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Diving into the local pool always meant competition for Anneliese Hohm. In the 11 years since her first meet, that competition has labeled her as a swimmer.

Her story with swimming began at 7 years old at a local pool in Charlotte, North Carolina. She was only a part of the summer team there. When she broke a pool record for the fastest 25-meter freestyle event, though, she figured it was worth getting to know the sport a bit better.

She put away her soccer cleats and joined a year-round swim team, the Aquatic Team of Mecklenburg. This is where she truly found her passion for swimming.

“I started to really like swimming when I was 13 just because I was getting better and I made a lot of friends, stuff like that,” Anneliese said in an interview. “Once I started making qualification cuts for big meets, that was when I was like, ‘Oh, I’m actually kind of good.’”

Fast forward five years, and she committed to East Carolina University for the swim and dive team early on in her senior year of high school. She was content with her choice until the pandemic changed her plans: The school cut the program completely.

“She was upset, she had her heart set on going to that program,” said Angela Hohm, Anneliese’s mother. “But when they cut the program it just took her a few hours and she started reaching out again because she just wanted to swim.”

Finally, in June 2020, the University of Pittsburgh answered her call and offered Anneliese a spot on their team. The transition was fast, but she and the rest of her family has confirmed that it was worthwhile.

“It was sudden when ECU cut their program,” said Madeline Hohm, Anneliese’s younger sister. “I was a little worried for her at first, but I was excited when she committed to Pittsburgh because I think the conference she’ll swim in is better for her. I was generally just excited for her.”

While the eight-to-nine-hour drive is long and not what the family had expected, Anneliese has found the settling process relatively easy.

“I don't think it's that hard because I'm on the same time zone as my family and friends,” she said. “Since I'm swimming, though, I'm not allowed to go home for Thanksgiving because of COVID, so I don't get to see my family as often as the rest of the student population here would. I wouldn't say it's an easy adjustment, but it definitely wasn't as hard as I thought it would be.”

As for settling into her freshman year, Anneliese has taken a fairly normal path. She has found the classes that both challenge her and discourage her, and she has even switched her major from biology to psychology.

When it comes to being on the swim team during the pandemic, Anneliese has acknowledged that it is very different from normal circumstances, and it is not necessarily for the better.

“We aren't having swim meets, which is the basis of swimming,” she said. “Technically we're not allowed to have them until November 1, and I don't even know if we're going to do them at all. Also, it's hard to be a team and hang out outside of the pool when there are strict COVID restrictions.”

Although she has spent over half her life on a swim team, Anneliese does not see herself going much further when the sport is involved.

“I would like to make NCAAs by the end of my four years, but I think after four years I'm done,” she said. “I want to go to med school.”

Luckily, her family stands by her in this decision.

“I want to encourage her to explore all of the opportunities and options that she has when she's in college,” Angela said. “I want her to find out what it is she really loves so that she can try to make that into work. You just want them to do what they love.”

No matter what she ends up doing with her life after college, Anneliese has found a passion that has helped her form habits that will help her forever.

“I would say that swim is my life,” she said. “If I didn't swim, I would be in a completely different place than I am now. I've met so many friends through swimming and it's helped me learn how to become a leader, and also just a good person in my community.”