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TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

Ms. Domingos is a member of the USF volleyball team.

What brought her to the University

Originally from Brazil, she was first recruited to play volleyball in Utah. Placing great importance on education, she felt that USF met her needs academically as a junior college transfer, while also offering a strong athletic program. The Florida weather was certainly appealing to her as well.

Language difficulties

Aside from basic phrases, she understood very little English, only learning to speak it when she moved from Brazil to the United States. She credits full immersion as the primary means by which she successfully learned a foreign language. After five years, she has few problems communicating in her second language.

Initial experiences in the United States

She feels that moving was the best thing she could have done. Strong family values and institutions in Utah provided a stable atmosphere for her to adapt to life in a new country. After two years there, she felt “very adapted” and was ready to move on to a four-year school. Having a friend at USF compelled her to visit the area and seriously consider the University. The diversity of the community and the school itself proved to be attractive qualities to the Brazilian native. After considering a variety of options, she still feels that she made the very best decision in coming to USF.

First impressions at USF

Initially overwhelmed by the size, she found her niche and quickly grew accustomed to life at the University. Pleased with her decision, she decided, “This is it!”

Social life

She moved in with a group of friends living off-campus, though she was still very much connected to university life through her involvement in athletics. She does a lot of community service through the athletic program, while staying involved with the

international student community at USF. Spending the majority of her days on-campus, she exclaims, “Being a student athlete is not an easy job!”

Typical day at USF

She is typically enrolled in eighteen credits, and thus spends her entire mornings in class through the week. In the afternoon she participates in conditioning activities, such as weight lifting, followed by practice. If she does not have classes again in the evening, she takes the opportunity to relax or study. “It’s a very busy schedule ... you definitely learn about time management!”

Academics

She decided on a double major: international studies and international business, with a concentration in economics. Such lofty goals require that she take a heavy course-load each semester in addition to her athletics. Her coach stresses the importance of academics before athletics. “We are here to go to school, and as a consequence we play volleyball.” While on the road, the team regularly devotes time to studying between competitions.

Relationships with instructors

She does not receive any special attention from her professors, who expect her to attend class regularly, aside from schedule conflicts with athletic events. She emphasizes the importance of establishing a strong and open relationship with her teachers, should she need additional help as a result of her volleyball commitments.

Athletic achievements

She was first assigned the position of “floor captain” by the coach; her second year she was elected “team co-captain” by her fellow teammates and coaches. “With the success and the glory comes a lot of responsibility.” She was awarded Conference USA “Center of the Year” both years that she played for USF. She was also selected “All-Region” player twice, as well as the Tournament MVP during her last season. She modestly suggests that her own individual accolades and successes are “just a reflection of how well our team really did.” This past year, they finished first in the regular season, going as far as the second round of the NCAA conference tournament. Following her career as a player, she was asked by her head coach to be the undergraduate assistant coach of the volleyball team, a position that she currently holds.

Impressions of athletics at USF

Speaking of her experiences at USF, she asserts “If you put your effort into it, if you work hard, you will be rewarded.” She speaks highly of the support the administration gives to athletics, and admires the facilities available to the student athletes at the university.

Family connection

Though her family has not been able to visit since her arrival in Tampa, she hopes they will be able to see her graduate in May 2004.

Plans after graduation

She really feels that she is ready for something different. As an international student, she is awarded a year where she can work in her field of expertise after graduation, an opportunity that she did not have as a student due to immigration rules and restrictions. Following that year, she plans to go on to graduate school at the University of Florida, to which she has already been awarded two scholarships. "I'll always be a Bull...but I have to be a Gator for a while!"

Favorite activities as a student here at USF

She had a lot of cookouts with friends here, something that reminded her of home. Occasionally, they would get together at somebody's house and watch Brazilian television, or go out to the movies. "There is a lot to do here," she enthusiastically declares.

What will she take with her from experiences at USF

She has made life-long friendships, as well as establishing strong relationships with coaches, teachers, and advisors; important experiences that, she notes, "You can never put down on paper." She celebrates her experiences here at the University, asserting, "It's big, but at the same time it's warm.... You have a voice."

Advice and suggestions for student athletes

She urges students to "get to know your community;" the benefits of working hard are endless, and friends will always be there to help one another out.

End of Interview