

# *Orinda Aquatics at its Very Best!*

## **Clovis 2014 – Senior Travel Trip**

***No dark clouds over this team!***



**“No one has yet fully realized the wealth of sympathy, kindness and generosity hidden in the soul of a child. The effort of every true education should be to unlock that treasure.”**

*Emma Goldman*

### **Stat recap**

- 79 swimmers (78 teenagers) – most in team history
- 1 charter bus
- 2 fifteen passenger vans
- Over 30 first-time travelers
- 0 chaperones/0 bed checks
- 0 swimmers late for any departure
- 0 problems
- An “L” relay! (that’s 48 girls into 12 relays!) – maybe a national record!
- 400 best times – most ever!
- Nearly 1,000 points scored to win the meet
- Over 500 meals (lunches and dinners) organized and served over 4 days
- 1 tornado warning (with 40mph winds)
- 1 amazing team

## A **LOT** to cheer about!



*The following is a random email from a USA Swimming coach (received after the trip) and reveals why this travel process is so significant:*

*Hi Coach Don,  
Of all the talks you and Ron have given, I hope one point that people hear (I hope I got this correct) is that you do not need chaperones, not in the traditional sense anyway. Amen brother. Your culture and the expectation that it affords at "OA" of not needing chaperones (dorm police, baby sitters etc.) is spot on. We should all aspire to that. But it does not start at the competition. It is, as you teach, an outflow of the ongoing, clear, unwavering, nurturing of ideals and practices that make for a SAFE and TEAM focused environment. Who and where does anyone get the idea that rowdy acts or vandalism is cool or acceptable? As I read more about poor judgment in teams or on campuses, I am bewildered where the teaching is and reminded how much I respect what you all do at OA. I am sure it is not easy but I also do not think it is that complicated either - set a tone, teach a standard, and nurture belief and confidence that gets buy-in, so everyone can enjoy, and be proud of an incredible culture. Respectfully, AK*

I was talking to one of the swimmers a few weeks ago and they mentioned that a new swimmer on the team was very excited about the upcoming Clovis trip. I thought a little about it, and while I was encouraged to hear that, I was a little surprised. It is in fact, *a swim meet*, and in this case, a swim meet in bad weather, *and* we do nothing in terms of activities. Of the fifty plus waking hours in Clovis, only about six are not "meet" related. There is virtually no downtime or free time. And yet, kids come back talking about what a great *experience* it was. To most people, spending fifty hours at or around a swim meet in the wind and rain would not be considered "a great experience", yet for these kids, it is. And the reason is not in sitting in the cold watching hundreds of heats; it is in being with an extraordinary peer group, in a positive, caring culture, and being a part of a great swimming effort. And the critical piece in all of this is leadership; creating a perpetual leadership model where upperclassmen are impeccable role models and younger swimmers aspire to that role in the future.

## Leadership (OA Senior Class) at its Best



We have attended the Clovis Swim Club/Juanita Allington Senior Championship for several years. This is the largest group we have taken to date, and it may very well be the best meet in terms of performance and behavior. The kids were near perfect in every way; punctuality, attitude, support, attire, respect, behavior, not to mention swimming. They were painfully humble and supportive of everyone. They busied tables, thanked Craig, the bus driver (fifty-five times each trip), and supported their teammates like no other. It may sound like a cliché to say that it is a privilege and a pleasure to coach them, but it is. With all that is going on around us and in society in general, they are a beacon of light and hope for youth and sports.

In our meeting with the kids prior to the trip, we told them that few teams in the country, if any, would even entertain this – a coach run/managed trip with eighty teenagers and no chaperones. In a sense, our objective, beyond swimming well, is to show that this can be done and to prove that a large group of teenagers traveling is not a recipe for disaster and does not even have to be a challenge, but can be, dare we say, highly enjoyable. And it does not matter whether you have one or eighty. We hope that in some way this may inspire other clubs to cultivate such behavior and travel standards and create accountability with athletes. So the real significance of the trip is in the power of integrity, teamwork, respect, and leadership, and that is what we are most proud of, of setting standards and not following social norms. There is a quote that suggests that great leaders *produce more leaders*, and that is the goal of this team and this process.

A large part of what makes the trip work is the structure and expectations. Ronnie does a tremendous amount of work in preparing the trip: busses, vans, hotel, entries, t-shirts, and countless spreadsheets. Nearly eighty swimmers are placed strategically in a charter bus and in vans, and they are assigned rooms with a room captain at the hotel. We leave each morning at 7:15, arrive at the pool, warm-up, have a meeting, swim trials which run from 9:00 to approximately 1:00, swim time trials, head back to the hotel at about 2:00 where the kids have lunch (waiting for them) and about two hours to rest (mandatory in rooms), and then we head back to the pool at about 4:00. At finals, kids either race or cheer. We all swim (a lot of) relays, and arrive back at the hotel at about 8:00 for a catered dinner, a detailed meeting, and bed. If kids need to leave their room for any reason, they must call us. Room captains are accountable for everyone and everything. Team attire is mandatory, and is navy in the morning and red in the evening (or rain gear in a thunderstorm).

Another key to a successful meet is support. We are blessed to have kids that care about the team and want to be a part of the process. Two swimmers attended the meet that could not compete but assisted the coaches throughout the trip: Kylie Van De Wyngaerde and Mary Ashby. We are very appreciative that they could be with us, and thankful for their help.

We could not be more fortunate to have incredible coaches with us and with the kids, in Kevin and Sophie. They are extremely passionate about coaching, about the team, and about the process. On a side note, they did come to a revelation that, after spending 10 hours in a van with thirteen (great) teenage girls, they may wait just a *liiiiittle* longer to have kids. And player/coach, Katie Kastes, AKA “secret weapon” or #definitley not first rodeo, was amazing in finals and showed why she is/was such a great competitor, and how much she is a part of this team and culture.

### Some highlights

- *Rajeev cheering for 20 relays (by himself!)*
- *Genevieve’s best 50 and 100 times in the 200 Free!*
- *The Alec Zhang fist pump*
- *Great time trial swims*
- *The underwater backwards worm*
- *The Matt Lennon swim-off (and fifty screaming fans!)*
- *Cassidy Fuller going 55.9 in the 100 Free – a great swim on her journey back!*
- *Will Gitting’s first 200 Fly at 2:02, going out 56.0 (best time in 100)*
- *Underwater videos*
- *Arianna’s 10 second drop in 200 IM*
- *BIG drops in finals/BIG cheering in finals*
- *Team Trivia challenge*
- *Cole Stevens – short course Jr National cut in the 100 Back at 50.9*
- *Jake Simpson’s first 400 IM (at 4:10)*
- *Swimming videos on the bus*
- *Kimi (HOTa)’s Fly relay split of 58.8!*
- *And of course the obligatory In & out Burger stop with a line of eighty-five. When all were eventually served, we took every seat in the restaurant.*



### Thank you!

We would also like to *sincerely* thank Wendy Jacobs and all of the parents for their support of meals, snacks, and water at the hotel and at the meet. Wendy organized and transported three made-to-order lunches for 85, and organized all team dinners. A big thank you to Charlene Funai for creating an extraordinary video that captures the energy and team camaraderie of the trip, and also to Cheryl Grubbs for the great photos. And finally, thank you to you, the parents, for supporting your children to be students-athletes, for allowing them to travel with us, and for creating such incredible representatives of this team.

Donnie & Ronnie

*“Life begins at the end of your  
comfort zone.”* Neale Donald Walsch



## Looking Forward

We are having post-Clovis meetings with the kids to review the meet and we are now looking toward the high school championship meets in terms of kids peaking and their event selection. Any USS meet should be entered "Unattached". The next two months will be critical for training, technique, and race adjustments.

## USA Swimming's Virtual Club Championships

On a somewhat related note, we would like to mention the team's performance in the USA Swimming Virtual Club Championships. USA Swimming calculates daily the performance of every USA Swimming team (over 3,000) in ages 11-18, for all events, assigning points for each time. We swam so well in Clovis that our score increased by over 15,000 points to 197,200, an all-time high for OA and places us near the top fifty in the United States, top ten in California, and certainly among the very best in our size range nationally. This is a true measure of team performance and one that we should all be proud of. It also serves that notion that you can have both, performance and culture. Thank you again and congratulations to everyone.



**“A great leader’s courage to fulfill his or her vision comes from passion, not position.”**

John Maxwell