MARIAH CAMERON

Mariah Cameron was an All-American defender on Castro Valley High teams that won three league championships in her four years. The team her senior year reached the North Coast Section semifinals, setting the stage for the Trojans -- led by Hall of Famers Micaela and Morgan Castain -- to claim the NCS title the following season.

But coaches all the way back to her rec days in the Castro Valley league have recognized Cameron is far too talented to just play defense. Fortunately, her high school coach also recognized this, pushing her forward to score the league-championship-clinching goal her senior year against Bishop O’Dowd.

Versatility has been Cameron’s forte ever since she enrolled at Vannoy Elementary and then Canyon Middle School.

She played CYO basketball and youth volleyball, was one of two girls on the Canyon flag football team, ran track so well she once qualified for the Junior Olympics, and was the shortstop on a Castro Valley Synergy softball team that won a national championship.

Among dozens of accomplishments that would make the top of most girls’ lists -- including getting to play varsity softball on the same team as older sister Danielle -- the game-tying goal against O’Dowd (Castro Valley needed just a tie to win the league title) stands out.

“My grandfather had just died,” she recalled. “My grandmother and grandfather had been at every game I had ever played in all the sports. My grandmother was there (at the O’Dowd game). It was very emotional.

“It was a two-fold emotional night because we were playing for the championship . . . and it was Senior Night as well.”

One negative of splitting time in high school between soccer and softball was it confused recruiters. It wasn’t until Cameron made it clear she’d be going forward in soccer that Washington State invited her to visit and made her an offer.

Cameron was so impactful for the Cougars both on and off the field as a freshman, the coach made her the team captain as a sophomore. It’s a title and responsibility she cherished for three years, two of which ended in knee surgeries.

After a year off to recover from her second surgery, Cameron continued her education and soccer playing in England, earning a Masters degree while gaining the type of experience that eventually would make her a key “free agent” signing in Switzerland.

This past season, Cameron was recruited to play for FC Lugano in Switzerland’s top professional league as a midfielder.