

ENGLAND'S TOP-TWENTY

Splashing throughout the continents

Sophomore Alexander Eland has gone from country to country sailing through the water

Isabella Verette
Senior Editor-in-Chief

Gliding through the water and making a splash on his way through the continents, freshman Alexander Eland made the move to the United States four months ago.

"I lived in South Africa until around the age of nine," Eland said. "We lived in a small town called East London that was on the south coast of the country."

Growing up in East London, on the southern coast of South Africa, Eland made lots of memories and a connection with the water.

"While South Africa is one of the most dangerous countries in the world I think it beautiful," Eland said. "The scenery and the natural beauty. It's just absolutely amazing."

Eland started swimming from a young age and enjoyed the water.

"I didn't compete much while in South Africa," Eland said. "I was in some meets but nothing very serious."

The fondness that Eland holds for East London and South Africa as a whole remained even after he moved to England when he was nine.

"We moved to London right before Covid," Eland said. "There just weren't enough job opportunities in South Africa at the time, so we moved to England for more opportunities."

While more opportunities arose for the family as a whole there was a cultural adjustment once they arrived in Barmouth, a small town on the southern coast of Wales.

"The culture is really different there than in South Africa," Eland said. "It can be quite grumpy sometimes there, but eventually I connected to the place and the people and I really enjoyed my time there."

Once Eland got to England and adjusted to the new environment, his love for swimming grew and he started to take the sport more seriously.

"I didn't start to take swimming that seriously until around three years ago," Eland said. "I had been competing for a while but I started to win county championships and was in the top-10 for most races in the region."

Other than basic local awards Eland reached recognition in the United Kingdom as a whole.

"I'm not sure exactly where I would be ranked right now, now that I'm in the United States," Eland said. "But I was ranked around 20th in the country when I was in England."

Eland, who moved here when his sister decided to go to college at the University Houston four months ago, is excited to be part of the Bowie community.

"I think it's the best and nicest school I've ever been to," Eland said. "There is a crazy gym and



MAKING A SPLASH: Bulldog swim team starts practices at Circle C pool for the upcoming season. Bowie Swimmer splashes into action, racing through the water. **PHOTO BY** Will Olenick

weight room and equipment that I can use that I didn't have access to before."

While being used to being close to the coast all of his life, Austin has been a nice change.

"While it's a change it's not that big," Eland said. "Austin has a lot of really cool rivers and lakes."

Eland also continued his swimming journey soon after he arrived in the United States. Junior Alexa Sanders, knows him from not only the Bowie's swim team but also their club team Whitecaps of Westlake.

"I saw him first over the summer but our team was really big and it was crazy getting everyone in lanes," Sanders said. "When all the college kids left to go to their respective schools that's when I to know and meet him."

Eland not only is a skilled and talented swimmer but also extremely friendly and social.

"The first time I met him he was in my lane and he immediately sparked up a conversation," Sanders said. "He was bubbly and friendly, and it was

really fun getting to talk and swim with him that day."

Once the school year started Eland jumped from club practice with Sanders to school practice.

"I think he'll be a great addition to the team," Sanders said. "I've seen him at practices and he has a really strong work ethic so I think he'll be great for the team."

Since swim practice has started Eland's efforts haven't gone on notice by his new teammates.

"Alex being only a freshman is absolutely insane to me," senior co-swim team captain Noah Ellinger said. "He is very diligent and his form and speed are incredible for his age."

Eland's positive energy and spirit are something that shine through at practice.

"I think Alex brings nothing but

diversity and an overall positive attitude to the team," Ellinger said. "He's a great guy and he's going places."

Sanders and Ellinger aren't the only ones who share this sentiment about Eland his other teammates see the same things.

"Alex always shows up to practice with 100 percent effort and with a good attitude," senior swim team member Avery Archer said. "He never complains about the sets and is always determined to be better. His work ethic is admirable and I think he is an amazing addition to this team."

With his strong work ethic and talent Eland is ecstatic to be part of a great team, and compete with the bulldog swim and dive team.

"It feels more like a team than teams I've been on, in the past," Eland said. "Instead of just working for yourself it feels like a community." ■

SAY CHEESE: Eland poses with former team-mate in Wales after placing in his events. **PHOTO COURTESY OF** Alexander Eland



WINNER, WINNER: A young Alexander Eland poses with teammate after winning at a swim meet. **PHOTO COURTESY OF** Alexander Eland

DRUM MAJOR

Senior drum major Sophie Thollander makes a bang

Capri Wyatt
Dispatch Reporter

As Friday night lights shine down on the football field, senior Sophie Thollander directs the band through the halftime show with sharp movements of her hands. Being the head drum major for the 2024-25 school year means that the entire band is watching Thollander.

"After we perform it makes me so happy to hear the cheers," Thollander said. "Especially the ones I know are from my friends in the stands and on the field."

Thollander is following in her brother's footsteps, Ben Thollander, who was the head drum major during the 2021-2022 band season. She also had another brother, Jacob Thollander, who was a section leader.

"Whenever my brother was drum major, I actually didn't want to be drum major because I saw how much work it was," Thollander said. "And then after he left, my directors were like, oh, you should be a drum major. And then it was more enticing after he left, because I saw the impact that I could have."

Head drum majors in the band are expected to do many different things, ranging from starting rehearsal, getting equipment out, and leading rehearsal alongside the directors. Drum majors are a vital part of the band, and they play a significant role in the overall performance.

"We feel her impact every-day," band teacher Tyler Jacks said. "We can depend on her to tell her what needs to happen in any given situation and she figures out a way to take care of it."

Alongside being the head drum major, Thollander balanc-



SHARP MOVEMENTS : Senior Sophie Thollander keeps the rhythm at half time. With the Bowie bands competition seasons fast approaching drum majors take the spotlight on and off the field. **PHOTOS BY** Chance East (left) and Will Olenick (right)



es a heavy workload with all advanced classes and other in-school commitments that take up a large portion of her time.

"Being drum major is a lot of its own, but with other things, it's very difficult," Thollander said. "But I love it so much that I wouldn't trade it for the world."

To her peers, Thollander is the perfect mix of a kind but hardworking leader. She is able to be a good mentor and friend outside of band rehearsal, while being a leader in rehearsal.

"We'll finish rehearsal, and she'll put on music while we're getting ready before game days, and we'll run around, and we'll dance to Footloose and do the Whip and Nae Nae," junior section leader Fiona Sobosinski said. "But then whenever rehearsal starts, or whenever a performance starts, you can tell she's focused."

Though Thollander has had previous family members in leadership positions on the band, her determination and talent is what got her the position

of drum major.

"I don't think in our process of selecting her as drum major, we were ever like, thinking about her brother and like, oh, it would be great to have this legacy situation," Jacks said. "I think it was really just you're doing all the things that we would want to see you doing, and that kind of checks out."

Making sure that everyone in the band is on the same page is a very important job that Thollander has, and it ensures that everything runs smoothly during football games and rehearsals.

"My biggest strength is probably my ability to communicate, because that is really important with communicating with your other drum majors, your directors, and the people that you're leading," Thollander said. "Just to make sure that everyone's pushing for the same goals."

Though being a drum major is not an easy feat, Thollander describes it as a rewarding and fulfilling experience that she will never forget.

"This experience has shaped me into the person I am," Thollander said. "I have learned how to be confident, empathetic, and hard working, and it has truly made me into the best version of myself." ■

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