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Published October 3rd, 2018

Acalanes shortstop spends summer on Great Britain Women's National Under 19 Softball Team

By Jon Kingdon

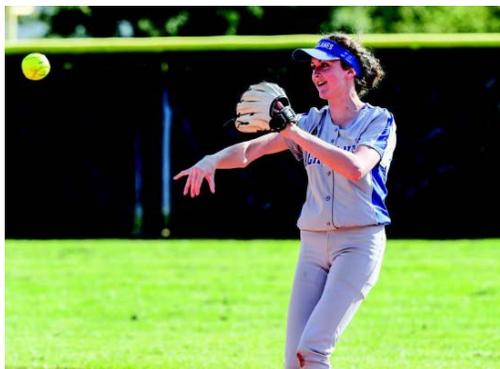


Photo Gint Federas

If you asked Acalanes sophomore Morgan Salmon "What did you do this summer?" you had best leave more than a few minutes to hear all that she experienced.

From July 5-22, Salmon played on the Great Britain Women's National Under 19 Softball Team. Since Salmon's father, Tom, was born in the United Kingdom, this provided Salmon with dual-citizenship.

Salmon's mother, Nicole, was a soccer player and Tom was a basketball player but Morgan's first love was softball, which she began playing at the age of 5 with the Pleasant Hill Baseball Association and has been playing continuously as she enters her sophomore year in high school. Salmon also spends time as a swim coach for the Lamorinda Youth Association.

Softball is just beginning to become a major sport in England, says Salmon. "It's nowhere the level that it is in the United States but it is very competitive. Still, the majority of the players on the team were Americans and we had only 3-4 British players." Salmon was the youngest player on the team, which consisted of active and committed college players from schools like Yale and UCLA.

Robbie Robison, the head coach of the British team, is from England, however all of the assistant coaches were Americans. Salmon appreciated the opportunity to work under different coaches: "I would say that every coach in softball is different in the ways that they teach the game and it was a cool experience. Our head coach did a good job, but he wasn't as tough as the American coaches."

Salmon played in 16 games overall against teams from the Netherlands, France, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Israel, Egypt, Nigeria and the Czech Republic, playing in England and climaxing with the final tournament in Starazano, Italy. "We did well, finishing sixth overall," said Salmon

It was more than just softball for Salmon: "It was a life changing experience. My social skills increased living abroad and talking to so many different people about their experiences, enabling me to connect to the rest of the world."

It was Salmon's mother who discovered that the British team was looking for eligible players from outside England. It was not the typical tryout to make the team, says Salmon: "I was asked to send them a video tape of me doing various softball skills from which they analyzed my hitting and fielding mechanics along with my strength and conditioning." Salmon was chosen from over 500 applicants for one of the 20 spots on the team.

Of softball, Salmon says: "When you find something that you love and never want to not do it, it keeps you working and practicing. You just can't let it go. I really enjoy the speed and the intensity of the game."

Besides playing, Salmon is also a junior coach for the LMYA softball team because "I want to give back to the sport."

Salmon, who plays shortstop, has also played at various times for two club teams - Batbusters out of Stockton and the Suncats out of Gilroy and batted .600 last season as a freshman for Acalanes. Stepping in as a starter for Acalanes was a positive experience for Salmon: "The upperclassmen really welcomed me. It's a great experience playing with the team."

Acalanes head coach Victor Silva speaks glowingly of Salmon's talent and attitude: "As the season progressed, Morgan took over becoming the leader of the team. She was chosen all-league last season. She has the five tools to be a great player - hitting, hitting with power, throwing, fielding and running. Nobody works harder than Morgan. She takes ground ball after ground ball and will hit about 150 balls. The upperclassmen saw how much she cared about the game and came to accept her. Morgan could be a great player in any sport and just recently had a growth spurt to 5'10" and has kept her coordination. Not to mention that she is also a straight-A honor roll student."

Salmon appreciates the help that she has received from her head coach: "He is amazing, the most beneficial coach I have ever had. He has been helping me since I was in the sixth grade, taking me to

fielding and batting lessons. He has always been there for me and has been a constant help for me."

Besides Silva, Salmon cites three other coaches from her club teams: "Shawn Ching, who has helped be with my batting, Dave Gutierrez and James Jimenez, who have helped me with getting my name out to various colleges, though they can not contact me until my junior year."

Salmon has participated in various softball camps at Utah State, Iowa State and Clemson, which has provided her with a great deal of exposure to the Division I schools. Until then, the Acalanes Dons softball team will be the beneficiary of Salmon's talents.

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