

## **Mark Schubert is Home Again at the Helm of the Mission Viejo Swim Team**

Just a few months after the 2016 Rio Olympic Games Mark Schubert returned to the pool deck of the Marguerite Aquatic Complex, 46 years after he first arrived as the head coach of the Mission Viejo Nadadores. His title was associate head coach.

Author Tom Wolfe's book titled "You Can't Go Home Again" may have been recalled by many of his peers and colleagues when they read the online swimming news about Schubert's return for a second act. The premise is that "old ties and associations cannot remain the same, unchanged. Old ways must be set aside as part of a past which cannot easily again be recaptured." An older and wiser Coach Schubert would surely have something to say on the topic, debunking those words.

The City of Mission Viejo motto is "Making Living Your Mission". Schubert was preparing, a second time, to make "Swimming his Mission" in Mission Viejo. Schubert had done this exceptionally well during his 13 year tenure at the Marguerite Aquatic Complex, and achieved similar success at the collegiate, world championship and Olympic levels.

Mission Viejo was in the market for a new head coach for the first time in decades after longtime head coach Bill Rose announced his retirement earlier in 2016. Rose was 73 years old, highly regarded as one of nation's best distance swimming coaches, and the coach of several Olympians. Rose had been with the club since 1992 and planned to coach through December of 2017 before enjoying his retirement from coaching.

The agreement was that Rose and Schubert will coach together for the 2017 calendar year. Schubert will assume responsibility for day-to-day operations immediately and in 2018 Schubert would assume to head coach title for a second time.

***"This is a great opportunity. I get to work with Coach Rose for a year. Bill and I have a great relationship, and I will enjoy working with him," I'm going to be associate head coach working with him and I'm looking forward to that," said Coach Schubert. "To be able to go back and coach at a club I started is like a dream come true for me."***

It was a homecoming for Schubert, who was a bit older, a lot wiser and certainly full of pride to be returning to the internationally renowned Mission Viejo Nadadores swim team that he built from scratch in the early 1970's.

In 1972 The Nadadores were a summer swim team of 55 young kids of varying ages and abilities. In 1978 Sports Illustrated described the team that Schubert inherited: "In those early days, the Nadadores were so bad that other clubs in Orange County refused to swim dual meets with them."

Schubert's 2018 Mission is to return the program to the past glory days which were chock full of Olympic dreams and medals, like those he first inspired and ignited within weeks of his arrival as a 23 year old summer league swim coach.

As a young man, Schubert dreamed of becoming a swim coach. He swam breaststroke on his championship high school team in Akron, Ohio and played trombone in the band. Schubert often wondered what it would take to become a high school swim coach and he worked towards that objective. He swam for two years at the University of Kentucky on a swimming scholarship and served as an assistant coach for his final two years mapping out the next step in his career. Schubert's dream came true and in 1971 he became a high school coach in Cuyahoga Falls High in Ohio. This was the same little town that was made famous by the legendary James Edward "Doc" Counsilman, an US Olympic coach from 1964 to 1976 and was the head swimming coach at Indiana University from 1957 to 1990.

As a young man Schubert loved driving fast cars and coaching kids to become fast swimmers. Schubert wasn't prepared to lose at anything, but he failed to persuade the Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, parks and recreation department to build a bubble over the city's outdoor pool so that he and his athletes could train swimmers all year.

Schubert recalled his disappointment and remembered the words he heard that were intended to soften the "No" he received. "Mark, you're probably going to be a great coach someday, but it's never going to be in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio."

In 1972, at the age of 23, he applied for and was offered the co-head coaching position with the Mission Viejo Nadadores Swim Team in California, a swim team with 55 members. Schubert accepted the Nadadores job on the condition that the Mission Viejo Company, the owner of the planned community and the recreation center, would cover the travel expenses for any swimmers who qualified for the US national championships. Schubert knew that no Mission Viejo swimmer had ever done that, but he saw something in the future of his new team that wasn't obvious to anyone else.

***"With the new pool and the corporate backing, I could see the possibilities even then," Schubert says.***

Under Schubert the team grew to over 500 swimmers and became a club swimming powerhouse like none before it. Schubert was a tough taskmaster who often told his swimmers, ***"You're not going to fail for lack of training."***

Schubert placed six swimmers on the 1976 U.S. Olympic team, more than any other coach.

By 1985 his Mission Viejo team claimed a record number of 44 AAU and USS Club National Championship titles, eclipsing Hall of Fame Coach George Haines' Santa Clara Swim Club record of 43 national team championships. Mission Viejo's

championship titles including 18 women's team championships, 8 men's team championships and 18 combined team championships.

Schubert coached Nadadores achieved 124 individual US national championship titles. A total of 17 Olympic medals, 10 of the gold medals, six Olympic silver medals, one Olympic bronze medal were earned by Schubert trained swimmers. His athletes won five individual World Championship titles, 88 American records and set 21 world records, all during his 13 year tenure.

Schubert was named Coach of the Year for 1975, 1976 and 1981 by the American Swimming Coaches Association. In 1981, for the first and only time in the history of American swimming, his team captured all six national team titles in one year: men's, women's and combine titled in short and long course competition. In that year Mission Viejo athletes won 15 individual national titles and set 9 American records.

In 1985, Schubert said his new "Mission" would be to replicate those achievements on the east coast. Schubert was named the coach of the Mission Bay Makos Swim Team in Boca Raton, Florida. During his three years there, his club team won another nine national team titles and placed three swimmers on the 1988 US Olympic Team, one winning a silver medal.

Schubert was a featured author in the Sports Illustrated Winners Series of books on competitive swimming: Techniques for Champions.

Schubert's first foray into collegiate swimming was as the coach women's team at the University of Texas women's coach, succeeding Richard Quick, who had led the Longhorns to five straight NCAA team titles and six in seven years at the helm. Schubert's Longhorns won two NCAA Championships during his four year tenure from 1989 to 1992. The Longhorn women won 12 NCAA individual and eight relay titles, and he was named 1990 NCAA Coach of the Year. Adding to his reputation as the most successful club coach in history, he and University of Texas men's coach Eddie Reese won another 10 USA Swimming national team titles with Texas Aquatics Team.

Schubert return to Southern California to follow retired Hall of Fame coach Peter Daland as the head coach of the University of Southern California's men's swim team. Daland coached USC from 1958 until his retirement in 1992. Leaving huge shoes for Schubert to fill, Daland coached 70 Olympians and 392 All-Americans, and his USC teams won nine NCAA championships and placed second 11 times. As the men's swim coach for 14 seasons and the women's coach for 13 seasons, Schubert has established an impressive .822 winning percentage and his teams regularly placed in the NCAA top ten. At the University of Southern California, the Trojan women took home the 1997 NCAA team title. Under Schubert's leadership, USC swimmers won 49 NCAA individual titles and his swimmers qualified for the 1996, 2000 and 2004 Olympic teams.

After a 25 year coaching career Schubert was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame as an Honor Coach in 1997. USA's Olympic Coach, "Mark's probably

done more for a man his age than anybody else ever involved in the sport." said Don Gambrill who served as the USA's Head Olympic Coach for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

Schubert was appointed to the U.S. Olympic coaching staff for the first time in 1980 as an assistant coach of the combined men's and women's team. However, the USA boycotted the Moscow Olympics that year.

At the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games he would serve as an assistant coach for the USA Olympic team, swum in the newly constructed University of Southern California pool. Nadadores swimmers won 10 gold medals at the 1984 Games in Los Angeles, 13 medals total. Only five countries won more gold medals in all sports combined in Los Angeles than the swimmers from Mission Viejo won in the pool.

Schubert would go on to have a streak of eight consecutive Olympics where he served in some capacity on the USA's Olympic staff.

Schubert coaches 38 swimmers on U.S. Olympic teams. He was Head Women's Olympic Coach in 1992 Barcelona and 2004 Athens and was the Head Men's Olympic Coach in 2000. Additionally, he was named a Women's Assistant Olympic Coach in 1996, and an assistant for the combined Men's and Women's teams again in 1988. He was an eight-time World Championships coach, serving as the head men's and women's coach in 1982.

Schubert was selected for the newly created role of USA Swimming National Team Head Coach and General Manager in March 2006. Schubert led Team USA to its most dominant performance in history in his first World Championships. The Americans ran away with the medal count in Melbourne 2007, winning an incredible 36 medals, 20 of them gold, and setting 11 world records. Schubert led the US team that earned 31 medals at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, led by Michael Phelps' record eight gold medals.

Schubert went on to serve as the Head Coach and CEO of Golden West Swim Club and as the Head Coach of the Golden West College, both teams based in Huntington Beach, California. Schubert lead both the Women's and the Men's teams to the California State Community College Championships Title – in his first season. The Men's team also won the State title in 2014 and 2015.

Throughout his career of coaching countless national, world & Olympic champions Schubert may regard Shirley Babashoff as one of the finest swimmers he ever coached. Altered in seven Olympic events, Babashoff won three silvers and a relay gold but not the individual gold she wanted. In her disappointment she bad-mouthed the East Germans and refused to congratulate them, so distressing U.S. swim officials that they sent GDR star Kornelia Ender a dozen roses by way of apology.

In paying tribute to Babashoff, Schubert recalled something that Olympic Coach Don Gambrill once said: 'What makes a great swimming coach is a great swimmer', and the person that made people think I could coach swimming is Shirley Babashoff. "

Entered in seven Olympic events, Babashoff won three silvers and a relay gold but not the individual gold she wanted. In her disappointment she bad-mouthed the East Germans and refused to congratulate them, so distressing U.S. swim officials that they sent GDR star Kornelia Ender a dozen roses by way of apology.

"Shirley came to Mission Viejo when we built a 50m pool and shortly after her swim coach had quit. In order to train with us she drove 30 miles each way to come to practice twice a day every day. The only day she missed practice was the day that she thought she had quit swimming, until it showed up in her living room to tell her she hadn't quit yet." recalled Schubert.

"In the 1976 Olympic year Shirley and other female athletes in the Mission Viejo program were training 2.5 hours every day, twice a day with the dream of succeeding at the Montreal Olympic Games. Shirley had won nationally every event from the 100m to the 800m plus the 400 IM and she held AR in each of those events. At the US Olympic Trials, she won all of those events plus the 400IM in a truly magnificent performance."

According to Schubert, "The press had built her up after her amazing Olympic Trials experience, and she deserved to be built up. She was one of the very few people in the 70's to stand up against doping. Nothing had been proven but it was obvious, and everyone was talking about doping by the East German athletes."

Babashoff had great expectations at the 1976 Olympics. Entered in seven Olympic events, Babashoff won three silvers and a relay gold but not the individual gold she wanted. Showing her disappointment Babashoff complained about the physique and the deep voices of her East German competitors and refused to congratulate them. U.S. swimming officials said that they sent GDR star Kornelia Ender a dozen roses in apology.

"Shirley was the only one with the guts to say something about doping to the press. She was ridiculed for talking about doping, and she left the sport disappointed and bitter. Today, 42 years after the 1976 Olympic Games she deserves our recognition for her swimming accomplishments and our respect for speaking out. I am proud of you for the courage you have shown and continue to show all these years later.

Babashoff recognized that Schubert was partly if not equally responsible for her success. "I want to thank Mark for all he did for me. When you go on the podium at the Olympic Games I always felt like I wanted to take him with me and to show and tell everyone that 'this is the guy who got me here' but that's never possible."

As appreciative as she was of her swim coach, she thoroughly enjoyed poking fun at her taskmaster. "It is true that to be a good coach you don't have to know how to swim very well. There were occasions, I don't know if we made it look easy, when Mark felt like he could get in the water and swim a fast 25. My teammates and I watched him swim, but we were careful not to let his see us laughing."

Perhaps she was speaking about Schubert, or sharing her admiration for all swim coaches: "It takes a special person to be a coach and I want every coach to know you are better a lot of children's lives and they are going to remember that forever. What you learn through swimming is discipline, respect and a work ethic that stays with you for the rest of your life."

Upon his return Schubert was instrumental in the renovation of the iconic Mission Viejo facility. The city spent more than \$11 million renovating the aquatic center with Schubert at the helm.

Olympian Rowdy Gaines was the master of ceremonies for the grand reopening of the Mission Viejo Marguerite Aquatics Center on April 7th: "Continuing Mission Viejo's Olympic Tradition,"

Swimming World magazine reported on the festivities and on the celebration that featured an exhibition by two Olympic Gold medalists:

***"These are hallowed grounds where numerous Olympic divers and swimmers—dating back to the early '70s—once trained.***

***The renovated facility is a jewel in the fast-paced life of Southern California. The diving platforms are the only ones on the west coast of the United States that allow for synchronized diving.***

***The eight-lane competition pool remains at 50 meters, with new tile lines and deep gutters. A two-sided video board separates the diving well from the competition pool. The teaching pool kept its footprint, but is now more parent- and kid-friendly. What is most striking is that the seating capacity has been extended to hold 2,000 under an impressive shade structure.***

***On opening day, three-time Olympian Greg Louganis, 58, climbed to the top of the 10-meter platform and thrilled everyone with an inward dive in pike position that scored perfect 10's. Not to be outdone, 1976 Olympian and Mission Viejo City Councilman Brian Goodell took the first lap in the 50-meter competition pool to the delight of everyone.***

**"It's incredibly poetic Mark will be able to complete his career where he made his name. It's a wonderful thing for the club, the parents and the community. The facility that has been such a special place has new life with Mark and following**

**this investment in massive pool renovations. Mark has the drive, the knowledge, the experience and the passion to further enhance Mission Viejo's reputation as a swimming mecca."**

— [Brian Goodell](#), *Mission Viejo Alum, 1976 Olympic Champion*

Goodell was 9 years old when Schubert became the Mission Viejo head coach. Goodell was the only swimmer on the original Nadadores swim team who knew how to swim butterfly. Schubert first coached him when he was 13 years old. Goodell's two gold medals in the 400m and 1500m freestyle events at the 1976 Montreal Olympics were the only victories by a high school boy in the 13-event men's Olympic program.

***"When Mark came here nobody in the club liked him," Goodell said. "He was always yelling. But he kind of grew on you. Besides, he got the best out of us. Mark ran the toughest program in the country and sometimes I would ask myself if it's worth it. But I like to win and that's what it takes. Everything I learned from him, I carried over into my everyday life."***

In August Schubert was on the pool deck at the Asian Games, but wearing the flag of a different country on his coaching uniform. The former USA national swim team head coach was serving as a part-time adviser for the team from China.

***"It's feels strange, very strange, but it's nice to be involved at this level." said Schubert.***

As the USA national team head coach at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, Schubert was extremely outspoken about issues of doping involving Chinese swimmers dating back to the early 1990's.

***"That's when they got the really bad reputation. Chinese swimmers won almost every event in 1994 (at the FINA World Championships)," Schubert said. "I think they've really made an effort to clean up. From what I've seen, most of the problems are out in the provinces with local coaches and kind of renegade athletes."***

***"At the highest level," he added, "particularly at their training center, they won't even let swimmers off the campus to eat because they are afraid of food contamination."***

Schubert has hosted several camps in southern California with Chinese swimmers, who periodically train alongside his US swimmers.

***“It’s good for my team because they can see how really good athletes train, and believe me I point it out to them,” Schubert said.***

Ironically Schubert's experience and expertise is helping Chinese swimmers who may one day stand on the Olympic podium ahead of swimmers from the USA. Schubert recognizes several areas where the Chinese athletes he works with can improve.

***“It’s the little things,” he said. “The starts, turns, finishes, and the relay takeoffs. I think it cost them some races here. As for training, they work hard. I mean, they really work hard.”***

Schubert ability to prepare American swimmers for Olympic success has been as consistent as it has been legendary. As so many things are coming around "full circle" in Schubert's career, perhaps the best and most recent example is Michael Brinegar who represented the USA in Tokyo this summer as a member of the 2018 Pan Pacific team just weeks after his high school graduation in June.

"I am particularly proud of Michael who qualified for the US National team in Open Water and the 1500 M freestyle and was a member of the 2018 Pan Pacific Championship Team. Currently he is a freshman at Indiana University." said Schubert.

Brinegar trained with Schubert at Golden West Swim Club and won the 800m freestyle at the 2016 SPEEDO Junior Championship. When Schubert returned to the Mission Viejo Nadadores, Brinegar followed. Brinegar was the silver medalist in the 7.5K race at 2016 FINA Junior World Open Water Championships and raced in the 800m and 1500m freestyle events at the FINA Junior World Championships in 2017.

A generation ago Schubert trained Brinegar's mother, Jennifer Hooker, when she was in high school swimming for the Nadadores. Her son will attend his mother's alma mater. Hooker who graduated with a degree in business in 1984, earned a masters degree in sports management in 1996 and is currently employed as an assistant athletic director at IU.

As a member of the Bloomington Swim Club in the 1970's, Hooker met and was mentored by Doc Counsilman, coach of the IU men's swimming team. Counsilman took Brinegar under his wing and saw something in Brinegar she didn't see. When she was around 12 years old, Counsilman told her that she would make the 1976 Olympic Team. He invited her to train during the summer with the IU swim team and to sit on the bench during meets -- this was the time of Mark Spitz, Gary Hall and six consecutive NCAA championships -- and teaching her about the field of competitive swimming.

Hooker had just turned 15 years old when she finished third in the 200m freestyle at the 1976 US Olympic Trials, earning a spot on the US Olympic team that would compete at the summer Olympics in Montreal. She finished 6th in the 200m free at the Olympic Games that US athletes suspected were tainted by athletes who were doping to enhance their performances.

Hooker was a member of the US team racing in the heats of the women's 4x100m freestyle relay although she did not receive an Olympic medal as the rules in effect at the time awarded medals only to those swimmers who competed in the Olympic final. "Watching that relay that night was amazing; it was incredible," she said. "It showed that we weren't complete failures." recalled Hooker.

After the Olympic Games Hooker trained with Schubert before enrolling at IU. Swimming at Indiana, Hooker won seven Big 10 championships, and twice won national titles in the 500 yard and 1,650 yard freestyles.

In 2017 Brinegar announced that he would join the class of 2022 at Indiana University and credited his Mission Viejo swim coach:

***"I am happy to announce my commitment to become an Indiana Hoosier beginning in the 2018-19 academic year. I am excited to have the opportunity to train alongside and learn from 2016 Olympic Gold Medalists Blake Pieroni, Cody Miller and Lilly King as well as current USA World Championship team member Zane Grothe. I am also looking forward to joining several of my former Indiana age group friends and competitors to train and compete together.***

***Having spent most of my life in southern Indiana, I have enjoyed watching the recent resurgence of Indiana Swimming under Ray Looze, highlighted by Rio Gold Medalists Pieroni, Miller and King.***

***"The atmosphere of championship expectations is one I look forward to joining at Indiana, and I cannot thank Mark Schubert enough for preparing me for this nextstep."***

Schubert, once an upstart, like the Mission Viejo community itself, is 45 years removed from obscurity as a high school swim coach in Ohio. He isn't as blond, as lean or as beach-boyish as he was in his first act as a pied-piper of the Nadadores. But still likes to drive fast cars and coach swimmers to be faster, both things he still very much enjoys doing.

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