

**Name:** Molly Gallant

**High School:** Severna Park

**Years on SPY:** 6

**College Attending in Fall 2013:** Grove City College or Messiah College

**Hobbies when NOT swimming:** Well, I spend a lot of my time on the USA swimming website creeping on all the people I swim against. That's my favorite way to procrastinate the homework I'm supposed to be doing. And everything else I do basically leads to the same conclusion: I'm kind of a dork. I like to do online jigsaw puzzles, instigate political debates, go to youth group, whistle rather superfluously, and bore people with my accounts of all the fun things I do at summer camp. I like to read magazines and books about swimming, talk to Allison about all of the things no one else would have the patience to listen to, play tiny wings and fruit ninja, try and convince the team that Christian rap music is good, and of course make videos. I am also constantly on the watch for sporadic outbreaks of communism within our practice group.

**Most memorable swim:**

One of the most memorable swims I have ever had was one I never actually dove in for. I was a SPY rookie and my family and I made the short trek up to Wilton for the first time, which was maybe my second or third meet ever. I was just SO excited to swim at what I then considered to be a huge meet, when all of a sudden I was confronted with a new element, that up to that point I didn't even know existed. Finals.

I was seeded ninth in the 50 free, the only event I was good at. (Obviously not much has really changed since then). Frantically I counted up the people who finished after me. "Eleventh. You got eleventh. Good," I said to myself. I went to the result sheets to solidify my place for that night. My eyes scanned the sheet once. Nothing. Twice. I couldn't find my name. My heart hit the bottom of my chest with a thud as I looked down to the bottom of the page, and found not a time, but the letters D and Q lingering next to my name. "False start. You moved your foot on the block," Jim said when I came over, demanding an explanation to this recent injustice. Needless to say, I was disappointed. But that day, I made a promise to myself that I was going to make finals. I did not know where, when, or how, but I knew that someday I was going to make it happen. So two and a half years later at Districts, I made my first final in my favorite event. And you know what I thought about as I stood, petrified, behind the block that night? I remembered that promise my 15-year-old self was keeping to that eager little swimmer.

**Most memorable/Funny moment:** Pretty much each one of my teammates evokes at least a dozen comical memories. My morning car rides with Marissa and Caroline last year were the best start to my day, as we were often delirious and had almost no control of what came out of our mouths. Katie liked to meow at the wall during our sets, and scared me half to death when on my first day of practice she started throwing a tantrum. She also invented this thing called Wedgie Wednesday and sings the baby monkey song perfectly. Michaela once "accidentally" spit water in my face, and my

conversations with Allison make me laugh on a daily basis. Richard and Tori take the cake, though, with their interview last SCYN, which somehow ended up with Tori dying on the side of a road and Richard heartlessly leaving her there.

**Best Event:** 50 Free. It's a real event people. Richard, I'm talking to you.

**Favorite Set:** SPYOPOLY!! The day Jim decides to yield to my suggestion of doing an aqua-man of only 50s and 25s, that will be my number one.

**Pre-swim Rituals:** I go to the blocks about 15 minutes before my event. If I can focus on the pressure, the pounding of my heart, and the feeling of adrenaline running through my body, I know I will do well. I stand in front of the blocks petrified. I refuse to do that little floundering jig that everyone else does in front of the blocks because I'm a sprinter. If I start thrashing my limbs around, I'm sure I'd just be wasting the little energy I've managed to scrounge up. I fix my goggles a thousand times, rub my stomach, and repeat the same prayer to myself over and over again. And then I go.

**Favorite Meal before a Meet:** Chicken Parm. Is that even a question?

**Advice:** Being on swim team is a lot like being in the Hunger Games. All of a sudden you're forced to compete against people you have trained with and come to love. But if I were to die tomorrow, no one would remember my 50 free time, or how I did on a set last Tuesday. What they would remember is if I encouraged them on their sets, congratulated them when they made a cut, or cheered for them on the side of the pool. Unfortunately for me, they'd also remember the times I yelled at them for being on my feet, was jealous when they made cuts, or focused solely on my own accomplishments. I've learned that the relationships I have with other people are all that really matter. So as much effort as I put into getting faster or making a cut, I know I must put even more effort into building relationships with my teammates.

My hope for next year's class is that they will come to love their team and their teammates as much as I do. And that even in this Hunger Games scenario, truly making an effort to put others before yourself when you want to do exactly the opposite will make the team closer, tighter, and consequently stronger.