



### **See how one Woman's journey in Soccer led her to Africa.**

I have my first shin guards to thank for my soccer career. When I saw those shiny black guards with hints of red highlights, I thought they would turn me into a super hero. Much better than those flimsy ballet slippers my big sister wore. That's why I didn't make a fuss when my mom sent me to a Skyhawks soccer camp one summer when I was six. I knew any sport that had accessories to make me a superhero would be more fun than sucking in my belly at a ballet studio. My experience at Skyhawks that first summer only strengthened my resolution to exchange my tutu for cleats.

I went to Skyhawks summer camps every summer for the next five years. I created relationships with my teammates and coaches many of which I still maintain to this day. My exposure to Skyhawks soccer nurtured a desire in me for greater competition, so in 1999 I joined the Shadow Premier club. I played and traveled with the club from sixth grade up through my senior year in high school; highlighted by a national championship my junior year. I also coached for Skyhawks in their 4-6 year-old Mini-Hawk programs.

In the Spring of 2007 I completed my freshman year at NCAA Division III Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota. I am a student-athlete at Macalester and play for the women's varsity soccer program and started as a freshman. I currently majoring in anthropology and international studies, and last season our team finished 13-3-5 and made it to the round of 32 in the NCAA Tournament.

Thirteen summers after my first taste of the game, I plan to travel across the globe to share my passion with others who are less fortunate. I am traveling to Rwanda, Africa with a human rights delegation. For the first two weeks I will discuss the reconciliation work that has taken place in the country since genocide ravaged the nation in 1994.

For the next two weeks I will be volunteering with Amahoro Great Lakes, a

non- profit that uses extracurricular activities, like soccer, as a way to engage the youth in a dialogue about human rights, health, and education. I will be coaching their boys team as well as developing and managing the first girls team in the country. Skyhawks has sent me off with soccer equipment to help promote and spread our passion for sports and to teach life skills through athletics.

Skyhawks sports camps offered me my first experience playing soccer in a safe and organized environment. I had fun that first week taking part in obstacle courses, tournaments, and games. Little did I know, however, how much my first exposure to the sport would shape not only my attitude, but my personal growth, and future goals.

My formative experiences with soccer did not propel me into a professional sports career, but rather equipped me with the skills to lead others, relate to my peers, build on constructive criticism and have an invincible sense of self confidence – the qualities any child sees in a superhero.