

Streid ready for life outside the pool

By DJ Barger

At 5-foot-5, Taylor Streid is far from the tallest member of the women's swimming and diving team, but lately her performance has had her standing tall. In a series of meets encompassing five consecutive grueling weekends, Streid has been in top form, placing first a total of 13 times including relay races. While her athletic performance has been exceptional recently, Streid's background is similar to many of her fellow Saint Louis University students.

Streid grew up in the Midwestern town of Peoria, Ill., about three hours northeast of St. Louis. In a family with three siblings, she was the oldest and thus the first to go to college. Despite being within SLU's recruiting reach, she did not hear about it right away.

"SLU wasn't really on my radar, but the coach (Jim Halliburton) emailed me," Streid said. In addition to the attention she received from Coach Halliburton, Streid received mail from other schools, too. Those calendars many prospective students receive from SLU? She received one, too, and though it was a small thing, Streid was impressed with the SLU community without even having visited.

Streid's first campus visit was relatively late in her college decision process, but it was nonetheless effective. She got a chance to see all the picturesque scenes in the calendar and meet her future coach.

"The second I stepped on campus, I knew I was coming [to SLU]," Streid said.

But she couldn't make the decision right then – there were other factors to consider. She had to balance her swimming ambitions with her plans for a future career. Streid and her mother were both excited about SLU because of its physical therapy program. However, her father initially wanted her to enroll in a college with a more prominent swim team. In the end, though, SLU won out, and Streid came to SLU in August of 2009.

The change from a small-town high school environment and a school of 800 students to an urban college was a bit of a shock for Streid. The transition was not just numbers, though. Living away from home was something new as well.

"Being free was huge," Streid said. "You could do whatever you wanted," expressing the sentiments of many a liberated college freshman.

"The swim team had an automatic, built-in family," Streid said of her teammates' camaraderie. This kinship kept her out of trouble, in the pool, and muted the feelings of homesickness.

In addition to the increased academic workload of college, Streid had to deal with the increased athletic workload. Her practices were longer and more numerous than before. During that first year, Streid recalls "always being tired."

With the help of her teammates, Streid learned new study and practice habits that helped her complete the transition to college life and responsibilities. Now, as she approaches the end of her fourth year at SLU, she is handling the ever-increasing demands of the physical therapy program while also excelling in the pool.

Streid's effort of late has been top-notch, making her a standout for the women's team. Still, she says her proudest moment was in last year's Atlantic 10 Conference meet, when she placed second in the 200-yard butterfly. This and her other accomplishments are a testament to her ability to balance training and school.

During weeks without a meet, Streid has some form of practice, training or lifting every day except Saturday. On top

of that, she has clinicals for the physical therapy program from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. every Friday. Some days, she shuttles between practice and clinicals; even so, Streid enjoys the challenge.

“It’s cool being in the real world,” Streid said, speaking about the clinical experience.

As her time as an undergraduate approaches its end, Streid is looking forward to entering the real world permanently and putting her physical therapy degree to good use. After finishing the physical therapy graduate program, she hopes to work with either athletes or kids. She dreams of working in Colorado, her spring break destination of choice, where she could ski during her off hours.

Wherever she ends up, as the popular NCAA commercial goes, Streid will bet “going pro in something other than sports.”