

Osprey Starts Its 13th Year

September 4, 2008

Welcome everyone to the upcoming 13th season of Osprey Aquatics. OAQ started in the fall of 1996 with 26 swimmers. Last year we began a season with 115, and this year we will start the season with 125.

The 2007-2008 season was our finest year to date. The highlights were many. For the 2nd straight year we won SVSL's. Last year the win was close, by only 3 points. This year we won big, by over 700 points! We swam well and won with class. Congratulations to all on another Silicon Valley Swim League championship.

OAQ continued to show well at Pac Swim's long course JO's, improving from last year's finish of 7th place by moving up a notch to claim 6th out of 83 teams. During the course of the meet, the team experienced a flood tide of excellent swims, setting an unprecedented 32 individual team records in the process. That performance, while a real highlight, was part of an overall trend of excellence. Over the course of the season, we established an all time high of 111 new team records, 27 more than last year!

The most exciting of those records was another first for the team. At SVSL's, our 11-12 girls 200 free relay of Miranda Carter, Catherine Ladd, Rachel Owen and Linnea Mack broke the Pacific Swimming record of 1:42.40 held by PASA. Our Osprey girls soared to a time of 1:41.70. In so doing they received tremendous support from the whole team, who made it their goal to help the relay set the record, cheering them on and providing great energy. This is the very first Pacific Swimming record to be set by any Osprey in team history. After doing some checking with the other California LSC's we found that our girls swim was faster than all of their respective records, and hence a state record for 11-12 girls. Congratulations girls!

For the 5th straight year OAQ was represented on Pacific Swimming All Star teams. Four swimmers, Jennifer Dean, Chris Scott, Miranda Carter and Linnea Mack were selected to swim in Canada at the North America Challenge Cup. Three swimmers, Mike London, Michelle Berry, and Phillip Fry were chosen to swim at Western Zones in Oregon. Miranda Carter also qualified for the Quad Meet swum in Reno in February.

Jennifer Dean, swimming on scholarship at Washington State University had a very successful year, both for her school and the Osprey. After competing in the Pac 10 championships in March and finishing school in May, she returned in the summer to swim for the Osprey. Demonstrating her toughness, winning mindset and outstanding competitive development to her younger teammates on a daily basis, both in practice and at meets, Jennifer continued to improve as a swimmer. She won high point at JO's and swam lifetime bests in all 9 of the events she competed in during the summer: the 50, 100, 200, 400, and 800 frees, 100 fly, 100 back, 200 back and 200 IM. Her best times in these events were also team records.

As in years past, during the break, the coaching staff takes advantage of the opportunity to thoroughly review the past year and 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. Changes and adjustments are made where necessary in an effort to upgrade our system of coaching and development of the swimmers, what we call the Osprey Way. 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?"

A big part of that process is the ongoing education of our staff. In addition to frequently studying the 3 different coaching magazines we receive throughout the year, and reading different coaching books, we regularly attend the annual American Swim Coach's World Clinic, held at different venues across the USA each year. This year we will be going to Las Vegas for our 8th straight conference. We attend each year to be exposed to the best and brightest minds in our sport, endeavoring over a 4-day period of clinics, seminars and demonstrations to sharpen our skills and stay current with the cutting edge in the sport's development. We also network with other coaches to be able to share and receive helpful tips and ideas via e-mail throughout the course of the year. I believe these annual trips have improved us as coaches and helped the team as well. This year's clinic promises to be extra special, with most of the USA Olympic coaches in attendance, including Bob Bowman, Michael Phelps' coach. Bob will be speaking on 2 occasions, and we really look forward to hearing him.

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 the best possible race pattern skill sets

- To develop an aerobic base, overall balance, strength and swimming 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.

As for the staff, we see the departure of both Ashleigh Pezzoni and Zac Greer. Each has done a very good job for the Osprey in the past two years, but each has moved on to further their academic and career pursuits.

I shall continue to coach the Senior 1 & 2 groups, and the Gold group. Currently we have 7 swimmers on the team with Sectionals times. I would like to see that number reach 10 or more by next summer. I would also like to see more finalists at CCS and some Junior National qualifiers. Most of the Gold group will be new, but they show promise. Last year's Gold group leaves as the best Gold group we've ever had, and given the stellar history of that group over the years, that is quite an accomplishment.

Oliver Mackin continues with us and will add another group to his responsibilities. Oliver will continue to coach the Gold III and also begin coaching the Gold II. Oliver learned a great deal last year coaching the Gold III and working closely with me in assisting with the Gold group Monday thru Saturday. I point with great pride to the accomplishments of Phillip Fry this summer (going from a swimmer who didn't even have JO's at the start of the year to making Western Zones) and I note with great satisfaction the job that Oliver did working with Phillip. Oliver was the primary coach who instructed Phillip in developing his stroke mechanics, especially his backstroke.

Shannon will continue coaching the Senior 3. Last year I set the challenge before her to develop more FW swimmers from that group. Jackson Steinberg and Courtney Dean each made their FW cuts. I am pleased to see the group's continued improvement under Shannon's guidance. Shannon will also return to coaching the Blue group after 4 years absence. This is one of our largest and most diverse groups and it will benefit greatly from Shannon's experience and her outstanding ability to develop stroke mechanics in her swimmers.

I have hired 2 new coaches to join our staff. Nick Noble is 19 years old and a student at De Anza Jr. College. Nick first started swimming at the age of 9 for SJA. More recently he swam last year on the De Anza college team. He is also on the water polo team. He is bright, hard working, enthusiastic, and loves working with children. Nick intends to continue his

education at SJSU in the future and would like to stay with the team, growing and developing as a coach over the next several years. Nick will be coaching the White group. Also joining us is Janice Petty, a lady I have known for 8 years. Her son George was on the team at the time. Janice spent her youth swimming for one of the legendary coaches in USA swimming, Dick Shoulberg in the 1970's. Recently Janice has decided to make a career change and pursue coaching. She is very intelligent, hard working and has been successful enough in her corporate career to be able to make this change. She knows that the sport has changed a great deal since she swam but she is passionate about the sport, about working with children and she is ready, willing and able to learn the Osprey Way. Janice spent the last few summers running her own lesson program. Long term we would like to establish a more robust lesson program for the team, and Janice will be an added asset in this regard. Janice will assist with different groups as she learns the ropes.

For both Janice and Nick there will be training prior to the season to get them up to speed on our system. Then, as with all of the coaches on the staff, training will continue in an ongoing basis. Moreover, Shannon will spend the first week working with Nick and the White group as they get started and get up to speed. I am excited about adding both of these coaches to our Osprey staff and look forward to the contributions they will make to the team.

A great deal of thought has gone into group placements. Several factors are considered in each case. They are for each 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. Two years ago, 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 Far Western'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 12 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 10th!

Sincerely,
Brian