

LAMORINDA SPORTS

Acalanes Grad to Row at Second Olympics Games

By Karl Buscheck



Two-time Olympian and Lafayette native Anthony Fahden. Photos provided

When Dana Hooper first met Anthony Fahden back in 2002, he would never guessed that the young rower would go on to become a two-time Olympian.

"One of the things that kind of stood out about him as a junior rower (was that) I don't think I would have ever said that he was going to go to the Olympics," said Hooper who is the managing director of the Oakland Strokes.

Fahden grew up in Lafayette and began rowing for the East Bay powerhouse back in 2001 when he was a sophomore at Acalanes. Hooper started coaching Fahden, who's now in the midst of making his final preparations for his second Olympic games.

"In hindsight, all the personality traits were there that allowed it to happen," Hooper said. "He was always just very straightforward. He came in (and) there was no drama. He came in and did his work. (He was) just super solid and very personally motivated to do well."

"In hindsight, it seems like something that could definitely happen," Hooper added with a laugh.

Once he started coaching Fahden, it didn't take Hooper long to realize that he was working with a uniquely gifted athlete.

"I pretty quickly identified him as someone who had the talent to step into the varsity boat, which he did as a junior," Hooper said. "But I think it was really during his senior year that I saw him as kind of a special kid and someone who was going to lead the boat and just drive it for-

ward."

Now 30, Fahden has been a member of the U.S. Rowing Senior National Team since 2009. He insists his day job is just like anyone else's.

"After a while, it starts to feel just like a normal job," Fahden explained in a phone interview from the team's headquarters in Princeton, New Jersey. "It's pretty much a full-time gig and you're expected to travel with the training group all year (for) every year that you're on the team. In that sense, it's just like any other normal job."

After graduating from Dartmouth in 2008, Fahden spent a year with the under-23 team before earning a promotion to the senior squad in 2009. He made his Olympic debut as a member of the lightweight four boat at the London games in 2012.

As Fahden admitted, his boat almost didn't make the cut.

"We just narrowly missed out on qualifying the year before (at the World Championships)," Fahden said. "There was one last chance - a final qualifier in Switzerland the year of the Olympics, just a few months before."

The lightweight four ended up making the grade, but Fahden described the last-minute qualification as far from an ideal ticket to London.

"That's typically not the way you want to do it," Fahden said. "You end up spending the whole year training - not sure if you're going to be to go and compete in your country's boat. And we were lucky enough to qualify and earn the right to go."

After placing eighth in 2012,

Fahden enters his second Olympic go-around with the mindset of a true veteran of the sports grandest stage.

"Honestly, it's not that dissimilar from just the World Championships, which is obviously a big event itself," said Fahden of the preparation process.

The Strokes alum has rowed in the World Championships on five occasions.

"Your competition is the same. These are people you see every year. The distance is the same," Fahden said. "The only real difference is that there's a lot of pomp. There's a lot of media presence. So, there's more attention. But as far as the actual competition, it's really not that different."

Fahden deflected when asked to share his objective for his business trip to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

"The goal - we actually don't talk about the result we're hoping to get," Fahden said. "I mean, certainly we're hoping better than last time. But when we're talking about just our day-to-day rowing, the content of the conversation is mostly just about improvement."

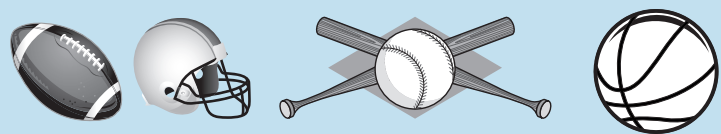
With the games set to begin in less than two weeks, Hooper will be among the many family members, friends and supporters back in the Bay Area, watching with a big smile on his face.

"I think the coaches like to see it as a feather in their cap," Hooper said. "But really it's all down to the athlete, it's all down to Anthony. And what he's done is really incredible."



Anthony Fahden on left

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