

Sierra Kondo | Maryland Gymnastics

Hi my name is Sierra Kondo I go to the University of Maryland I do gymnastics and I'm going to be a senior this year So I was very lucky during club gymnastics in high school I had great coaches that always made sure that I was having fun and really loving the sport One coach that was a main coach of mine she was like my second mom and she would always remind me that the The main reason that I'm doing gymnastics is to have fun and that I love it And that really has taken me a long way And that's the main reason that I'm still doing it today What I believe gave me an advantage over the competition is always taking that one extra turn that I might not wanted to have taken that day or the Workout that I didn't want to do just continuing to push myself And I find that it's always the things the hard things that you are hesitant to do are the things that make you grow the most and push you the most to be your best self Growing up in high school I did face a ton of challenges The biggest challenge that I faced was a mental block So it was actually on my best event which is bars I went through a time where I did not know where I was in the air and I could not do any skill that I was supposed to perform And that was my biggest challenge in getting through it because I could try as hard as I could and it still wouldn't have made me successful with the skill But the best way that I overcame it was to just trust the process and remain positive through all even if one turn didn't go my way or if I was having a bad day just not get too hard on myself because that really takes a toll on my mental health but continuing to push through it and knowing that giving my best effort that day was going to take me where I needed to go and that's what helped me overcome it I think the best advice to give on how to manage your mental health is to Use your resources I have been fortunate enough that we have a sports psychology team at Maryland and I've been seeing a sports psychologist for a while now whether it's just to update her on how my day is going or how to get through a certain thing at practice and just even the relationship with your coaches being close with your coaches and being open that is the best way to make sure your mental health is Good for you and kind of putting that as a priority because if your mental health isn't at the top of your list it's going to affect your performance definitely So I actually did not know whether I was gonna do gymnastics in college or not It was kind of up in the air for me but I definitely wanted to keep an open mind So I just kind of started out by sending a huge email to a bunch of schools that I was interested in and just kind of seeing who replied And then

from there I had a couple of calls with coaches and I was able to narrow down what I wanted in a school and what I didn't want in a school And then I had a call with the Maryland coaches and I hit it off right off the bat And I knew that that was such a great school for me and that I would fit in perfectly there One thing I did to stand out among other recruits was just be myself I have a big open personality and I'm bubbly And that was the main thing that the Maryland coach said to me He said your positivity would fit in perfectly with our culture and just being yourself will land you at the perfect fit of a school for you And that was the main thing that helped me be so successful at Maryland One thing that I have picked up on at Maryland that helped me be so successful was to almost beat my best self So in gymnastics it's not necessarily Um being better than the competition it is uh how well you do yourself So every competition I focus on beating my best self from the meet before and really taking time before I compete to slow my heart rate and get my nerves down and just taking an extra breath before I go to do the gymnastics that I know how to do I balance academics and sports by taking Every little piece of free time that I have and getting a little bit of schoolwork done here there getting head-on assignments It really helps I major in neurobiology so it's definitely tough balancing the two but I've had Quite a lot of practice at it in high school We would go from school to practice and I would get home late and I would bust down my homework But just taking every single moment that you have while leaving some time for yourself but when you're traveling or when you have a couple of hours after practice just grinding out some homework and getting ahead the best you can is a great way to manage it all Trying to get a Division One scholarship is definitely tough and I know it can be grueling but the one thing that I would keep in mind during the whole process is to always have fun with gymnastics and be grateful and really take in every moment because it does go by really quickly and Just enjoying your time and having passion within your sport is what's going to lead you to being your most successful self I think you'll perform your best when you have that drive of passion and all heart behind your gymnastics The first year I got into college I was lucky enough to have opportunity for NIL deals That was the first year And I kind of jumped into it and took Anything any opportunity that I that came my way I established my brand and what I wanted to represent and I tried to go after every single opportunity that came my way and I've had a lot of fun with it all I've worked with a lot of different brands I have been working with Steve Madden actually Cava There are surprising surprisingly big companies that

will reach out to college athletes even though your following might not be as big or you might not be the best athlete at your school There's still so many opportunities that you can achieve and I would say just go for every single one that you can get We've done a couple NIL deals With a lot of the team we will do coaching appearances so we'll host like a camp at a nearby gym where a couple of us will come and coach kids for the entire day And we've worked with a brand that has like hair products So we'll all put like colors in our hair for meats and posts about it And it's really fun working with the whole team