



RAIDERS GAMEDAY

RAIDERETTE OF THE GAME

Monica ROOKIE

BY JENNA ANGELO

Monica has enjoyed every second of her first season as a Raiderette. Through all the excitement she has had to train herself to stop and focus on being in the moment and appreciating this once-in-a-lifetime experience. "These moments go by in the blink of an eye. Game days can be so jam packed that it's easy to get caught up. The national anthem is a moment for me, where I can really just stop and be present and take everything in. I take that time to think about how grateful I am for, not only this moment, but everything that led up to it," Monica said.

Being a part of the Raiders' family, which is so rich in tradition, is new to Monica. Monica's family doesn't practice many traditions. Instead they make a point to experience new things together. "That mindset shaped me into the person I am today. I'm always trying to get out of my comfort zone and it has lead me to some of my greatest accomplishments - like trying out for the Raiderettes," Monica said.

Monica's mother is from Nicaragua and her father was born and raised in Peru. They came to the United States with nothing but a suitcase and a few hundred dollars. "Having parents from a foreign country has taught me the importance of hard work. They built everything that we have now from the ground up," Monica said. Monica has visited Peru on several occasions but has grown to appreciate the country's history more now than when she was younger. Monica hiked Machu Picchu for the first time when she was eight years old. When she went back and did it for her second time last year she said it was like seeing it for the first time. "You are about 11,000 feet high and it requires a plane, a bus, a train, another bus, and then a hike up the mountain," she said. "It's a very long day, but worth every second. You feel like you are on top of the world and it makes you realize and appreciate all the incredible things mankind can accomplish."

Monica began her dance training at a young age and was competing by the time she was five years old. She trained in nine different styles of dance including musical theater and Tahitian. In addition to dancing she took tumbling and later joined her high school's elite varsity cheer team. After graduating, she began coaching the high school's competitive Song Pom team, even taking them all the way to the national competition. "I don't even remember a life before dance," Monica said, "I love performing and being part of a team and I'm so excited for this journey ahead. I hope to continue for as long as I can."

