

the **O**utrigger



©2014 *scoringlive*

JUNE 2016

Published by the Outrigger Canoe Club for Members and Guests at Home and Abroad



Jr. 'Rigger Off to Stanford to Pursue Water Polo Dream

By Kehau Kali Berquist



Emalia Eichelberger



Emalia (first row, right, next to coach) and her Team USA Junior National team after winning the FINA Junior World Championship last summer in the 20 and under division.

You may know her as the granddaughter of Past President Wakey Mist, or the daughter of Admissions & Membership Committee member DC Mist Eichelberger and four time PGA Tour pro champion Dave Eichelberger, or as the twin sister of Davis Eichelberger, but if you're a Stanford alum or follower of water polo, it's time to meet Emalia Eichelberger.

Emalia, who graduated this month from Punahou School, is a goalie on Team USA's Junior National Water Polo team which won the Gold Medal at the FINA Junior World Championship last summer in Volos, Greece.

She joined the National Youth Water Polo team in 2013 and won a Gold Medal at the UANA Youth Pan American Championships in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In 2014, she moved up to the National Cadet Team, which won matches against Hungary and Serbia. And last year it was Gold.

Emalia is a poised, humble young woman at 18, who is regarded as the best high school goalie in the nation. Her Punahou water polo team has never lost a game since she began playing water polo in the seventh grade. This is an amazing record; six years without losing a game! A humble player, she gives all of the credit to her Punahou Coach Ken Smith and

her teammates. That's four ILH championships and four State championships, if you're counting!

At 6-feet tall with a wingspan of 61 inches, Emalia was a favorite of college water polo recruiters. She'll be heading to Stanford University in the fall where she'll major in either human biology or earth systems.

When asked about how she got started playing water polo, Eichelberger said, "My mom's high school classmate played water polo in high school and college. He has twins, a boy and a girl, three years older than (my twin brother) Davis and myself. She started playing water polo, and it looked like fun.

"I used to swim until I was 10 years old with Punahou Aquatics," she said. She saw how much fun her friend had playing water polo and started playing it in the seventh grade.

One of the things that Eichelberger likes best about playing water polo: "I like that I get to be in the water, and that it's a difficult sport, especially as a goalie. It's exciting to watch everyone play."

Coach Smith spoke about her in a recent article in the *Star-Advertiser*, "Lots of players have the physical talent, but it's the way she approaches everything mentally. She's mentally tough

and committed to being the best she can be and she's always been that way. She's never wavered in her commitment to improving. She'll be able to play at the next level because of it. She's regarded as probably the No. 1 (high school) goalie in the nation."

Before she heads to Stanford, she will rejoin her Club team, Rose Bowl Water Polo Club in Pasadena, California as she has for the past five years and travel to Camogli, Italy for three weeks to train with a professional water polo team.

When she's not in the pool, she also likes paddling, being in the ocean, sunbathing and horseback riding. She said that she initially was interested in horseback riding because her grandmother used to ride horses and was a really talented rider who used to ride across from the current Outrigger Canoe Club in Kapiolani Park.

So Emalia and her brother Davis started riding as well, and attended Summer Camp for western horseback riding for five years in Wyoming.

Besides playing water polo and paddling, her other passions include helping special needs children. She volunteers and did her Senior Capstone project on therapeutic horseback programs that teach special needs children how to ride and care for their horses at Therapeutic Horsemanship Hawaii in

Waimanalo.

When asked about her future after Stanford, Eichelberger said, "Definitely working out and playing water polo. I hope to make the Olympic team for the 2020 Olympics." One of the reasons she selected Stanford over her other offers (UC Berkeley and UC Los Angeles) was because she likes that Stanford is not "water polo-centric." They expect her to be well-rounded and not just a water polo player.

"For example, for my freshman year, we are not allowed to room with other athletes," she added. She also selected Stanford because she feels comfortable there, and attending the school is a family tradition.

One of her favorite memories during her high school years is winning the State Paddling Championships on Maui in 2015. "We swept all the categories – Girls, Boys and Mixed Varsity! It was really exciting because I raced in the Girls and Mixed races."

As she graduates and leaves for the summer and college, we wish her Bon Voyage and Good Luck! As she attempts to join other OCC members who played on USA Olympic water polo teams, including Duke Kahanamoku, Frank Walton and Chris Duplanty, we'll be following her career at Stanford and looking forward to cheering her and Team USA on at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo!