

High school student ranks at youth Olympics

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PAWHUSKA - Sarah Tolson still can't believe it, even weeks after she returned from the Youth Olympic Games at Singapore.

The 17-year-old Pawhuska High School senior is now ranked ninth in the world in the discus throw as a result of competition held Aug. 21.

And making the honor more fruitful is the fact that she was the only American competing in the discus event.

Tolson had her doubts going into the finals competition. Four days earlier, during preliminary trials, Tolson said she didn't do that well.

But persistence paid off for her, and she managed to throw the 2.2-pound discus 147 feet and 6 inches to grab the ninth-place spot in the finals round.

The first-place finisher, a teenage German, won with a throw of 180 feet, Tolson said.

An avid basketball player, Tolson first got involved in the discus during the fourth grade. When she reached the seventh grade, she was on the track team, where she found herself competing not just in the discus but also the long and high jumps.

Her throwing coach back then, Olivia Chronister, made a deal with her, promising Tolson that if she won meets in the discus, she wouldn't have to compete in the other events.

Tolson made good on that deal.

"I really didn't think I was good in the discus until the ninth grade," Tolson said.

Soon after, she began working with Caleb Seal, a private throwing coach out of Owasso, and it wasn't long before she began taking titles in state and national competitions. She's already won a pair of state titles in the discus.

Last year, she took the top honor in discus at the USA Track and Field Junior Olympics.

Her performance last April at the Youth Olympic trials in Arlington, Texas, gave her the chance to compete in the world Youth Olympic Games at Singapore.

Those olympics, for youths between the ages of 14 and 17, featured more than 3,600 young athletes from 205 countries competing in more than two-dozen events.

Tolson, accompanied by her mother and father, Sheila and Steve Tolson, left for Singapore on Aug. 9.

Tolson said she saw some sights while there, but most of her time was spent in the athletic village that was set up for the athletes in Singapore.

"We're really proud of her and thankful she had the opportunity she had," Sheila Tolson said.

"There's not too many people in a town of 3,800 who get to go to an international event like this," her mother said.

Sarah Tolson said she wants to go to college, and she's hoping she'll win a scholarship.

In the meantime, though, she has her mind set to compete in the discus throw in next year's Pan American Games.

Her biggest dream remains competing at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Brazil.

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Associate Images:



Sarah Tolson, a 17-year-old senior at Pawhuska High School, is now ranked ninth in the world in the discus throw after competing last month in the Youth Olympic Games at Singapore. MANNY GAMALLO / Tulsa World

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