

On the Field of Her Dreams

Taylor McQuillin's jet-black hair is braided into a long ponytail and secured with a red ribbon tightly on her head. She squinted on the field as she looked at her catcher from the pitcher's mound.

Standing calm and collected, she thought hard about the next ball she would hurl at the batter. Without even giving a signal, her catcher knew exactly what pitch was coming next.

Softball seemed like a far-fetched dream that would never be possible. McQuillin never thought she would break records, be one of the most highly regarded recruits in Arizona history during high school, play on college's biggest field or be in the Olympics.

Ever since McQuillin was a little girl, her life revolved around softball. From overcoming an eye disorder to now playing her dream sport as an Olympian representing Mexico in the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, McQuillin is unstoppable, just like the softballs she pitches.

McQuillin has Duane Syndrome, an eye movement disorder that limits mobility to move the eye to look inwards and outwards and causing her to be legally blind in her left eye.

McQuillin's parents were quick to put her in many different sports to see which one would stick. She fell in love with softball.



“They wanted to see what I could do, what I couldn’t do, so we kind of started going after a whole bunch of different sports. I started playing softball when I was seven and then started itching when I was nine or 10,” McQuillin said. “From then on I just kind of knew...this is what I want to do.”

Her eye disability never once slowed her down. Once she found softball, McQuillin couldn’t be stopped. She had goals to achieve and records to break. During her high school softball days at Mission Viejo High School in California, McQuillin was a force to be reckoned with.

Her powerful pitching arm is well known by other softball players. She is a four-year letterwinner at Mission Viejo High School under Troy Ybarra and Toni Mascarenas and was named Gatorade National Player of the Year in 2014, USA Today Sports, OC Sideline, OC Varsity, Cal-Hi, Max Preps and Flo Softball All-American.

She is also a lefty, something many softball and baseball players fear. She led her high school team to a No. 1 national ranking spot with a 25-1 record, the same year she was named Gatorade National Player of the Year, her junior year of high school.

She also played on a travel ball team known as the Orange County Batbusters, which she led to back to back national championships.

“She was just a dominant force in travel ball and high school, just spun the ball extremely well. A lot of times kids will throw hard but Taylor, really I think was masterful at commanding her pitches,” said Mike Candrea, the head softball coach at the University of Arizona.

When it was time to think about college and where to play, her original choice was to commit to Oklahoma State University.

“As it got close to her going to school, [she] kind of decided that she wanted to make a change and be closer to her mom and dad,” Candrea said. “The family kind of helped us get Taylor to Arizona.”

McQuillin is described as knowing what she wants out of the game and doing everything she can to get what she wants when playing.

“She is very much a leader that likes to take charge, she’s very vocal. She will be the first person to compliment you when you do something great and the first person to let you know, maybe you messed, but she still has your back, but she’s going to let you know,” said Taryne Mowatt, the pitching coach for the UA softball team.

Once getting to UA, McQuillin was quickly immersed into the collegiate-athlete life. She would wake up, go to class and then went immediately to softball practice in the afternoons.

“My first year was a little rough...just finding my confidence and being able to perform to the best of my abilities but because of the coaches I only got stronger every year,” McQuillin said. “My teammates helped a lot with that too, just being able to rely on a strong team.”

McQuillin had no worries about playing with strangers or meeting new people her freshman year at UA. She had childhood friends who were also recruited to play softball at UA alongside her.

Dejah Mulipola, a senior at UA and catcher for the UA softball team who is also an Olympian representing USA, grew up playing with McQuillin in California. They played on the same travel ball team and their parents were good friends.

“She was very direct and she always knew what she wanted to do as a pitcher on the mound, so me being the younger catcher...we kind of worked well out on the field together,” Mulipola said. “She was a big leader on the team, I know I always looked to her. She was a big force on the team.”

With friends on and off the field, McQuillin set major goals for herself and for her team. She was a leader among her teammates, showing them how to really play your best on the field and at a level that no other team could beat.

McQuillin soaked in every word and advice from her coaches daily ever since her freshman year so she could play at her best at every game.

Senior year is where she really shined when she led her team to the 2019 Women’s College World Series last spring.

“Taking a trip back to the WCWS last year...I think we were in a 10-year drought, so being able to go back and being the team to get us back to the World Series was super exciting,” McQuillin said. “For us...our senior class, it was something we had been working for since we got there.”



The lady Wildcats would not take a WCWS title home, but that wasn’t the end for McQuillin and her softball legacy. She would go on to be selected sixth in the Nation Pro Fastpitch Draft by the Cleveland Comets, a professional softball team with ties to the Mexico Women’s National Team.

McQuillin would then go on to live out her Olympic softball dreams that she always imagined as a kid.

“I played for Mexican National Team, this summer was my first year. We went to the Pan-American games in Peru in July,” McQuillin said. “Since I had been playing with the Mexican Team, we had gone to the qualifier, won all the games in the qualifier and earned our worth to Tokyo this summer.”

She will represent team Mexico in the 2020 Olympics in the Tokyo, Japan games.

“My mom’s side of the family is Mexican...I am proud to be a Latina woman and proud of the background I have and the heritage I come from,” McQuillin said. “Being able to represent my family, the country of Mexico, and Latina women throughout the world. All of us on Team Mexico feel honored and privileged to be selected to do so.”

This is the first time since the summer games of 2008 that women’s softball will be featured in the Olympics.

Until her time to play at the Olympics, McQuillin is attending the University of Arkansas and is working on completing her master’s degree in sports management while simultaneously working as a grad assistant with the Arkansas softball team and training with the Mexican Team for Tokyo.

