

THE ULTIMATE

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GOAL



**FOR SOCCER STAR
CHRISTEN PRESS,
STAYING GROUNDED IS
THE NAME OF THE GAME**



"MORE IMPORTANT
THAN BEING A
PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE
IS DOING WHATEVER
YOU'RE PASSIONATE
ABOUT. THAT'S WHAT I
WOULD LIKE THE WORLD
TO KNOW. JUST FIND
YOUR PASSION."

—CHRISTEN PRESS

CHRISTEN PRESS
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An athlete is always on the move, and for pro soccer player **Christen Press**, there's no stopping her adrenaline kick both on and off the field. From winning the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup with the US Women's National Soccer Team to participating in the 2016 Summer Olympics, Press continues to run, aim and shoot no matter the number of victories and losses. With the spotlight following every moment of her athletic career, you might wonder how Press manages to contain the exhaustion solely within soccer matches. The formula to her physical and mental health is staying rooted and knowing when to slow down to catch her breath during life's quiet moments.



In the city of Palos Verdes Estates, California, there was a family that was obsessed with soccer. Press and her two sisters started playing the sport,

among many others, after their parents decided that learning about the principles of team dynamics was very important. "It was definitely a family affair with my mom and dad managing, coaching my teams, watching videos online, studying how to play soccer and understanding the rules—all of that," Press recalls. "Before I was even in high school, we were like a crazy soccer family."

Come high school, Press never really thought about shooting for the big leagues. Her goal setting was and still is in the present. During her younger years, she didn't play for any of the US national teams, but once she attended Stanford and saw that her teammates were making the National Team, that's when her perspective shifted.

That shift led to a whirlwind of highs and lows. Press lost in the NCAA College Cup two years in a row despite becoming Stanford's all-time leading scorer. After college, Press was drafted to magicJack in 2011 and hoped to attract the USWNT's attention, but it wasn't enough—even with 'Rookie of the Year' attached to her

name. Then in early 2012, the Women's Professional Soccer league folded.

Without another moment's hesitation, the disheartened athlete packed her bags and moved to Sweden where she would sign with Kopparbergs/Göteborg FC.

Though one opportunity slipped out of reach, another unexpectedly fell into her hands. Press let go of all the validations and expectations that she'd carried from back home and simply played for fun during her time abroad. A few months after signing with the professional team in Sweden, by a stroke of luck, the Head Coach of the USWNT, who is originally from Sweden, was visiting her native country and watched a few of Press' matches. Shortly after, Press got her first call up. "It was such a good lesson for me because sometimes letting go is how you come into things," she explains. "We try to force things in our life. We try to shove ourselves through these small holes. If we just let ourselves flow, we fit so easily."

Press believes there shouldn't be a word for failure because everything is transient. "Nothing's finite," she declares. "If you lose a game, you've lost—that's definite, but you haven't failed because you'll play another game." By adjusting her mindset, Press has allowed herself to play more freely, and regardless of what happens, she has a strong hold on her sense of self.

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Native Knowledge

• For anyone who visits the South Bay, Press recommends going to Manhattan Beach. Hit up Fishing With Dynamite or Two Guns Espresso, her favorite restaurant and coffee shop, respectively.

Story of Her Life

• During high school, Press' favorite courses were English and essay writing. She's kept a journal since third grade and reveals that she has a high stack of journals at her parents' house.

**Pump It
(Louder)!**

- When Press is gearing up for a workout, she puts on her playlist called CP 2.0 which is mostly rap music.

Women's League

- One of Press' most inspirational athletes is Serena Williams. "The way she plays is amazing," gushes Press. "She's so powerful [and] so beautiful."

**Around
the World**

- While Press doesn't have the travel bug, she loved living in Madrid and Sweden. Tuscany, Italy is on her list of places to explore.



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Awards and victories are natural indicators of success, but for Press, success comes from the quiet moments after failure. "It's like the people who fail the most are the best," says Press. "It's a crazy thing to think about and I think in other realms of the world, it's hard to accept that. But in sports, it's 100 percent about getting back up."

And picking herself off the ground is exactly what Press did. "I think each time that I handled it, each time that I had grace myself, each time that I said I'm not gonna let someone else determine my own self-worth, my own value, I got better and I became a better player," expresses Press. "I became a more *joyous* player."

As a seven-year veteran on the USWNT, Press feels fully embraced and loved by the team. "I think that just as much as I enjoy the sport and being technically good and physically good, I think even more than that, I enjoy feeling trusted and respected by my teammates," she says with a smile. "And a lot of that stuff happens off the field. It happens when there [are] no cameras around in the quiet moments... that's the most rewarding part, I think."

That love and support not only emanate from her teammates but from the fans as well. With half a million followers on Instagram, Press thinks it's all surreal. She keeps a careful distance from social media but at the same time, she can connect with her fans by sharing parts of herself and her truth.

At the games, Press still can't believe that "people are going nuts" over her and her team. Other than earning trust and respect from her teammates, the most rewarding part about the job is bringing joy to people. "Joy is underrated," Press shares. "I think we have so many American goals of what you need to do to be happy, but actually, happiness should be the goal. To be able to give people reasons to celebrate, to spend time with their family, to laugh and to yell and to embrace that human experience—I think that is super cool, and seeing it in the stadiums is one of the best parts."

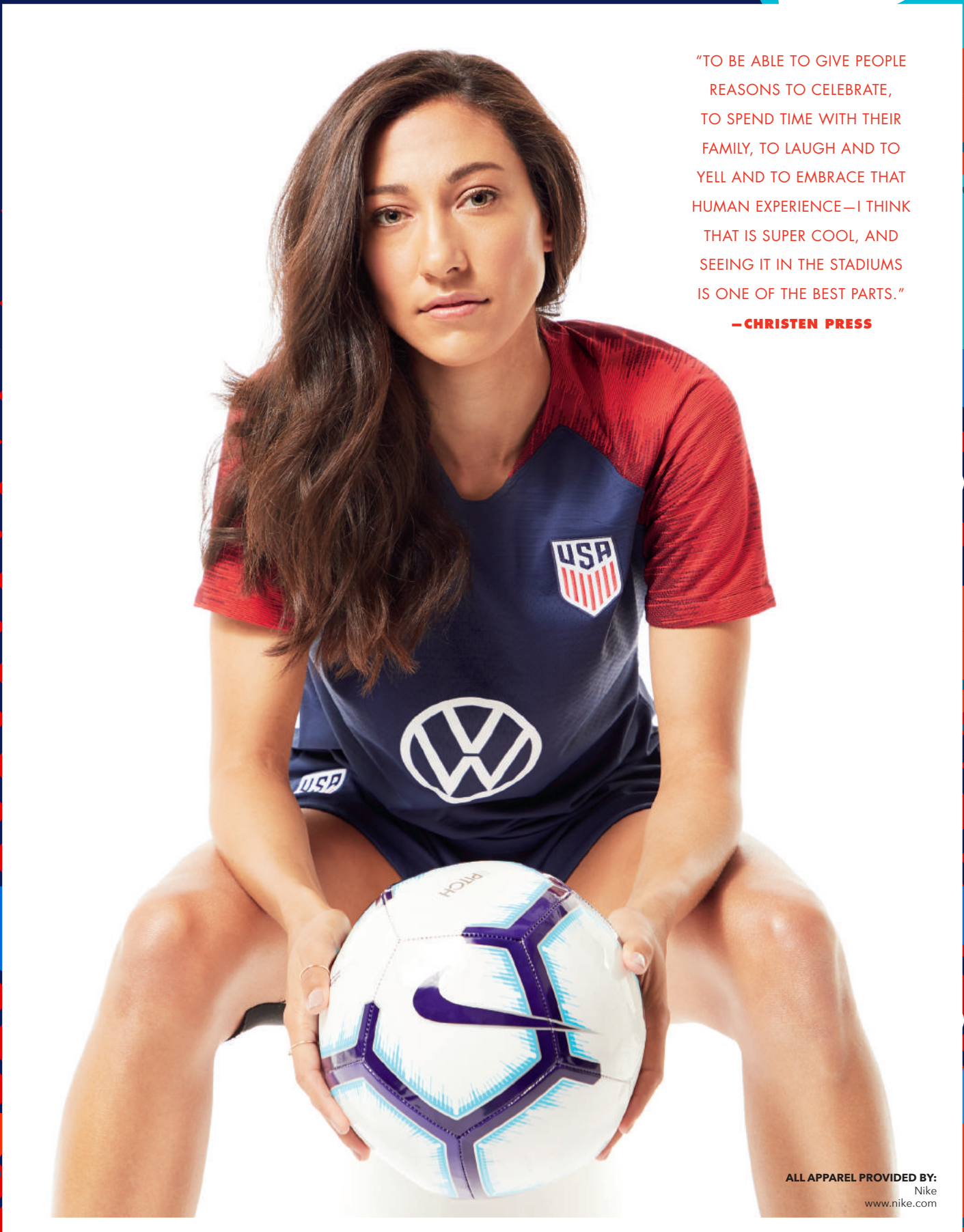
As someone who speeds along the field, Press admits she has too much energy. Over the years she has learned to expend that abundant energy in healthier ways.

Meditating and walking with her bare feet on the field before a match keeps her grounded. Coming to terms with stillness is especially important. "I've learned, specifically as an athlete, I used to have more of a mentality of, the more I do, the better I am," Press explains. "Now it's the smarter I am, the better I am, so [that stems from] managing what I'm doing on the field and what I'm doing off the field... It's very much become a holistic, all-encompassing job."

The countdown to the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup leaves even less time for Press to do anything non-soccer related. "You're only on the field for two hours," states Press. "You've got 22 hours and you have to manage that time perfectly so that when you're there for two hours, you're the best that you can be."

In preparation for the World Cup, Press believes that embracing every moment leading up to the event will build a foundation and strengthen her determination rather than letting stress take over. "You have to be ready because my experience in the last World Cup was that *crazy* things happened," explains Press. "It's never going to be the way you think it's going to be so you have to be emotionally, physically ready for everything. And that's a really hard thing to do, but I think we can do it. I have full belief in our team. I have full belief in myself." Press' fighting spirit along with her neverending determination to become better plants hope in her team and the rest of the country that will cheer them on.

Despite all the national and international acclaim throughout her soccer career, Press wants to remind the younger generation that "it's not about being famous or being successful and having the world tell you that you're great." Passion is what will drive you to your end goal. "I think it's about being great for yourself and deciding that you're perfect and beautiful and that you [can] make mistakes and that doesn't take away from that," emphasizes Press. "In sports, it's such a great opportunity to learn those things and to stay focused on the process on playing... More important than being a professional athlete is doing whatever you're passionate about. That's what I would like the world to know. Just find your passion." ■



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