

## Who is this guy?

Who is this guy that is our head coach? I am sure that this particular question has been on the minds of several of you during the last month. When I accepted the head coaching position with this club, there were a few challenges that immediately stood out to me. Those challenges seemed to be related to how communications were handled and to some degree the accessibility of the coaches to the parents and swimmers. The biggest challenge that any organization has is communication. We hear it all the time. We often hear what needs to be changed, and quite frequently who is to blame.

Well, communications start with the top person in the organization and in order for everyone to know how I operate as a coach, I feel it is important to understand who I am as a person, and what I am about. Just like all of you, I am a spouse, and a parent. My wife Carla and I have been married almost three years. We met through my mom and our association with the church that we both attend. We are both involved in our church and Carla's parent's missionary work. In fact we will be traveling to Africa on a mission's trip in August, 2008. This is where Carla spent 8 years of her life and they have been invited to return for a 'reunion'. In the time that we have been married, God has blessed us with two beautiful baby boys...**AND I AM NOT ONE BIT BIASED!!** Kelvin is our oldest son at 18 months, and Aidan is our newest addition at 5 months. Whether they become swimmers like their dad remains to be seen!

I have been involved in swimming in some kind of capacity for over 30 years. As a swimmer, God blessed me with enough talent to qualify for the US Nationals. As a swimmer my mentors included my college coach Mike Jones at Eastern Michigan, University of Michigan head coaches; John Urbancheck and Jim Richardson. I would also be irresponsible if I did not mention my high school coach Art Bucci who enabled me to swim at a good college like Eastern Michigan, and Ann Urschel who was my boss with Team Foxjet and my club coach at Greater Toledo....a VERY long time ago.

As a swim coach my roles have expanded over the years and especially in the last 10 years. My role as head coach with the Miami Valley Aquatic Club has helped my success as a coach through a number of areas. That position enabled me to be the president of the Ohio Swimming Coaches Association, Central Zone Representative on the National Age Group Planning Committee. In the head coach position I was responsible for hosting a number of large competitions including one Jr. National competition, a Central Zone Sectional meet, and a annual invitational at the Miami University aquatic center that exceeded 1200 swimmers.

Performance wise we had swimmers achieve at every level of swimming from novice/entry level swimmers to US Olympic Trials qualifiers. This level of performance was evident with the three subsequent programs I was involved with including the Ft. Collins Area Swim Team, Team Foxjet – Minneapolis, and most recently the Bowling Green Swim Club. Our swimmers achieved national cuts, top-16 times, and state level

time standards. The success was due to the fun that the swimmers in those programs had and the commitment of swimmers, coaches, and parents to success.

Our performances were also enhanced by kids of every ability level. We realize that not every swimmer is going to make a national cut, and that some swimmers are involved in other sports and swimming is just a way to stay fit. I think this is great! I have found that a number of my best swimmers were involved in other sports during their swimming careers. One of the best swimmers I ever coached was involved in jazz dance. I think her success was attributed to BOTH her time in the pool and time on the dance floor. So I think that it is ok for kids to do other activities. However, I will say this, that just like any other endeavor in life; there does come a point in time where making more of a commitment is required to be successful in a life endeavor such as a school, sports, and work.

My involvement in swimming as an athlete continues even today. I love to workout...even more than compete at times! My feeling is that swimming is a great sport for maintaining life long fitness. Like many of our swimmers though, I like to be involved in other sports. I do like to run, bike, and snow ski. I dream of playing golf on the Senior PGA tour with one of my kids being my caddy!! Well, maybe not, but that is one of the other things I like to do and that is to have fun with my two little boys. Who at this time are one of my biggest sources of inspiration and influence.

I would also be wrong if I did not mention the other people in my life who have influenced the direction I have gone. My parents gave me the opportunity to achieve at the highest levels of swimming and if it were not for their support I would not be where I am today. My wife also has been a great source of inspiration too. Her love of children, and not just our own, has inspired me to be the best dad and coach I can be!

So in order to be the best coach I can be I live by the philosophy that has been my mantra for my entire coaching career. That is to provide a training environment where each swimmer can maximize their potential whatever that potential is. As a leader I have to lead by example and as a swimmer my goal was to maximize my potential. My coaches provided the tools necessary to do so and as a coach I plan on passing those same examples of leadership onto our swimmers.

The bible says that leadership is a gift of God and I believe this. I try to work harder than any coach I know, and I hope people will quickly realize this too. As a coach I will also say that I have no control over what other people do and so do our swimmers. Worrying about what other coaches do will not help our swimmers. Just the same, it will not help our swimmers improve if they also worry about what other swimmers are doing. Whether they are swimmers on this team or other teams, it is in our swimmers best interest to focus on what each of us is doing. What are we doing? Trying to be the best swimmer we can be within the framework of this program and the framework of each of our lives!

If we achieve any of this, our lives will be enriched just that much more, and our children will become better individuals. I think this is something that I think we would all agree on. Leading our children in the direction that will make them the adults we want them to be when they have left our homes. What greater challenge do we have in our lives?

Archieved