

Hemburrow finds her way into NCAA's top division in swimming



By Jake Courtepatte

Laura Hemburrow had to wade through dozens of suitors to find the right school for her in the NCAA's Division I program.

Pardon the pun, but it is pretty impressive.

The Aurora swimmer officially signed her letter of intent last Wednesday to hit the pool for the New Mexico State Aggies in September, one of the top schools in American college swimming.

"In March and April, she was up to around thirty schools looking at her," said Hemburrow's mother Tanya. "By around mid-summer Lauren narrowed it down to about ten."

Though receiving offers from some of the most prolific schools in the NCAA, it was a combination of the academics, the team vibe, and the team's head coach after meeting them during a recruiting trip that brought Hemburrow to her decision.

"I just had that feeling, like I just wanted to go there, as soon as I got on campus," said Hemburrow. "I still had more recruiting trips lined up but I knew this was the place."

An all-girls swimming team, a rarity in college sports, was a drawing point for Hemburrow.

"You get more focus on you and your team with an all-girls team, it just seemed like a good fit," said Hemburrow.

With aspirations of Olympic swimming in her future sights, it was also the nationality of the coach that really caught Hemburrow's eye: like her, and few others in the top division of American college athletics, he is a Canadian.

"That was one of the [dealmakers]," said Tanya. "When I got the call, and (Lauren) was like 'mom, the coach is Canadian.'"

Coach Rick Pratt's nationality seems to have sparked interest in a number of people, with a handful of Canadians on the New Mexico State swim team.

"Something like going to Canadian trials may not be possible with other schools in Division I, but I think because the coach is Canadian, if I can make Canadian trials every year it might be something they can help out with," said Hemburrow.

"Some universities don't take their international students to their individual trials, it's just based off of the US trials, but he's one of the few in the universities that would show interest."

Hemburrow is looking forward to the high-tech equipment, both in the weight room and in the state-of-the-art 50-metre pool on campus, to achieve her dreams of one day making Olympic trials.

She grew up swimming with the Newmarket Stingrays.