

# SW

## SWIMMING WORLD

### BIWEEKLY

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A close-up photograph of a swimmer in a yellow cap with the 'arena' logo. She has a shocked expression, with her mouth wide open and her hand covering her face. She is wearing a blue and black swimsuit and is in a pool with red lane lines. The background is a solid yellow color.

# OMG!

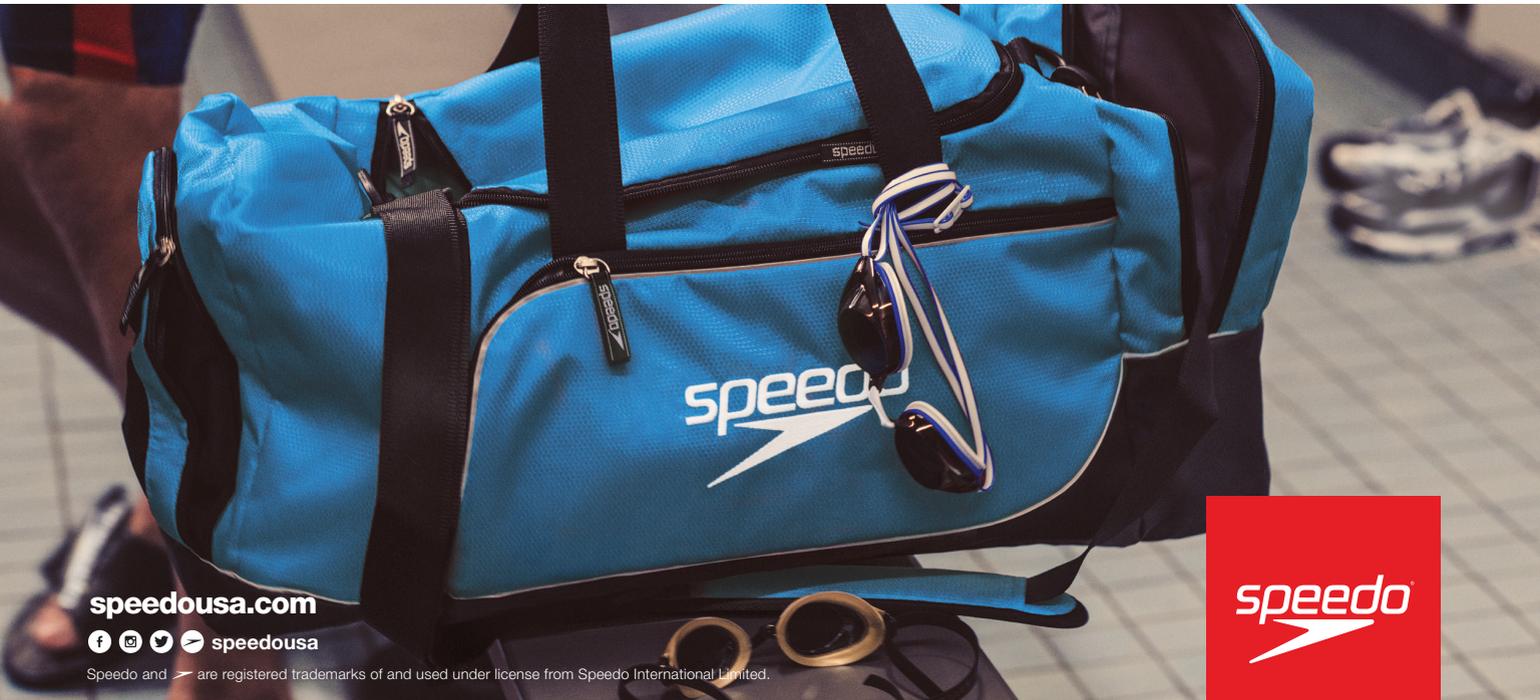
**IN THIS ISSUE WE LET THE INTERNS TAKE THE REINS,  
AND THE RESULTS ARE AWESOME.**



**TEAM SPEEDO:**  
Ryan Lochte, Jessica Hardy, Cullen Jones and Nathan Adrian

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*Injuries happen in our sport. And they can happen to anyone. You aren't the only one in the swimming world that's ever been in serious pain; so don't be afraid to speak up, and get yourself help as soon as possible.*

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[ Photo Courtesy: David Farr ]

# DEAR STRUGGLING SWIMMER

BY ELISE CAMPBELL

Every swimmer on every swim team has hated the sport for a time. There are thousands of reasons for this that all converge at the same point: losing love and passion for an amazing sport.

These feelings are inevitable based solely on the commitment level that swimming requires. We do things that others don't and if the payoff isn't there, resentment creeps in to replace passion. The way out is hard to find, but that doesn't mean it isn't there.

## **WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG**

Try to remember yourself as a young athlete. The way you felt, the things you cared about. This may have been before reality set in, but the memories are still there. You loved to swim because of how it made you feel. Embody that little kid again. Embrace his or her thoughts and emotions after winning that first medal or beating a rival.

If it makes you nostalgic or even sad thinking of this past life, there's still something there. By thinking of happier times, you can remember why you felt that way and how you can get back to the good.



[ Photo Courtesy: Connor Bailey ]

## **HYPE LEVEL**

Close your eyes and imagine yourself swimming your best event at the meet of your life. Your stroke is strong as you pull through the water. You race to the finish, practically on fire, and your team goes crazy as you touch the wall. It's an unbelievable time, something you never thought you were capable of in reality.

Did that raise your hype level even a little bit? You're still a swimmer.



[ Photo Courtesy: Ian MacNicol ]

## **GOING FORWARD**

What lies ahead of you in the sport? Are you going off to college or are you nearing the end of your career? Place yourself in that new situation, but imagine it without swimming. There are obvious and lazy pros to this idea, but do they outweigh the cons?

Boredom is scarier than many realize. Swimmers are distinctly competitive and that rush will no longer be provided. Figure out which is more frightening: a hard set or a total lack of competitive stimulation.

## **GOAL SETTING**

In swimming, goals can sometimes appear overwhelming, particularly in the midst of a lull in motivation. They don't seem possible, so why try? Switch to thinking about the process. Keep your dreams in your back pocket and focus on one set at a time. You've survived countless difficult sets and you'll continue to do so. Think of time in smaller increments and your goals won't seem so looming.

Set a weekly goal and pour everything into it. Write that goal down each week and post it somewhere visible. Over time you'll have tangible proof of the work you've put in and the ways you've succeeded beyond just fast times.

## **CONFIDENCE**

Confidence is directly related to achievement and passion. Why would you think you're anything less than amazing

while behind the blocks? Picture what you do EVERYDAY in comparison to the average person. Not good enough? Make sure that you truly are special by putting in the work to create confidence. You will always swim faster when you know you can.

Stand with your hands on your hips behind the block because you know you're the best. Smile to yourself with the knowledge of your impending win. Have the strength to create the victories you want.

## **T STANDS FOR TEAM**



[ Photo Courtesy: David Plummer/Twitter ]

If you can't do it for yourself, what about your teammates? They've seen you crying into your goggles because you were breaststroke-kicked in the head in the warm down pool. And they are still there. Conversely, they've seen you standing on the podium after the race of your life. And they are still there. Think of them every time you can't find a reason to keep going.

Swimming never claimed to be easy, but how hard would it be without your support system? Not everyone is afforded that luxury, so take advantage of it. Lean on them when you can't stand. Be that rock for them. What is more motivating that comradery, than the knowledge of a common goal that everyone builds upon?



[ Photo Courtesy: Rob Schumacher/USA Today Sports Images ]

## **PASSION IS A CHOICE**

Most of the time, these feelings pass. Somehow things turn around and you start fighting again. Other times, they don't. Regardless of the outcome, searching for that passion, that overwhelming love and competitive fire, is completely worth it. It's what sets you apart from those who won't allow their own success. ◀



# 6 GOOSEBUMP MOMENTS OF 2015

BY ANDY ROSS

*I have been a huge swimming fan since I was eight years old. After watching almost every race from every meet closely, I have grown to cheer for some swimmers over others for their character or sometimes if they always seem to come up short. There were a lot of moments from 2015 where I got goosebumps from watching certain swimmers do well, or just from seeing truly impressive performances.*

*Here are some of those goosebump-inducing moments of 2015...*

## 1. JAMES GUY'S 200 FREESTYLE



After Great Britain swam out of their minds at the 2014 Commonwealth Games, I was a bit skeptical if they could repeat those performances in 2015. A lot of those British swimmers with breakout swims, like Adam Peaty, Siobahn O'Connor and Ross Murdoch, had not been successful on the major international level (yet).

One of those swimmers from 2014 was James Guy. I wasn't expecting much from him in Kazan but what he did in Russia was nothing short of spectacular. I knew he was the real deal when he went toe to toe with Sun Yang in the 400 earlier in the meet. But I didn't think he would be able to challenge for a gold medal in the 200, because I assumed the 400 was his best event.

The men's 200 free final in Kazan was stacked. I honestly thought that Ryan Lochte was going to be the guy to beat going into the final with Sun, Cameron McEvoy and Chad Le Clos with outside chances. But James Guy went out and won the race. He outswam Sun on the last 50 and it was so cool to see someone beat him at his own game.

## 2. LASZLO CSEH'S 200 BUTTERFLY

I always felt bad for Laszlo Cseh because he had to live in Michael Phelps' shadow for his whole career. He had the meet of his life when he won three silvers in the Beijing Olympics and yet nobody really knows about him or what he did in Beijing. To be honest, I thought Cseh was done in 2011. I thought after the suits, there was no way he would be as good as he was.

I honestly thought he peaked in Beijing, since he was also getting (relatively) old. But when he did well in the 50 fly in Kazan, it was almost like Cseh was reborn. He came into the 200 fly and it was expected to be a battle between him and Chad Le Clos. He took it out with Le Clos and pulled away at the 125 and he finally won

gold again. I didn't watch it live (as I was sitting in the airport before my flight to nationals), but I wish I could have watched it.

I tweeted right after he won and said that if he would win in Rio, then it would be easily one of the greatest storylines in the Olympics. It would be like if John Stockton and Karl Malone had won an NBA title in the early 2000s after getting beat by the Michael Jordan Bulls in 1997 and 1998, or if the Buffalo Bills of the early 1990s won a Super Bowl after losing four straight times. But unfortunately for Cseh, Phelps went a time in the 200 fly that would have won the world title. But the Olympic final isn't for another 11 months, so who knows what will happen...

## 3. KEVIN CORDES' SILVER

Kevin Cordes was another swimmer I have felt bad for. He had an incredible college career and everyone put a lot of pressure on him to perform in long course. In 2013, he didn't make the final in the 200 breast at Worlds and disqualified the (would have been gold medal-winning) 400 medley relay. In 2014, he disqualified Arizona's 400 medley relay with a false start again. And at the 2014 Pan Pacific Championships, his goggles came off in the final of the 100 breast and he wasn't able to qualify for that event at the 2015 Worlds. It was only a matter of time before he would have a breakthrough swim at a major international meet.

He lined up for the final of the 200 breast in Kazan as one of the favorites. He kept his stroke long the entire time and did not panic. He was right with Marco Koch and stayed with him to the finish, where he finished second behind Koch. It was Cordes' first international medal and he finally proved that he could step up in big long course meets.

## 4. EMILY SEEBOHM'S 100 BACK

After she went 58.23 in the prelims of the Olympics, I always thought that Emily Seebohm was the best 100 backstroker in the world. Yes, I do know that Missy Franklin was around, but I always thought Seebohm was naturally better at the 100 than Missy.

When she won gold in Kazan this summer, it was cool to see her finally break through. She has been around

on the world scene since she was 14, but has always seemed like she couldn't step up in the big moment. I thought she might break the world record this summer, but it is only a matter of time before she can track that record down.



## **5. KATINKA HOSSZU'S WORLD RECORD**

Katinka Hosszu is probably one of the toughest swimmers in the world and the IM world records for women are probably the toughest in the books. After the 2013 Worlds in Barcelona, I knew she was the only swimmer in the world who had a chance at chasing down both of those world records. It was only a matter of time before she did. When she went 2:06 in the semis of the 200 IM, I knew the world record was doomed in the final. She went out and won the race and got under Ariana Kukors' world record. The camera then showed her husband Shane Tusup beating his chest and screaming. Then the camera panned to Hosszu in the water and she had tears in her eyes. I can only imagine how hard she works everyday to be able to handle her busy racing schedule. It was so cool to see her so emotional after getting her first long course world record. I don't know Katinka personally, but I felt like I was watching a teammate of mine with the excitement I had for her after nabbing a world record.

## **6. MICHAEL PHELPS AT US NATIONALS**

Michael Phelps has never been my favorite swimmer, but I still love watching him swim in person. I mean, who doesn't stop and watch the greatest swimmer of all time? When I found out I was going to be on deck at US Nationals, I wasn't really expecting much from Phelps. He had a lackluster 2014 and I thought he would just get by in San Antonio with a few wins, but no stellar times. Boy was I wrong.

When he lined up for the 200 fly, I thought he was vulnerable to Jack Conger. Phelps went out and was pret-

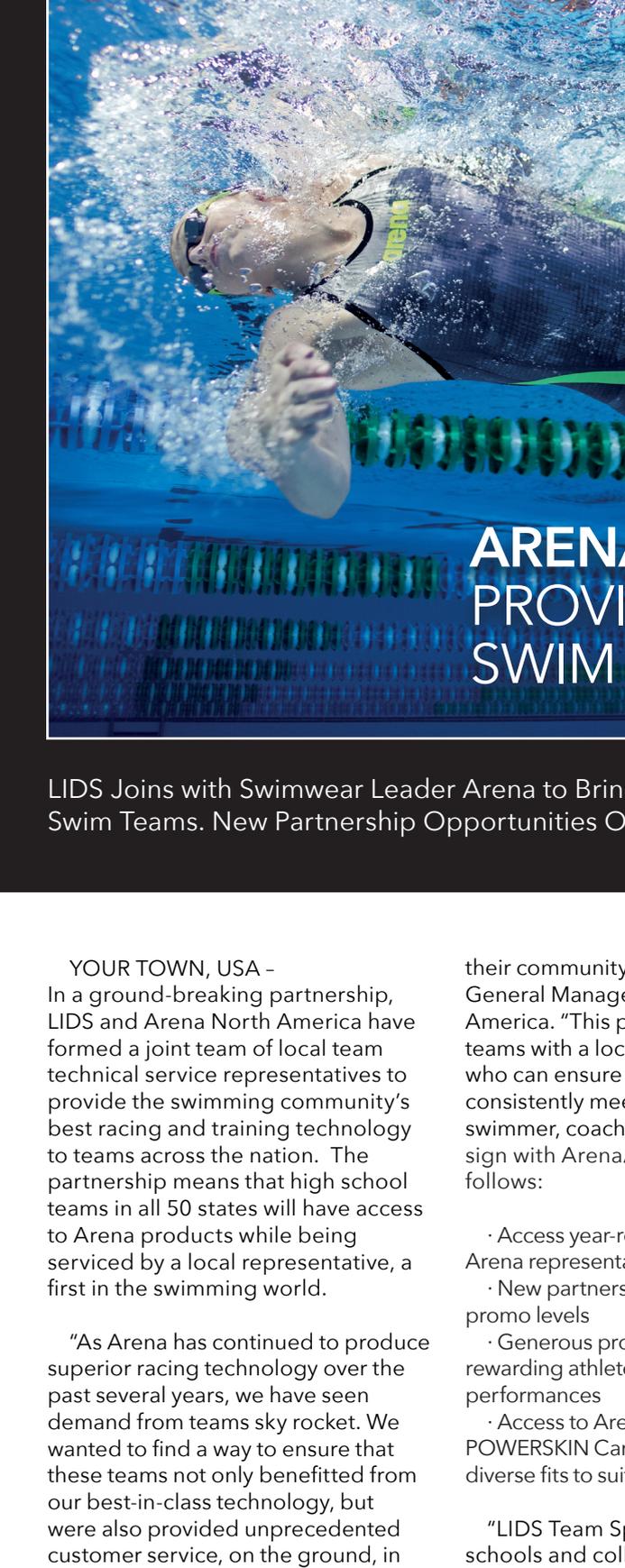
ty close to his world record the whole time. He went 1:52 and when I saw how excited he was after he won, I knew I had just witnessed something amazing.

The next day was the 100 fly and all the talk on the deck was a quote from Chad Le Clos saying how he went a time that Phelps hadn't done in four years so "he can be quiet now." The deck was packed. I was in about the fourth row behind the lane one fence. A few of my teammates said they were going to try to watch the meet upstairs, but there wasn't any room up there. Everyone was packed in to see what Phelps would do. When he touched in the world's fastest time, it was spectacular to see. He got even more excited than he did when he won the 200. For the first time in quite a while, it looked like Phelps was legitimately enjoying swimming again. Something I hadn't seen him do since about 2008.

The next night was the 200 IM. I had to warm up during the finals session and I made sure I was done with my workout before Phelps swam. When I walked onto the deck to watch him swim, I couldn't even stand by the bleachers because it was so packed. I then moved to the benches behind the lanes. When I saw he was under world record pace, I started to freak out. When would be the next time I would witness a world record? I then committed one of my pet peeves and started taking Snapchat videos of Phelps swimming because I wanted to savor the moment (for 24 hours).

The entire pool deck was silent, aside from deafening cheers when Phelps' head popped up for breathes during breaststroke. Everyone was hoping they'd see a world record. When he just missed it, I was disappointed I couldn't tell my Snapchat friends I just saw a world record. But when I went back to finish my warm up, I started to soak in what I had witnessed over the last three days.

The greatest swimmer in the world gave us a performance like we had not seen since his (so-called) prime. After 2010, I didn't think Phelps would be the same swimmer. I even said a few weeks before Nationals that I felt bad for kids nowadays because they have no idea how good Phelps really was in 2007 and 2008. But those kids saw that again in San Antonio, and to see that in person— that was special. ◀



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[ Photo Courtesy: Claire Pinson ]

# SWIMMING: A SHARED LANGUAGE IN THE U.S.A. AND JAPAN

BY BRITTANY OXLEY

One thing I have learned through my swimming career is that the swimming community is small. Someone you know always knows someone else you know.

Swimming has given me friends all across the country in different states. When your team travels to out-of-state meets, it is wonderful to see faces you may only see once a year. Coaches all know each other and your best friends may not even swim on your team. I started to notice just how inter-connected the swimming world was when I began my collegiate swimming career.

Many people of this generation rely on social media to communicate, but swimming remains a means of connecting people through face-to-face interactions. USA Swimming is a small world with so many familiar faces. No matter where you go in the country, there will typically be someone close-by that you know or know of.

For Claire Pinson, a rising freshman at Harvard, her swimming community extends beyond the United States.

## **A SWIMMER ABROAD**

In the summer of 2013, Claire became interested in studying abroad. Being a competitive swimmer, she knew it

would not be an easy task. Claire decided to go to Japan and experience the culture and lifestyle in the Land of the Rising Sun.

She contacted a swim team, WaterMates, located in Yokohama, Japan. From there, the exchange between Claire and WaterMates swim team flourished. She stayed with a host family for a month while training and was able to experience the differences between training in Japan and training with her club team in Sacramento, California (Davis Arden Hills Racing Team).

She discovered a huge emphasis placed on core strength and dryland training. Their practices were much more sprint-based than her California club practices. She swam 2,000 meters less each practice than she would with Arden Hills. A different training environment in a different country were both huge culture shocks, but she found herself in love with the country.

## **BREAKING DOWN LANGUAGE BARRIERS**

The December following her first trip to Japan, Claire's host siblings came and trained with the DART Arden

Hills location during winter training. I was swimming with Arden Hills that winter and experienced what it was like to train with swimmers from another country. It was fascinating to me how even though there was a language barrier, we could still communicate and support one another in the pool. I realized what Claire fell in love with in Japan the summer before. Even though it was a different country, we all speak the same language— swimming.



The friendship between WaterMates and the Arden Hills site of DART continued as Claire stayed in contact with her host family and other friends she had met while training in Japan.

### ***A BRIDGE THAT CLEARS THE PACIFIC***

This past June and July, Claire, along with several other swimmers from DART and Coach Brian Nabeta traveled to Yokohama to train. Claire introduced the swimmers from DART to Japanese culture. Practices in Japan were once again different than what Claire and her teammates were used to back home.

The major takeaway from their trip was how much they were able to learn from others. Sure, there was a language barrier and it was sometimes hard to communicate, but the swimming world is so close-knit that all swimmers can connect on some level.

Forging through hard practices together connects you to those you train beside. The WaterMates swim club became a support system for Claire and her teammates.

Though Claire is now a freshman at Harvard, the relationship between WaterMates and DART will continue. The world may be large, but the swimming community is small, and Claire has helped bridge a friendship across the Pacific Ocean. ◀





[ Photo Courtesy: Fitter and Faster Swim Tours ]

# SWIM LIKE AN AGE-GROUPER... PERFORM LIKE A CHAMPION

BY NIKKI CANNON

Since graduating college and becoming an official “swammer” I have transitioned my life from the pool to a classroom, where I assist sixth grade students. Being around them has not only reignited my love for recess, Beverly Cleary books, and fun pencil toppers, but has also taken me back to a much simpler time in my swimming career.

You see, I LOVED swimming when I was 12. I lived it, I breathed it, it was probably the main focus of my energy at the time. But somehow along the way, things changed. Swimming turned from something I got to do, to a chore, or even job, that I was forced to do. I went from begging my mom to let me do a double to dreading morning practice. I went from getting over a race that went poorly within a few seconds, to replaying every minute detail in a practice

set that didn't go well.

What changed? Some people might say that as I got older I became more realistic, but I would challenge that embracing our inner age-grouper (or even self) may allow us to accomplish things we may not have otherwise dreamt of.

## **1. UNLEASHING YOUR CHILDLIKE WONDER**

Remember the days when every practice was a mystery? It was like this exciting adventure; what am I going to learn or do today? It's pretty easy to get jaded, purely because of the repetition the sport requires. I recall very clearly that my “Oh, I bet practice is going to be fun” feeling transitioning to assuring myself that practice would be awful.

We begin to think that we are all-knowers and thus be-



[ Photo Courtesy: Taylor Brien ]

come rather cynical in swimming. It's not only that we lose a sense of wonder, but also that we begin to think we know what will happen. We begin to create self-fulfilling prophecies.

This practice is always hard. I NEVER do well at dual meets. I ALWAYS swim slow in practice.

What would happen if you didn't put those limits on yourself? If you could enjoy that hard practice, swim fast at a dual meet, and surprise yourself with speed during a hard set at practice?

## **2. WHY NOT?**

This next one ties in closely to my first tip, but with a little twist. But first a quick story. I once had a teammate who truly put no limits on herself or her swimming. "Why not?" was basically the motto to her swimming career. She was an amazing trainer and racer and held herself to very high standards. While doing pace I would crank my head over to see if I heard correctly....if she was going to hold that pace, her total time would be almost 6 seconds faster than her goal time.

"Dude, why are you going so fast?" asked one of our teammates.

"If I'm going to go that time, I need to be this fast."

You see, to this teammate there was no reason why she would not be able to go that time minus six seconds. This teammate became one of the first NCAA qualifiers on our team. The point is, my friend didn't list all the reasons she wouldn't be able to be fast; she was tired, she was too slow, she wasn't tall enough, she wasn't talented enough, no. She simply asked, "Why not?"

## **3. LETTING GO OF FAILURES**

One summer, I absolutely bombed my taper meet. It was awful, especially after all the hard work I had put in, and the care I had invested in my swimming. The next summer, as I stood next to my block at the same meet, at the same pool, the official blew the whistle. I had a flood of memories, like a terrible flashback of how badly I had done before. I was paralyzed with fear.

Now, is this the ideal mindset to be in before a race? Absolutely not. But how many of us held on to memories like that as a child? I could barely remember the last practice I had been to when I was 10, let alone a year prior.

What if you let go of failures instead of letting them dictate your future? What if you took away the lesson without internalizing the fear of repeating your mistake? How much faster could you be? More importantly...how much happier would you be?

Embrace your inner child and have fun! ◀



[Photo Courtesy: Arizona Republic-USA TODAY Sports]

# REWRITING THE SOCIAL SCRIPT: SWIMMING'S ROLE IN GENDER FRIENDSHIP

BY CONNOR BAILEY

There are men's and women's teams for soccer, volleyball, water polo etc. Really, almost every sports is divided by gender, and when there are companion teams—say for a single school—they don't really interact with each other. But, swimming is different.

Though in name there are men's and women's swim teams, most have no real distinction. And though they may swim in different heats, girls and boys will practice together and have meets together. When I think about "my team" I don't just think about the men I think about the men's team and the women's team together. And I don't think I'm alone in that. The 2012 US Olympic Swimming Team's famous "Call Me Maybe" video did not have just the men, or just the women, but everyone on that team. While most sports serve to isolate athletes from those of the opposite gender, swimming can be a place where children have a greater opportunity to create friendships that span gendered social barriers.

I became aware of this part of swimming when I realized that I was a bit of a social oddity; most of my friendships have been have been cross-gender friendships. In high school, at the height of my gender-imbalanced social life, my core friend group consisted of me, one other guy, and about a dozen girls. Almost all of those friends I had as a direct result of my involvement in swimming.

If it were not for swimming it is doubtful that I would have had as many girl friends and I would not have the benefits of all those friendships. But I don't think I've ever heard any-

one say they liked swimming because it allowed them to be friends with swimmers of a different gender. Frankly, I think it's time that we realize this as a real benefit of swimming and celebrate it as such.

Generally, cross-gender friendships are becoming more and more common; it's a trend that mirrors the society wide breakdown of gendered spaces (like more women entering the workplace).[1], [2] And that's good because there are a number of benefits that come from cross-gender friendships.

There are straightforward reasons, like: doubling ones number of potential friends, buoying confidence in ones attractiveness to those of another gender, and gaining an otherwise unobtainable perspective on the opposite gender. But there are also more complicated benefits like encouraging communication across genders in order to reduce sexual harassment and sexism, as well as breaking down the male-dominated social networks that empower men while exclude women from access to resources and positions of power.[1], [3], [4]

Perhaps most complicated, but most importantly, heterosexual friendships actually serve to redefine friendships for those involved. That's because in same-gendered setting men and women relate to each other differently, and when they come together they bring those social patterns to their mixed-gender friendships.

One sociologist, Harry Brod, once referred to men as gen-

erally having “side-by-side” friendships centered around peripheral interaction and shared activity, while women’s friendships are more often “face-to-face” with a greater emphasis on direct dialogue and emotional care. Cross-gender friendships usually end up somewhere in-between, which is why men often report that they value their female friends for their engagement, while women often report they enjoy their male friends because they see the relationship as relaxed.[1], [2], [5]

But, despite these benefits, cross-gender relationships are still regarded with suspicion. In a reflection of that social suspicion, since cross-gender friendships were first studied in the early ’80s, sexual tension has been a major focus of the psychological and sociological research, and that focus hasn’t dissipated. [1], [3], [6], [7]

In truth, people report some level of sexual tension in most of their heterosocial friendship. However, you would be wrong to conclude, like so many others, that “men and women can’t be just friends.” The research shows even though many men and women report sexual tension, most relationships never become romantic or sexual. And, most of the platonic (non-sexual) friendships that “cross-over” quickly return to their original platonic dynamic.

The general conclusion of the research is that the main reason for the “problems” with cross-gender friendships—both the internal and external projections of sexual tension—is that people don’t having alternative models for these friendships. There are “social scripts” for these relationships, and those scripts don’t include men and women being friends—even though it is a reality for many, many people.[1], [3], [4]

Our shared stories (TV, movies, music, books), often conflict with the realities of lived experience. Those stories exalt romantic and sexual relationships while downplaying friendship relationships. And, generally speaking, cross-gender friendships either don’t exist or are undermined by when they inevitably become romantic. But that’s a problem with the social environment, not with people.

And therein is the central issue. That script needs rewriting. And swimming can help to update that outdated—and ultimately disruptive—social script.

Swimmers and their teammates are often nearly naked together. But, we quickly get used to it. Any initial awkwardness or hints of sexuality have a tendency to disappear. Similarly, swim teams can normalize cross-gender friendships, and neutralize the disruptive social baggage (like awkwardness and sexuality) of the friendship. Meaning that if swim-

ming provides an environment where young boys and girls can be close friends, they should also be able to continue to make those kinds of cross-gender friendships later in life because their scripts and models for what is a friendship have been updated.

Now, this heterosocial aspect of swimming has been very important in my life. Like I said, I’ve always had more girl friends than guy friends, but it’s because of swimming that I’ve had some of my best and most formative cross-gender friendships. So, in light of the impact it’s had on my life and the benefits I see in it, I am very surprised that I hear so little about this part of swimming. In fact, I have never heard anyone say explicitly that swimming is good because it provides an environment for boys and girls to be friends.

The good news: I don’t think we need to change much. Swimming has already played a role in breaking down gendered social barriers, my only concern is that it continues to do so. For that to happen it’s important that those in the swimming community be aware of the heterosocial nature of the sport, and actively celebrate the beneficial outcomes of this part of swimming.

Future swimmers should not need to write or read anything like this. Instead, by the time they finish swimming they know it and understand how they are better off for growing up in a swimming community. Looking forward, we need to make sure that awareness begets action and that those with power to shape the teams’ social environment—that means mostly parents and coaches—evaluate team policies or activities and make sure they don’t undo one of swimming’s best hidden benefits. ◀

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*Author’s Note 1: I realize that is article is acutely heteronormative. The unfortunate framing and vocabulary of this topic arrives in this article directly from the scientific research and was imported unchanged for purposes of clarity. And, while I realize that queering this discussion leads to some very interesting findings<sup>8</sup>, unfortunately that discussion was beyond the scope of this article.*

*Author’s Note 2: For those intrigued by this topic, a short list of the resources used in researching this article appears below. But this is not all there is; a great amount of research and discussion is readily available online. Some helpful search terms include: Opposite-Sex Friendships, Cross-Sex friendships, Opposite-Gender Friendships, Cross-Gender Friendship, Mixed friendships and heterosocial friendships.*

*For resource footnotes, please click here.*



## SHOULDN'T SWIMMING OFFICIALS BE PAID?

BY ALEX LABONGE

Imagine standing behind the starting blocks, waiting to begin a race. Who is the last person that you see, only a few feet away, whether you realize it or not? The officials, tirelessly watching over the swimmers, standing at the side of the pool for hours at a time, constantly being splashed and leaving a session exhausted and reeking of chlorine.

These hard-working individuals do all of this for free. Without officials, swim meets would have no validity, no accountability, no backbone. My question is this: Shouldn't these officials be paid for this?

The average official for a youth sporting match, such as basketball or baseball, makes between \$9 and \$17 an hour. Why can this not be applied to our swimming officials?

Jim Holcomb is the current Chair of Officials for USA Swimming and is charged with leading the efforts of the National Officials Committee and enhancing officiating throughout USA Swimming. "Our tradition is volunteerism," said Holcomb. "Still, it is expensive to volunteer at national events. Some local swim communities provide funding for officials to attend larger regional and national meets."

With that being said, many do not, and nearly no officials receive reimbursement for any meet on the local scale. On the national level, most Local Swim Committees (LSC) offer a modest compensation to officials to help offset the

costs associated for the meets. For example, North Carolina officials receive roughly \$500 for national meets, but this is nowhere near the amount required to pay for the trip, which can easily soar to exceed \$1,000.

How often at a swim meet are there one or two officials watching over an entire eight- or 10-lane pool? Too often. The USA Swimming website has a presentation for the recruitment and retention of officials. This slideshow focuses on the personal benefits of officiating, including an improved knowledge of the sport and creating friendships that last a lifetime. While this may be true, a little money for these people who volunteer so much time and effort would really show our gratitude and aid with both recruiting and retaining officials. They deserve so much more gratitude than a hospitality tent or a drink cart passing by their lane.

The process to becoming an official is not easy and requires a great deal of time and energy. Officials must pay out of pocket to take classes to get their certifications, and this process continues at every stage of officiating. If someone knew they were going to get paid, there would be a higher participation because it wouldn't be coming out of pocket. If nothing else, officials should not have to pay for their training, especially with all the energy they will give to their sport.



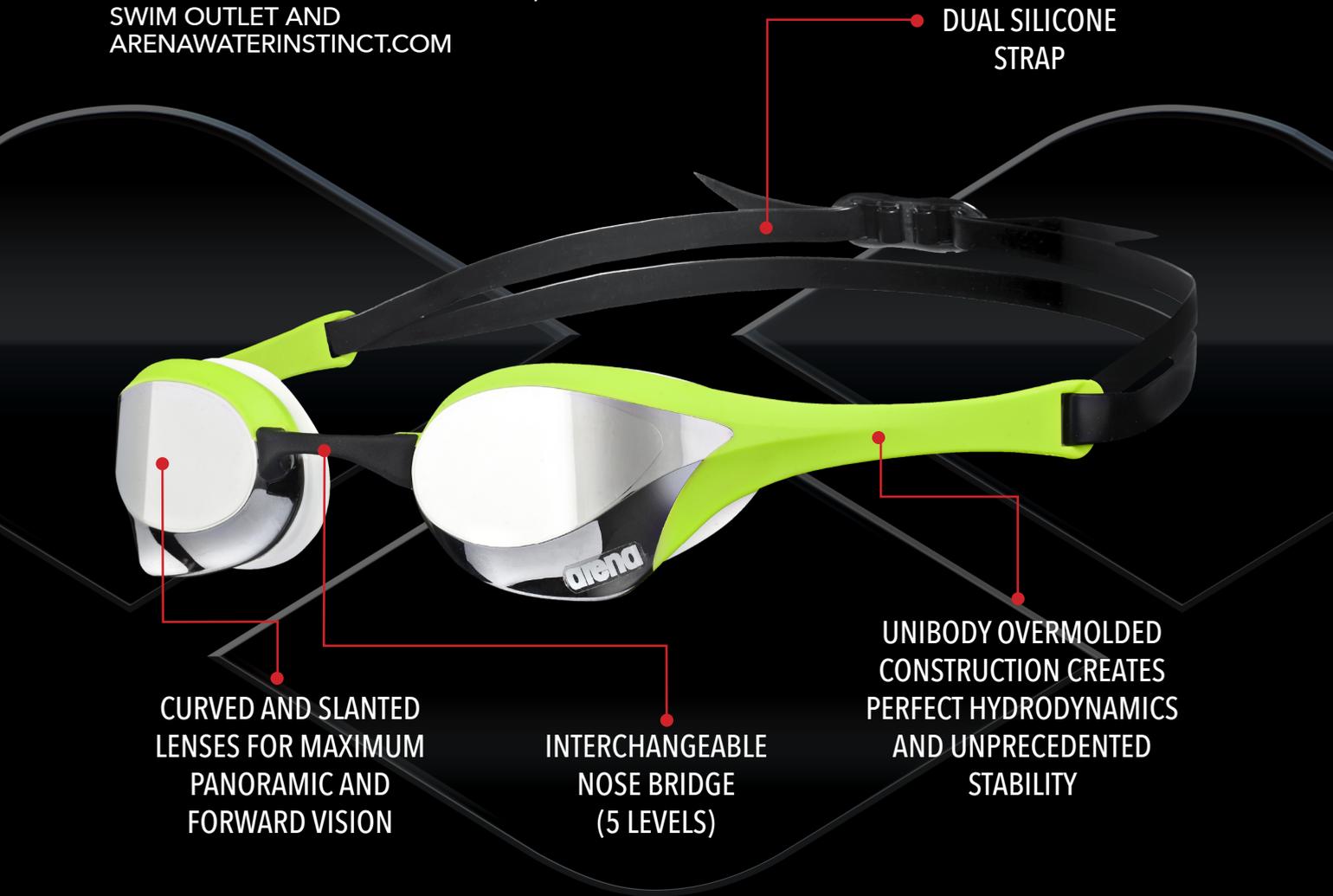
It would be no small task to make a nationwide change in officiating culture, but it is absolutely possible. Increasing swimmer fees by as little as a few dollars could greatly enhance the experience for our officials, the pillars of the swimming community. It is truly amazing how well the system works now, with little to no compensation to the officials, but with it, so much more could be achieved.

The single largest problem faced by LSCs is recruiting and retaining officials. Let's make a change in this and compensate our hard-working officials so their unofficial motto no longer has to be "We work for food." ◀

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[Photo Courtesy: Peter H. Bick]

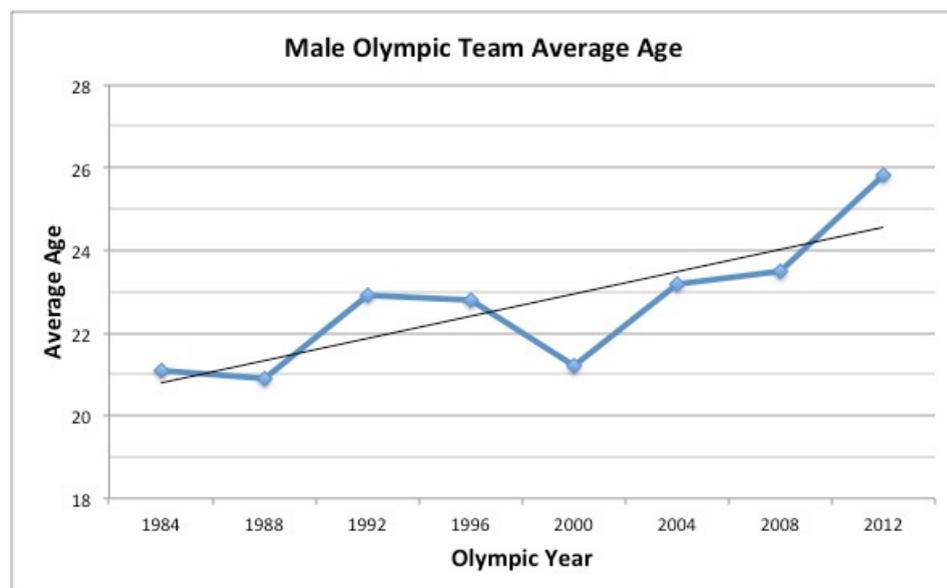
# THE EFFECTS OF PROFESSIONAL SWIMMING: ARE MALE SWIMMERS STAYING IN THE SPORT TOO LONG?

BY PATRICK MURPHY

As we approach the World Championships heading into the Olympic year, we get to see a number of veterans compete in what's believed to be their last go-around. The World Championship roster includes three-time Olympian Ryan Lochte, multiple two-time Olympians, and countless swimmers over the age of 25. This roster doesn't even include a certain four-time Olympian due to suspension.

Surprisingly, even with all those veterans, this roster is not quite as "old" as some international meet rosters in the recent past. Ever since the Michael Phelps era began in 2000, the average age of the male Olympic team has trended upwards.

On a positive note, this shows how far swimming has come. Not too long ago, swimming was a sport consisting mainly of college athletes. Very few managed to swim past the age of 22. Now, swimming is a legitimate "professional sport."



*courtesy of USA Swimming*

USA Swimming provides a number of athlete services that allow swimmers to compete well into their 20s.

This is great for the sport of swimming. While not on the level of the NBA or NFL, young swimmers can still aspire to be "professional swimmers." As the "professional" aspect of the sport continues to grow, we see more and more swimmers competing into their 30s. Keep in mind this is not just perennial Olympians like Phelps, Lochte, and Matt Grevers, but other competitors like David Plummer, Nick Thoman, and Mike Alexandrov are successfully competing as professional swimmers. On one hand, this trend is only going to make careers longer and the sport faster and more competitive. But is there also a negative effect of these vet-

erans continuing to swim so long as professionals?

### **THE AGE GAP**

The age gap for USA Men's swimming has been a topic of conversation for years now. As mentioned before, there are a number of late 20, early 30-year-olds on the World Championship team. We also have young stars on the World Championship team like Kevin Cordes, Ryan Murphy, Reed Malone, and Jordan Wilimovsky.



Take Ryan Murphy for example. He is the youngest on the World Championship roster, turning 20 just a few weeks ago. Michael Phelps turned 30 last month. As impressive as it is that Murphy is competing at the international level at age 20, remember that Phelps made his first Olympic team at age 15. This difference in age held by the youngest roster member shows how much times have changed.

Of course, Phelps was Phelps, and no one can compare to him, but still in 2000, the average age at the Olympics was 21.1. In 2012, that age was 26 and we can expect this average to only increase next summer.

While in all likelihood, these college kids are going to get their chance to shine, the real issue here is the lack of international experience held by those in between the youngsters and the veterans. These are the swimmers who have been overshadowed by the Phelps and Lochtes of the sport. These are the swimmers who have not gained Olympic experience.

Outside of Nathan Adrian, Tyler Clary, Conor Dwyer, and Conor Jaeger, no US swimmers in their mid-twenties have made an Olympic team. Yes, athletes like Tom Shields and Michael McBroom are on this year's Worlds team, but they still lack extensive international experience. When these swimmers are called upon for veteran leadership once the big-time veterans retire, will they have enough experience to provide it?

### **HURTING THE FUTURE?**

Almost every elite swimmer's goal is to make the Olympic

team one day. Recently, two potential future US Olympians decided to swim for other countries. Shane Ryan, NCAA All-American in the 100 back and 100 free, now swims for Ireland. In addition, Santo Condorelli recently posted the number one ranked 100 freestyle in the world while swimming for Canada.

I do not know what led these swimmers to swim for other countries, but I am sure a number of factors influenced their decisions. I do not doubt their competitiveness, but I will say that it would have been much tougher to decide against the United States if some of these veterans were not still standing in the way of an Olympic berth.

In addition to elite swimmers deciding to swim for other countries, there is also a chance of swimmers choosing alternate career goals over the Olympic dreams. Take the case of David Nolan. He is one of the most decorated college swimmers of all-time, currently is the only swimmer (for now) to break 1:40 in the 200 IM, and owns arguably the most impressive high school national record in history in that same event.

But, he has never qualified for a major international meet and he is a Stanford graduate. In addition, he swims the same event that Phelps and Lochte have dominated for more than a decade. If Nolan doesn't make the Olympic team in 2016, will he continue to swim? Only he knows the answer, and I expect that he will. But if he doesn't, I presume Phelps and Lochte sticking around past their primes influenced the decision.

### **IS THIS ALL BAD?**

Now, this whole situation could play out perfectly for the US. We will find out next summer. If some of the young guys make the Olympic team and the veterans mentor them on how to lead and perform consistently, this links the old generation to the new one. If not, the US will compete internationally with a very inexperienced team after the 2016 Olympics. That lack of experience may very well hurt US performance in 2017.

Overall, professional swimming is great for the sport. I am not arguing that professional swimming is bad. It is fantastic that people are getting sponsorships and making money doing what they love.

Trust me, I started my first full-time job last Monday, and I would choose to put my body through hell if I could swim for a living instead of sitting at a desk all day. What I am arguing is that if these veterans shut out the young up-and-comers yet again, USA Swimming could be in trouble in 2017. Hopefully, it all works out next summer. ◀



[ Photo Courtesy: Rich Abrahams ]

# RICH ABRAHAMS, REWRITING THE RECORD BOOKS AT 70

BY NICOLE CASSOU

For most aging adults, hitting a milestone like 70 is not something to look forward to. The opposite is true in Masters swimming, where aging up brings not apathy, but excitement for a whole new set of goals.

“Literally I have heard this expressed by a woman who was 49 years old saying, ‘I can’t wait, next year I’ll be 50,’ you don’t normally hear that,” Rich Abrahams said. Abrahams started Masters swimming in 1975.

Since turning 70 in March, Abrahams has been rewriting the record books in his new age group. In just over six months, Abrahams has claimed 14 world records and 20 national records in all three courses.

During the first week of August, at the U.S. Masters Swimming (USMS) Long Course Nationals in Geneva, Ohio, Abrahams set new world records in the 50 and 100 fly, as well as the 50 free.

He was also the first Masters swimmer ever to receive Swimming World’s Performance of The Week in the summer of 2010, when he went a blazing 22.10 in the 50-yard free, and

a 49.42 in the 100-yard free as a 65-year-old.

In total, Abrahams currently holds 19 individual world records, and 36 individual national records in sprint butterfly, freestyle, the individual medley, and backstroke over four separate age groups. Over the past 30 years of Masters competition he has set 54 world and 104 national individual records.

## **A STORIED START**

Abrahams grew up in a suburb of New York City, where his family belonged to a beach club with a pool. While there was no organized team, Abrahams learned of his affinity for the sport by swimming in races on the 4th of July and Labor Day. He didn’t start swimming competitively until his family moved to Florida when he was 14, where he tried out for his high school swim team in tenth grade.

He quickly learned that he was “low man on the totem pole,” but quickly improved, making All-City, and finishing in the top three at State, earning him a partial scholarship to Northwestern University.

Similar to his high school experience, Abrahams dropped significant time, taking him to an entirely different level of competition. He was the first swimmer at Northwestern in nine years to make it to the NCAAs, where he got fifth in the 50 free his sophomore year. The following season he placed second in the 50.

Unfortunately, during his senior year Abrahams, a two-time All-American fell ill at the Big 10 Championships, spending 10 days in the hospital, and later had a relapse two days before NCAAs (where he was the top seed in the 50 free). True to form, Abrahams persevered to compete so that the team’s 200 free relay could race.

After graduation, Abrahams left the pool behind him, attending Columbia Law School, and then continuing on to practice law in New York City. Realizing that law wasn’t his true calling, Abrahams and his wife moved to Colorado, where he eventually started swimming again after a nine-year hiatus. He pursued a career in recreational administration, after completing all the course work for a graduate degree in performance physiology at Colorado University.

## **TOTAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Abrahams is completely self-motivated and acts as his own coach, designing his workouts with his physiology degree in mind.

“In the mid 1970s I had a fairly good understanding of what



[ Photo Courtesy: Peter H. Bick ]

energy systems were important for certain types of physical activities,” he said. “From 1975 on I trained to race, I never trained to train.”

A typical week for Abrahams is swimming six days a week with one total rest day, where two days focus on pure speed, one day on lactate, easy recovery another, and two more of stroke or aerobic threshold work.

It is this focus and discipline that makes Abrahams such a successful Masters swimmer. “You can’t just leave it all up to your coach,” he said. “You have to take total responsibility and be a student of the sport.”

Abrahams is also a dedicated fan, attending the past three Olympic Trials, and regularly follows four swimming websites. “You know my wife thinks it’s a little weird,” he said jokingly. “I just love the sport.”

### **KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL AGING**

In addition to his training, volunteer coaching for the University of Denver, and running Masters swim clinics, Abrahams also has been giving presentations called “The Keys to Successful Aging,” which largely parallels the benefits of Masters swimming.

A central theme of successful aging is engaging in life. “It can mean a whole bunch of things,” Abrahams said. “Staying

productive, being connected with people, or spirituality.”

Abrahams has found that spirituality is quite compatible with swimming. “In a lot of ways, swimming has many meditative and zen qualities, because when you’re swimming you are in the moment, listening to your body.”

### **NO END IN SIGHT**

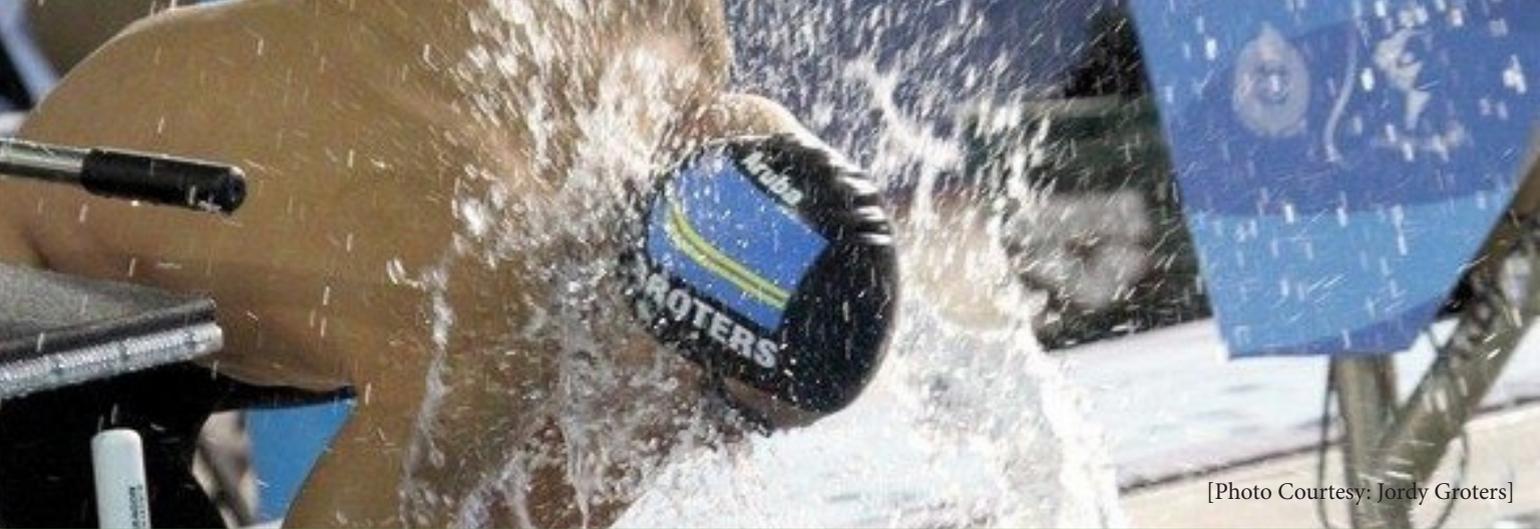
The longevity of Abrahams’ career is a testament to his love for the sport. When asked why he loves swimming, Abrahams outlined three simple, but meaningful reasons.

“Staying physically active, having goals, and being a part of a community of people that I respect and love,” he said.

Even if he slows down considerably and his record-breaking streak ends, Abrahams is committed to sticking with the sport to encourage others and be a part of a very special community.

As far as getting older goes, Abrahams has an unabashed positive outlook. “Old is always ten years older than I am,” he said.

Perhaps the secret ingredient to the fountain of youth is chlorine. ◀



[Photo Courtesy: Jordy Groters]

# THE OLYMPIC MOTTO: FASTER, HIGHER, STRONGER?

BY SEREN JONES

The controversy about the purpose of the world's largest sporting events, such as the Olympic Games and the FINA World Championships, remains to be an ongoing, unofficial debate.

For many, such games are about the best athletes in the world converging to compete against one another, hence the historic Olympic motto, "Faster, Higher, Stronger." Thus the rules to qualify are simple: earn the meet's A cut time designated by FINA, and/or a top two national ranking, and you're almost guaranteed to represent your homeland on the world stage.

But with younger, less experienced athletes attending these games every year, the foundation of the world's fastest meets is arguably changing. At this year's FINA World Championships, at only 10 years of age, Bahrain's Alzain Tareq became the youngest ever competitor to attend the meet.

So what about the swimmers who are eligible to qualify for the games without getting the A cuts? Those swimmers from minority nations who compete in world events, and in doing so, inspire others in their homeland to follow.

Thus are the games all about being "Faster, Higher, Stronger," or about athletes of different nations, who share common goals, coming together?

*Jordy Groters experiences this debate first hand.*

## MEET JORDY GROTTERS

Jordy Groters is entering his sophomore year at the University of Missouri and already has far more swimming experience than his fellow teammates.

"I became a member of Aruba's national junior team at the age of 11 when I first represented Aruba at the CARIFTA (Caribbean Free Trade Association) Swimming Championships in 2008," said Groters. "I have been representing Aruba at international age group meets from 2008 to 2014 at CARIFTA, CISC (Caribbean Island Swimming Championships), CCCAN (Central American and Caribbean Championships) and CONSANAT (South American Championships)."

Having been a member of the senior Aruban team since the age of 13, Groters has continued to represent his homeland at major international meets to date, and has claimed five national records in doing so: the 50 breast (28.64), 100 breast (1:03.66) and 200 breast (2:18.55), as well as the 200 IM (2:09.35) and 400 IM (4:39.83).

However, the Aruba-born athlete, who moved to Florida after his freshman year of high school, hopes to witness his 16-year-old brother, Patrick, break his IM records at this year's World Junior Swimming Championships in Singapore— a move that can only better the standard of the nation's sport.

“In the last 15 years Aruban Swimming has transformed completely from not even being able to medal or make finals at the Caribbean meets like CARIFTA, CISC, or CCCAN to not only medaling, but also setting meet records,” said Groters, who recently returned to Florida from his third World Championships in Kazan.

The Mizzou Tiger gives credit to Head Coach Ismael Santiesteban, who built the Aruba Swimming program from the ground up. However, Groters fears that Aruban junior/age group swimming will hit a standstill in the upcoming years due to the very few swimmers on the island.

“At a typical meet, we barely have more than 100 swimmers,” Groters said. “It’s only logical that these swimmers aren’t as talented, motivated, or simply put, fast enough to compete internationally. I hope that the coaches in Aruba and the swimming federation itself will try to raise more awareness for the sport so that more children will choose to join.”

Although Aruban swimming is progressing, with some members committing to move abroad and swim in college, more could be done to advance the nation’s standing in the pool.

Jamaica’s Alia Atkinson is a prime example. She competed at her first Olympic Games at 15 (certainly not in the top heats), but she now holds the world record in the 100 breaststroke (SCM). Thus, if motivation and drive to become the best are the outcomes of sending these younger swimmers from countries (where swimming is a minority sport) to these meets, then where is the negative? In a sense, some of the greatest athletes were shaped because of such experiences.

### **US VERSUS THEM**

“There are many benefits of being able to compete at these big meets, regardless of cuts,” said Groters. “For one, the meet truly would be a ‘World Championship’ event since there is a representative from almost every country. The result of this is that the participants of the meet also become a little more culturally aware of their surroundings,” Groters admitted. “I have been to three World Championships, and each time I’ve learned about countries that I didn’t know existed. I raced against people I would never usually get the chance to and in some occasions, even became friends with them.”

“Another benefit for the ‘non-qualified’ swimmers is that we push ourselves to another level when we’re at these meets. Just being around all the big-shot swimmers and

warming up in the same lanes as them and being in the same calling room as them, we push ourselves. Not only do we want to show them that we want to compete with them, but we also show ourselves that we aren’t that far from them. During finals, when all of us are in the stands and watching the pros do their thing, it lights a spark inside of us. Seeing these ordinary people swim these extraordinary times makes us excited to get back into the pool and work even harder. In short, being at these meets motivates us to eventually make our cuts and swim amongst them in semis and maybe even finals.”



But this doesn’t mean that outsiders don’t have a conflicting opinion about Groters’ attendance at such significant meets.

“Training in the US as an international swimmer, I’ve definitely heard opinions from every aspect,” he revealed. “Some people have told me that I’m lucky to be able to go to these meets. Others have said that the only reason I get to go is because nobody on Aruba is fast enough and that I didn’t earn the spot. Kidding or not, that’s the worst kind of thing to hear.”

“Only a few people are genuinely happy for me when I get selected to go to a meet,” he continued. “However, I understand their reaction. The US has a selection meet for Worlds and the Olympics. People think that the way to earn a spot is to get top two at that selection meet. What they are forgetting is that not every country has the capability of putting two swimmers in each event. In the case of Aruba, so far we’ve only had one swimmer ever qualify for Worlds (with an A cut) and that was Allyson Ponson in the 50 free, recently in Kazan.”

### **NEVER SAY NEVER**

With his eyes on the prize and aiming to qualify for next year’s games in Rio, Groters believes that his experiences at these world-class meets are making him faster, higher and stronger in more ways than one.

“In the end, we can’t forget that the big shots are normal people too,” he said. “A friend of mine once told me, ‘He has two arms, two legs, two eyes, and a nose. And so do I. Who says I can’t beat him?’” ◀



[Photo Courtesy: Griffin Scott]

# SMILE. YOU'LL SWIM FASTER.

BY CATHLEEN PRUDEN

Swimming is fun. On some level, we all believe this. If we didn't, we would not wake up before the sun and launch our bodies into cold water, following a black line up and down a pool, oxygen deprived, with burning muscles.

There is something we all enjoy: the water, workout endorphins pumping, teammates laughing, best times, racing, something that keeps us coming back every day.

I always knew this to be true, and I genuinely enjoyed going to practice. I had fun taking on a challenge. I thrived off of those workout endorphins. I loved my teammates. But, meets were still stressful. Sometimes not even enjoyable.

I was afraid of failure. I was afraid of letting down my teammates and myself. One bad swim and my confidence plummeted.

At the first meet of my collegiate sophomore season I raced in the 1,000 and I was unhappy with it. Excessively frustrated and disappointed, I then swam a poor 500. My coach told me to "put the swim away," but I couldn't turn my attitude around despite my captains' valiant efforts.

I quickly found myself dreading, and fearful of my favorite event, the 400 IM. I was irrationally afraid of disappointing people— people who would still love me no matter how I swam. I spent the entire race focusing on every negative and was so busy beating myself up that I couldn't recognize the race for what it was, a decent swim at an early season dual meet.

Before I even had a chance to dwell on the swims, my cap-

tains intervened on the bus ride back to school. They said, "You weren't having any fun and that's what's most important." Having a good time was our number one team goal, yet I had allowed myself to be miserable all night.

"You didn't even smile!" they added.

That one comment helped change my attitude towards swimming and improved my ability to race. It reminded me of something a coach once said: "Smile. You'll swim faster." I knew my captains and my coach were onto something so when reflecting in my swim journal I wrote, "New rule: I smile before every swim."

Swimming is fun. Racing is supposed to be fun. Even if I wasn't having a blast, I was going to pretend. This is still a team sport, and I needed to try my best to present the positive attitude my teammates expected.

At first, it was awkward.

Sometimes the smile was a little bit forced, because sometimes swimming the 1,000 doesn't seem like something to look forward to. But, I kept smiling. It became a part of my pre-race routine. Eventually, it became natural.

An article from Forbes reports, "Decades of research bear out the basic truth: your mood is elevated and your stress is reduced if you plaster a big smile on your face, even for a short period of time," and Psychology Today explains why it works.

"Each time you smile you throw a little feel-good party in your brain... The act of smiling activates neural messaging that benefits your health and happiness... The feel good neurotransmitters dopamine, endorphins and serotonin are all released when a smile flashes across your face as well."

Now, when I stand in the ready room before the mile, I get weird looks from the girls around me. Why? Because I am absolutely beaming.

I am so excited to climb on the block and race for 17 painful minutes, to travel up and down the pool thirty three times without enough oxygen and with all of my limbs burning. I know that I am going to have fun. I am being given an opportunity to race, to showcase weeks of hard training, and to do something worth smiling about.

So, when you find yourself dreading a rep, struggling through a practice, or afraid of a race, try something new: smile. ◀

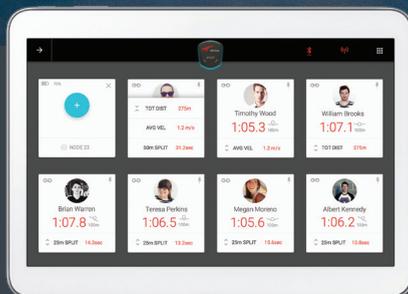
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[ Photo Courtesy, Dr. Scott Spann ]

# THE LAST MAN SWIMMING: DR. SCOTT SPANN

BY TERA BRADHAM

One second before a devastating collision that would change the course of his life, he wasn't thinking about the fact that he was a seven-time NCAA champion. As his ears heard the crunch of his bike's impact with the metal of the car, he wasn't thinking about the world records he'd once held. As his body flew through the air, he wasn't thinking about his renowned surgical practice. As his head hit the unyielding pavement, he wasn't thinking about his son, who would follow his swimming path and would become a 2008 Olympian.

Dr. Scott Spann's panicked mind was able to think about one thing: paralysis.

Lying on the side of an Austin highway, waiting for paramedics to reach him, Spann knew that he had just become a quadriplegic.

## **DEFYING THE ODDS**

As his body lay motionless, Spann's mind swerved out of control. His medical mind raced to analyze his symptoms while he begged and bargained with God.

"I told Him that if I survived, then I would do my best to make the very most of the rest of my life," Spann recounts.

An orthopedic surgeon with nearly two decades of experience was abruptly transformed into a patient. At the hospi-

tal, doctors assessed the damage and told Spann that with surgery, extensive physical therapy, and the help of a cane he might be able to walk again, someday. They grimly offered no assurances.

The ensuing operation involved the removal of bone and ligaments in his neck, the insertion of plates and screws, and the extraction of bone from his hip. It was an attempted restoration with no guarantees.

Encouragement came just days following the surgery, when Spann felt sensation in his hand. After a few weeks, he could stand and begin physical therapy. One year after his surgery, Spann picked up the scalpel again. In 2012, seven years after his accident, he completed the aquabike Ironman. Now he spends his days competing in sprint triathlons and traveling the globe to share his research and to perform surgeries.

## **NO PAIN, NO GAIN**

Spann asserts there is no scientific basis for his recovery. He believes there is more for him to accomplish here, and credits his miraculous recovery to divine intervention.

While he concludes the results are inexplicable, Spann maintains that the perseverance that enabled his recovery came from a core of steel developed in the water many years ago. As a swimmer, Spann and pain were well acquainted with

one another even before his accident. To be a competitive swimmer, Spann believes you must possess extreme mental toughness. It is one thing to withstand the daily pain of the sport in order to participate.

“It takes even more to say, ‘I like the pain and I’m going to keep pushing even harder.’ We learn to accept pain but also to work as hard as we can to achieve pain, because if we don’t have it, then we must not have been working hard enough. Many people never experience that, and swimmers do that by design.”

Spann’s familiarity with pain and endurance in swimming enabled him to push himself in physical therapy, to keep fighting through the bad days, and to continue to push himself past what others deemed “possible” during his recovery.

“Pain can be overwhelming for some and instructive for some. How you choose to incorporate that pain into how you move forward in life is very significant and largely dependent upon our experiences prior to the onset of pain,” Spann explains.

During his swimming career, Spann flirted with the border of sane pain tolerance every day. At each practice, he pushed himself beyond what he thought was possible, he befriended discomfort, and he distorted normality.

“To simply exist on a swimming team, you have to do things that are way beyond the bounds of the work ethic any other sport mandates. And that’s not to succeed in the sport, but just to be on the team.”

The same lessons that propelled him to break world records in the pool propelled him to take a solitary step in the rehabilitation room. The same drive that helped him captain the Texas Longhorns to an NCAA victory later urged him to lift a finger weight.

“Swimmers are always held accountable to themselves,” Spann adds. After a career in the pool, a swimmer simply does not know how to not give their best, to not work with unparalleled dedication, or to not defy the odds.

## **MOVING FORWARD**

“None of us leave the world without a story. We will all have some story of loss in our lives. It’s about taking our own individual story and writing it the way we’re going to end up the happiest,” Spann declares.

Turning tragedy into transformation, Spann has rewritten his story in more ways than one. He continues to take huge strides,

both literally and metaphorically. Spann is the first surgeon in the United States to use stem cells clinically, and he has independently created his own company for the production of a new spinal procedure model.



This September will mark the tenth anniversary of Spann’s biking accident. He still faces adversity every day, and just last summer, he had three more lumbar procedures.

“I still have deficits,” he says. He still walks with a limp and claims he “can win a dance contest just by walking across the dance floor.”

But “how many people do you know who develop character with no stress or work? The adversity we encounter and how we handle it is the telling part for all of us.”

Spann’s story certainly is telling of his character, yet he claims the power he harnessed is available to all.

“None of the things that allowed me to keep going through that and to keep pushing forward are inherent or naturally-given. They are learned behaviors, most of which I obtained from swimming. I simply extrapolated and translated those same assets and attributes that every person in the sport has the opportunity to gather. You do not have to have the same level of success I did in swimming to develop those long-term qualities.”

“Swimmers are an exceptional group of people by necessity,” Spann asserts.

Dr. Spann certainly fits the mold. For a man whose every step defies logic, ‘exceptional’ is quite an understatement.

“Impossibilities DO happen!” Spann exclaims.

Impossible is merely a word defined by its user. ◀

# STRONG WOMEN ARE BEAUTIFUL WOMEN: GROWING UP IN A SWIMMER'S BODY

BY LILLIAN NELSON



[ Photo Courtesy: Rob Schumacher/USA Today Sports Images ]

With ESPN Magazine's recent release of their annual Body Issue, our bodies are on our minds a little extra lately. Whether you are 13 years old and just growing into your body, or 20 years old and reshaping your body with college swimming, this sport really forces you to be aware of your own presence.

I cannot speak on behalf of our male counterparts in the sport, but growing up as a female swimmer, I can fully relate to the feeling of exposure swimming induces. When you are wearing a swimsuit in public for a few hours every day, it can feel as though your body is developing, maturing, and being shaped under a microscope.

Having extra wide shoulders, bulky biceps, and big quads aren't exactly the features emphasized on the Disney princesses we grew up idolizing, and we've all been in that situation where we can't buy that dress or that shirt because when we went to try in on in the store, it got stuck on our shoulders and we needed help getting it off.

Being a fairly big girl myself, I have experienced pretty much the full spectrum of the struggle. On my journey to growing into the athlete I am today, I have experienced being slightly overweight and I have experienced being slightly underweight, but regardless, I've always been bigger than my peers. Long arms, long legs, big hands, big feet.

At age 19, I stand at 5'11" and weigh 155lbs. I've always been among the tallest of my friends, even the boys, and "dainty" would not be a word I would use to describe myself.

It has taken me my whole life to work on being totally comfortable in my own body, and though there are definitely some insecurities that linger, over time, I have come to learn that a strong woman is a beautiful woman. There is no better

sport to celebrate this in than swimming.

Next to the Body Issue, there have been many recent movements and endless literature on loving and accepting your body, especially aimed towards young women.

As I fall into this target audience, I have learned a lot lately from articles, speakers, etc. One of the most important things I've come to understand is that everyone is insecure about their bodies at some point or another, yet no one has the same set insecurities. Being insecure with your body comes with growing up. But that doesn't mean you should always feel that way.

Being an athlete, a swimmer especially, can open up a whole different world of insecurities. When your uniform is a swimsuit, there is very little you can hide. That being said, it is so important to remember how lucky we are to even have bodies that allow us to do what we do, no matter what magnitude we compete at. Not all 'strong' bodies are going to look the same. Swimming is one of the most physically demanding sports, so that in and of itself should make you confident that you are doing good by your body with every practice you finish.

Instead of being uncomfortable and insecure in your own body, no matter what you may criticize on yourself, own it.

Celebrate what you have been given to work with. We often forget the value of our own opinion on ourselves, and how much that opinion can make or break us on a daily basis. Your body is a wondrous tool you have been given to shape and use to reach any goals you may have. So get out there, and show yourself and everyone how beautifully strong you can be. ◀

# A MESSAGE TO THOSE WHO HIDE THEIR INJURIES

BY KAYLIE NOLL



Swimming is tough. It's a sport that requires every ounce of energy from your mind, body, and soul.

But sometimes your body can't take it.

At first you probably don't believe you're actually injured. You're just tired. Just sore. Just having an off day. You'll be fine tomorrow. You say this to your coach. You repeat it to your teammates. To your parents. To yourself.

But then it's back the next day.

It's just a ghost pain, you think. Nothing some ibuprofen can't help, you think. You down a couple pills after practice. You ice. You take all the preventative steps you can. You think you're better.

The pain hits again, though. And again. And again.

Maybe some days it's a dull ache all over. Some days it's a sharper pain, in a centralized area. Some days it doesn't hurt whatsoever, and you're on top of the world...until it rears its ugly head the next time you touch the water. Whatever the pain is like, you tell yourself that it's just part of being an athlete. You comfort yourself with supposed rationale, thinking that this is what happens when you put in the time and effort. But the voice in the back of your head screams, "What if this isn't normal?!"

You don't want to stop and get out of practice. You've never been a quitter. Why start now? You need to finish this practice. You need the yardage. You need to perform well. You have goals you have been striving to reach all season. You're a determined, hardened veteran of the sport.

You don't want to be the swimmer that cries wolf. The swimmer that your teammates scoff at behind your back, saying things like, "they're just trying to get out of the set," or "they just want attention." The thought of losing respect along

with your skills terrifies you.

So you do what you can for a while, ignoring the pain during practice. Maybe you go to a trainer and you do some exercises, stretch it out, ice it or heat it. Maybe you do it all on your own. You just have to get through the season, you think. That's all you have to do. You can't be injured right now. Downplay it.

But downplaying it only makes it worse. The next thing you know, you can't move in the water like you used to. Or you're sitting out at a meet. Soon, it's not only your body that is in pain, but your mind as well. You're a shell of your former confident self, with worries, fear and regret filling your thoughts on a daily basis, in and out of the pool. There's a stigma about being injured when you're a swimmer. Our wounds aren't always visible because we aren't a contact sport. But that doesn't mean that there isn't a real issue, or that it's all in your head.

Whatever others may think, you need to take action immediately, instead of waiting for a miracle to happen. You need to tell your coach. You need to tell your parents. You need to stop swimming when your body is giving you clear signals that it can't go on. You need to do what's best for you, because if you are going to be the best you can be, you need your body to be the best it can be.

Injuries happen in our sport. And they can happen to anyone. You aren't the only one in the swimming world that's ever been in serious pain; so don't be afraid to speak up, and get yourself help as soon as possible.

You can get through this. It will take time. And persistence. And effort.

But you will get through this, and emerge with a stronger body, mind, and soul. ◀

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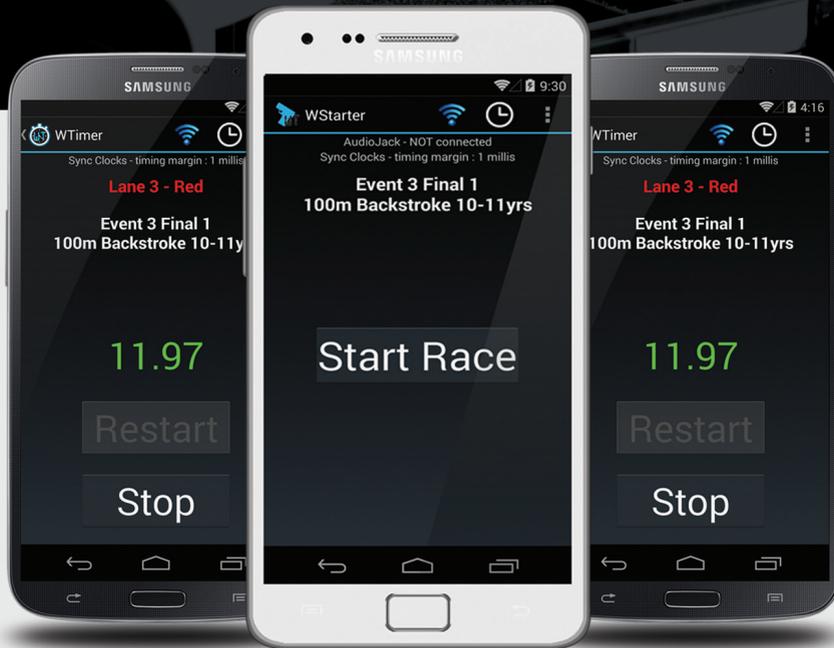
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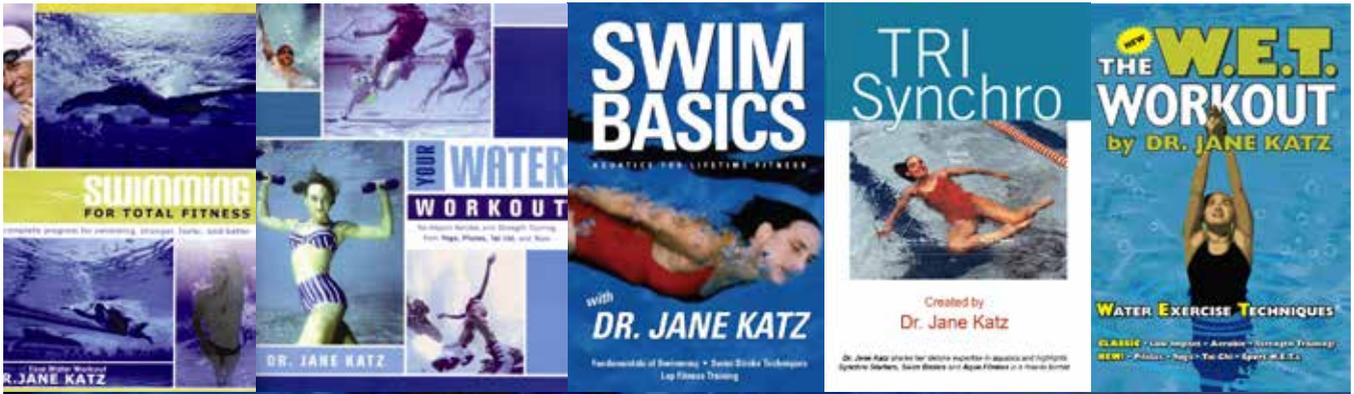
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*“SwimPro has helped revolutionise how we work with swimmers. To be able to capture real-time footage from multiple angles, add delays, analyse, diagnose and then be able to communicate to a swimmer at the pool deck helps improve the quality and effectiveness of our coaching. Thus speeding up the improvement in the swimmers technique and performance.”*

Jim Fowlie, elite Olympic coach, has joined SwimPro as our Director of Coaching

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— continued from 6

## SWIMWEAR

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### Dolfin Swimwear

800-441-0818 ..... [www.dolfinswimwear.com](http://www.dolfinswimwear.com)

### Finis

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### Speedo USA

..... [www.speedousa.com](http://www.speedousa.com)

### SwimOutlet.com

800-691-4065 ..... [www.swimoutlet.com](http://www.swimoutlet.com)

### Swimsuitsforall

888-241-7946 ..... [www.swimsuitsforall.com](http://www.swimsuitsforall.com)

At Swimsuitsforall, we're making the world a better place to swim in, one perfectly fitting, amazingly flattering suit at a time. Since 2005, our unique perspective on female beauty has made us a leader in swimwear for curvy women. Aquabelle, our chlorine resistant swimwear line, is designed to keep the original color and shape so you can throw your worries - and old, beat-up suits - to the wind. Soak up the sun in these long-lasting suits with tummy control! Everything we do comes

down to one simple principle: to make shopping for a swimsuit just as enjoyable as wearing one.

## SWIM CLINICS AND CAMPS

### Fitter and Faster Swim Tour

[www.fitterandfaster.com](http://www.fitterandfaster.com)

The Fitter and Faster Swim Tour *Presented by SwimOutlet.com* is the only turn-key elite level swim and **water polo** clinic operation in the United States. FFT handles all the work from the day they agree to produce a clinic or camp with "local hosts" until the event concludes. Over the past two years Fitter and Faster produced more than 250 clinics and camps in 44 states. FFT selects where to produce clinics based on the shared objectives and relationships with teams, LSCs, and leagues. Fitter and Faster Invests in every event that they produce and does their best to keep the financial investment on the part of the Event Host to a minimum.

## T-SHIRTS (CUSTOM)

### Hasty Awards

800-448-7714 ..... [www.hastyawards.com](http://www.hastyawards.com)

## TEAM GEAR

### Agon Sport LLC

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### Dolfin Swimwear

800-441-0818 ..... [www.dolfinswimwear.com](http://www.dolfinswimwear.com)

## TIMING EQUIPMENT, PACE CLOCK

### Competitor Swim

800-888-7946 ..... [www.competitorswim.com](http://www.competitorswim.com)

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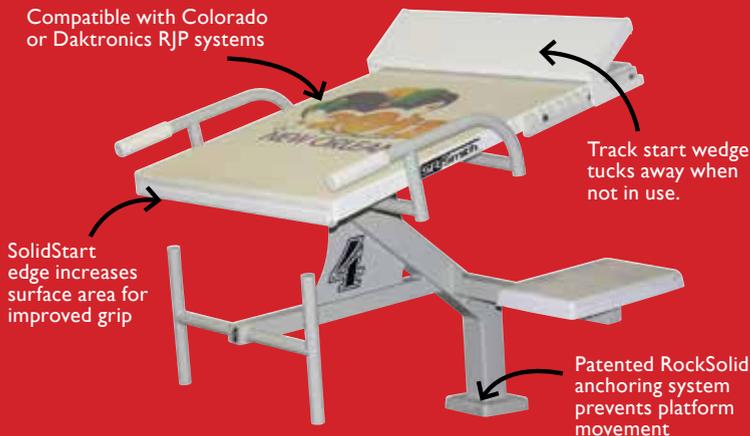
SwimPro, The Elite Swimming Performance System; Providing Professional Coaches and Elite Athletes with the World's Leading Swimming Video Analysis Technology. Developed in conjunction with professional coaches and elite athletes, the SwimPro system of high-definition cameras with individual mounting solutions, iQ2 enterprise analysis software and hardware, iPad multi-streaming application and cloud-based storage system provides the ultimate in professional swimming coaching technology. SwimPro allows coaches to provide active feedback on pool deck as well as review and create post-analysis sessions with commentary and annotation. SwimPro is utilized on a daily basis by over 2,000 world-leading coaches, institutions and elite athletes. ❖

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