

MEET

Tiana Sumanasekera will compete in the U.S. Gymnastics Championships in San Jose.

Olympic Dreams

A Pleasanton teen gymnast has her sights set on Paris in 2024.

BY LEEANNE JONES



When she steps onto the floor at the U.S. Gymnastics Championships—hosted this month at San Jose’s SAP Center—Tiana Sumanasekera will be cheered on by a proud hometown crowd. The 15-year-old from Pleasanton is on a red-hot rise as a first-year senior elite competitor, winning the all-around title at the Pan American Championships and landing in contention for the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris.

“The Olympics is a dream,” says Sumanasekera. “I know making the five-person team is very difficult. So I’m just going to take it step-by-step and enjoy all the experiences I get.”

Her career began, delightfully, at a kids’ birthday party. Then 6 years old, Sumanasekera was flipping high on a

trampoline and caught the eye of a coach, who encouraged her parents to enroll her in classes. She walked on to the level-three team at Pleasanton’s West Coast Olympic Gymnastics Academy.

As Sumanasekera rose quickly through the 10 levels of developmental gymnastics, she won the NorCal State Championships five times in a row and qualified at age 10 for Hopes, an intensive USA Gymnastics program that identifies young athletes with potential and provides them with special training and competition opportunities.

For her senior elite start in 2023, Sumanasekera made her biggest move: She is now training in Texas under coaches Laurent and Cecile Landi, the duo who led Simone Biles to seven Olympic medals.

“Training with amazing athletes like Simone Biles and Jordan Chiles is so cool and surreal,” says Sumanasekera. “They’re very supportive, and we make each other better gymnasts, athletes, everything.”

While she spends a lot of time away from her Pleasanton home, Sumanasekera says her parents never miss a competition. She can’t wait for the San Jose championships, where she’ll show off her new *Aladdin*-themed floor routine and a double-twisting double-backflip tumbling pass.

“I’ve been waiting for so long,” she says. “The last time an elite [gymnastics] competition was held in California was the 2016 Olympic trials, where I was in the crowd watching, and now I’m going to be competing. I’m just so beyond excited!”