

Written by John Crumlish

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After her successful Sunday debut as a freshman gymnast at UCLA, veteran British gymnast **Danusia Francis** said she is enjoying her transition into the newest phase of her gymnastics career.



Danusia Francis on bars for UCLA

Francis, who competed on uneven bars and balance beam during UCLA's winning effort against Southern Utah University, enrolled at UCLA on an athletic scholarship after serving as a reserve gymnast for the British team at last summer's Olympic Games in London. While Francis has yet to declare her major at UCLA, she is considering a career as a television presenter.

Born May 13, 1994, in Coventry, Francis previously trained under coaches **Vincent Walduck**, **Michele Walduck** and 1981 world floor exercise champion **Natalia Ilienکو-Jarvis** at Heathrow Gymnastics Club in London.

Francis represented Great Britain at the 2011 World Championships in Tokyo, where she placed 34th all-around in qualifications and helped her team place fifth (the country's best world finish in history) in the team final. She finished 16th all-around at the 2011 European Championships in Berlin, and was a member of the fourth-place British team at the 2012 Europeans in Brussels. Earlier in Francis's career she placed 17th all-around at the 2008 European Junior Championships.

In British Championships competition, Francis's best results include third place all-around, and first place on balance beam and floor exercise, in 2010; second place all-around and first place on balance beam in 2011; and sixth place all-around in 2012.

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Francis was one of the reserve gymnasts for the British team at last summer's Olympic Games in London, where she had the opportunity to perform exhibition routines on balance beam under spotlights before each competition session.

IG spoke with Francis at UCLA following Sunday's competition, where she positively assessed her transition to academic and athletic life as a U.S. university student.



Francis competing for Great Britain at the 2011 Europeans

IG: What was it like competing in your first U.S. collegiate meet?

DF: It's such a different experience, competing in such a team environment. I hurt my shoulder in warm-up, so that held me back a bit, but it was a lot of fun. There was so much positive energy around.

IG: How did you manage your nerves, competing for the first time since summer and in a new place?

DF: The atmosphere helps you control your nerves a lot, since it's more like having a team right there beside you. It really helps you. Making sure you support your whole team after you perform makes you forget about your own nerves, as well.

IG: After a lengthy international career, what gives you the motivation to continue competing?

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DF: Before I was offered the scholarship, I was definitely thinking I would quit after London, whether I made (the British Olympic team) or not. So being here, my motivation is definitely the team. We have so much support, not just in gymnastics but getting a great education and the whole experience so far. I'm sure the next four years are going to be so much fun.

IG: What has been the biggest adjustment for you – the academic demands, the U.S. culture or something else?

DF: I was very homesick when I came here. I was at boarding school since I was nine, but I knew I could always go home because it was only about an hour and a half away. Being so far from home (at UCLA) and knowing I couldn't go home even if I wanted to gave me a slight feeling of being trapped. But having the support I've had has helped me get through that.

IG: What's the biggest difference for you between England and the U.S.?



Danusia Francis (Great Britain/UCLA)

DF: Everything is so different from England. It's been a big adjustment. The weather, for sure, and there are some small differences, like foods that they don't have here, like baked beans (laughs). I was surprised to find that out! The people are slightly different. I'd says that, in England, people are more sarcastic and to-the-point, so at the beginning if I was a bit honest sometimes to the other freshmen, I was like, "Just let me know!" because they're not used to people being as honest as people are in England, I think (laughs).

IG: What is your course load this term?

DF: This quarter I have English, Architecture and German 59, which is like learning about

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German culture. I don't have a major yet. I'm undeclared, but I will possibly major in communications. I also love to write, so maybe English or sociology. I'm not sure yet.

IG: What are your thoughts about competing internationally in the future?

DF: I want to do the World University Games in Russia (this summer), and then next year we'll see how my body is, and how my mind is. I'm definitely taking it one day, one month, one year at a time.