

Ashlyn Harris

U-19 GOALKEEPER GETS ACADEMIC CREDIT

Ashlyn Harris earned four A's and two B's on her fall report card at Satellite High School in Satellite Beach, Fla., but they might have turned to F's had an appeal to award her credit for her classwork been denied.

Harris, the star goalkeeper of the U.S. team that captured the FIFA U-19 Women's World Championship title last summer in Canada, was required to go through an appeals process after missing more than the maximum nine days last semester while preparing for and competing in the inaugural U-19 tournament.

The 16-year-old junior learned her classwork would be counted following a mid-December hearing during which she dazzled the board with a highlight tape from the championships.

"I think it shocked them when they saw it," Harris said. "It was a better visual of what I went through [in Canada], how many people were there. Instead of them thinking it was just another U.S. soccer tournament."

Harris was forced to go through the appeals process after the Brevard County School Board last spring barred principals from exercising "administrative absences," through which students who missed more than nine days could receive class credit without a hearing.

Harris, the nation's top prep goalkeeper, likely will have to go through the same process this spring and twice as a senior. Her participation in national team camps will force her to miss more than nine days each semester.

A soccer scholarship awaits her at the University of North Carolina in 2004, but she must earn a high school diploma and a passing grade on the SAT or ACT to claim it.

"It was a relief," she said of the committee's ruling. "I didn't know what to expect. It was a pretty frustrating semester. I got back [from Canada] and had to make up all this work, and when I got my report card, it just said FA [failed-absence]."

Harris benefited from support from U.S. Soccer, which supplied the highlight tape, and extensive media coverage of her situation.

"I felt more confident because FIFA and U.S. Soccer and the community and everybody was backing me up," she said. "It made [the school-board policy] look almost ridiculous."

— Scott French

Everton will have no need to use Brian McBride (pictured after scoring against Mexico in World Cup 2002) if its forwards continue to play as well as they have done this season.



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