

LAMORINDA SPORTS

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Acalanes grad Jewel Roemer making her first appearance with the U.S. Olympic water polo team

By Jon Kingdon



Photo provided
Maggie Steffens with Jewel Roemer earlier in their careers.

Water polo in the Bay Area and in Lamorinda specifically has made great strides, going back to when Heather Petrie had to play on the boys' water polo team at Miramonte in the early 1990's, ultimately competing in four Olympics (2000, 2004, 2008, 2112). Petrie set the standard for players like Maggie Steffens (Monte Vista H.S.) who is now competing in her fourth Olympics (2012, 2016, 2020, 2024). Acalanes alum and upcoming Stanford senior, Jewel Roemer, on her first Olympics team, stands ready to accept the baton from Steffens and carry

the standard for water polo excellence in the East Bay. Roemer is a three time (2021-2023) All-American at Stanford, two-time NCAA champion, three-time first team All-American (2018-2020) at Acalanes with two NCS championships, and a two-time Junior Olympics MVP with the 680 Water Polo Club. Jewel's father, John Roemer is the current Head Coach of the Miramonte girls water polo team, which has won the last three NorCal Championships with a composite won-loss record of 83-2. In 2022, Roemer

was named the best girls' water polo coach in the country by MaxPreps. It all began for Jewel when she was seven – though it was not love at first sight, getting splashed and pushed under the water. "My dad supported me every single day at practice, just trying to make me as happy as I could be while I was there," Jewel said. John did more than attend the practices. "Jewel wouldn't get into the water for practice unless I got into the pool as well which in the end helped her development because I was able to correct little things that I wouldn't have noticed outside of the pool." When she reached the age of ten, Jewel began to stand out in the water. "I started to be more dominant with the ten and under coed teams, outplaying the boys at times and that was a confidence booster. I would also play with the fourteens and even with eighteen-year-olds and would get beat up with all the older girls so coming back to my own age group also gave me a lot more confidence." There was a bit of a hazing process in going against the older girls. When Jewel was ten, she went to Italy with a team of high school girls,



Photo USA Water Polo/Catharyn Hayne

coached by Maureen O'Toole, a great player in her own right, to practice with the team. "Mo put her in a game, which I had not anticipated," John said. "A much older opponent held Jewel underwater for about ten seconds and Jewel came up and elbowed her in the ear guard. After that they were much nicer to her because they respected her for fighting back." "That was a scary moment for me," Jewel said. "I was thirteen when I took my first international trip and then was invited to play on some national teams. At 14, I played with the 14 and 16 and under teams

at the junior Olympics and I was able to contribute with every age group. That's probably when I felt that I can do this, and I determined that I wanted to be the best that I could be." Jewel has three older brothers, the youngest of them 14 years older than Jewel. None of them were water polo players, but they did play rugby and basketball. "I tried to get them to play water polo, but they were land animals," John said. Still, they engendered a love of sport for Jewel: "I grew up watching them play basketball in high school, college, and after that and I really enjoyed it. They had

a good perspective and mindset which they shared with me that I didn't really appreciate until I started playing at a higher level." Growing up, she was more than just a water polo player. "Jewel was a very good softball player and played CYO basketball through the eighth grade at St. Catherines, winning the diocese every year, and even played the baritone sax in the band at Acalanes," John said. "I did have fun doing other things," Jewel said. "I grew up watching my dad coach as well and water polo just clicked for me." ... continued on Page 12

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