

Pine-Richland grad playing lockdown defense for Case Western women's soccer

TRIB LIVE JERIN STEELE | Sunday, October 30, 2022 3:01 p.m.



SUBMITTED | TIM PHILLIS

Submitted | Tim Phillis Pine-Richland grad Katie Rishel is a sophomore defender for the 2022 Case Western women's soccer team.

Katie Rishel gained confidence in herself through hard work in the offseason, but she had to prove her progress to a new women's soccer coaching staff at Case Western Reserve University.

The coaches showed belief by making her a starter, and she's repaid them by flourishing in her sophomore season as part of an ironclad defense.

Rishel, a Pine-Richland grad, has started every game and is part of a backline that yielded only seven goals through the first 13 games, helping the Spartans to an undefeated start through Oct. 26.

They've accomplished their excellent start under a new coach, Abby Richter, who didn't join the team until August.

"We've had an incredible season so far," Rishel said. "It's super exciting. Being without a coach until two weeks before preseason was stressful for the whole team, but we were very resilient. We adapted to coach Richter and stayed together as a team. Team chemistry and our relationships within the team has been a big part of our success."

Rishel appeared in only eight games as a freshman, so she was unsure of what her status would be for the fall, but she knew she put a lot of hours in to improve her game.

"It's definitely jarring when you come into a college program, because everyone on the team was the best player on their high school team and their club team," Rishel said. "You're with a lot of girls that are incredible players, so it can be hard to stand out. You just have to find your stride. I always think about the things I know I am good at that I can focus on and keep a mental list of the things I need to work on in practice and over the summer. It's really important to put in that work outside of practice, because all of the girls are good."

She made the best of her opportunity in her audition during the preseason.

"There's positives and negatives to having a new coach," Rishel said. "You get a clean slate, but you also don't have much to fall back on. The coaches didn't see me play until the first day of preseason, which was nerve-racking, but also exciting, because you are starting fresh. I just gave it my best and thankfully the hard work that I put in last season and in the offseason was able to be shown on the field."

Case Western had seven clean sheets through the first 13 games. Rishel, who plays outside back, is the youngest member of the defense, playing with three senior captains.

She spent a lot of time working on communication and connecting with her backline mates and it's paid off. Rishel also credited goalkeeper Maggie Storti, an Oakland Catholic grad, as a major contributor to the shutouts.

The Spartans had three more games to finish the regular season before gearing up for postseason play. Rishel is hopeful they can make a deep run together.

And she'll be enjoying every moment along the way.

"If you're not loving the game then you shouldn't be playing," Rishel said. "It's hard to find motivation if you're not enjoying it and having good experiences with your team. That's the biggest reason why I play. I love the game and the people that this game has brought into my life."

EMAIL NEWSLETTERS ([HTTPS://SIGNUP.TRIBLIVE.COM/](https://signup.triblive.com/))

TribLIVE's Daily and Weekly [email newsletters \(https://signup.triblive.com/\)](https://signup.triblive.com/) deliver the news you want and information you need, right to your inbox.

Copyright ©2022— [Trib Total Media, LLC \(http://tribtotalmedia.com/\)](http://tribtotalmedia.com/) (TribLIVE.com)

