

Gomes lets her play do the talking

Bengals' star tries to deflect the credit, while her action boosts team's success

By Bubba Brown
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Brighton star forward Nadia Gomes is a study in contrasts.

She is soft-spoken, shy and withdrawn, she prefers not to talk about herself. But that changes when she's on the soccer field. Her shyness morphs into tenacity, and her reluctance to speak about herself vanishes — only she does the talking with her skills.

"She speaks with actions much more than with words," Brighton coach Mark Stoker said. "Athletically, she's just remarkable. Her speed and her first step are just unmatched within Class 5A. She's got touch on the ball and a very strong left foot."

If what Gomes did this season on Brighton's soccer field — 16 goals in 11 games, according to MaxPreps.com — didn't say enough about her immense talent, perhaps this could sway any skeptics: The senior spent nearly a month of the season playing for the Portugal U19 national team.

It started with an e-mail, which her father sent to Portugal's coaches to ask if a spot on the roster might be available for his daughter. The coaches were eager to get her on the field after they saw clips of her playing. She flew to Portugal and impressed them.

When she scored a goal in a UEFA qualifying match against Lithuania, she had accomplished something she'd spent her whole life dreaming about.

"It was way awesome," she said. "It's been my dream to play on a national team, especially the Portugal team."

Added Stoker of Gomes playing for a national team: "My coaching career is young, but I don't know if I'll witness that again a player of that caliber."

The transition wasn't always easy when Gomes returned to Brighton after playing for Portugal. It took time to adjust to the Bengals' style of play after spending a month in Portugal's fast-paced system.



Nadia Gomes' amazing talent helped Brighton to the state championship and also earned her the Tribune's MVP pick.

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"It was kind of hard," said Gomes, who plans to continue her career at BYU. "My dad told me when I got back that my speed was way up because they

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play with more speed [in Portugal], but then I fell back into more Brighton style again."

When she again became comfortable with Brighton's style, the results were impressive. She led the Bengals through the Class 5A playoffs, unchallenged until the state title game, which they won 1-0 over Viewmont.

Viewmont coach Emalee Tate's Vikings also lost to Gomes and Brighton during the regular season.

"She is a very dynamic player," Tate said. "She does a great job of initiating their offense and was someone we always had to be aware of where she

Nadia's big season

Brighton senior Nadia Gomes came on strong, starting in the middle of the 2013 season, and helped the Bengals to the 5A state championship. For her efforts, area 5A coaches voted her to be the Salt Lake Tribune's 5A MVP.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Opponent</u>	<u>Goals</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Opponent</u>	<u>Goals</u>
10/22	Fremont	3	10/1	Jordan	2
10/17	Davis	2	9/12	Jordan	1
10/15	West	1	8/22	Fremont	2
10/10	Alta	2	8/20	Viewmont	1
10/3	Bingham	2			
			Total		16

was on the field because she was so dangerous, especially with her left foot."

But despite all the victories and on-field success Gomes enjoyed, Stoker said he'll remember her for something else — how much her teammates and coaches respected her.

"They say the mark of a great leader is how much they are loved by the people around them," Stoker said. "I think that goes for her. There's not one player who has any ill will toward her. She is the most amazing person and individual. Everybody just loves her."