

To the swimmers and families interested in Tsunami Swim Team:

When you sign up for Tsunami, you are not just signing up for someone to improve your stroke or drop your time - you are signing up for best friends, personal development, and a ton of goal-setting. Tom has the ability to take swimmers and turn them into athletes - leaders in their sport that receive recognition from coaches across the country not only for their times, but their attitude and sportsmanship as well. This is the program you join in Kansas City when you want to be serious about your craft.

I started under Tom when I was a sophomore in high school. I was a decent swimmer - I had made State in multiple events my freshman and sophomore years, and I had attended Sectionals once before as well. I came into Tom's program on the recommendation of my former coach at the time as well as some high school teammates who swam at Tsunami. I was quiet and shy, terrified to be joining a new club so late in the game for athletes. As it often goes, I realized that joining Tsunami was one of the most correct changes in my life that I had ever made.

Tom and the team took me in, and for the first couple weeks I was swimming in the outer lanes - away from the watchful eye of the coaches, hanging with my friends, but beating the intervals for sets handily. Tom slowly started moving me up in lanes, until I was training with the strongest athletes on the team, the National Team. This group was different from any program I had been in before, even after college. I was swimming with world class athletes. These were friends who were incredibly gifted in swimming - Olympic Trials cuts, National and Jr. National cuts, finalists at meets below that level. These athletes were leaders in the water and it showed - college coaches from all around the US were eager to recruit these athletes to their own programs.

However, the National Team did not just lead in the water. This group was very vocal at practice: if it was a hard one, you could expect encouragement from the team to keep fighting, keep pushing through. Other swimmers wanted to be in their lanes so that they could learn from these National Team athletes and compete with them, and the National Team always had space in their lane for anyone who wanted to join. This group was incredibly respectful, outgoing, and personable at meets, so much so that coaches from other clubs would often come hang out with us at meets (I personally had an entire running joke with a former coach at Columbia Swim Club about Melman from *Madagascar*). But the leadership didn't stop at the National Team - every level of swimmer became more respectful and outgoing. No matter the meet level, Tsunami athletes were kind, approachable, and devoted to the craft.

Tom's leadership and approach to the team is the key to the success of the program. It was understood that, while we may not all be as fast as one another, we were all worth training and developing as athletes. A coach should consider the success of everyone, not just the top-tier, and that's what Tom did. Even though he had 14 lanes to coach during practice, every lane received attention from him. A coach also has a responsibility to the swimmers and parents to teach the soft skills. Tom made sure that we understood the personal duties we each had to

ourselves, our teammates, and the brand itself. You have a bad race? Keep it together until you're off the pool deck. You mad that someone beat you? Congratulate them and be excited about your race, regardless of theirs. You have an out-of-your-mind race and smoke everyone? Win gracefully, don't showboat or grandstand, also say congrats to the other athletes who you were just racing. These qualities are what set Tsunami athletes apart from others, and Tom is the one who instilled them within us.

Tom takes it even a step further, though - not only does he support your swimming and your personal conduct, he supports your goals and often dreams bigger than you would. Prior to Tsunami, my goals stopped at going to college for swimming. I was focused on becoming fast enough that someone would pay me to go to their school and get an education. Tom's goals were different though - he was pushing for Olympic Trials. This was something I had never considered personally, I never saw myself as someone fast enough to get the cuts necessary. However, no matter how many times I told him it would never happen or I would never be fast enough, he kept pushing Trials and mentioning the cuts and encouraging me to strive for them. While I never did make Trials, I do not put the blame on Tom - it was my unwillingness to seriously consider the goal that stopped me from achieving it. But Tom never gave up hope, never gave up on me just because I didn't achieve the goal. Tom always supported mine and others goals, no matter how big or small they were, because when we achieved our goals Tom got to be right there with us to celebrate, and that is an amazing feeling.

As a retired collegiate athlete now, I can guarantee you that these skills are not taught everywhere. In college, you see lots of lackluster personal conduct, however I was always receiving praise for my ability to listen and follow direction, to cheer and support others when they thought they couldn't do it, to be respectful towards other athletes and coaches. Most people in collegiate swimming are incredibly talented, however the soft skills don't match. And that is where a strong base program is crucial. Ten years later and I still remember specific talks Tom gave, sets he wrote, and challenges overcome during my tenure with Tsunami. I attribute my swimming success to Tom's program - without him, I would not have gone D1 in college, I would not have shifted my focus from mid-distance to distance swimming, I would not have met the incredible people I have and developed friendships I still foster. This is a program that will shape you for the rest of your career and beyond.

If you are a family or swimmer interested in the Tsunami Swim Team, I can only offer glowing praise for the program. The athletic prowess of Tsunami cannot be understated; more importantly, though, the personal traits and goal-orientation Tom espouses is rare and top-tier. I personally thank Tom and Tsunami for developing me into who I am today - and I hope that many of you get to experience the same that I did.

All the best,

Liam Huffman