Escondido High Swimmer Riley Baldwin Participate in ISF Gymnasiade in France

Escondido, CA - Escondido High Junior Riley Baldwin was one of 24 swimmers from across the United States who recently traveled to Normandy, France to compete in the 19th ISF Gymnasiade Normandy 2022. The International Sports Federation (ISF) Gymnasiade is the largest international sporting event held for high school students. It has taken place every two years since 1974. This event is like a mini-Olympics, held two years before the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics. She was the only swimmer selected from California.

Riley has been swimming since she was seven years old. When she told her parents she wanted to quit gymnastics, her parents asked her what other sport she was interested in. She selected swimming since she’d always enjoyed being in the water.

“I’ve always enjoyed the way my body feels in the water,” said Riley.

She swims with her club team, Renegade Aquatics, year-round and has been on the Escondido High swim team since her freshman year. During her freshman year, she became affiliated with Speedo as a Speedo Ambassador. While her contract with them does not include dollars, she receives merchandise packages from them monthly and participates in Speedo sponsored events, including beach clean ups and leadership events with other world-class and Olympic athletes.

Her coach at Renegade Aquatics encouraged Riley to apply for the AAU National Team and represent the US at the Gymnasiade. She had never heard of it and was able to qualify based on her previous times. At the Gymnasiade, she swam the 400-meter freestyle, 200-meter
individual medley, 400-meter individual medley, 200-meter freestyle, 200-meter butterfly, 50-meter butterfly, and participated in a few relays.

“I had the most events on the girls swim team,” said Riley. “Everyone else was a specialist. I can do everything except for the backstroke.”

She was happy to place in the top 10 for 200-meter freestyle, 400-meter freestyle, and 200-meter individual medley.

“This was the best trip of my life,” said Riley.

In addition to the competition aspects, the group was able to socialize with athletes from other countries and enjoy cultural exchanges, including a cultural night, nations nights, an opening ceremony, and many shared meals with athletes from around the world. She is already planning a reunion trip with two other US swimmers, and the entire team is hopeful about competing together once again at the next Gymnasiade, which will be held in China.

“My favorite part of the event was being able to see all the different competitions and meeting so many different people,” said Riley. “It was very eye opening in the sense that I got to meet people from countries I had never even heard of.”

In total, there were 3,662 student athletes representing 69 countries registered to compete at the Gymnasiade, which took place May 14-22. She was one of 76 US athletes. Riley traveled with her parents, including her father, Paul Baldwin, a physical education teacher at Escondido High who helps her work out in the weight room.

She said being able to participate also made her like swimming even more in a way.

“Being at this competition made me see that there are so many opportunities I can have with sports, and all because I swim in a pool every day. I want to take advantage of everything I can through swimming.”

This summer she is planning on being in the water a lot. She’ll practice two times a day and hopes to fit in some time to surf, as well as go out to eat Mexican food with her friends. She’ll spend part of the summer connecting with college coaches. She has her eye on University of California, Santa Barbara and Florida International. In addition to swimming, Riley takes her studies seriously and finished the year with a 4.1 GPA. She’ll begin the next school year as a senior at Escondido High, representing her classmates as the Associated Student Body senior class president.

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The Escondido Union High School District has empowered students to graduate prepared for college, career, and life through excellence in learning for more than 125 years. The district serves more than 7,000 students across five high schools including: Escondido, Orange Glen, and San Pasqual, Del Lago Academy and Valley; as well as the Escondido Adult School. More than 900 staff members are employed by Escondido Union High School District, which offers more than 180 courses, including nationally recognized Advanced Placement courses, College & Career Technical Education, Independent Study, after school enrichment, career exploration, STEM opportunities, and more.