

Full of zest

Argentinean Jesica Umansky brings passion and experience to Macae

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The best person to define the addition of Argentinean setter Jesica Umansky to Macae Sports is her coach, Airtón Nascimento: “Jesica arrives in a good time for us. She is a player who is at the same level of the other athletes, but she brings with her what I believe every Argentinean has: a deep desire of fight and the fact that they don’t like to lose, even if we are just playing for fun.” Her addition brought some experience, because, even though she is only 17 years-old, she practiced with her National team several times. “She is a player with a great serve and a big notion of where to position herself in the court. For what we are working on with our juniors team, which is based on tactics, she has been extremely helpful.”

Born in the Argentinean capital, the athlete started her career at Club Ciudad de Buenos Aires. She loves ice cream, spending her free time with boyfriends, reading books or simply looking at the beach. “I find the sea to be beautiful. Where I used to live we didn’t have a nearby beach. This sight (Sesc) is beautiful”, she says.

Living in Macae for about 45 days already, Jesica is considered one of the great revelations of the Argentinean women’s volleyball, and one of the major reasons of the great campaign of Macae’s junior team. Acontece went to talk to Jesica to find out more about her career and her dreams.

Acontece: Did you know a lot about Brazilian volleyball?

Jesica: In Argentina people talk very well about the Brazilian program, but only a few girls from my country had played here. Down there, I got to see a few Brazilian games, men’s games usually, when they played the Americas Cup or pre-Olympic games. During the South American Championship in Bolivia, I got to see more of the women’s game.

Acontece: What did you feel when you were invited to play in Brazil?

Jesica: For us, Argentineans, playing in Brazil is very important because everyone knows how good the level of play is in this country. When I was invited I could not believe it at first. No girl my age had ever played here before. It is a great event.

Acontece: Did you doubt in coming to Macae?

Jesica: I didn’t have any doubts. I knew that I wanted to come, but there was also my family and a lot of other things...

Acontece: School?

Jesica: No! I didn’t quit school. Even though I’m here, I brought all my books with me and when I get back I have to take several exams.

Acontece: Do you have a volleyball hero?

Jesica: In Argentina I always liked Waldo Kantor, just because I'm a setter.

Acontece: How was the beginning of your volleyball career?

Jesica: It was in Buenos Aires and now I have a contract with Nautico. My first eight years I used to practice three times a week, Mondays Wednesdays and Fridays. I was always dedicated.

Acontece: Did you feel the rhythm of the practices when you got here?

Jesica: A little bit. This past year I got to practice with our National team and we practiced twice a day. During the past three months I started to practice with Nautico every day since they were playing in the Argentinean National League. All that practice helped me to get here and not feel too much pain.

Acontece: How is the volleyball in Argentina in comparison with the volleyball in Brazil?

Jesica: The level of volleyball here in Brazil is really good. Our Juvenile team here in Macae is much better than most of the Argentinean teams. This team down in Argentina could be top three in the League. This is because of the technical quality of the players here, the amount of time they spend practicing... in Argentina you can't practice in the morning and in the afternoon.

Acontece: How do you analyze your coach Airton?

Jesica: He is a really good coach. I only know one other coach who can be compared with him in the way they manage practices.

Acontece: Have you thought about the future?

Jesica: In September I have to get back to Argentina. I don't know what will happen after. I'm going to take all the exams to finish high school and I have to finish the contract with my team. I have to play the playoffs in all three categories: juniors, juvenile and principal. The Argentinean tournament ends in November. As of today, my pass belongs to Nautico, but since I did not turn 18 years-old yet I can buy it if I want to. I think the price is around US\$1,800. Whenever I turn 18, then the pass belongs to the club and they can decide the amount of money they want.

Acontece: Are you going to play the Superliga in Brazil?

Jesica: I would love to. I heard that the gym is packed every time with 3,000-4,000 people. I've never seen a volleyball gym with that many people. I can imagine how great would a game like that be...

Acontece: Did you make friends here?

Jesica: The friendship I have with the girls was really important. They made me feel great. I didn't know any Portuguese and everyone here helped me a lot.

Acontece: Do you miss home?

Jesica: Yes. It is hard. I'm an only child. My mom was here a few weeks ago. My dad will be coming in August. I miss them a lot; however, I'm doing what I love: playing volleyball.