



Elizabeth Mahlich

5-1 Sophomore
Mason, MI

**** All-American ****

Sophomore All-American Elizabeth Mahlich stays true to her roots by doing what most Michigan natives do when asked where they are from – she holds up her palm and points to the center, using her “mitten” to indicate her hometown of Mason, Mich.

“We have 12 acres of land, but my dad uses most of it for himself. We have that big long driveway, and my dad has two barns because he has to keep his truck in there,” Mahlich said. “He hauls milk, that’s where the farm comes in.”

Mahlich, who has never milked a cow herself, says her biggest inspiration is her hard-working father, Robert, and enjoys spending time with him on the acreage. He sometimes would share with her a bit of what was in his trunk’s tanks – raw milk.

“When I would go with him to work he would take a little sample of milk and I would just drink it on the farm. I like raw milk to drink but the store milk for cereal,” Mahlich said.

Mahlich, who thought she would never leave Michigan, came to the University of Florida on an unofficial visit and knew instantly Gainesville was the place she wanted to be. This skilled athlete never expected to be a part of the Gator Nation, but she says the Gainesville environment is completely different than that of her home state and she was ready for a change.

“I was planning on staying in Michigan, but I just felt really comfortable down here when I was talking to Rhonda and the rest of the coaches. I felt like this was the place for me,” Mahlich said. “Everyone is so nice and caring here. It was a different environment and I loved it.”

Once committed to Florida, coach Faehn informed Mahlich that another gymnast from the Midwest had also recently committed to become a Gator. Nicole Ellis, who Mahlich had known from Region Five club gymnastics competition, had just given her verbal commitment a week earlier. The two sophomores competed at nationals four years together and knew one another pretty well. Mahlich says the decisions to come to Florida were very independent, mainly because neither gymnast had even discussed coming to Florida.

“When we were at nationals our sophomore year [in high school], we talked about the different schools we were going to and neither of us mentioned Florida whatsoever. It was kind of a shock when I came down here and Rhonda said my friend from Region 5 committed last week,” Mahlich said.

With the support of her teammates, coaches and family, Mahlich adjusted well to her new life as a student athlete. One of her current Gator teammates is going to help Mahlich connect to her family heritage.

When Mahlich was three years old, her family took a trip to her mother’s (Ivanka) native country Croatia, a trip she still remembers today. Eager to go back and visit Croatia again, she and future roommate, teammate Dali Lemezani, have come up with a plan.

“I really want to go back to Croatia. Dali and I are going to room together next year and she actually knows Serbo-Croatian. Dali said she’s going to teach me some Serbo-Croatian because it’s very close, if not the same, to the Croatian language. That’s my plan,” Mahlich said.

Last season when the gymnastics team headed to Michigan for a meet, Mahlich had the opportunity to share with her teammates and coaches her unique family culture.

“My mom made a great dinner for everyone and it was just nice for everyone to see where I came from. A lot of people grew up in the city, whereas I grew up in the country away from anyone. It was still only 10 minutes away from the city, but still it was just nice for everyone to see where I came from,” Mahlich said.