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Family ties: Sisters Louise and Sophie Hansson make a splash for Sweden

By Adrianna Robakowski

When competing at the highest level, athletes rely on their teammates as their support system and family away from home. For Louise Hansson of Sweden and her little sister Sophie, blood relatives are never far away, even on the pool deck.

“We’ve always swam together. We’re both lucky, she’s a breaststroker and I do everything except for breaststroke... which is really nice because we actually don’t compete against each other,” said Louise. “Swimming in relays together is so much fun and it is really comforting just having her here.”

Their father, Lars-Olof Hansson, was also a swimmer and got them both into swimming, along with their younger brother Gustaf. He now coaches their club, Helsingborgs SS in Sweden.

“He wanted his kids to be able to swim all four strokes and we weren’t allowed to quit swimming until we knew how to swim all four of them,” said Louise. “At that point, we were all stuck, so me and my two siblings are all swimmers now.”



Louise Hansson (SWE)

Acting on the advice of their father, doubling as advice from their coach, both of the Hansson sisters are swimming at universities in the U.S. in order to take the next step in their swimming careers.

“My dad was a swimmer when he was younger and he always told us that if there is one thing that he regrets, it was not taking the chance to at least see if [swimming in the U.S.] was at least something he wanted to do,” said Sophie. “So he said if you get the chance you should take it and at least see if it is for you guys.”

Though far from home, both sisters are thriving in collegiate swimming. Sophie just completed her freshman season at North Carolina State University, where she earned two bronze medals at the NCAA championships and was honored as the 2019 Atlantic Coast Conference Women’s Freshman of the Year. Lousie finished her junior year as a captain of the University of Southern California swim team, where she swam the fastest 100-meter butterfly in NCAA history at 49.26.

They hope their brother will join them in the U.S. to continue his education and swim in college, and eventually for Sweden on the international stage.

Watching the women’s 4x100 freestyle relay, the Hansson parents get to watch both of their daughters swim for their country in the same race.

“My parents are back home now and they are up in the middle of the night just watching us so it is really nice to have such a supporting family around us,” said Sophie.

For the Hansson sisters, the support and comfort they get from having each other is a constant in the world of competitive swimming, where ups and downs are unavoidable.

“It’s fun to have her here and it’s comforting,” said Louise. “If it’s a stressful situation or anything, you always know you have you sister.”
