

Dovirs Williams didn't play soccer growing up.

But after seeing how much his daughter, DeAireal Williams, enjoyed playing the sport, Dovirs went to YouTube to learn everything he could about soccer.

"DeAireal was like 4 or 5 years old, and I used to set up cones and everything (in our backyard)," Dovirs Williams said. "I worked with her and then I started coaching her (in the park league). We did pretty good out there, and she played all over the field."

These days, DeAireal Williams plays center back for the New Hope High School girls soccer team. In her sixth year in the program, Williams has blended the skills she learned from her father to become the anchor to the Lady Trojans' defense. Those skills were a hot topic of conversation Friday, as DeAireal celebrated her decision to continue her soccer career at Meridian Community College in a signing ceremony in the school's multi-purpose room.

"I expect for it to be harder, but I will transition to work to understand how to play college ball and how to work around getting the balls from opponents and the physical style of play," Williams said.

Williams played offense for about five years in the park and recreation soccer leagues and some offense for her Columbus

United club team. Last season, she moved from outside back to center back due to an injury and made a seamless transition. New Hope coach Andrew Olsen said patience and athleticism help Williams anchor the team's defense.

"She has started since the ninth grade and has been a part of the back line, which has helped us win three straight district championships," Olsen said.

Olsen also said Williams' knowledge of the game and timing enable her to always control the back line and limit the number of shots freshman goalkeeper Emma Sanders, who is in her first season playing soccer, has had to face.

"When it is a one-vs.-one situation, she is not going to stab randomly and get beat," Olsen said. "When she stabs, a lot of times she is going to get the ball. She has handled a lot of good strikers she has faced."

Williams will join former New Hope High teammate Katie Hayes at MCC. She said Hayes provided valuable feedback about the school and will help ease her transition to a college game she expects to be played at a faster tempo and with more physicality.

But Williams said she will rely on the patience she learned from her father to adjust to the next level.

“I feel like I know exactly when to charge the ball and when to let my team come back,” Williams said. “I think that ability comes from my dad. He taught me to play. He helped me get the knowledge of the game and learn every position.”

Thirteen years after watching his first YouTube videos about teaching soccer, Dovirs said it is “unbelievable” to see the progress DeAireal has made. He said her willingness to listen made her a student who was easy to teach.

“I didn’t see us getting her to be this good,” Dovirs said “She is a very good soccer player. I am happy as I don’t know what.”