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COM201

4/19/21

### **A Saint Mary's Sophomore Receives a Division Athletic Award**

Being nominated for the MIAC Tennis Women's Athlete of the Week was a welcome surprise for this deserving Saint Mary's University athlete.

Zoie Becker is a women's tennis player at Saint Mary's. Although she is only in her second year of university, she is making a name for herself as a strong competitor on the court.

Becker began her tennis career in sixth grade in her hometown of St. James, Minnesota, and continued to play throughout high school. Her skill was such that she helped lead summer tennis camps, playing over 100 hours each summer and improving everyday. During her sophomore year of high school, Becker suffered a severely torn meniscus and torn ACL during the winter that prevented her from playing girl's tennis the following fall. Instead, she played with the boy's tennis team in the spring. She developed her talents even more so and proved herself a formidable opponent.

Thanks to her skill, as well as recommendations from St. James' alumni at Saint Mary's, Becker was recruited to play for Saint Mary's by the head tennis coach, Jeffrey Halberg. "She was clearly a player that not only was talented but also had the potential to really grow as a player too," he said. "It was kind of a no-brainer to recruit her." The attributes of the university appealed to Becker, and the rest is history.

Saint Mary's is part of the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC). The MIAC consists of 13 private colleges and universities throughout the state of Minnesota. These schools compete with each other in many different sports, tennis included.

As a MIAC athlete, Becker devotes much of her time to improving her capabilities. Coleen Lois, captain of the women's tennis team, recalls that Becker is a hard worker both on and off the courts, mentioning that Becker is "I swear, at the gym 24/7."

Her commitment to strengthening her athletic ability and her competitive drive are evident in her sports record. Becker's current collegiate record for singles in tennis is 19-4, and she currently ranks fifth in the team line-up. She is certainly a force to be reckoned with.

With her incredible record and talent, it only made sense for Becker to be honored as the MIAC Women's Tennis Athlete of the Week on March 15, 2021. As a weekly award, the Athlete of the Week is granted to athletes based on criteria such as best performance, strength of the opponent, and importance of the game. Becker was honored with the award after her wins against St. Catherine University and Wartburg College.

Halberg believes that Becker's award is well deserved. "Nobody gets that award without putting in a lot of work," he said. "This conference is so good that there's no such thing as good luck." Becker proved her skill and was rewarded as a result.

Becker herself was surprised but happy when she found out she received the title of Athlete of the Week. "It was nice, it just means that all of the hard work is paying off so far," she said.

While Becker thrives on the court playing singles, her connection with the team off the court is still strong. Lois said that the team has a secure bond. "The tennis team is definitely a

family, and we all get along really well,” said Lois. “ Zoie fits right into this and she is very easy going, a great teammate, and makes us all want to work harder

What’s next for Becker? She plans to continue her tennis career by putting in the time and effort to develop herself as a player and teammate, and she hopes to continue pursuing what appears to be a winning collegiate career.