

Osprey Aquatics Starts Its Twelfth Year

September 12, 2007

Welcome everyone to the upcoming 12th season of Osprey Aquatics. We have traveled far since our humble beginnings in the fall of 1996 when OAQ had 26 swimmers. Last year we began with 95 year round swimmers and rose to 190 with the addition of our summer swimmers.

The 2006-2007 season was our most successful to date. The highlights were many. We finally won SVSLs after 7 long years of coming close. We won with a stunning, joyous victory over Sunnyvale, 2221 to 2218! That is the closest meet any of us can recall seeing. Congratulations to all!

OAQ also had our best ever showing at Pac Swim's Long Course JOs. We cracked the top 10 for the 1st time, finishing 7th out of 73 teams. We also had a big year in the team record books. An unprecedented 84 new team records were set, a significant improvement on last year's strong showing of 68. There was also a great harvest of new standards achieved at all levels, as well as a plethora of lifetime bests from all of the swimmers.

For the 4th straight year OAQ was represented on the Pacific Swimming's Western Zones All Star team. This year Ian McAlister and Catherine Ladd were selected to represent Pacific Swimming in New Mexico, as well as coach Shannon coaching the 9/10 girls.

Another milestone was accomplished by Jennifer Dean, who became the first Osprey to earn a Division 1 swimming scholarship. Jennifer received a full ride, 50% for athletics and 50% for academics, to Washington State University in the Pac 10. Jennifer also earned USA Swimming's Academic All American honors for the 3rd straight year, and became the first Osprey to compete at the Santa Clara International Meet. Monika Eckold also excelled. The fastest female 100 flyer in the team history earned a full academic scholarship to UCLA, another team first. Monika will swim on the Bruin's team this fall as a walk on.

As in years past during the break, the coaching staff takes advantage of the opportunity to thoroughly assess and evaluate the program, it's past, it's present and it's future trajectory. This analysis provides the direction needed to chart a course that will facilitate the program's continued growth towards excellence. Change is part of that growth, in answer to the central question, "What are we doing well, and what can we do to get better?"

Our mission Statement remains: To develop individual potential towards excellence within a team concept and to qualify athletes for Olympic Trials. Our core values support this. They are for each individual swimmer:

- To develop a winning mindset
- To develop race pattern skill sets
- To develop an anaerobic base and fitness

To that end swimmers are placed in groups that will best suit their current individual phase of development and provide them the best opportunity to improve.

The team's success has led to growth in numbers. We will start the new season with about 115 swimmers, up 20 from last season. This increased number will enhance our competitive growth at all levels by adding to our talent and depth. It will also help to maintain and safeguard our financial viability into the future.

Zac and Ashleigh both return, as do Shannon and myself. Zac has taken on more schooling and will continue to coach Willow Glen High; therefore, he will focus his talents on coaching the Blue group. Ashleigh is bright and capable. She has continued to develop as a coach, and now has the understanding and experience within our system to assume sole coaching duties of the White group.

Oliver Mackin has been brought on to coach a new group, the Gold III. Oliver has gained experience coaching the last 6 summers for us. He was an original Osprey and I personally coached him for 6 years. Oliver was a Far Westerns swimmer and is still ranked in the teams all time top 2 for the 200 Fly. He brings experience within the system, both as a coach and a swimmer. He has grounding in our system , what we do and how we do it. He has the understanding, ability and passion to be a very good coach, and will be a significant addition.

In order to accommodate our increased size, you will note we have pushed the start times for the Gold and Blue groups back 15 minutes, which means they will be ending at 7:15. I apologize up front for any inconvenience this might cause. Under the circumstances there is no other way unless we shorten the workouts for those groups and that would diminish both development and performance. I recognize the need to finish promptly at 7:15 for those groups and pledge to insure we do just that. We can also continue Shannon's policy of clearing the deck faster in the evenings to get our swimmers off the deck by about 7:30. It won't be easy, but I know of many teams in Pacific Swimming that end practice anywhere from 7:30 - 8:00 pm. I believe we are all glad we are not one of them.

A great deal of thought has gone into group placements. Several factors are considered in each case. They are for individual: maturity, stage of development, commitment, training consistency and capacity. We also factor in group size and group standards. In general it is more advantageous to be at the top of one group, than the bottom of another. A swimmer's confidence can grow simply by being one of the fastest, most skilled in their group. They often train and improve faster, as well as develop as leaders within that group.

A case in point is Catherine Ladd. Last year, as a 10 year old with 2 Far Western times entering the season we considered placing her in the Gold group. Yet it was my judgment she would benefit more in the Gold II. Her parents trusted my coaching assessment and experience. It paid off handsomely. At the long course FW's at the end of the season Catherine finaled 9 times, a first time accomplishment for the Osprey team! That said, at some point all of our swimmers will be at the top or bottom of a group in their Osprey career. We seek to equip each of them with the mindset necessary to succeed regardless. Each swimmer who takes advantage of their situation, shows up regularly, focuses, trains and races with toughness, will improve. That's what 11 years have demonstrated beyond a doubt.

We seek to help each swimmer improve, learn life lessons through the sport and enjoy the process.

See you September 12th!
Sincerely, Brian