



Orinda Aquatics Year-End Letter to Team



“Strong lives are motivated by dynamic purposes.” Kenneth Hildebrand

As the year comes to a close, we wanted to reach out and offer a note of gratitude, a recap of the year, a look at 2022, and of course, wish you all the best in the coming year.

Gratitude

Before addressing the team and the year, we first want to acknowledge the extraordinary work of our volunteers. From our selfless board, and their organizational oversight, to the invaluable work of our meet team, in all areas, to those who have supported and facilitated our events and social activities, we are so grateful. Your support is what elevates this organization in every way, whether it be competitive opportunity, financial support, health and well-being, or personal experience. The pride we have for the team is every bit as profound outside of the pool, thanks to the work you are all doing. We appreciate *all* our Orinda Aquatics parents for supporting the team and its mission, as well as your children to be student-athletes at this level. We are truly fortunate to have such a positive parent group.

“Your whole life is a message. Every act is an act of self-definition.” Neale Donald Walsch

Staff

We continue to be blessed to have a staff anchored in the history of this program, in deep friendship, and one that operates at the highest levels of swimming, professionalism, and care - Matt, Marc, Dom, & Kati. Additionally, we were thrilled to have Tiffany Forbes back at the helm of the Masters program and also supporting the year-round team.

New Families

To all of the newer families, we thank you again for choosing Orinda Aquatics and for your support. We are very proud of the development of the swimmers who joined this Fall, Junior and Senior, and look forward to your growth in the years to come. Although the learning curve is steep, we truly hope that the organization fulfills your expectations and provides value beyond the pool.

College

The college component of Orinda Aquatics is one of the pillars of the program, along with culture and performance, and this year has proven to be as impressive as any in our history and would rival any team in the country. Many teams do not either value this connection, support it, or understand its tie to the entire process. This is again evident over the break as numerous collegiate athletes return to train and reconnect. They truly represent the student-athlete at the highest level, and specific to our pursuits, they are living (and visiting) examples of the pathway for our entire program.

This is critical for many reasons. First, it legitimizes and supports the (high-level) student-athlete concept, that disciplined athletes become better academically, and it ties back to the areas of personal growth and discipline. Additionally, it supports the notion that sports is not divorced from academics. And finally, with regard to Orinda Aquatics, it is evident that academic pursuit is integral to this (athletic) process, and that the staff is unduly committed to support our graduates through the entire collegiate journey and beyond.

Commitments to date for the Class of 2022

Henrik	Barck	Harvey Mudd	Swimming
Gabriella	Bensadoun	Cornell	TBD
Emma	Bustamonte	Westmont	Swimming
Nick	Chang	Carleton College	Swimming
Christopher	Devlin	TBD	
Lexi	Fok	Pepperdine	Swimming
Mac	Follmer*	Cal Poly	Swimming
Nicky	Glenn	Cal Poly	Swimming
Sydney	Griscavage	Cal	Swimming
Lauren	Healy	TBD	Swimming
Christine	Mlynek	TBD	
Connor	Ormsby*	TBD	Swimming
Lydia	Osborn	University of Chicago	TBD
Jenna	Ravarino	Vanderbilt	Swimming
Tommy	Roder	Cal	Swimming
Regan	Stambaugh	TBD	Swimming
Amber	van Meines	Harvard	Swimming
Théo	Yavuzer-Judd	Gap	Swimming - OA
Sydney	Zhang	TBD	

* Class of 2021

Other academic/collegiate distinctions for Orinda Aquatics:

- Orinda Aquatics had the most graduates committed to swim in college in Pacific Swimming in 2021, and most likely in 2022
- The team averages forty to fifty collegiate athletes each year
- The Senior Group GPA is at or near 4.0
- We have had over fifty collegiate team captains in OA’s history



Team Success

We would like to highlight some of the successes and achievements of the team as many may be unaware, given the various meets schedules and focuses at the Junior and Senior levels.

Scholastic All Americans (3.5 GPA & Winter Junior National standard)

Closing out the 2021 long course season, Orinda Aquatics had the highest number of Scholastic All-Americans (9) in all of Pacific Swimming and ranked fourth in the entire Western Zone of USA Swimming (16 states and over 1,000 teams). For a team of only 150 swimmers, this is a testament to the athletic and academic culture in our program and the extraordinary discipline these student-athletes demonstrate, not to mention the support of each family.

Summer Sectionals

After a year with limited competition, Orinda Aquatics placed third at the **California-Nevada Sectional Championships** in Roseville this past July, finishing behind a multi-site program and a college-driven team. Orinda Aquatics as a whole swam exceptionally well, and the meet was widely viewed as one of the best in the past decade. With many highlights, final swims, and standards met, one swim that stood out was Ben Hays (Brown University) making an Olympic Trials cut in the 400m IM, by one tenth of a second.

Olympic Trials Qualifiers

Orinda Aquatics had seven qualifiers for the 2021 Olympic Trials, with four competing (due to Covid) at the meet in Omaha. Margaux McDonald (Princeton) was the most recent qualifier in the 100m back.

Junior Nationals

Orinda recently returned from Junior Nationals in Austin, Texas, and was one of only 30 teams to score in both the men's and women's division with over 800 teams in the West site. *Some* highlights from the meet were:

- Adriana Smith (16) - 100 Back 53.87, 10th (Team Record), 200 free split 1:50.8 in 800FR
- Tommy Roder (18) - 100 back 48.1 (8th), 200 back 1:47.2 (20th), 1:40.1 200 free split
- Andrew Hallett (16) - 20.2 free split in 200 FR, 44.2 free split in 400 FR
- Emilia Barck (15) - 51.03 free split in 400 FR, 1:05.1 breast split in 400 MR
- Jenna Ravarno (17) - 50 free 23.3, 100 free 51.9
- Mac Follmer (18) - 22.9 fly split in 200 MR, 21.3 free split in 200 FR
- Nicky Glenn (17) - 26.0 breast split in MR, 21.0 free lead-off 200 FR
- Amber van Meines (18) - 23.3 free split in 200 FR, 52.4 free split 400 FR
- Sydney Griscavage (16) - 29.8 breast split MR (13th), 23.4 free split in 20 FR
- Jasmine Fok (16) - 24.5 fly split in MR, 23.6 free split in 200 FR
- Lily Struempf (15) - 200 free 1:51.5 (lead-off 800 FR), 51.6 free split 400 MR

Junior Olympics (14&U) – Santa Clara

The team finished fourth in the meet with outstanding performances at all ages. *Some* of the impressive and improved swims were:

Jed Johnson (14) - 1:46.4 (2nd) 200 free, Eason Feng (13) - 1:48.3 (2nd) 200 free, Siena Santos (14) - 2:12.1 (2nd) 200 IM, Calei Calica (12) - 2:31.7 (2nd) 200 breast, Kai Calica (10) - 37.8 (4th) 50 breast, Chloe Cooper (12) - 2:15.9 (2nd) 200 back, Viola Griebenow (13) - 2:14.0 (4th) 200 back, Kat Kratcht (14) - 2:17.8 (3rd) 200 IM, Emma Shane (14) - 1:10.2 (4th) 100 breast, Bella Smith (11) - 2:19.9 (1st) 200 IM, Lily Yung (12) - 2:02.4 (2nd) 200 free, Julian Thorn Leeson (11) - 2:13 200 free, Stella Canoles (12) - 57.7 100 free, Sophia Schwartz (12) - 30.2 50 fly, Gray Bloes (12) 25.9 50 free, Isaac Kemper (12) - 58.9 100 free, Elise Gratton (13) - 57.4 100 free, Kendall Lee (13) - 2:17.6 200 back, Anna Motes (13) - 2:34 200 breast, Chloe Thorn Leeson (13) - 2:06 200 free, Gabriel Hoffman - 1:03 100 fly, Dima Secor (13) - 4:45 400 IM, Clare Baker (14) - 1:02 100 back, Ariel Indrisano (14) - 4:50 400 IM, Jewel Mendiola (14) - 2:15 200 back, Sisi Roggensack (14) - 50 free 26.3, Charlotte Shamia (14) - 2:33 200 breast, Avery Yasukochi (14) - 31.8 50 breast split

Santa Clara Senior T/F:

This was a very positive mid-season meet for the team. *Some* improved times:

Swimmer of the Meet: Théo Yavuzer-Judd - 100 breast 56.8, 100 free 46.8, 200 free 1:44.2, 50 free 21.1, 100 fly 51.2; Top Swims: Henrik Barck - 400 IM 4:02.8, Connor Ormsby - 200 breast 2:03.9, Nate Levy - 200 breast 2:07.6, Annabel Piel - 200 back 2:01.6, Lily Struempf - 500 free 5:00, Robby Brents - 200 fly 2:01.7, Logan Gunn - 200 free 1:47.8, Nick Chang - 400 IM 4:16.1, Lauren Healy - mile 19:38, Natalie Aiken - fly 58.1, Clare Baker - 100 free 56.1, Gabriella Bensadoun - 500 free - great swim in finals, Emma Bustamante - 500 free 5:23, Parker Etnyer - 200 back 2:04, Ben Graham - 400 IM 4:19.9, Theo Holtzman - 200 fly 2:08, Ariel Indrisano - 500 free 5:31, Ben Kang - 200 fly 1:59, Reid Lalli - 100 breast 1:03.2, Sammie/Sophie Lederle - 100 free 57.0/56.9, Devin Purewal - 100 back 56.6, Emma Shane - 200 fly 2:14, Parker Smith - 200 breast 2:18, Lila Waechter - 100 fly 57.8, Ben Wang - 100 free 52.5, Whitney Wilkalis - 100 fly 1:00.9, Zach Zener - 200 back 2:04

SRVA Age-Group Meet - San Ramon

Some improved times:

Aurea Emhoff (10) - 50 breast 44, Talia Sikora (10) - 50 fly 36, Quinn Baker (11) - 50 free 29.1, Claire Gallup (11) - 50 back 38, Sam Griscavage (12) - 50 fly 34, Serena Indrisano (11) - 100 free 1:17, Alexis Letulle (1) - 50 free 31.0, Kat Lu (12) - 50 fly 35, Marin Nebel (11) - 50 free 31.2, Kiera Shane (11) - 39.6 50 back, Sophie Struempf (11) - 31.9 50 fly, Atlas Metin (12) - 1:00.6 100 free, Siena Balassi (14) - 1:01 100 free, Katie Buckley (13) - 1:09 100 free, Juliet McIlwain (14) - 1:04 100 free, Claire Park (14) - 30.8 50 free, Maddie Phan (13) - 2:21 200 IM, Asha Spitzer (13) 1:18 100 breast, Halima Watson (14) - 2:42 200 back, Kyle Chang (14) - 2:14 200 free, Laird Delbridge (13) - 2:26 200 IM, Logan Letulle (13) - 27.6 50 free, Matthew Lkhagvasuren (13) - 1:03 100 fly, CJ McWhorter (13) - 2:26 200 back, Drake Sikora (14) - 54.9 100 free, Daniel Siu (13) - 1:13 100 breast, Meliana Calica (15) - 2:26 200 IM, Audrey Hoover (15) - 1:07 100 fly, Katie Meyers (15) - 1:07 100 fly, Supitcha Phoonpirom (15) - 1:10 100 back, Abby RG (15) 1:08 100 fly, Taryn Veronda (16) - 2:21 200 back, Chris Seo (15) - 1:00 100 fly, Bruce Zhang (15) - 54.6 100 free

Team/Coach Recognition

- Donnie was asked to join the Board of the **World Swimming Coaches Association (WSCA)**. This an extraordinary honor to serve alongside leading coaches from Australia, Europe, Canada, and Asia.
- Orinda Aquatics is featured in the new **USA Swimming Coach Curriculum** Character portion
- Orinda Aquatics asked to contribute to the February Issue of **Swimming World Magazine**

Looking forward

For both the Senior and Junior Groups, we will swim at home in the OA Senior Meet (**now open**) and the Zone 2 meet. Swimmers should enter both days and a full schedule. Use these meets to expand event options, try distance events, and work on pacing for 200's and IM's. The Albany meet will be an opportunity to swim distance events which we encourage (**see VCC letter**).

The Senior groups will move into the Championship phase of the Spring with Clovis and Sectionals (last weekend in February and first weekend in March respectively), and then into the high school season, with league meets in late April and NCS and the State meet in May. We will hold a Zoom meeting to review the logistics of the high school season.

A note on Clovis and Sectionals: we are evaluating the health situation, with regard to a bus and hotel rooms, against the state of the virus, and are leaning to not traveling as a team. Although our preference would be to keep the team together, we must do what is in the best interest of the kids, their families, and their opportunity to compete. We will send out a note shortly with more details and reasoning. We *will* look to provide the best competitive and team atmosphere possible regardless.

The Junior Group will look toward JO's (last chance and the meet) and Far Westerns. For the Junior Group, big picture, we ask that the focus be on the following (below), with a reminder that *swimmers don't fundamentally improve at a meet, they improve through high-quality training, and that is where the primary focus should be.*

- all strokes/all events
- balance in the water/distance-per-stroke
- underwater speed and endurance
- effort/workout detail
- race awareness and maturity
- being a great teammate, aaaaaand,
- helping around the house

Junior Group swimmers should read, or reread, the **Junior Handbook**. They should also assess their **IMX Score** (located in Deck Pass) as it is the best all-stroke measure of development.

We asked the Senior Group to use the break to “decompress”, and to take a step back and evaluate things from swimming to life, to objectively review:

- swimming - training, focus, attendance, motivation
- academics - management and perspective (and gratitude)
- health and well-being - life in balance, mental health, pressure, etc. (utilize the Restoic app)
- family - (“*are you a good teammate?*”), relationships with parents and siblings
- value system - friends, peer pressure, choices, thought process, appreciation of opportunities
- general attitude - glass half-full or half-empty (in all things)

For the Senior Group, the Spring will move quickly with overlapping seasons of high school and club. Swimmers need to manage both training and meet schedules as well as event line-ups for their league meets and into the “walk-on” meet. Again, we will hold a meeting to review.

Administrative notes:

- *On Saturday we began giving out the team gift (character-themed tumbler), a holiday card, as well as a Buddy note. If you were not there, please reach out to a coach.*
- *We will be giving out a car magnet to each family.*
- *Don't forget to explore the **Restoic** app. We will set up an introductory meeting with the founder.*
- *Adriana Smith will be highlighted in February in the **Lafayette News**, courtesy of Angie Zener*

Big Picture

As another year concludes and we reflect on the past, and the process, we come back to the mission of Orinda Aquatics, of sports in general, as it should be, and yes, life - to grow, to serve, to strive, and to make a positive impact where possible. And sports is uniquely an equalizer as it does not matter the time, the group, the lane, the age, but only the intent. We have stated that the platform of athletics can be one of the greatest learning grounds of life skills and growth, when embraced and exploited.

With regard to character and the team's pursuit, as each year passes, we see the “bar” raised for academic standards and athletic performance, and one could unfortunately argue for social (media) acceptance as well, but sadly, not for ethics, morality, integrity, and character. We don't ever want to lose sight of what truly matters, what is timeless, and where all kids can be *extraordinary*.

As the Tumbler says, ***“Your true character is revealed by the clarity of your convictions, the choices you make, and the promises you keep. Hold strongly to your principles and refuse to follow the currents of convenience. What you say and do defines who you are, and who you are... you are forever.”***

Again, we thank you all, parents and swimmers, for your support and participation, for the invaluable relationships, and for the opportunity to work with such an amazing group of athletes, parents and coaches.

We wish you a happy and healthy New Year.

Donnie & Ronnie Heidary

“Character is the basis of happiness, and happiness is the sanction of character.”
Santayana