

INTERNATIONAL SWIMMING HALL OF FAME PRESENTS

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**WORLD MASTERS
SWIMMERS OF
THE YEAR**

+

**IN DEPTH WITH
ENGLAND'S
JAMES GUY**

+

**SWIM BENCH
TRAINING
FOR STROKE
TECHNIQUE**

WOMEN'S NCAA

WATER POLO

CAN STANFORD REPEAT AS CHAMPIONS?



Q & A



Coach Kirby Beierle

Head Coach
Missoula YMCA Swim Team
Missoula, Montana

- University of Montana, BFA, emphasis on sculpture, '08
- Member, varsity team, University of Minnesota Moorhead
- Head coach, Missoula YMCA Swim Team (2009-present); assistant coach (2004-09)
- YMCA national coach of the year (2017)
- Montana age group coach of the year (2007, 2008)
- Member, Montana Zones coaching staff (two times as head coach)
- YMCA coach representative for Montana
- ASCA Level 2 coach

Beierle inspires her athletes with the philosophy that swimming is a metaphor for life and not just about competition.

KIRBY BEIERLE

BY MICHAEL J. STOTT • PHOTOS PROVIDED BY KIRBY BEIERLE

On the Missoula Y Swim Team (MYST), Coach Kirby Beierle has melded the “Body, Mind, Spirit” principles of the YMCA with fun, fitness and competition to produce a growing and winning experience.

Q. SWIMMING WORLD: *What was it about swimming that drew you to the sport?*

A. COACH KIRBY BEIERLE: As a child, I wanted to do any and all things my older brother did—including the YMCA swim team in Billings. I am pretty sure the team took me only because they wanted my brother. I was a hyper, unfocused kid, so I’m sure I wasn’t a joy to coach.

What kept me swimming through my sophomore year of college was that swimming allowed every single body and personality type—regardless of skill level—to find his/her own success in the sport. Throughout my competitive career, I fulfilled different roles on different teams—i.e., point scorer, hard worker, comic relief and leader.

SW: And then to coach?

KB: I didn’t fall in love with the sport until I became a coach. I coached some for my club team in Minnesota while in high school, where I was given opportunities to learn and grow. After swimming in college, I moved to Missoula and got a job with MYST.

I love introducing young people to this awesome sport and helping them develop and gain confidence. Competitive swimming is a great catalyst for young people to find themselves. Watching a swimmer figure out butterfly or breaking five minutes in the 500 for the first time is really gratifying.

SW: You have an “elite versus elitist” philosophy. Has that been a tough sell to swimmers and parents?

KB: Our team runs on the “elite versus elitist” philosophy. I introduced the idea simply as:

“Swimming is a competitive sport. In competitive sports, we often hear the word, **elite**. What does this word mean with regard to our team? How can a YMCA swimmer feel like they can compete when they are striving to find success in an elitist world that celebrates and praises only the very most elite athletes?”

To me the answer is incredibly simple. The YMCA has core values that we strive to live by: caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. Why would a competitive sport be any different? Would swimming not benefit if our team, parents, swimmers and coaches all strived to do our very best and be elite selves in all aspects our lives?

The elite concept challenges the connection between success and standing alone above everyone else. We are basically trying to separate the desire to be the best version of ourselves from the negative connotations that come with being a high-performing athlete.

You can still be a great teammate to an 8-and-under on our team while you are qualifying for Y nationals. You can also be a serious athlete without separating yourself from your friends, teammates and fun. Everything is connected.

SW: What’s a typical midseason practice schedule for your senior swimmers?

KB: We recommend seven to nine practices a week with five to seven of those practices being water practices. We offer one-and-a-half-hour practices Monday through Friday in the morning and Monday/Wednesday/Friday in the afternoon. Dryland is offered three times a week for an hour. Though we have outliers on either side, the majority of our swimmers practice seven to nine times.

We train mid-distance IM, but each practice has a main emphasis based on a weekly area of focus. We rotate that practice

HOW THEY TRAIN

CLAIRE BECKER

BY MICHAEL J. STOTT



Claire Becker is a 5-foot dynamo who has swum for the Missoula YMCA swim team since she was 5 years old. She is a multi-sport athlete, president of her junior class at Hellgate High School, swim team captain for both Hellgate and MYST and a recent sectional qualifier in the 500 and 1000 yard freestyles. At the 2018 Montana High School AA Swimming and Diving State Championships, Becker notched a third in the 500 and fourth in the 200 yard freestyles.

Coach Kirby Beierle was one of Becker's first coaches, and she remembers her as a very athletic lover of the water whose understanding of the dolphin kick led to her mastering butterfly before freestyle. "She easily qualified and swam well at the state meet as an 8-and-under," says Beierle.

"Although swimming comes naturally to her, going fast hasn't always been her No. 1 priority—so we've had to work on that. Throughout middle school and the first year of high school, she remained a really solid swimmer. Ultimately, her work ethic and intensity grew, and she achieved cuts for regional meets.

"At the start of her sophomore year, her increased confidence and love for the sport led to more training intensity, expanded expectations and higher goals. She continued that momentum into the long course season and even averaged three swim training days a week during her fall soccer season.

"Becoming a MYST captain has forced Claire to grow in her leadership skills," adds Beierle. "She is very coachable, works hard and, as captain, has grown to lead her team verbally in ways more than just cheering. She has a heart of gold and is incredibly approachable to every single one of her teammates from age 5 to 18.

"At five feet of pure muscle and personality, she is hilarious and always has her team doubled over in laughter. Her approach to life is so light-hearted and warm that I often find myself wondering what it would be like to spend a day in her brain.

"She has the ability to be very critical of herself without being over the top or disappearing into her head when overwhelmed. She makes being dedicated, having goals and striving for them obtainable to her teammates," says her coach.

A two-year member of the Montana Zones team, Becker is currently one of two Junior Athlete Representatives for Montana Swimming. She was invited to attend the 2017 USA Swimming convention and plans to attend the 2018 USA Swimming Leadership Summit this spring.

PROGRESSION OF TIMES

SCY	2014	2015	2016	2017	This Season
200 Free	2:07.76	2:06.53	2:05.64	1:58.66	—
500 Free	5:46.02	5:38.15	5:28.63	5:15.41	5:09.41
1000 Free	12:33.47	11:47.30	11:32.18	10:58.94	10:46.95
1650 Free	20:55.56	—	19:51.95	18:40.03	18:32.15
200 IM	2:40.28	2:31.49	2:25.14	2:17.74	—
400 IM	—	5:11.29	4:56.08	4:47.17	4:43.57

SAMPLE SETS

MID-SEASON

MID-DISTANCE/DISTANCE

RACE PACE SET

(with comments from Coach Beierle)

- 10 x 50 free 500 pace on :45 (hold 31s or under)

"Focus on consistency going in and out of turns. Hit the same spot on breakout, taking same number of dolphin kicks off wall and stroke count."

- 500 free with fins and snorkel on the 7:00

"Shoot for under 5:15. Focus on high-elbow catch and relaxed recovery with a kick-dominant stroke."

- 20 x 50 free end with flip on 15 seconds rest (hold 31s or faster)

"Maintain the exact stroke count, dolphin kick count, breakout point and breathing."

- Minus-a-minute 500

"All on 500 race pace."

- 25/10 seconds rest, 50/10 seconds rest, 50/10 seconds rest, 75/10 seconds rest, 75/10 seconds rest, 125/10 seconds rest, and 100

"Becker tracks her rest intervals, drops a minute from her total elapsed time to determine her broken 500 time." ❖



"At five feet of pure muscle and personality, Claire is hilarious and always has her team doubled over in laughter. Her approach to life is so light-hearted and warm that I often find myself wondering what it would be like to spend a day in her brain."

—Coach Kirby Beierle

focus to allow all of our swimmers, given their diverse schedules, to cover their training requirements.

SW: What's the role of volume in your program?

KB: My philosophy is training in moderation. I am a big fan of Dave Salo and his training methods. For swimmers above the age of 13, I do think it is important to ensure they are getting the endurance work. I do not believe in hammering yardage, so all volume has to serve a purpose.

This year, we really started to work on USRPT. Although I have a handful of swimmers who would rather train for sprints only, our team tends to be good at mid-distance and distance events. We warmly welcome kids to the GATTS (Good At Things That Suck like the 400 IM, 200 fly, 500, 1000, 1650) Club when they figure it out. If you train smarter rather than harder, those races don't seem to be as out of reach or daunting.

I believe we have the right formula of yardage, technique, discipline and intensity. Each age group's percentages look a little different. Yardage doesn't become a key player until swimmers hit middle school. Even then, we do it in a thoughtful way, piggybacking it on other skills.

SW: Last April's training was dominated by kick sets. What was the purpose, and how did that work?

KB: We take a week off after our last championship meet and the start of the long course season. When swimmers are getting back in shape, it is a great time to make noticeable shifts in kick sprint endurance. It is an opportunity to get everyone caught up before we add yardage. We have noticed that by the end of the short course season, swimmers may have developed funky stroke and practice habits, so we work on endurance while rechecking and rebuilding stroke technique.

SW: You have a phrase, "scrap line," that is intrinsic to your coaching.

KB: Several years ago, one of our junior high kids would race the last 15 meters and just crush everyone. We asked her thought process, and she said, "Well, that's where you need to get scrappy." So then we started putting cones down at the scrap line and talking racing the last 15 meters.

It really comes down to who wants it and is willing to hurt the most in order to get to the wall first. We focus on the scrap line at least a couple times throughout the season.

We have also incorporated it into our "button reward system." We hand out buttons at swim meets for different things like Outside Smoker (if you win your heat from an outside lane), Good to Great (doing a skill to the next level—i.e., streamline dolphin kicks into not breathing off your first stroke).

Scrap Line is one of the buttons we give out when a swimmer clearly gets really scrappy and touches out an opponent. It has put a fun spin on race finishes and is a great point of pride.

SW: How has becoming a mother made you a better coach?

KB: It has changed me so much! For one, I feel like my relationships with the swim parents are much stronger. I have a better understanding of where they are coming from and approach issues and conversations with more grace and empathy.

I feel my swimmers also see me in a different light. My daughter has almost become a team mascot. I try to find the balance between mother and coach and invite my swimmers to get to know my daughter. I think it makes me more of a real person to them.

My coaching, organization and communication skills have improved significantly because my time is much more precious now. ❖

Michael J. Stott is an ASCA Level 5 coach whose Collegiate School (Richmond, Va.) teams won nine state high school championships. He was named a 2017 recipient of NISCA's Outstanding Service Award.

CLASSIFIED

LONGHORNS SWIM CAMP

ASSISTANT COACHES/CAMP COUNSELORS NEEDED: The Longhorns Swim Camp at The University of Texas at Austin is seeking mature, motivated, team-oriented individuals to be part of its 41st year!

Exciting opportunity to work with world-renown coaches Eddie Reese, Carol Capitani, Roric Fink and Wyatt Collins. Guest coaches/speakers include Olympians Josh Davis, Ian Crocker, Colleen Lanné-Cox, Garrett Weber-Gale, Ricky Berens, Jack Conger, Jimmy Feigen and Whitney Hedgepeth.

Five one-week sessions (May 27-June 29). Room, board, parking, \$600/session salary, up to \$300 travel expense help and NIKE camp apparel package provided. Applicants must agree to work in an alcohol/drug-free environment and must have completed at least 70 hours of college coursework. Competitive swimming and/or teaching/coaching/camp experience required. References, First Aid, CPR and/or Lifeguarding/Safety Training for Swim Coaches certifications must be submitted.

For more information/application, check our employment section at www.LonghornswimCamp.com. Completed applications accepted until positions filled.

The University of Texas at Austin is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, citizenship status, Vietnam era or special disabled veteran's status or sexual orientation.

MICHIGAN SWIM CAMP

CAMP COUNSELORS / COACHES: The Michigan Swim Camp at the University of Michigan is looking for individuals seeking an opportunity to work with Olympic coach Mike Bottom and staff. Five one-week sessions (June 10-14, June 17-21, July 29 – August 2, August 5-9). Room, board, plus \$550/week salary and \$125 travel expense help. Applicants must be 21 years or older, have attended at least two years of college and have experience as a competitive swimmer and/or coach. References, CPR and First Aid certification are required. For more information and an application call 734-647-0862, fax 734-763-6543, email: kbrager@umich.edu, or write to: Kristy Brager, Michigan Swim Camp, 1000 S. State St., Ann Arbor, MI 48109. Candidates must be willing to work in an alcohol/drug-free environment.

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