

Published in the Appleton Post Crescent on Saturday, April 12

The future seemed to dim the very moment Cassie Glodowski crumpled to the ground, her right knee throbbing in pain.

"I knew something was wrong right away," Waupaca girls' soccer coach Mark Polebitski said of his goalkeeper. "She still wanted to play, but we kept her out."

The injury occurred almost exactly one year ago as the Comets traveled to New London for a nonconference clash against the Bulldogs in only the third game of the season.

Pulled from her usual goalkeeper spot and slotted instead to play at sweeper, Glodowski was taking part in a pregame drill when her knee collided with the knee of a teammate.

Goodbye ACL. Goodbye junior year. But goodbye college dreams? Not so fast.

Glodowski, a first team all-Valley 8 selection at goalkeeper her freshman season, never did make it back into the lineup. Surgery followed late that May, as did five months of rehab.

Yet here the senior is today, the picture of health and the holder of a partial scholarship to play NCAA Division II soccer this fall at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, which extended the offer in November, just after she was finally cleared to take the field again.

"When you see her play, she's one of the top goalies in the state," Polebitski said. "She's right up there. She's one of the best ones around."

But how did Parkside have any idea about her potential given her injury status? Credit technology.

Fourteen video clips of Glodowski's skills can be viewed on the Web site of Wiberg's Wisconsin Goalkeeper School, a Stevens Point-based program that has attracted a growing number of boys and girls from throughout the state, some as young as 8, seeking goalkeeping instruction.

Glodowski has attended the school, which features a camp and weekly training sessions, since its opening in 2004 and saw her interest as a recruit skyrocket once video clips of its college prospects were added as a Web site component.

So while she was busy recovering from knee surgery, college coaches were just as busy clicking away at the clips.

"Goalkeeper is a unique position in soccer, where you can scout pretty well by video clips as opposed to a field position," said Eric Wiberg, the school's founder and an instructor. "As a result, Cassie received six Division I scholarship offers alone just from seeing her on the Web site."

"Because of the site, she was able to get a huge audience, and she thought Parkside was the best fit for her, for many reasons. Things have worked out really well."

Wiberg said Glodowski shipped DVDs of herself to a host of colleges but garnered minimal feedback in large part because those schools are often inundated with mail and videos from potential recruits, making it difficult for coaches to review everything.

That's why the video clips on Wiberg's Web site, and the ease in which they can be seen, have become such a valuable recruiting tool.

"He's probably the most crucial part of it," Glodowski said of the part Wiberg has played in helping her evolve into a college goalkeeper. "He has taught me everything — all forms and all physical aspects. And mentally, he has pushed me. He has always believed I could play in college."

That's because, Wiberg said, he has seen nobody better than Glodowski when it comes to catching the ball.

"She has tremendous hand-eye coordination," he said. "If she chooses to catch it, I have never seen her bobble one or drop one. She has the most unbelievable set of hands. That really sets her apart."

That, and other things.

"Her technique is amazing," said Polebitski, whose Comets are sporting a 2-0-1 mark. "She's very well trained at all different types of dives and punches. Her punts or goal kicks can go to midfield or beyond, so she can really move the ball in transition. She's a good athlete."

One who has no intention of missing out on any more games.

"I'm going to work my hardest to try and get there," Glodowski said when asked if she felt she could start at Parkside right away. "I don't want to sit on anybody's bench."