

Tay Stratton

Notes from April 28, 2007 induction into the Arkansas Swimming Hall of Fame.

Tay Stratton grew up swimming for Millers Swim Gym and the Dolphins. As a swimmer for UALR, she was an Academic All-American, Team Captain both her Junior and Senior Years, and Mildred Hollis Scholarship winner, while on the Chancellor's List for four years. She took her love for the sport and experience as a competitive swimmer to create the Laser Swim Team in 1992. With 14 swimmers and a need to compete, she took the opportunity to join USA swimming, and the LRAC Laser Swim Team began.

In her early years as a coach, she was also Aquatics Director at the Little Rock Athletic Club and an instructor, where she has taught thousands of children. Under the encouraging management skills of Bill Grantham and consistent support of owner, Pat Riley, the Lasers continued to grow into one of the top teams in the State. Tay's most successful swimmer, Neka Mabry, won High Point in 1999 at Junior Nationals. Under Tay's coaching, Neka went on to attend Olympic Trials in 2000. While swimming for the University of Georgia, Neka set a World, American and NCAA Record in the 200 m Free Relay and an American, NCAA record in the 400 m Free and 400 m I.M. relay.

Members of the Laser Swim Team have set over 56 State and LSC records, had 40 Top 16 swims posted, and many National rankings with two swimmers ranking 2nd in the nation. The team has produced many State High Point winners, and won the state championship in 2001. Two swimmers, Neka Mabry in 2000 and Roy Chambers in 2005, have been named Arkansas Swimmer of the Year. Many of the athletes have continued their swimming careers in college on scholarship. Tay is proud of the many swimmers who have had a great competitive experience from the team and gone on to be productive citizens.

Tay was named Arkansas Age Group Coach of the year in 1994, has served as ASI Age Group Chairman for six years and is serving as the Technical Planner Chairman. She is an ASCA level five coach. Currently, the team has almost 200 swimmers, ages 6 and up, 5 coaches, Triathlete and Stroke Technique camps, 30 practices a week, and 35 masters swimmers.

Besides coaching and administrating the team full time, she is currently training Becky Carter to compete in the 2007 Special Olympics World Games in Shanghai, China and is training a master's swimmer to swim the English Channel in July of 2007.

Tay has had an incredible staff in Tasha Stratton and Mat Twillie. They have been with the team for over six years along with many assistants who many are former Lasers. Tay believes that the years of coaching have been a gift and she has relished all of the great experiences and people she has come to know.