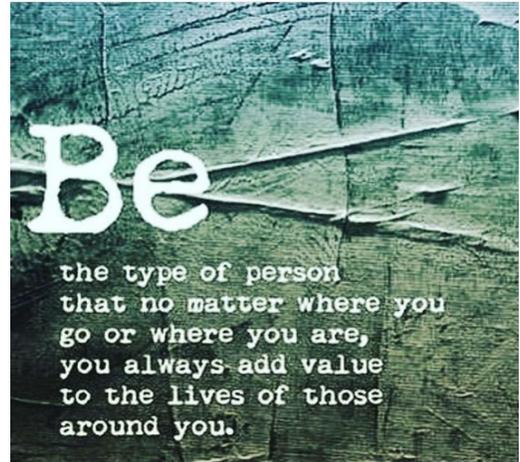


# Orinda Aquatics Fall/Winter Newsletter



*The following newsletter is a supplement to the weekly updates. It offers a broader view of the team, the culture, and the sport. Included is information on the topics listed below.*



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## General Recap

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First and foremost, we wish you all a very Happy Holiday and certainly an extraordinary New Year.

I would like to offer a general recap of the season and some broader observations and allow you to read any or all of the following newsletter. First, as we have stated, we thank you for your participation and support. We truly feel blessed to not only coincide a passion with a vocation (although we have never referred to coaching as “work”), and so fortunate to be a part of this program and to share your/our athletes’ journey with them.

There are a number of college updates included in the newsletter. This is primarily because we are very proud of their achievements, and, their observations offer critical insight into the process that both parents and swimmers are living in the present.

As far as the season goes, the team finished the winter championship/peak meet season with strong performances at all levels, beginning with breakout swims at the Brentwood Last Chance meet, followed by an outstanding meet by the Junior Group and our fourteen-year-old Senior swimmers at JO’s, and concluded with a truly impressive showing at Junior Nationals in Iowa City, with the largest group (18) we have taken to a national meet. With regards to Junior Nationals, we would like to sincerely thank Kristin Thompson for her invaluable support with travel and organization.

We want to welcome the newer swimmers who are joining the team and feel confident that while it can be overwhelming at the beginning, you will find great value in the program and the relationships over the course of your journey. USA Swimming is the greatest and most successful amateur sport in the world and Orinda Aquatics has been recognized for culture and athletic development, and has achieved a level of performance that few smaller clubs ever have. We are excited to have you and are here to help in any way we can.

Finally, I would like to include two emails that recently came to me that touch on the heart of the program. The first is an email from a coach in Arizona who has reached out to Orinda Aquatics for assistance in building a stronger team culture, and the second is from John Leonard, the Executive Director of the American Swimming Coaches Association.

Thank you again, Donnie

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*Hi Don,*

*I hope the season is treating you and your team well. I’ve been fully immersed in your ASCA character guidebook and it has inspired me to a completely different level as a coach. Everyday I feel compelled to work with my athletes at a level above just stroke work and swimming, to fully engage and mentor them in a personal and emotional way. This book and model has been a blessing and **I look forward to continuing to shift the culture of my team in the right direction.***

*All the best, Bob*

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*An email from John Leonard, the Executive Director of The American Swimming Coaches Association*

I consider Orinda Aquatics, with you and your brother, providing our entire profession with an example of “how it is supposed to be done,” the shining example of a club providing the service that all should, to their community. Thank you so much for all you do for your athletes and team, for Pacific Swimming, and for our profession. **You “changed the conversation” about coaching with this work.**

*All the best, and Happy Holidays! JL*

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## Coaches Corner:

### Junior Group

As swimmers come with various backgrounds and exposures to the sport, the focus in the Junior Group will always be on stroke construction and development. From Junior 1 to Junior 3, the emphasis is on balance and movement in the water, and distance-per-stroke. Training becomes an adjunct to efficiency. It is certainly easier to train younger swimmers with more volume and intensity, but as swimmers grow and become stronger, inefficiencies become magnified and any poor habits become engrained and very difficult to reverse, especially with increased workloads in the senior group. We have seen over many years, a “catch-up” effect in performance in later years (high school) by swimmers with good technique and balance in the water and this continues into their college years. See recap of components for improvement later in the newsletter.

We have also expanded the Bridge dry land program for the Junior Group (1-3), and let’s not forget the Ultimate Frisbee program! Bridge offers comprehensive physiological development for younger swimmers, which incorporates core strength, flexibility/range of motion, mobility, and injury prevention (which the coaches need after Ultimate Frisbee!). This program is also a prelude (as building blocks) to the Senior Groups’ program. Thank you to Lauren Healy who has done a great job leading the group.

Focus for the Junior Group will be on the Neptune Invitational in February and then on the Spring peak meets culminating with the Arizona Age-Group Showcase, which will be short course trials/long-course finals.

### Senior Group

The senior group has enjoyed one of its greatest periods in recent memory. The group is the largest in terms of size, and has shown camaraderie and culture that is positive, supportive, dedicated, *and* extremely enjoyable to work with. With the promising meet in Iowa, there is every expectation that they will grow into the strongest group in OA history.

Swimmers either traveled to Iowa City or rested for the Walnut Creek Senior 2 trial/final meet. The focus will now will move to Clovis at the end of February and/or Sectionals in Carlsbad for the Spring peak meets. The high school season will begin in February and long course competition will begin in March. The short course season will culminate in May with league meets, North Coast, the State meet, and the USA Swimming walk-on meet. We will meet with the groups to review the process of balancing high school and USA Swimming, and well as meet plan overviews.

### Standard Achievements:

Congratulations to new time standards achieved and to our PacSwim All-Stars:

#### Pacific Swimming All-Stars:

- Isaac Kim (14)
- Natalie Ung (14)
- Lexi Fok (13)

#### New Futures Qualifiers:

- Natalie Ung – 100 Breast, 1:05.73 (JO’s)

### New Sectional Qualifiers:

- Isaac Kim (14) – 500 Free, 4:42.67 (JO's)
- Amber van Meines (14) – 100 Free, 53.20 (JO's)

### Junior National Qualifiers

- Maddie Smith – 100 Back, 55.88 (Iowa)
- Mason Loyet – 200 Breast, 2:03.59 (Iowa)

### Junior National Final Swims

- Spencer Daily – 50 Free (13<sup>th</sup>) 20.54
- Tony Moore – 100 Breast (20<sup>th</sup> qualified) – 56.03



### Junior National - Four Men's Relays scored (top 16)

- 200 Medley (14<sup>th</sup>) – Cruz (23.8), Moore (25.6), Thompson (22.8), Daily (20.06)
- 400 Medley (12<sup>th</sup>) – Cruz (51.6), Moore (55.1), Thompson (50.2), Daily (44.7)
- 200 Free (16<sup>th</sup>) – Daily (20.7), Ayers (21.3), Cruz (21.2), Moore (21.1)
- 400 Free (16<sup>th</sup>) – Ayers (46.5), Daily (45.3), Moore (46.7), Cruz (46.2)

### And congratulations to Daniela Moroz for her continued dominance in the world of Kite Board as she wins the World Title –

*“If anything, the US’s Daniela Moroz was even more dominant in the women’s division. The 16-year-old had already won the IKA Formula Kite World Championship crown even before she took to the water on the last day, securing her back-to-back world titles.” Note: the OA coaching staff is still offering to carry her bags at the next World Championships!*



### Board note:

The Board and the staff are here to assist with anything you might need and will make themselves available to meet with you if you would like. Please don't hesitate to reach out with a question, need, or concern.

- Vince Castillo, President - vcastillo@llcllp.com
- Jean Follmer, Vice President/Secretary - jeanfollmer@yahoo.com
- Trent McDonald, Treasurer - trent@mcdonaldcapital.com
- Renee Owyong, Meet Director - r.owyong@att.net
- Jon Wheeler, Facilities - jwheeler35@comcast.net
- Sonya Twyman, Parent Committee - stwyman12@gmail.com
- Jennifer Flanders, Social – jm\_flanders@yahoo.com

**“The happiest people don’t necessarily have the best of everything but they make the most of everything.”** Sam Cawthorn



### Parents Need-to-Know:

- ✓ **Parent Education Night** – Soda Center Community Room – January 25<sup>th</sup> 6:30 – 8:00
- ✓ Senior – **Clovis** (Feb 22-25) will be a coach-entered meet. There are qualifying times. The meet will be optional for Sectional swimmers. Coaches will discuss with the groups.
- ✓ Senior – **Sectionals** in Carlsbad (March 1-4) will be a coach-entered meet. Details to follow. For these swimmers, Clovis will be limited or optional.
- ✓ Junior – **Arizona Showcase** (April 13-15) will be a coach-entered meet. Swimmers will travel with parents. Meet information will be coming in January. Parents may want to begin looking at flights and hotels.
- ✓ Senior – some high schools may be participating in the **Mission Viejo** Invitational on March 24<sup>th</sup>.
- ✓ We will soon have available, Orinda Aquatics **team attire**. Parents will be able order from the OA store and have items delivered to their home.
- ✓ **Far Westerns** (OA host) will be very important to the team and to Pacific Swimming
- ✓ Parents also “need to know” that **we greatly appreciate your support!**



### Parent Reminders:

- ✓ Orinda Aquatics has a contractual relationship with **Speedo** as a team sponsor. As such, we are obligated to purchase and wear Speedo suits for training and competition, including championship meets. We ask that swimmers and parents honor this relationship.
- ✓ **Team attire** (navy warm-up, red t-shirt, and team backpack) is required at all meets by all swimmers, and **team caps** are required at workout.
- ✓ Don't forget to view the great **team photos** on the website. Thank you to Fred Stambaugh!
- ✓ All caffeine related products and **stimulants** are strictly prohibited in competition, or otherwise.
- ✓ Coaches are more than **happy to meet** if you would like to discuss your child's swimming.
- ✓ Juniors in high school should begin assembling their **college lists** and meeting with their coach.
- ✓ **Spring Break** for the DAL schools will be April 2-6.



### Swimmers Need-to-Know:

- ✓ PLEASE – **Do NOT “borrow” other swimmers' equipment**, and make sure your name is on your mesh bag and each piece of equipment.
- ✓ All swimmers should know their spring **meet schedules**, focus, and time standards for qualifying.
- ✓ Please let your coach know if you have a workout **conflict**.
- ✓ Make sure you have a **water bottle** at practice, and all of your training equipment.



### Gift Exchange “Creative” Prize Winners!

#### Senior Group: Harry Flanders –

A large, heavy box (bricks and rocks used for weight deception). The “gift” was a **loaf of bread, lunch meat, and condiments**.

#### Junior Group: Elsa Hartley -

A plastic **reindeer that “pooped” jelly beans**  
*Neither one sounds too appetizing!*

**“The struggle you are in today is developing the strength you need for tomorrow.” unknown**



### Key Dates/Events Reminders:

- ✓ January 25<sup>th</sup> – **Parent Education**, Soda Center
- ✓ **Spring Break** for DAL schools is April 2-6
- ✓ **OA CBA Long Course** host meet – April 14-15 (Junior Group at **AZ West Age-Group Showcase**)
- ✓ **OA Team Picture** May 15<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ **OA Long Course Senior** host meet – June 2-3
- ✓ **Character Camp** (Junior Group) – early June
- ✓ **Rafting** – June 15 (TBD)
- ✓ Senior Group **Theme Week** – Week of June 25<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ **Harbor House** clinic #1 – June 29<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ **Junior Breakfast** – June 30<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ **Team Banquet** – July 12<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ **Water Slides** – July 16
- ✓ **Harbor House** clinic #2 – July 20 (TBD)
- ✓ OA host **Far Western Championships** – July 26-29
- ✓ **Tiburon Mile** – August 18<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ **NorCal Kids Triathlon** – August 25 (Junior Group)

### Welcome to the Team

- Team Hlavic (William, Gregory, Claire), Junior 1 – from Meadow
- Emma Bustamonte, Junior 2 – from Dewing Park
- Anna Krivan, Junior 1 – from WCAB
- Emily Jones, Junior 2 - Montclair
- Nathan Pompeani, Junior 2 - Montclair
- Mary Kate Young (welcome back), Senior 2 – from Meadow



*Although not until June, Jill Jones will be getting married and relocating to Santa Barbara at the end of May. Jill has been a gift to us as an athlete, friend, and coach, and we will miss her tremendously.*

*Thanks Jill!*

**“What you do makes a difference, and what you have to decide is what kind of difference you want to make.” Jane Goodall**

## College

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**Commitments** - The following OA swimmers have made college commitments:

- Sophia Cavalli – UCLA (swimming)
- Mason Thompson – UC San Diego (swimming)
- Spencer Daily – UC San Diego (swimming)
- Megan Colpo – West Point (swimming)
- Lauren Etnyer – Indiana (water polo)
- Michael Wheeler – Georgetown (swimming)

### College Coach Notes

- UC San Diego - David Marsh, United States Olympic Coach 2016, said in an email, “I have the highest regard for your program”
- Whittier – has hired a new coach and is looking to build the program
- Mills College – the coach will come and speak with any swimmer interested in the school

### OA Collegiate Team Captains (2017-2018)

- Allie Stevens named Team Captain at UCSB
- Brittany Percin named Team Captain at CalTech for the second year
- Both Megan and Emily Giambastini have been named team captains to their respective schools, University of Indianapolis and University of New Hampshire.

### The College “Club Swimming” Path

Orinda Aquatics graduated sixteen swimmers in 2017. Nine are competing on their intercollegiate programs and we have learned that another five are swimming (and competing) with the college *club* teams:

- Callan Hoskins – Stanford
- Rishabh Roy – Cal (developing)
- Ryan Teshima – Johns Hopkins
- Eli O’Brien – Cal Polo
- Neil Binnie - USC

### Alumni/College Notes - Performance

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#### **Emily Ward (OA 2016) Wins 3 Events, Leading UCSB Women Past UCLA in Swimming**

The UCSB women's swim team swept the 50 freestyle and went on to defeat UCLA, 137.5-123.5, in a dual meet on Saturday. **Emily Ward** took first place in 24.20. Ward had a big day for the Gauchos, winning three events against the Bruins. She took the 100 free in 51.82 and tied for first in the 200 free in 1:52.35.

#### **Mackenzie Duarte (OA 2017) Represents Strong Freshman Class at Washington State**

*The Cougars lost eight senior athletes, but gained eight freshmen for the season*

“We have a young, talented team. I am looking forward to preparing them for the challenge of the Pac-12. I like our schedule ... it will give our fans a chance to see us swim a little more.” **Mackenzie Duarte of Alhambra High School in Martinez, California, signed a national letter of intent to attend WSU earlier this year. Duarte finished 13th in state for 100 breaststroke her senior year of high school. She was also a member of the Orinda Aquatics, where she was named swimmer of the year.**

## Megan Howard (Navy – OA 2013), competes in IRONMAN World Championship

<u>NAME</u>	<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>DIV RANK</u>	<u>GENDER RANK</u>	<u>OVERALL RANK</u>	<u>SWIM</u>	<u>BIKE</u>	<u>RUN</u>	<u>FINISH</u>	<u>POINTS</u>
<u>Howard, Megan</u>	USA	21	368	1585	00:59:54	06:14:49	04:55:01	12:17:46	3422

## Alumni/College Notes - Experience

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Below are three recent emails/updates from OA alumni. They reflect great lessons in life and in sports:

- Scott Wu - embracing challenges (athletic and academic) through perseverance and resilience
- Callan Hoskins – an integrity-driven culture
- Spencer Lekki – the power of team

## Scott Wu (University of Chicago)

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Donnie & Ronnie,

I hope you are doing well and are enjoying this holiday week. It's been a bit since we've talked, but I wanted to send some general updates on how my sophomore year has been thus far.

This year has been far more difficult than last year, but it has also been very fun. Swimming is going very well, and we just had a drop-rest meet last weekend. I felt alright in the water but not completely rested, and raced the 200 fly, 500 free, and 200 free. My Saturday sessions were extremely exhausting, as I had to swim five races totaling 1,600 yards (200 fly prelims/finals, 500 free prelims/finals, 200 free in the 4x200 relay) with a few of those races back-to-back-to-back within a one-hour time frame.

My swim training has been very good this year, and I have managed to stay injury-free while putting together some great sets in the weight room. With regard to the team atmosphere, the overall work ethic here is top-notch with several exceptionally committed swimmers. My two roommates are especially motivating and make me **excited to go to practice every day.**

School is also going well, however classes are much harder this year. I am taking organic chemistry, molecular biology, child psychology, and an American politics course, all of which require large amounts of reading. I do enjoy these courses, but often find myself up late at night and catching up on work on the weekends. With swim practices and my job as a student lab technician in the biology division, free time is hard to come by. In the coming quarters, I am hoping to take more classes in cancer biology and immunology. Looking even further ahead, I hope to conduct research abroad in Europe during summer 2018, however, I have a lot of work to do before then in order to make it a reality.

I hope OA is going well and that the kids are training hard. I could give endless advice about school and swimming to the swimmers, however, the positive and professional environment that you guys create is by far the most effective tool for their development; it transcends advice and puts them much, much farther ahead than other swimmers around the country. As always, I am very grateful for my involvement in the program and always speak fondly of OA when it comes up in conversations.

Best, Scott Wu

University of Chicago 2020, Biology, Comparative Human Development

## **Callan Hoskins (Stanford)**

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How's it going at OA? I just wanted to give you an update from the Farm. I am super excited to be swimming as well! The pool is definitely my "happy place" and it's so nice to get to swim every afternoon. Our season started just a week ago, and our first meet is this Saturday against Santa Clara, Cal Poly, and USC at Santa Clara. Hopefully we will be able to swim against Rishabh and his bears swim team sometime soon and show them who's boss.

Everything is going well and adjusting very nicely to college, but one thing stood out to me this afternoon. It was the first day of our Stanford club swim practice, and we were doing introductions with the team. At my turn, I said my name, strokes, hometown, and high school/club. When I mentioned Orinda Aquatics, several members of the team recognized it instantly. They didn't know many of our swimmers, but they knew about our philosophy--"Character First". They swam for PASA and said that their coach was constantly telling them about what we were doing at OA outside the pool. I was so proud to have swum for Orinda Aquatics.

Yours, Callan Hoskins

## **Spencer Lekki (Carleton)**

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It's been a hectic first term here at Carleton, but I think that the bustle is worth it for all the positives I've been experiencing. The team is currently on our way back from the first meet of the year, a relay invitational with all the teams in our conference, and I've had some time to reflect on the college experience so far.

I don't think I can overstate how important being on the swim team has been to my enjoyment of my time here so far. I know you agree that having a full schedule makes people more productive than lots of free time, and that is doubly true here. Having the structure of swimming has been great for my time management skills in the adjustment to only having 4ish hours of school a day, often less.

As great as the time management has been, the thing that has really struck me about the team is the culture. All throughout my time on OA, I knew that what we had was special. However, I never could have imagined that I'd find a college program that would match my values as well as the Carleton team has. I already feel like the other men on the team have the potential to become some of the best friends and role models I've had in my life.

One way that this was made clear to me was at the meet today. We had a men's team meeting before we started, and the upperclassmen were telling us what to expect. The part of that talk that stood out the most to me was the part about cheering. Coming from a program like OA, I had prepared myself for a noticeable drop in cheering once I reached college, but my expectations were blown away this morning. The upperclassmen explained that they would be cheering for every race they could, so we should try and pay it forward by cheering for as many as we could. It wasn't cheering because we had some rule-based obligation to, it was cheering because that's the way our team works. And that's what happened. Even though people swam on 4-5 relays, there was a wall of swimmers cheering for every race, the atmosphere was electric.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that without the culture that OA provided, I'm not sure I would have been as excited about the amount of cheering that happened today as I was. So thank you for that. I hope all is going well with the team and that the smoke hasn't hampered practice too much.

Best, Spencer Lekki

## OA Achievements/Performance

### Virtual Club Championship National Scoring

USA Swimming calculates on a daily basis every team and swim in the nation. They produce a team score for all 3,000 clubs based on single ages and all events (two score per event/four events max per swimmer). Orinda Aquatics has been the top-scoring team for clubs under 200 members (~2,800 total). We continue to pursue this ranking as we move into the Spring short-course season.

### IMX Update: (USA Swimming)

The IMX program originated from the philosophy of developing all strokes and all distances as an age-group swimmer. This is a healthy and balanced way of training and perspective as opposed to fixating on one stroke or one event. Many swimmers' best strokes and events changes throughout their careers and an early focus on IMX development will help facilitate those transitions. Check your IMX score on the USA Swimming website or on Deck Pass. We encourage all OA swimmers, especially those in the Junior Group, to pursue and follow an IMX score. The following are OA's current IMX qualifiers.

<b>Emilia Barck</b>	<b>Natalie Mak</b>
<b>Henrik Barck</b>	<b>Natalie Ung</b>
<b>Jeromy Chang</b>	<b>Amber Van Meines</b>
<b>Michael Chu</b>	<b>Evan Velek</b>
<b>George Flanders</b>	

### Junior Group Winter (peak meet) Highlights:

*(look for separate Senior Group update)*



<b>Natalie Mak (9)</b>	50 Back – 32.1	Swam the 1,000!	<b>George Flanders (13)</b>	200 Back – 2:08.3	5 second drop
<b>Emilia Barck (11)</b>	200 IM - 2:22	7 second drop	<b>Ben Kang (13)</b>	100 Free - 53.8	2 second drop
<b>Jasmine Fok (12)</b>	100 Fly – 1:01.7	5 second drop	<b>Amber van Meines (14)</b>	50 Free – 24.68	1 second drop
<b>Sydney Griscagave (12)</b>	50 Free – 24.62	1 second drop	<b>Ginny Vazquez-Azpiri (13)</b>	200 IM – 2:14.2	1.7 second drop
<b>Elsa Hartley (11)</b>	50 Free – 27.7	1.6 second drop	<b>Henrik Barck (13)</b>	500 Free – 5:14	12 second drop
<b>Sophia Holman (11)</b>	500 Free – 6:03	8 second drop	<b>Devin Purewal (13)</b>	100 Fly – 1:04.7	5 second drop
<b>Kaia Levenfeld (12)</b>	100 Fly 1:05.99	3 second drop	<b>Daniel Zilper (14)</b>	100 Free – 59.9	3 second drop
<b>Maren McDonald (12)</b>	200 Br– 2:35.08	5.5 second drop	<b>Christine Mlynek (13)</b>	200 Free – 2.17	7 second drop
<b>Clara Roggensack (12)</b>	100 Free 1:04.5	2 second drop	<b>Christopher Devlin (13)</b>	200 Breast – 2:28	8 second drop
<b>Adriana Smith (11)</b>	200 Bk 2:18.90	5.4 second drop	<b>Gabriella Bensadoun (13)</b>	200 Free – 2:26	10 second drop
<b>Michael Chu (11)</b>	500 Free – 5:56	10 second drop	<b>Maelyn Peters (11)</b>	100 Free – 1:09	5 second drop
<b>Zach Hoffman (12)</b>	100 Fly – 1:00.4	3 second drop	<b>Mifay Liu (10)</b>	50 Free – 34.5	.5 drop
<b>Nathan Levy (12)</b>	50 Breast – 33.4	1.6 second drop	<b>Elise Chang (12)</b>	50 Free	Best time
<b>Lauren Healy (13)</b>	50 Free – 26.8	.75 second drop	<b>Ally Castro (11)</b>	200 Free - 2.25	11 second drop
<b>Lydia Osborne (13)</b>	50 Free – 27.19	2 second drop	<b>Evan Velek (12)</b>	500 Free – 6:39	42 second drop
<b>Regan Stambaugh (14)</b>	50 Free – 26.05	1.5 second drop			

## Swimmer Spotlights

The following swimmers have diverse backgrounds and unconventional paths to Orinda Aquatics, and all are doing a great job!



### Orinda Aquatics – Senior Swimmer Spotlight

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**Name:** *Matt Lanzara*

**Age/OA Group:** 17/ Senior 4

**Grade:** Junior

**School:** Campolindo High School

**Pets:** None

**In which city do you live?** Moraga

**Previous team?** Tri City Channel Cats, Terrapins

**Brief swimming background?**

I started swimming competitively when I was 8 years old on the Tri City Channel Cats in Richland, WA. When I moved back to California in 2012, I swam on the Terrapins Swim team for 2 years before joining the Orinda Aquatics.

**Main stroke?** Backstroke

**Hobbies (other than swimming)?**

I enjoy watching sports (Oakland A's, Oakland Raiders and Warriors), hanging out with friends and listening to music.

**Favorite ice cream?** Rocky Road

**Favorite musician/singer?** Migos

**Favorite class and why?**

My favorite class is American History. I find American History interesting because I like learning how things were and how they came to be.

**What brought you to Orinda Aquatics?**

When I was on the Terrapins, I would always see Orinda Aquatic swimmers cheering on their swimmers in the water. They looked like a team and supported one another. I wanted to be a part of that. I liked the team comradery and coaching style.

**Most positive (non-competitive) swimming experience?**

The most positive (non-competitive) swimming experience was when I joined Orinda Aquatics. I immediately bonded with my new teammates. It felt like I was a part of the team. I feel like I have made lifelong friends.

**What have you learned/how have you benefited, from swimming?**

I have learned respect and work ethic to better myself and the team. I have also learned to be disciplined and to accept criticism on my strokes. I have taken these lessons and have applied them to my life outside of the pool and have applied that same work ethic and discipline to my school studies.

**Who has supported you to be a year-round swimmer?**

My parents, coaches (Ronnie & Donnie), and my friends have supported and encouraged me to be a year-round swimmer.

**What does "putting character first" mean to you?**

Putting "Character First" means to act with integrity in every situation. It means to always put the team before yourself.

**Anything unique or personal you would like to share?**

I was born in San Diego, raised in Richland, WA, and moved back to California – Bay Area in 2012.

**What advice do you have for new OA swimmers?**

Always do your best at practice and ALWAYS listen to your Coach.

**Name:** *Jalen Evans*

**Age/OA Group:** 14 and Senior 3

**Grade:** 9th

**School:** Head-Royce School

**Pets:** Turtle

**In which city do you live?** Danville

**Previous team?** The Clubsport Tidalwaves and Tri-Valley Aquatics

**Brief swimming background?**

I started swimming on a recreational team at Clubsport in Pleasanton when I was 8. At ten I started swimming year-round for Tri-Valley Aquatics. I joined Orinda Aquatics when I was 13 during December of 8th grade.

**Main stroke?** Butterfly

**Hobbies (other than swimming)?** Soccer and playing the flute

**Favorite ice cream?** Vanilla

**Favorite musician/singer?** Usher

**Favorite class and why?**

My favorite class is physics. I like physics because it is an interactive class where we learn interesting things about the way the world works.

**What brought you to Orinda Aquatics?**

Going from Danville (home) to Oakland (school) to Livermore (swimming) was too long of a drive for my parents to make from work so we decided to leave TVA. Over the summer of 2016, I tried a lot of different teams. After practicing a few times with three or four different teams, I told my parents that if I had to leave TVA, I would want to join Orinda Aquatics because I felt most comfortable there.

**Most positive (non-competitive) swimming experience?**

My most positive non-competitive swimming experience was Swimjitsu at the Arizona Showcase.

**What have you learned/how have you benefited, from swimming?**

Through swimming, I have learned that perseverance and self-motivation are essential skills not only for my development as an athlete, but also for school and life in general.

**Who has supported you to be a year-round swimmer?**

My family has been huge in supporting me to be a year-round swimmer. They have always been with me every step of the way and are very supportive at meets. They also allow me to make decisions freely about when I go to practice which has helped me to stay motivated, instead of feeling forced to do it. On top of that, they do not get upset with me when I do not beat my times. They are always very positive, which is often necessary and very much appreciated when I have a rough meet and am feeling a bit down. I also appreciate the support of my coaches and teammates at practice and at meets.

**What does "putting character first" mean to you?**

Putting character first means being the first to volunteer when the coach asks for help. This also means never complaining about a set, or the weather, or anything. Finally, to me, putting character first means being a good role model to the younger kids on the team and branching out to make new friends so that everyone feels supported.

**What advice do you have for new OA swimmers?**

My advice to new OA swimmers would be to come to OA with open arms. I know that when I joined OA, I was relatively shy and reluctant to get integrated into the team. I even remember thinking to myself initially that when I turned 16 and could drive, I would go back to swimming at TVA where I had existing friendships. As time has passed, I have made new friends at OA and now, I am fully integrated into the team. I would also tell new swimmers that no one on OA is trying to judge you. I know coming into a new environment with new people can be intimidating, but you should know that while it is a new environment, I believe it is the most trusting and safe swimming environment that exists. All of the coaches are very receptive and only want the best for you. Finally, just be yourself and at the end of the day, the people at OA will appreciate you for who you are.

**Name:** *Gabriella Bensadoun*

**Age/OA Group:** 13/Junior 1

**Grade:** 8th

**School:** Home-schooled

**Pets:** Koi fish

**In which city do you live?** Berkeley

**Previous team?** No competitive swimming experience

**Brief swimming background?**

I started swimming three days a week when I was ten with a non-competitive group. I was a tennis player. I wanted to try competitive swimming and tried out Orinda Aquatics.

**Main stroke?** Freestyle

**Hobbies (other than swimming)?**

Piano, guitar, Ukulele

**Favorite ice cream?** Rose

**Favorite musician/singer?** Lin Manual Miranda

**Favorite class and why?**

Science – because it expands our understanding of the world around us.

**What brought you to Orinda Aquatics?**

I wanted to swim more frequently at a higher level and Orinda Aquatics was highly recommended by friends.

**Most positive (non-competitive) swimming experience?**

Riding waves with my parents on a beach in Florida.

**What have you learned/how have you benefited, from swimming?**

Swimming has definitely taught me to always try my best. Swimming has also made me a better, stronger person.

**Who has supported you to be a year-round swimmer?**

My parents and my old swim coach, Ian Lesser.

**What does “putting character first” mean to you?**

It means always being the best person and teammate possible, and always having a sense of what is ethically right. It means never sacrificing your character, or your integrity, just to win. (Editor’s note: see essay on page 22)

**Anything unique or personal you would like to share?**

I only started swimming three years ago, and only started swimming competitively six months ago. I played tennis from age four to ten but decided to switch to swimming.

**What advice do you have for new OA swimmers?**

Embrace your teammates. They are amazing people who care about you as a person. Never be afraid to be yourself around them.

**Anything else?**

I really love OA, and I am so grateful to be a part of it.

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## See’s Sales Leaders

Thank you *all* for supporting our See’s Candies Fundraiser. The top five sellers were:

- ✓ **Mallory Owyong, \$4,580!**
- ✓ **Michael Wheeler - \$1,000+**
- ✓ **Evan Velek - \$1,000+**
- ✓ **Aidan & Amelia Vollmar - \$1,000+**
- ✓ **Donovan Ballot - \$1,000+**



## Quick question...

# Where do ghosts like to go swimming?

Answer: Lake Eerie

## The Broader Landscape (Collegiate, USA Swimming, PacSwim)

- The American Swimming Coaches Association, in conjunction with the World Swimming Coaches Association (WSCA), is creating a **World Swimming Association (WSA)** and a **Professional Swimmers Association (PSA)**, to challenge FINA and the representation of athletes in international competition.
- USA Swimming has hired a new CEO and is restructuring the board and national team.
- There has been extensive study of the 12&Under “tech suit” issue and it appears USA Swimming will allow each LSC to decide on any restrictions. PacSwim is contemplating options.
- Donnie will meet with the head of USA Swimming and the American Swimming Coaches Association in February to discuss critical issues facing the sport and the profession.
- USA Swimming is considering a “Splash Fee” at senior/national meets in an effort to build an endowment fund to support (save) Division 1 college swimming.
- Pacific Swimming is putting money back into the LSC in the form of Equipment Grants for clubs and athletes.
- Tay Thomas is serving as an Athlete Rep for Pacific Swimming (Thanks Tay, we couldn’t have a better representative of the team or the sport!).

## Outreach Support: Consider a Donation

Through its mission of serving the community and the sport, Orinda Aquatics pursues a multidimensional outreach program that seeks to support the following: the swimming efforts in Swaziland Africa, teaching learn-to-swim lessons to children from areas where swimming instruction is not readily accessible, assisting clubs and newer coaches with mentorship and training equipment, offering club visits to present material on culture and character development, and finally on providing scholarships to those with need. All funds donated to Orinda Aquatics Outreach efforts are tax deductible and will *only* be used for the purposes described above. No funds will ever be used for operating expenses. We are passionate about the sport of swimming, about helping where we can, and about trying to make a difference in the world.

**“Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.”**

Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Coaches Notes/Coaches Tips:

### Race Tip:

Warm-up at every meet should include an inspection and awareness of the facility as it relates to your race. Important considerations might include:

- **The block:** size, depth, surface – where to grab? where to position your feet? is there a back plate? where to hold for a backstroke start (gutter or bar) and where to position your feet? is there slippery tile? Are there touch pads?
- **The flags:** for back and IM – height, color, size – is there wind or a breeze? Which flag color is above your race lane to center yourself?

### Team Tip/Question:

Have you met the new swimmers yet?

### Training Tip:

- Do you know your stroke counts, kick counts/break-out distances, pull-down distances for each stroke?
- Do you monitor each lap?

### Meet Tips:

- Stay off your legs as much as possible (when you're not cheering!)
- Stay hydrated
- Stay warm (and loose)
- Warm-down should be 10-20 minutes (500+ for Junior swimmers and 1,000+ for Senior swimmers)
- Visualize (mental preparation) before each race



## Ways to Improve (repeat from Spring newsletter)

While this newsletter is focused more on the broader aspects of the team, the sport, and the culture, we wanted to include this overview. It is not intended to be a parent primer on coaching, but rather to create an overview of the many components that are integral to swimming development. This will give some perspective on the notion that “just showing up” to practice should generate results, which is naively believed by many athletes and parents. The reality is, barring physical growth, it is very possible to not move forward in any of these areas, even if an athlete “shows up” regularly. And even if some areas do develop, a swimmers may regress in other areas, therefore neutralizing a specific improvement. An example of this might be a swimmer improves in a technical area but becomes social in workout and loses training focus.

There should be an ongoing awareness and vigilance of each of these categories as to whether or not they are a strength or a weakness for the swimmer. With a broad-based, focused, and aggressive pursuit of each component, the odds of improvement are certainly in the athletes’ favor.

<b>1) Improve technique/efficiency</b>	It is widely accepted that the fastest way to improve performance is to improve efficiency. Technically, this would be either reducing drag or increasing propulsion. As coaches, we focus first on the fundamentals of balance, timing, body position, pull and recovery lines. From there, stroke development can be as nuanced as hand pitch, elbow position, recovery angle, breathing angle/head position, and on and on. The key here is to begin with (macro) fundamentals and work into specific details. Swimmers must have a daily focus and commitment to this aspect of their swimming.
<b>2) Improve endurance/effort</b>	Effort becomes the foundation of the athletic process. Swimmers need to train “out of their comfort zone”. The numbers that coach’s say will never lie are heart rate and repeat times. Swimmer must know how hard they are working and what that effort produces. And beyond the effort, a mature, and disciplined swimmer, must “lock into” all of the technical components, such as stroke, turns, under water speed, etc. This is when effort is maximized and technique is established.
<b>3) Improve strength/fitness</b>	This comes in the form of dryland (and of course physical growth and maturity). The OA dryland program, <b>Bridge Athletic</b> , is designed by world class athletes and trainers in aquatics, with a focus on mobility, flexibility, strength, and injury prevention. The Bridge program also creates a continuum of progression from Junior to Senior groups. Proper execution of each exercise is critical.

<p><b>4) Improve under water speed/endurance</b></p>	<p>The fastest a swimmer moves in the water is when they are coming off a wall. Most high level swimmers leverage this aspect of the race. Those swimmers who undulate naturally are clearly better at generating under water speed, but it is daily focus and effort that develops this part of a race. Remember, a 5,000 yard workout offers <b>200 opportunities</b> work on streamlining and under water speed. This has to be a daily priority. <b>NOTE: Underwater speed MUST BE conditioned.</b></p>
<p><b>5) Improve turns</b></p>	<p>There is a natural tendency for swimmers to relax into and through a turn in an attempt to gain some recovery after the preceding lap. Mature swimmers know that turns are a critical component of a race which if maximized, create a competitive advantage. The only real way to improve turn technique is through daily repetition in workout.</p>
<p><b>6) Improve race strategy</b></p>	<p>Optimizing a race strategy can often lead to better results. A slight adjustment in pace, underwater distance, breathing pattern, leg drive, or stroke rate can easily improve a 100 yard race by a half of a second, and a 200 yard race by well over a second.</p>
<p><b>7) Improve mindset</b></p>	<p>While this may be a deeper, non-swimming issue, an athlete's mindset plays a significant role not only in racing but also training. Swimmers should keep swimming (and life) in perspective and not allow anxiety or self-defeating thoughts to impair performance, or general well-being. Relaxation, visualization, and affirmations should be employed by all athletes.</p>
<p><b>8) Improve coach-swimmer relationship</b></p>	<p>This is not simply a question of general dialogue, but more an understanding and collaboration between coach and athlete on current tendencies and critical areas for development. Better dialogue can be the glue that holds all of these together. A swimmer must seek this out as the “owner” of their sport, and ask for constant feedback.</p>
<p><b>9) Improve attendance</b></p>	<p>As mentioned in the introduction, attendance guarantees nothing. An athlete with poor focus, effort, and desire, will undoubtedly drift or regress. But a swimmer committed to all of the above, with excellent attendance will in most cases, continue to develop. There is also the academic/social balance of attending practice or not. We have seen for thirty years that swimmers <i>with</i> excellence attendance are generally better students and in most cases, more grounded socially. They develop a discipline that drives not only their schedule, but their expectations as well.</p>
<p><b>10) Other – nutrition, sleep, etc.</b></p>	<p>These will certainly influence training ability and performance. While they may not be the dominant components of improved performance, they <i>can</i> affect everything, <i>and</i> there is a without question a cumulative affect (positive or negative) here.</p>

## Team Sponsor

### Sports Basement

Thanks to the diligent work of Kristin Thompson, OA is now in the Sport Basement **Basementeer Program**. Sports basement will donate money back to OA’s Outreach Program with each purchase. Please look to sign up to support the team.

## Parents Corner

**Orinda Aquatics would like to grow the Junior Group and is always looking for good candidates for the team and year-round swimming. Key characteristics are a love of swimming (and training), and the personal and character traits that would make a good teammate and role model. Let the staff know if you know of someone who might be a good fit.**

## 8 Ground Rules to Know about Sports Nutrition

By Jill Castle, MS, RDN | Tuesday, November 21, 2017

Many swimmers know that nutrition is an essential part of their success, but sometimes they learn this information late in their career. What if the ground rules about nutrition were common knowledge? What if swimmers followed these rules from the start?

### **Food is fuel**

Just like an automobile, athletes need fuel in the tank to perform well. And not just any fuel! Premium fuel is the nutritious, wholesome food and beverages swimmers eat to perform at peak level. Fried foods, sweets, and sugary beverages, although tasty, aren't the ideal foods in which to anchor the diet if swimmers want to take their performance to the next level.

### **Carbs count**

Carbs, or the carbohydrate found in whole grains, fruit, vegetables and dairy foods are desirable fuel sources for exercising muscles. They require some time to digest, allowing a slow release of energy to the muscles. Refined carbs, such as those found in sweets, sports drinks, and dried fruit, contain sugar and offer the muscles a quick source of energy. Swimmers can use a blend of both types of carbs to support their performance.

### **Protein matters**

Too much protein can contribute to dehydration as well as other potential problems for the young athlete. Eating large amounts of protein at the end of the day, or not eating enough protein at breakfast isn't the most effective way to grow and repair muscles. Ideally, wholesome protein sources like meat, eggs or beans are eaten at spaced intervals throughout the day, such as at breakfast, lunch and dinner.

### **Dehydrated muscles don't work well**

Drinking plenty of fluids is a constant effort, as thirst isn't always easy to identify for young swimmers. If it is noticed, it doesn't mean they will drink, so gentle reminders are helpful. If dehydration does occur, it may impair athletic performance and contribute to muscle cramping.

### **Muscle recovery is a key to progress**

The harder you train, the more important nutrition is to your recovery and development as an athlete. Eating a snack that contains protein, such as chocolate milk or nut butter and crackers, and carbohydrate after an extended training session, helps the athlete repair muscle damage, promote muscle gain, and reload muscles with fuel for more training.

### **You can't out-exercise a bad diet**

No matter how hard you work, the habits of overeating, skipping meals, poor food choices, or under-eating work against optimal performance. The body performs best when it's given premium fuel (nutritious food).

### **Eating habits are key to lifelong health**

Swimmers may not swim forever, but their eating habits can last a lifetime. Making nutritious and balanced choices now means a better chance at optimal health later in life.

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## USA Swimming Parent Resource – “Growing Champions for Life”



<https://www.usaswimming.org/utility/landing-pages/club/growing-champions-for-life>

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**“It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare.” -- Mark Twain**

### Think about it... Questions for athletes to ask themselves:

- “If my life is too hard, how easy would I like it”? (from, Think on These Things)
- What are my core values, and how I live them?
- What is the biggest lesson I learned about myself?
- What three “character lines in the sand” will I unequivocally not cross?

## The Comparison Trap

By Rebecca Webber, published on November 7, 2017 - last reviewed on November 8, 2017

You know those people who have more than you— money, acclaim, looks, whatever? The spike of envy they trigger is natural, and social media is primed to amp it up. But in a world where followers and likes can seem like rock-solid proof of a person's worth, you don't have to take the bait.



Measuring the self against others is a modus operandi of the human mind, and in some ways, it can be helpful. The inspiration you feel about someone else's achievements can rev up the motivation to improve your own life. The recognition that your abilities are a notch above someone else's can deliver a boost to your self-esteem. But comparisons can be harmful when they leave you feeling chronically inferior or depressed.

The mental health of those prone to negative comparison can be seriously compromised as a result. "When we're reliant on others for our sense of self, only feeling good if we get positive feedback or markers of status, we're at risk for depression," says Mitch Prinstein, a psychologist at the University of North Carolina and the author of *Popular: The Power of Likeability in a Status-Obsessed World*.

Social media is like kerosene poured on the flame of social comparison, dramatically increasing the information about people that we're exposed to and forcing our minds to assess. In the past, we absorbed others' triumphs sporadically. Now such news is at our fingertips constantly.

There's a reason that teenagers in particular are prone to the feverish pursuit of valuation via social media. Prinstein says it's because the wide variety of regions in the brain that seek and deliver social rewards, including the part of the striatum called the nucleus accumbens, become supercharged at the adolescent transition. "Social rewards are basically activation of dopamine within the brain when we feel we're getting attention or positive feedback from peers," Prinstein says. "It can also come from comparing yourself to others, especially highly valued others, and seeing that you agree with them, they agree with you, or that you're similar to them. It activates parts of the brain not unlike the way a drug does, which may be why adolescents become truly addicted to social media."

But it's ultimately how we use social media, not how much time we spend on it, that has the greatest bearing on how it makes us feel. "When we use social media just to passively view others' posts, our happiness decreases," says Emma Seppaelae, science director of the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University and the author of *The Happiness Track: How to Apply the Science of Happiness to Accelerate Your Success*. "We compare ourselves to others, get lost in their idealized lives, and forget to enjoy our own. But contributing, sharing, and interacting can have the opposite effect. Facebook presents countless opportunities to check in with loved ones and friends and be there for them if something seems off. Similarly, social media is a place where you can express the need for support."

Ultimately, the greatest protection against falling into the comparison trap—and the best way to pull yourself out of it—is to develop and maintain a stable sense of self. That means cultivating your identity and self-esteem, nourishing relationships with people who see the real you, and staying attuned to your truest beliefs. "There's a tug of war," says Prinstein. "Do you seek to feel good about yourself through social rewards, or do you rely on more stable ways of recognizing who you are? A stable sense of self comes from thinking about who you are absent any feedback. What are your values and preferences in the absence of anybody knowing about them? Can you be proud of the person you are who isn't publicly posted?"

### **You Do You: A How-To**

#### **1. Seek Connection, Not Comparison**

"Limit time on social media, but more important is how that time is used," says Mitch Prinstein, a psychologist at the University of North Carolina. Instead of passive scrolling, send private messages, talk about shared experiences, seek genuine emotional connection, and use social media in general to "foster the kind of relationships known to be valuable offline."

#### **2. Look Up, Just a Little**

Decades of research suggest that upward comparison can provoke motivation and effort; children who compare themselves to peers who slightly outperform them have produced higher grades, for instance. Seeing that the path to improvement is attainable is key—you're better off comparing yourself to someone a rung or two above you than to someone at the very top of the ladder.

#### **3. Count Your Blessings**

If you focus on the good things in your life, you're less likely to obsess about what you lack. Loretta Breuning, the author of *Habits of a Happy Brain*, recommends engaging in "conscious downward comparison." For instance, Breuning says, compare yourself to your ancestors. "You don't have to drink water full of microbes. You don't have to tolerate violence on a daily basis. It'll remind you that despite some frustrations, you have a fabulous life."

#### **4. Compare Yourself to...Yourself**

Like the tendency among older people to measure themselves against their own past, Sonja Lyubormirsky, a psychologist at the University of California, Riverside and the author of *The How of Happiness* notes that "people who are happy use themselves for internal evaluation." It's not that they don't notice upward comparisons, she says, but they don't let that affect their self-esteem, and they stay focused on their own improvement. "A happy runner compares himself to his last run, not to others who are faster."

#### **5. Pursue Upward-Joy**

Based on his own Buddhist practice, San Francisco psychiatrist Ravi Chandra recommends using the social comparison impulse as a springboard for true self-growth. He recounts his own effort to do so in a new book, *Facebuddha: Transcendence in the Age of Social Networks!* "Instead of generating envy, which is a form of hostility, explore what you admire and appreciate about other people and cultivate joy for their success," Chandra says. "It can be a catalyst for personal growth."



**“The truth of your character is expressed through the choice of your actions.”**  
unknown

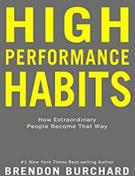
**“Two things define you; your patience when you have nothing, and your attitude when you have everything.”** unknown

**“Integrity is not something you show others. It is how you behave behind their back.”**  
unknown

### Character Focus (for teammates):

- Ask daily – *“Who can I help? How can I help?”*
- *How you help with lane lines or pool covers says more about you than you may think.*
- *“Character is what you are in the dark.” – and also in the locker room!*
- *Always shake the hand of your competitors (on each side) and please thank officials round the deck for their (volunteer) service.*

### Recommended Book:



After extensive original research and a decade as the world’s highest-paid performance coach, Brendon Burchard finally reveals the most effective habits for reaching long-term success. Based on one of the largest surveys ever conducted on high performers, it turns out that just six habits move the needle the most in helping you succeed. Adopt these six habits, and you win. Neglect them, and life is a never-ending struggle.

### Excerpts:

**“When you knock on the door of opportunity, don’t be surprised when it is Work that answers.”**

**“Often, the journey to greatness begins the moment our preferences for comfort and certainty are overruled by a greater purpose that requires challenge and contribution.”**

### High performers:

- ✓ *Are more successful and less stressed*
- ✓ *Love challenges*
- ✓ *Are healthier than their peers*
- ✓ *Are happy*
- ✓ *Are admired*
- ✓ *Do better academically*
- ✓ *Work with passion regardless of the reward*
- ✓ *See and serve beyond their strengths*
- ✓ *Are servant-leaders*



**How would you evaluate yourself with regard to these?**

## Article:

### Steve Jobs Said One Thing Separates Living an Exceptional Life from an Average One

Jeff Haden/Dec 3, 2017

It came easily to Steve Jobs -- and it's something we all should embrace. Steve Jobs set extremely high expectations. He wanted things done a certain way, challenging other people to work harder, work longer, and sometimes to do more than they thought was possible. Steve Jobs had high standards. He wanted things to be done his way. But he also believed in the power of taking an unconventional path -- of doing things that other people usually don't consider.

*When you grow up, you tend to get told that the world is the way it is. Your life is to live your life inside the world, to try not to bash into the walls too much: Try to have a nice family life, have fun, save a little money... but that's a very limited life. Life can be much broader once you discover one simple fact: **Everything around you that you call "life" was made up by people that were no smarter than you -- and you can change it.** You can influence it... the minute you understand that you can change it, that you can mold it, that's maybe the most important thing. To shake off this erroneous notion that life is there and you're just going to live in it -- versus embrace it, change it, improve it... and make your mark upon it. If you embrace that fact, what happens? **You realize you can choose yourself.***

If you're willing to work hard and persevere, who you are is more than enough. Never measure yourself against other people. Pick a goal and measure yourself against that goal. That's the only comparison that matters. **You realize that success will come from doing things -- or even just one thing -- that no one else is willing to do.** Even if they're simple. Even if they're small. After all, if you do what everyone else does... you'll only achieve the results other people achieve. Every day, do a few things differently from the people around you. After a week, you'll be uncommon. After a month, you'll be special. After a year, you will be exceptional. And you'll have done so on *your* terms.



*The following is a question (email) that came to The American Swimming Coaches Association from a member coach. The answer returned is below. It started an entire chain of thought and discussion with other coaches.*

### Letter to the Editor and Response from John Leonard

*Hi Coach.*

*Hope all is well. Happy Holidays.*

*I could use your input on this issue. I am 64 years old, and a bit “old school” I admit. I am passionate about my work and have been having complaints about being too hard on the swimmers. **I’ve been told coaching is different now.** I never use foul or abusive language, just passionate behavior.*

*Any advice or personal experience on this topic?*

*Thanks Coach.*

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#### **(Response from JL)**

*Anyone who doesn’t like you says “coaching has changed”. No, it hasn’t. Parents have changed, somewhat - parents who are “preparing the path for the child instead of the child for the path” are increasing in number.*

*Children need to be challenged. The children “know” that and appreciate it, and ENJOY it if presented in the light of, “I care about you, I believe in you, and therefore I have high expectations for you”.*

*Being DEMANDING is a COMPLIMENT to the child, not a rebuke. If you thought they were incapable, you wouldn’t bother being demanding. You’d simply say, “Oh, that’s fine. Good job,” and collect your paycheck from their parents each month.*

*It’s easy to collect a check. It’s much harder (and much more rewarding) to do something for the child that EARNS the check you get every month, AND changes the child’s life. Some parents just want baby-sitting. You are unlikely to change them.*

*If the Head Coach isn’t demanding of athletes, the head coach certainly won’t want anyone else to be either, such as the staff. And where does that leave the team and the true potential of each swimmer?*

*All the Best, John Leonard*

## Swimmer Essay on “Character First”

*Editor’s note: The following is an unsolicited essay on “character” from Gabriella Bensadoun (see swimmer spotlight), a thirteen year-old girl on Orinda Aquatics who has been on the team, AND swimming competitively, for just six months. This is truly remarkable insight into such a profound life concept for someone so young.*

### **“Character First”**

*As essay by Gabriella Bensadoun*

Orinda Aquatics’ principle is “character first”. I am going to attempt to explain what it means to me, my teammates, my coaches, and how they incorporate it into all the activities we engage in.

- It means always having a sense of the right thing to do ethically
- It means knowing when to put your teammates in front of yourself
- It mean knowing that winning is not worth losing everything else
- It means never giving up, or backing down, when you’re faced with a challenge
- It means always doing the right thing, even if it doesn’t benefit you personally

I am sure I am missing some aspects, but these are what came to me as I wrote this. Every single day the coaches try to instill this principle and its meaning into our lives. At practice, when we have a hard workout, we talk about how every little thing will help you become a better swimmer and a better person. When we have team meetings, we talk about using the principle as a guide for how to act, and how to improve our everyday lives. There has not been one meeting where it has not been mentioned or emphasized. An important part of this philosophy is that it is not the duty of the coach, or our parents, to make sure you put character first. It is the responsibility of each of the swimmers, and is seen as one of the most important parts of growing up and becoming an adult. It is also our responsibility to call out other people when we notice behavior that we ourselves would not display.

Over time, as we talk about it, there is always something I regret, or realize I should not have done; an act that my teammates and coaches would not be proud of. As time goes on, since I joined the team, that list has grown smaller, as I have learned to vet my actions, the things I say, and to make sure I am treating my teammates the way I want them to treat me, with respect, loyalty, and kindness. But, it is not about just living up to expectations, it’s how far you can go beyond it; and not only how much you can improve the quality of your life, but the lives of the people around you.

However, “Character First” goes well beyond swim practice, or dry land, or team meetings. Is also applies to everyday interactions outside of the pool; how you communicate with your teachers, parents, and the world around you. Character first is not a suggestion, it is an expectation that me and all my teammates must live up to everyday. And, as I said, our coaches try to instill this principle into our daily lives, as an attempt to make us a better person as well as a better swimmer. It is a great representation of the team, and looking at all of my teammates, I’d say we’re doing a pretty good job.

The end



*Thank you for your membership, your ongoing support, and for your contribution to making this an extraordinary team and a special environment for these children and young athletes.*