

Bonita Unified

SCHOOL DISTRICT

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Oct. 26, 2023

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Bonita Unified Freshman Diving Prodigy Looks to Become Olympic-Level Athlete

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – San Dimas High School freshman Jacqueline Chen first displayed her diving prowess at nine years old during a trip to Cancun, Mexico with her family. Standing atop a cliff more than 15 feet above the water, Chen showed no fear when she suddenly leapt off, performing a perfect dive. Her parents quickly realized that Chen was a diving prodigy.

Now Chen is preparing to make another huge leap – from high school student to Olympic athlete. After years of participating and medaling in USA Diving Junior Olympic competitions, Chen will travel to the Philippines for the Asian Age Group Championship, to be held from Dec. 3 to 6, trying to stamp her ticket to the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris.

Chen competes with the Arrow Dive Club in El Monte under the guidance of coach Deliang Li, who won a bronze medal for China during the 1988 Seoul Olympics. Chen started competing at an advanced level in 2018 when she qualified for the Junior Olympic 11-and-under age group. Chen's first national experience came in 2019, when she qualified for the USA Diving Junior National Championships.

In 2021, after a successful performance at the USA Diving National Championships, Chen was chosen to participate in the USA Diving High Performance program and represent the nation at the Pan American Junior Diving Championships. This exclusive program comprises the country's top young divers.

Chen's competition performances in 2023 show she is on the precipice of success. At the USA Diving Junior National Championships, Chen earned a bronze medal in the girls synchronized 3-meter springboard, an event she had never attempted until the meet.

"It's not whether you do it, but how you do it," Chen said.

Though Chen has shown marked improvement and advanced rapidly in the USA Diving rankings, she is hoping to become a member of the Taiwan national team – known internationally as Chinese Taipei – because she wants to attend public high school, according to her mother, Miao Liang.

"Most elite USA athletes, including divers, are home-schooled, so that they can stay on a strict practice schedule," Liang said. "Jacqueline wants to have as normal a school life as possible and be with her friends when she can."

At San Dimas High School, Chen plays clarinet in the marching band and enjoys art class. Though diving and band practices take up much of her time, Chen has a challenging road to navigate academically, taking two Honors classes and one Advanced Placement class in her first semester. While San Dimas High does not have a diving team, Chen will represent the school in CIF meets when diving season begins in spring 2024.

MORE

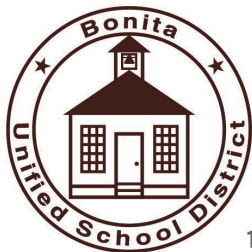


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Chen's toughest competition may not come from her peers at the national or international levels, but from her own family. Chen's younger sister Barbara, a seventh-grader at Lone Hill Middle School, is following in Jacqueline's footsteps. Barbara has competed and medaled in the same USA Diving meets as Jacqueline, and was also selected as a member of the USA Diving High Performance program in 2021.

"Barbara would go with Jacqueline to her practices and one day she made a dive that impressed the coach, so she started diving too," Liang said. "Jacqueline is a few inches taller than Barbara, and we are hoping Barbara can catch up to her in height, so that they can do synchronized diving together. That would be fun for the both of them."

Chen devotes three hours a day to diving practice, taking only Sundays off. From Monday to Thursday, she practices springboard at the El Monte Aquatics Center, and practices platform Fridays and Saturdays at the USC Uytengsu Aquatics Center or Mission Viejo Marguerite Aquatics Complex.

"Jacqueline Chen is a tremendous athlete and a dedicated student. For someone who is competing at such a high level at such a young age, she is very grounded and responsible," San Dimas Assistant Principal Jack Nance said. "We feel that the best is yet to come for Jacqueline, in both competition and academics. We wish her the best of luck in her quest to become an Olympic athlete."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

BUSD_DIVING_CHEN1: San Dimas High School freshman Jacqueline Chen (right) poses with her sister, Lone Hill Middle School seventh grader Barbara Chen, after a successful meet at the USA Junior Diving Championships in Mission Viejo. The pair are among the top young divers in the country. Jacqueline will travel to the Philippines in December for the Asian Age Group Championship, hoping to qualify for the Paris Olympics in 2024 as a member of the Taiwanese national team.

BUSD_DIVING_CHEN2: San Dimas High School freshman Jacqueline Chen performs an inward one and a half somersault pike from 10 meters at the 2023 USA Diving Junior National Championship, a meet where she earned a bronze medal in the girls synchronized 3-meter springboard. Chen, in addition to trying to earn a spot on the 2024 Taiwanese Olympic team, plays clarinet in the San Dimas High marching band and is taking two Honors and one AP course. Chen will represent the school in CIF competition in the spring.

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