ALEXIS KOLLIAS

Alexis Kollias led Castro Valley High to two Hayward Area Athletic League volleyball co-championships and three North Coast Section qualifications while earning first-team all-league honors as a junior and senior. Taking her talent to the University of California in 2002, she helped the Bears rise from the bottom of the Pac-12 to near the top and make their first NCAA Tournament appearance in 13 years.

Kollias, who was recruited by Yale and MIT among other universities before choosing Cal, twice earned Pac-12 All-Academic honors while majoring in public health.

A self-described “tomboy,” Kollias tried many sports as a youngster, but by middle school she had it narrowed down to volleyball, basketball and occasionally track and field (high jump was her specialty).

A physical education teacher at Canyon Middle School, Steve Spinola, recognized Kollias’ volleyball potential and told his daughter, Shelby, to take a look. Shelby was coach of the Golden Bear club team, an elite traveling club that played top competition around the country. Alexis soon was playing volleyball with and against the best in her age group.

Kollias played two years of junior varsity and one year of varsity basketball at Castro Valley before deciding to concentrate solely on volleyball. Playing for both the high school and Golden Bear club volleyball teams, she also was a member of the USA High Performance team, which aimed to develop elite athletes as future Olympians.

At CVHS, Alexis played outside hitter, a front-line position that emphasizes slamming the ball into the opponents’ court. But at 5-foot-7, Kollias was too short for the front line in the Pac-12, where the women occupying that position were 6-foot-1 and up. At Cal, she was strictly a libero, a defensive player limited to the back line. In her four years at Cal, Alexis had 594 digs, including 31 in one match against St. Mary’s (the third most single-match digs in Cal history).

Kollias, who began her Cal career as a walk-on, eventually became the first Cal libero ever to be awarded an athletic scholarship.

Upon graduation from Cal, Kollias played one year (2006-2007) in the Greek A1 Women’s Volleyball League, considered one of the top professional leagues in Europe.

Alexis, whose married name is Kollias Thiele, is now a nurse at Eden Hospital. She and her husband, Aidan, have two children and live in Castro Valley.