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NEWS

'ONE OF THE HAPPIEST MOMENTS OF MY LIFE'

LOCAL LACROSSE PLAYER WINS NCAA TITLE

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It was to be a promising year for the Lindenwood Lions.

Many of the team's veterans had taken a year off to line up their senior seasons with a group that was to be a contender for the NCAA Division 2 lacrosse championship, which the Missouri school was set to host.

The team had just finished a three-game sweep on a road trip to improve to 9-1 when their coach gathered them on the sideline and told them their season was over.

"It was heartbreaking," said Georgetown's Meghan Rea, then a second-year attack on the Lions. "We all knew it might be our last game. There was a lot of information on the news. The NHL and the NBA had shut down. Seeing our seniors so upset, it was a hard bus ride home."

The COVID-19 pandemic may have claimed Lindenwood's shot at a national title, but the Lions returned this season even more determined. They won their first 14 games, including a 12-10 victory over Indianapolis, the top-ranked team in the country.

On May 21, Rea scored twice in a 12-9 win in the national semifinal. Two days later, her 15th goal of the season, broke a 1-1 tie in the championship game as the Lions roared out to a 14-5 lead.

"By far, my favourite goal I've ever scored be-



Don Adams photo

Meghan Rea, left, helped the Lindenwood Lions win the NCAA Division 2 lacrosse title. The junior attack scored 15 goals in 18 games.

cause of how big the stage was and how important it was to get that lead," Rea said.

Lindenwood then held off a late charge to secure a 14-12 victory to win the team's first-ever NCAA title.

"It was kind of crazy," Rea said. "I hugged my friend for about two minutes and I was crying happy tears. It was one of the happiest moments of my life."

Rea played hockey and soccer as a kid, but when she was 11, she started lacrosse.

"I wasn't that good at the beginning," she said. "Hockey I understood, and I got good at it. (Lacrosse) was so complex, and there were so many challenges."

She quickly met those challenges. Though she always thought she would

pursue a hockey scholarship, she soon realized there were as many opportunities available for her in lacrosse.

"I had to sit down and have a tough conversation about where I was going to put my time and effort," she said. "And I chose lacrosse."

She began attending Everest Academy, a sports-based school in Vaughan, where she was named varsity female athlete of the year and the lacrosse team's MVP.

That earned her a scholarship to Lindenwood, where she was named a team captain this year. And now she can say captain of a national champion.

With a two-week quarantine since returning from school, Rea's had plenty of time to rewatch the game and relive the moment.

"It's still sinking in," she said.