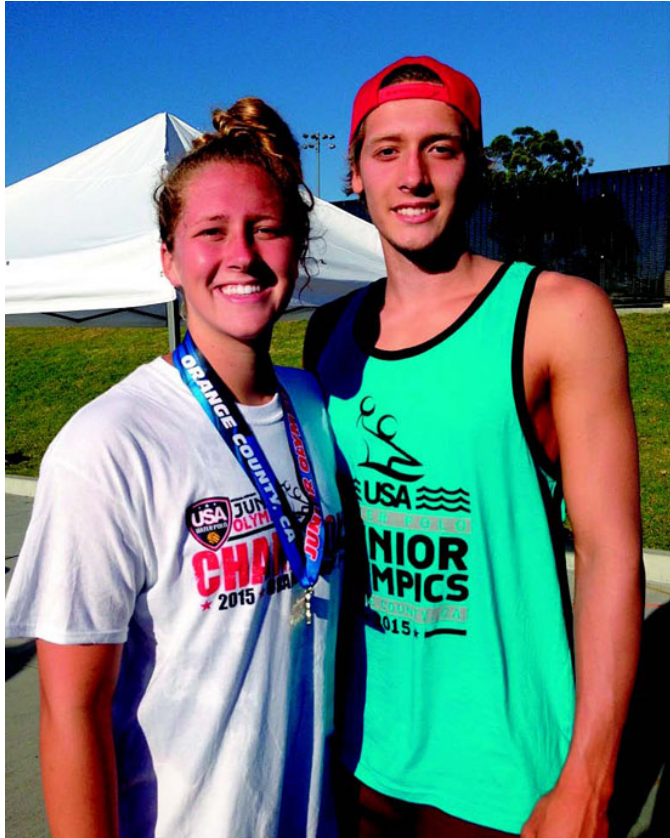


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Twin Goalies 'Tagg Team' Club Sports, Now College

By Emily Dugdale



Madison and Spencer Tagg Photo provided

Few people have a twin sibling. Even fewer have a twin sibling who is also an elite athlete. For Madison and Spencer Tagg, it's a well-earned reality. The twin goalies and recent Campolindo grads will head to Cal this fall to play for one of the nation's best collegiate water polo programs.

The lanky, tanned twins may look like typical California 17-year-olds, but their sun-bleached hair attests to long hours spent in the pool, hours that have turned them into some of the most powerful forces in the cage. Yet out of the water, they're just like any teenager about to leave the comforts of home - energetic, slightly awkward, and ready for the excitement of college.

After a friend introduced her to the sport in sixth grade, Madison quickly fell in love with water polo, and by high school she had dedicated herself to the sport. Her brother, Spencer, followed suit in eighth grade after seeing how successful she had become. Both preferred goalie to field positions, a preference found individually when they were rotated into goal during a typical practice drill.

"I still remember to this day - my coach said, we don't have a goalie so let's rotate in. I made some really good blocks, and he was like, 'Well, we have a goalie here,'" Madison said.

Spencer, who disliked the rough nature of field positions, described a similar experience with his team. "And then they saw how big my dad was, and they were like, yep - goalie material." Spencer, now 6 feet 5 inches, barely towers over his 6-foot twin sister.

They've taken home NCS titles at Campolindo and led their club team, the 680 Drivers, to unprecedented success over the years.

Recently, the Driver men turned in a sixth place finish at the Junior Olympics, a performance Spencer marked as one of the team's best.

"[Spencer is] a big game player that works as hard if not harder than every guy in the pool," said 680 boys 18U Head Coach Miles Price. "I can easily say he's the best goalie I've ever coached."

The Lady Drivers netted first place at the JO's and, to Madison's surprise, she clinched MVP honors. When Madison's name was called, her team members swarmed around to congratulate her.

"I was really surprised when they called my name. I was like, uh, I didn't make that many blocks in the championship game!" Madison said, laughing. "But I liked how my teammates backed me up - they're really supportive."

Driver's Head Coach Jessica Cima called Madison the "backbone" of the team.

During the summer, the Taggs also swim for Orinda Park Pool in the OMPA summer league. At the OMPA Championship Meet this month, the twins garnered a bundle of top finishes. Spencer was the meet's third highest individual points recipient in the boys 15-18 age group with 66 points and a win in the 50 fly. Madison came in second place in individual points with 64 points, and her 15-18 medley relay broke a meet record from 2004.

"I thought the scoreboard was broken!" Madison said of her relay's record. "We just wanted to

win."

The pair did not compete at the recent Contra Costa County Meet, citing busy schedules in preparation for the upcoming college school year. Spencer is underway with Cal's "Hell Week," doing two-a-day practices in preparation for the beginning of Cal men's water polo season.

Two top athletes living under one roof might provoke intense sibling rivalry, but their coaches mostly disagree.

"Madison and Spencer have this sort of constant support for each other, and the fact that they play the same position and yet they're still so happy for each other when they do well is really special," Cimas said of the twins. "It's just pure support."

"His sister still throws better outlet passes than him, though!" said Price.

All eyes are now turned toward how these siblings will stack up in their next big life challenge: college.

The support of the surrounding community made a big difference when considering which college to attend this fall, they both agree. "There were a lot of parents who came up to me and congratulated me on Cal," Spencer said. "They said, 'you'll love it there.'"

"I think college is going to be great for them," Coach Cimas said. "Who knows what's going to happen for Cal Water Polo in the next few years?"

The pair seemed excited and nervous to start their freshman year at Cal, not only a top-ranked water polo powerhouse but also a prestigious academic institution.

"People are telling me you have to be really prepared to balance school and water polo," Madison explained. "I'm prepared for it, but I also feel like once I get there I'm going to have to sit down and just study so hard to stay on top."

It's fair to say that based on their reputation in this town, these twins won't do anything less than hit the ground running.

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