



Katey Merksamer of Stouffville signs letter of intent to play for Stetson University.

Volleyball star ready to hit beach at Florida school

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When Katey Merksamer attends university in Florida next year, she anticipates spending a good portion of her time on sand.

The 17-year-old Stouffville resident won't be lying on the beach, relaxing.

Instead, Merksamer will be taking to the sand court to play beach volleyball for Stetson University Hatters women's squad.

A Grade 12 student at St. Brother Andre Catholic High School in Markham where she was top senior female athlete last year, Merksamer recently signed her letter of intent to attend Stetson after entertaining other athletic scholarship offers from schools including Florida Atlantic and Northern Florida.

Merksamer acknowledged it was a tough decision electing to sign her letter of intent to attend Stetson.

She says she took several factors into consideration after visiting the Orlando-area school, which was ranked sixth in the NCAA Division One last year.

"Obviously the weather is a big selling point in playing beach volleyball," she said. "But the campus was beautiful and smaller in size and I felt comfortable with that."

First playing organized indoor volleyball when she was 11 years old, Merksamer's introduction to beach volleyball came just two years later.

"From the moment I got on the beach, I knew it was the game for me," she said. "I love the strategy that's involved in the beach game and my quickness in the sand has always helped me succeed."

Since making her debut in the beach game, Merksamer has progressed her way up the competitive ranks to where she was a member of the 18U Team Ontario beach team last year and had the opportunity to train with some of the best players in the province all summer at Ashbridge's Bay.

As well, the five-foot, eight-inch Merksamer served up a silver medal in the 2015

Ontario championships.

Merksamer was quick to credit a couple of individuals.

They include Daniel Shermer, who Merksamer first became acquainted with as a skills development coach in indoor volleyball with the Markham Stingers.

When Merksamer began playing beach volleyball, Shermer also ran a development program at Camp Robin Hood in neighbouring Markham.

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While at the camp, Shermer took careful note of her passion for the game and helped her get into a recruiting combine in Florida that attracted coaches who were seeking student-athletes. Merksamer calls it her big break.

While working with Shermer, Merksamer was introduced to Daniel Dearing, a member of Canada's national team.

Dearing became Merksamer's personal coach and mentor.

Kristina Hernandez, Stetson University head women's beach volleyball coach, is elated to have Merksamer included as one of six incoming student-athletes to her team next year.

"Katey is smaller but is extremely explosive and quick in the sand," she said in a Stetson University athletic department news release. "This gives her a lot of range and versatility. I look forward to seeing her contribute immediately in our program."

Intending to do her undergraduate work in psychology and hoping to pursue a law degree, Merksamer said she hasn't set her sights too far down the road as to where she hopes her volleyball career might take her.

But in the short term, she will attempt to qualify for international play next year.

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