

OLYMPIC ASPIRATIONS

Former Laguna Beach High School water polo standout Makenzie Fischer looks to compete for Team USA at the 2016 Olympic Games.

Section by Kristin Scharkey



GERTJAN KOOLJ

Local athlete Makenzie Fischer is training with the USA Water Polo Women's Senior National Team for the Olympics.

WHEN DISCUSSING WOMEN'S WATER POLO IN ORANGE COUNTY, Makenzie Fischer's name is bound to come up. The 18-year-old defender made waves at Laguna Beach High School for the past four years, highlighted by a senior campaign in 2014-15 in which she led the Breakers to an undefeated season en route to the team's second consecutive CIF Southern Section Division I title. For her efforts, Makenzie repeated as CIF-SS Division I Player of the Year.

This upcoming summer, the recent graduate may have the opportunity to add to an already impressive resume: She is currently training with the USA Water Polo Women's Senior National Team to compete for a spot on the 2016 Olympic roster. While the Olympic group won't be named until May or June, she's already helped the national team to gold at the 2015 FINA World Championships and 2015 Pan American Games.

Though the current buzz largely surrounds Makenzie and her

Olympic goals, she isn't the only Fischer to make headlines for water polo. She's joined on the national team roster by her sister, Aria, and the pair come from a long line of talent: Their father competed for Team USA at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona and was an All-American at Stanford University, while their mother was also a Stanford graduate and competed for the women's club team. Extending the family legacy, Makenzie has chosen to pursue her college career at Stanford, but deferred her enrollment this year to train for the upcoming games. The team's lone opportunity to qualify comes March 21-28, 2016, at the Olympic Qualification Tournament in Gouda, Netherlands.

As she continues to prepare, Laguna Beach Magazine sat down with Makenzie to get the scoop on her current training regimen, as well as the prospect of competing for the red, white and blue in Rio de Janeiro.

Laguna Beach Magazine: What does your current training regimen look like?

Makenzie Fischer: When we're not traveling, we practice Monday through Saturday, typically. ... We'll have two practices a day, 7-10:30 a.m. and then 1:30-4:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. And then on Wednesday, typically we only have one practice from 7-11 a.m. and then Saturday is up in the air—it changes week to week. In the mornings, we normally lift weights and then we'll ... do some conditioning, and then in the afternoons, that's typically when we're [playing] water polo.

LBM: Is there any game from summer 2015 that stands out in your mind?

MF: I would say ... the final game at [FINA] World Championships, because it was a very close game and we were battling the whole time, and it was really physical. And then, obviously, to hear the whistle at the end and know that you're the world champions is pretty cool.

LBM: What was the transition like for you from high school to international competition?

MF: At high school, I feel like I had to do a lot more, and be scoring goals [and] making things happen, but [on] the senior team, everyone has their own individual roles. There's going to be people that are scoring more than other people and then people like me, where I need to be solid on defense at all times. ... [We are] also having to play at that higher level where there [are] no weak players on any of the other teams, so you always have to be on top of your game.

LBM: What does it mean to you to be able to compete for a spot on the Olympic roster?

MF: Growing up, I always knew I wanted to compete at the highest level. ... I was actually obsessed with soccer and I thought I was going to be a soccer player before I got into water polo—but I always wanted to be an Olympian.

Watching the Olympics and then having a father that was in the Olympics, it always seemed really cool and somewhat attainable

because I knew someone. ... Even just getting the chance to train at the highest level with [former] Olympians and then future Olympians is pretty special.

LBM: How do you feel about continuing your family's Stanford legacy?

MF: I think that it's pretty cool that I'm going to the same place my parents went. Even now, my mom will be like, "Oh, where are your friends staying? What dorms?" or whatever, because they got their dorm assignments, and she knows everything and I know nothing. So I think that it's kind of funny because I'm going to be doing the same things they did in college.

LBM: Do you have any water polo-related career plans?

MF: I wouldn't mind playing professionally for maybe a season or so, but that's definitely not going to be paying the bills. I'm not sure what I want to major in either, but I'm thinking something math-sciencey, maybe engineering. **LBM**



Guys can make a move toward the net in the **THALIA SURF BOSS BOARDIES MEN'S BOARD SHORTS**, \$51.95, at Thalia Surf Shop. (949-497-3292; thaliasurf.com)

WATER POLO WONDER

Take your game to the next level with these top products.

Living in our beach town offers the ultimate setting for the sport of water polo. While you wait for the Olympics, jump in a pool with the following items for a day of competitive entertainment. **LBM**



Play like the pros with the **MIKASA W6000 NCAA MEN'S WATER POLO BALL**, \$39.99, at Dick's Sporting Goods, Laguna Hills. (949-472-8180; dickssportinggoods.com)



Women can stay stylish in the water with Rip Curl's **GYPSY ROAD SURF SUIT**, \$70, at Diane's Beachwear. (949-376-9194; dianesbeachwear.com)