

## Chased Gold, Got Gold — The Walsh Sisters Now Chase NCAA History

By Brooke Evans



Credit: Associated Press | Creator: Brooke Evans

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It started in a backyard pool. Now, it spans Olympic podiums around the world.

Sisters Gretchen and Alex Walsh have already etched their names into NCAA history—anchoring four consecutive national titles for the University of Virginia— but at the 2024 Paris Olympics, they added another layer: *both* returned to Charlottesville as decorated Olympians.

Alex Walsh was the first to blaze the path, winning a silver medal in the 200m individual medley at the Tokyo Games while still a rising star at UVA. Her younger sister Gretchen followed closely behind, shattering records and redefining sprint speed along the way. By the time Paris 2024 arrived, both sisters stood on top of the world stage— and they brought home the hardware to prove it.

Gretchen, a rising senior, dazzled in her Olympic debut, capturing silver in the 100-meter butterfly and anchoring two gold medal-winning relay teams for USA. Alex, now a graduate student, returned to the Olympic stage after winning silver in the 200 IM in Tokyo, reaching another final in Paris and continuing to lead by example for both Team USA and UVA.

They've done it all side-by-side, from international competition to college domination.

In the NCAA, Alex holds 19 total NCAA titles, eight of them individual, and returns to UVA not only to pursue her graduate degree, but also to chase history: she could become the first swimmer to win five team titles and individual events at five different NCAA Championships.

Gretchen, meanwhile, holds 18 total NCAA titles, including six individual crowns, and has broken world, NCAA, and American records. She became the first woman ever to swim the 100-yard butterfly in under 47 seconds — and as for the others, it might be easier to list which records she *doesn't* hold.

Now dripped in hardware from NCAA titles and Olympic medals, and with UVA chasing a historic fifth consecutive national championship, the dynamic duo is hungrier than ever.

“It’s really special to be doing this with my sister,” Alex told reporters after the Games. “We push each other every day.”

As UVA welcomes back its Olympic medalists and adds rising stars like Leah Hayes and Katie Grimes to the roster, the Cavaliers aren’t just defending a dynasty. They’re expanding it.

Virginia’s quest for a five-peat officially kicks off September 28 at the Navy Intrasquad Meet in Charlottesville, with the NCAA National Championships set for March 19, 2025, in Washington.