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A pro Red Wolf thrives Down Under

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Moving across the world to an unfamiliar country might seem daunting to most, but one former Arkansas State soccer player snatched the opportunity to continue her soccer career far from the comforts of Shadrachs, friends, family and the places she called home.

Taylor Schneider leapt at the opportunity to play soccer professionally in Australia after she finished her career at A-State in 2018. Schneider, a three-year veteran for the Red Wolves, proved a forceful presence in a holding midfielder role at A-State.

“Probably one of the more underrated positions on the field is that holding midfielder,” A-State head coach Brian Dooley said. “Depending whether you’re a 4-3-3 with one holding player or a 4-3-3 with two holding players. When we used Taylor there we used her as one because she was dominant in the air, a very physical player, didn’t shy away from challenges and protected that area in front of your center backs effectively. That allowed us to use the other two midfielders with one in a pure attacking role and the other in a transitional attacking role.

That allowed us to add a player to the attack. It’s been tough to replace her. We did it this past year with Sophia Restrepo who brought a different set of talents to that position.”

A St. Louis native, Schneider boasted an extreme competitiveness on the pitch both in practice and game situations.

“She has that extreme competitiveness whether it’s a game or training,” Dooley said. “She demanded that same kind of effort from her teammates. Those are attributes that almost every successful professional player has. Training isn’t a time to just goof off and get through the day, it’s a chance to get better and that was her mentality. I think that helped us as a team bring our intensity levels higher in training.”

The St. Louis area provides A-State with multiple talents and three players in the incoming 2020 class hail from the second largest city in Missouri. Some familiar Red Wolves, Megan McClure, Olivia Smith, Sarah Sodoma, Victoria MacIntosh and Hailey Schue all came from the St. Louis area. Lou Fusz Soccer Club rolls out the talent.

“There is a significant number of top level clubs (in St. Louis),” Dooley said. “Whether it’s St. Louis Scott Gallagher

and they have various levels. The ECNL is generally the top level and they have a premier level and a USY, they have all kinds of different levels. Then you have the Lou Fusz club. That’s where Taylor played and a number of her teammates. Taylor, Riley Ebenroth and Kelsey Ponder all played together on the club level. Then the second wave of our Lou Fusz kids are the Sarah Sodomas, MacIntosh, Hailey Schue and Olivia Smith. You had kids who were constantly competing at the highest level. The other thing that makes St. Louis unique is the high school level of St. Louis is actually a really good competitive level.”

Dooley said Schneider became a strong leader for the Red Wolves in her time in Jonesboro. A-State center back Julianna Coates was a friend with Schneider off the pitch and also had to form a good relationship on the playing field with the now-pro. The dynamic between a holding midfielder and a center back is important as the positions are intertwined during the flow of the game.

“It takes a lot of trust,” Coates said. “You have to rely on them to help screen you and



“Ideally, I’ll be playing soccer until my legs fall off”

have your back if you get out of position they have to fill your space as quick as possible. She always had my back and I always had hers. It was a good working relationship between us.”

While speed may not have been Schneider’s best attribute

were both able to control people in a way. Like, just aggressively with our bodies. It obviously made my job so much easier having her in front of me. I really enjoyed playing with her. It was a lot of fun.”

Schneider graduated from A-State in December 2018 and just a few months later she was in Melbourne, Australia in a new life as a professional soccer player. Schneider played for Alamein FC in her first season as a pro and has now signed for Heidelberg United FC for the 2020 season.

“When I graduated I had an agent and everything,” Schneider said. “He basically just told me there was this opportunity. It felt like all the pieces were falling together. He called me and within a couple of days I said yes. Within a week I

The St. Louis native arrived in Australia and had to adapt to a new lifestyle.

“It was nice because I had a host family,” Schneider said. “They were amazing and they helped a lot with transitioning away from my family. It’s pretty hectic because there are so many things you have to figure out and learn to live on the other side of the world where I literally didn’t know anybody. It was crazy but then it also helped me learn a lot about myself and gave me the confidence to do a lot of other things, so I’m really grateful for it.”

In college Schneider’s schedule revolved around soccer and in Jonesboro she did not have to worry about making time for the game, that was a given already. However, in Melbourne the then first-year pro had to balance life and soccer carefully.

Alamein FC and Heidelberg United both play in the National Premier League Women’s, the second division of Australian women’s soccer. Schneider said the level of play in the league was about the same as the Division I level in the United States but learning the playstyle of new coaches from different parts of the world was one of the most challenging aspects of becoming a professional player.

“It was different from it being like the only thing I did to me having to work and make an income because women don’t get paid enough,” Schneider said. “I had to work a job and have a life and I also play soccer as well. It’s more of a balancing act I guess.”

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SCHNEIDER, 4A



Photo by: SoccerSTL.net | The St. Louis connection
In a high school match, Sarah Sodoma dribbles while Taylor Schneider (middle) and Victoria MacIntosh (right) look at their future A-State teammate.

as a Red Wolf, she made up for it in physical play.

“She wasn’t the fastest, just like me,” Coates said. “But we

had a visa. Two weeks later I was basically here and I’ve been here ever since.”

Jones-Branch accepts dean position of re-established Graduate School

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Vaughn Endowed Professor of History Dr. Cherisse Jones-Branch accepted the appointment to become the dean of the soon to be re-established Graduate School at A-State.

Jones-Branch begins her new role as Graduate School dean July 1, 2020. The tenured history professor said she wants to help students realize all the possibilities that come with a graduate degree and realize what programs are available to them.

“I’ve always been very interested in graduate education,” Jones-Branch said. “I’ve worked very closely with graduate students over the years. It was really important for me to be in a position where rather than helping one or two graduate students at a time I could help graduate students across campus. One of the

things that was very interesting to me is the opportunity to learn about the other graduate programs, to learn about other graduate students and to really just be in the position where I help students realize all the possibilities that come along with a graduate school education.”

In previous years, the responsibilities of a centralized graduate dean were distributed to the different colleges and schools with different graduate degree programs. A centralized Graduate School is important so students can realize all the different graduate school programs that exist.

Jones-Branch also said having a centralized Graduate School will increase A-State’s already strong profile and as well as helping current A-State undergraduate students, a centralized Graduate School could attract students from other universities outside of Jonesboro and Arkansas.

“We need a centralized

graduate school because number one we want our students and anybody else really to know about all the graduate programs that we have,” Jones-Branch said. “That’s very difficult to do if programs are just sort of sidled in each of their own departments. Through the graduate school, we’ll have a centralized operation whereby everyone can know what graduate programs are available.”

Jones-Branch joined the A-State history department in 2003, but in her first year as Graduate School Dean she will not be teaching. Jones-Branch said teaching is very important to her and she would just not be able to invest the time into teaching that she would like in her first year as dean. However, after her first year she does expect to be able to teach one course per semester.

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DEAN, 4A



Photo by: Krishnan Collins | Editor-in-Chief
Dr. Cherisse Jones-Branch is set to become the Graduate School Dean July 1, 2020. She said she looks forward to learning about other graduate programs on campus.