

JANUARY 2019



# NEWSLETTER

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# SOME THOUGHTS FROM YOUR WH20 PRESIDENT

BY CRAIG SINEL; WH20 MEMBER SINCE 2015

Happy New Year to everyone in our West Hollywood Aquatics family. I want to wish all of you a fabulous 2019 full of great achievements and experiences, a year filled with health, prosperity, love and loads of fun!

In moving forward, I think it's important to look back. 2018 was a year of incredible highs - the release of the *Light in the Water* documentary was celebrated by film critics and viewers around the globe, the Gay Games once again demonstrated how important and influential this quadrennial event is to the core fiber of our team, and the club continued to expand by adding significant numbers of new members to both swimming and water polo.

2018 also brought us devastating lows; namely the tragic and untimely loss of dearly loved teammates, including Jonathan Skow, Sean Early and others.

And looking back can be challenging, particularly in light of such devastating loss. That said, looking back provides us with an opening, a starting point to make 2019 count.

My personal goals for 2019 are, I believe, achievable. I want to smile more, embrace happiness, give more compliments, be grateful for the small things and focus on being a better person. I want to have more fun, treasure my friendships and loved ones, and motivate people to be the best they can be. I want to give more hugs.



My goals for the team in 2019 are achievable as well. I would like for our club to be even more inclusive in 2019: "WH20 - where everyone is welcome" will be my motto for the year. A diverse team membership comprised of people from a wide array of cultures,

backgrounds and viewpoints is not just a nice to have; it's essential. I want our team to give back to the community in bigger, more impactful ways. I want us to have greater participation in local, regional, national and international swimming meets, water polo tournaments and open water swimming events. Let's proudly fly that WH20 flag!

I want us to continue to outwardly appreciate the hard work that Shea and the entire coaching staff put into every single swimming and water polo workout. Without them there would be no WH20. I want us to continue to be thankful for our volunteer Board members who work hard to ensure there are pools available to practice in, training camps held, social activities planned, newsletters published, community outreach performed, and much, much more.

And most importantly, I want us to continue to cherish our teammates who make West Hollywood Aquatics the best Masters team in the world. Have fun and enjoy 2019.

# NEW POOL RISING

BY JAMES BALLARD, WH2O MEMBER SINCE 1982

The steel is in the ground and construction of the West Hollywood Recreation Center, topped by the gorgeous new pool, is moving forward, albeit with cost overruns and delays, but it is moving forward. The completion date is now slated for early 2020, however, don't be surprised if that date extends into the middle of 2020. That is the nature of public construction projects. There are inevitably changes as the vision takes shape and I am so happy that the City of West Hollywood wants to get it right from the start.

This is a massive project and we will soon be releasing a video that details the design of the new pool using footage we obtained from the City of West Hollywood. Two pools sitting on top of a five-story recreation center, one 25-meters x 25-yards and 7-feet deep, the second a four lane 25-yard shallow pool that can be kept warmer for varied recreational activities.

We have been lobbying for a new pool since 1984 when the City first incorporated and now it is under construction with deck lockers and showers, changing rooms, and a full locker room below, as well as wonderful views to the Pacific Ocean. The City has stepped up and we need to recognize all the effort that has gone into making this a reality. Thank you, City of West Hollywood.

What has not been finalized is the equipment list for the new pool. With cost overruns, largely due to new security measures, the dollars are getting thinner. That is where WH2O comes in. We need to partner with the City to help raise money to equip the pool. This will be our home and it will take a substantial amount of money to buy a timing system/scoreboard, lane ropes, sound system, water polo goals, starting blocks, flags, kickboards, pull buoys, pace clocks, life preservers, guard towers, and everything else needed to ready the pool for our community. Yes, this is about equipping the new pool for the entire community: think youth programs, seniors, members of the community who are seeking to exceed their disabilities, lap swimmers, and everyone who wants to swim and learn to swim, including WH2O. We use more pool time than any other group with programmed pool time, but the new pool will also bring competition for that pool time. We need to step up as choices are being made for the new pool right now. We need to get to work and do it now. Our efforts will say a lot about us.



The New Pool Committee is actively working to raise money to equip the new pool and to partner with the City to ensure the facility is fully equipped day-one. We are advised that the City of West Hollywood is setting up a designated gift fund so that we can be sure that everyone who contributes to equipping the pool will be able to claim a tax deduction for their donation and ensure that their donation will go to equipment for the pool. The details have not been worked out, but that is in process.

This has been a 30+ years process and it's exciting to finally see the steel in the ground which will support our new home. Now it's time for us to step up and support the City and our community. Walk around West Hollywood Park and see the progress. This is our Holiday gift this year and for many years to come. Happy Happy!!!!

# ANNUAL ANNIVERSARY BANQUET + AWARDS PARTY

BY COLIN DUEWEKE; WH2O MEMBER SINCE 2016

What a fabulous time we had at the Annual Anniversary Banquet & Awards Party held on November 12 at Mike Wallace's amazing home! There were over 90 team members and friends in attendance, and I hope everyone had as much fun as I did. Judging by the photo booth pictures, I'd say the answer is yes! And if you missed it, here is a link to the photos so you can take a look and save some as blackmail [WH2O Annual Anniversary Banquet & Awards Party Pictures](#)

I wanted to also recognize our 2018 swimming and water polo award winners:

- Swimmer of the Year** Colin Dueweke
- Water Polo MVP** Marcus Moncibaez
- Favorite Lane Mate** Jonathan Skow
- Favorite Passing Buddy** Jason Braun
- Most Improved Swimmer** Roman Charmes
- Most Improved Water Polo Player** Jon Kelly
- Hardest Worker** Antoine Kunsch
- Tom Martinez Memorial Award** Jack Sinclair
- WH2O Spirit Award** Keely MacDonald
- Volunteer of the Year** Amy Dantzler

Feel free to congratulate them next time you see them at the pool if you haven't already. They may even sign an autograph if you ask nicely!

Special thanks goes to Mike Wallace for opening his home to the team. His hospitality never disappoints (and neither does the view!). Also, thank you to Bryan Libit and Sam Stryker for putting together a touching tribute and toast to Jonathan, forever our favorite lane mate. It was a beautiful way to recognize the amazing friend and teammate he was to all of us.

As my last social article, I want to say thank you to everyone who attended the events we held throughout the year including the 2017 holiday party, LA Pride parade march, beach day, Gay Games send-off and the Anniversary Banquet. These events don't happen without team participation, and it's great having so many people show up and be together beyond just teammates; but as friends. I also want to say thank you to everyone who has volunteered to help set up, clean up, decorate, etc. for the events throughout the year. Your participation meant the world to me, and no doubt was the reason all the events went so smoothly.

I wish you all a happy 2019 and look forward to socializing, training, and competing together in the new year!

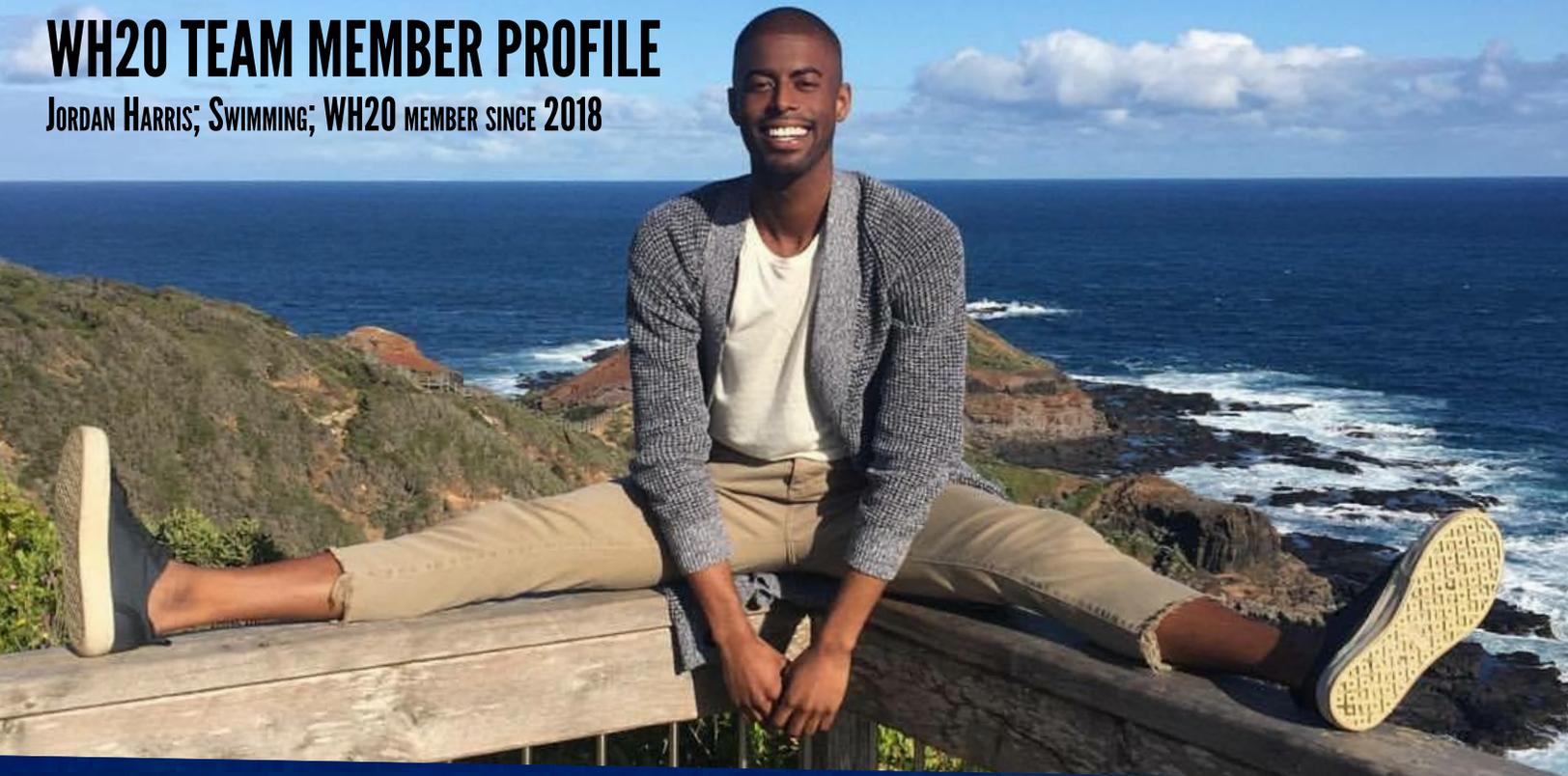
Socially (now Representatively)

Colin Dueweke



# WH20 TEAM MEMBER PROFILE

JORDAN HARRIS; SWIMMING; WH20 MEMBER SINCE 2018



## **Q). When did you start swimming or playing polo and what are your earliest and fondest memories?**

I started swimming competitively at the age of 9 with Hillside Aquatics in Alta Loma, CA. I was a chubby kid that loved water, individual sports and being shirtless so, my parents took me out of karate and basketball and put me on the swim team. As slow and chubby as I was, swimming brought me joy. One of my earliest memories of being on a swim team was becoming a man. Somehow, I matured way earlier than my peers and would get teased for all of the hair I was getting. Demonstrating a streamline out of water was my worst fear.

## **Q). What swimming teams have you belonged to over the years?**

I have only belonged to swim teams. As aforementioned, I started with Hillside Aquatics at 9, then switched to The Claremont Club (TCC) at the age of 10 and swam with them throughout high school. I swam with California State University Northridge for one year and they discontinued the swim program after my freshman year. Fortunately, I was able to keep my full scholarship and priority registration.

## **Q). Name one surprising or unique thing that's often in your swim bag...**

High heels. Dancing has always been a passion of mine and recently I started taking heels dance classes at Playground and Millennium to hone in any skills I may have. I figured if I start with heels, everything else would come easier. Some of the classes finish just before swim practice so I switch from stilettos to speedos.

## **Q). What's your favorite activity or hobby that doesn't involve a pool or beach?**

Aside from dance, it would be travel. I have lived in Japan and Australia for some years and traveled to 17 different countries. My favorite place overall has been Palma de Mallorca, Spain. Least favorite would be Guangzhou, China.

## **Q). What current film/TV show/book/podcast are you obsessing over? (bonus points if it involves bodies of water)**

My favorite TV show is Modern Family. The humor is so clever and funny to me.

## **Q). Pancakes or waffles?**

Pancakes. I've been vegan for 1.5 years and the best pancake I've ever had (considering vegan and non-vegan) is from Vegan Glory on Beverly.

## **Q). What's your favorite thing about being a member of WH20?**

I've only been a member for two months, but my favorite thing has been meeting all of you! I love the diversity WH20 offers and the kindness everyone has shared with me since joining. I look forward to getting to know more of you in 2019.

# WH20 TEAM MEMBER PROFILE

**BENNETT COOPER; WATER POLO & SWIMMING; WH20 MEMBER SINCE 2018**



**Q). When did you start swimming or playing polo and what are your earliest and fondest memories?**

I started swimming for my local Newport Beach neighborhood club, Newport Hills, when I was about 5 or 6 years old. I started water polo a few years later when I was in 3rd grade and went on to play for the Corona Del Mar club, Mater Dei High School, and eventually Boston College. My best memory has to be winning the New England Division in 2015, my junior year at Boston College, which allowed the BC team to play at Club Nationals for the first time in a decade.

**Q). What swimming and/or water polo teams have you belonged to over the years?**

As mentioned above, I swam for Newport Hills Swim Team from when I was 5 years old until I joined Corona Del Mar Water Polo full-time in middle school. I then swam and played polo for Mater Dei High School and returned to swim for Newport Hills during the summers (and I coached the 8-10 year olds). I went into college thinking I wanted a break from water polo, but after one month I ended up joining the Boston College Men's Water Polo club team and went on to serve as Captain my senior year.

**Q). Name one surprising or unique thing that's often in your swim/polo bag...**

If I had to pick out the most random things, I'd have to go with a) CBD Lotion, b) a change of socks and underwear c) sour candy

**Q). What's your favorite activity or hobby that doesn't involve a pool or beach?**

If I'm not at the pool or the beach, I love to hike / camp and to travel. I've been all over the USA, backpacked across Europe, and spent two weeks solo in Australia - I love getting out there and exploring. If I had to pick one place to go next, I'd love to visit Japan.

**Q). What current film/TV show/book/podcast are you obsessing over? (bonus points if it involves bodies of water)**

Film - "Bohemian Rhapsody" / "A Star is Born", Books - "On Trails" by Robert Moor. And if I'm in the mood for trash TV, "Real Housewives of Beverly Hills / OC".

**Q). Pancakes or waffles?**

Pancakes > Waffles, unless we're talking Chicken & Waffles.

**Q). What's your favorite thing about being a member of WH20?**

My favorite thing about WH20 is definitely the people. I love that everyone is so friendly, welcoming, and fun, yet we're a competitive team that continually pushes each other to perform at our best. It's truly a special community and I'm incredibly lucky to be a part of it.

# RAISE THE BAR IN 2019

BY SHEA MANNING; WH20 MEMBER SINCE 2017

One of my favorite things about December are the seemingly infinite amount of Year-End Lists ranking everything from Best LA Brunch Spots to Best Netflix Original Christmas Specials (how on earth are there enough to warrant a ranking?!) In honor of WH20's nomination to The Blade's "Best LGBT Sports League", I thought it fitting to create our very own



year-end ranking. In the spirit of the never-ending pursuit of lifetime fitness, however, we will also look ahead to 2019. So, without further ado, I present the Top 6 Swim-Year Resolutions:

## 1). Add a new piece of equipment to your bag!

Every time we get into the water we want to challenge ourselves to think about and feel our stroke in a different way than we have before. Using [the right] equipment can be a great way to force you into that line of thought. Don't know which swim toys will benefit you the most? Chat with me or one of the other coaches about your technique goals and we will happily give you further guidance. In general, I think everyone could use a snorkel, tempo trainer, and pair of fins—in that order of importance.

## 2). Ask a coach or teammate to film your stroke (and then film it again in the Summer)!

"I look like THAT?!" might be the most common response I hear from swimmers who are seeing his/her/their stroke for the first time (or for the first time in a long time). Watching footage of your own swimming is a great way to provide a frame of reference to the tips you receive from the coaches as well as a way to follow the development of a stroke you've been working tirelessly to improve. Bring your phone out to the pool deck one practice and ask a coach or teammate to record a couple different angles of your choice of stroke. Review it yourself, seek feedback from a coach, and put together a plan to fix the one or two elements that jump out at you. Then... circle back in the Summer and film the same stroke from the same angles to see what progress you've made.

## 3). Perfect your warm-up routine!

This one SHOULD be "ARRIVE ON TIME. Perfect your warm-up routine." Our first set of every practice is written with the expectation that everyone has had a chance to focus on a 8-10-minute personalized warm-up. This time should be spent getting your blood flowing, establishing your feel for the water, and on specific drills that pinpoint the weaker parts of your stroke and mobility. For instance, I know from my own experience that my upper body is warm and mobile much sooner than my legs... So, a vital part of my warm-up is half-pool blast or build kicks, mixed with some vertical kicking tempo-checks using the clock. Start by making a mental list of the weaker portions of your stroke and mobility, then introduce a couple of exercises into your warm-up aimed at addressing those weaknesses head-on. Most importantly: keep searching for a more complete way to warm-up by making slight changes and assessing how those changes impact your subsequent performance at practice.

## 4). Compete!

Competition is a great way to add structure to your long-term fitness schedule and goal-setting. What's more, WH20 is the envy of all other teams in our Region because of the connection and team spirit we share. You should feel empowered to participate regardless of your competitive/racing history. Sure, fast swimming and winning is a lot of fun, but it is overall participation and the continued dedication to physical fitness that creates the best training and team environment.

## 5). Bring a friend to practice!

Expanding our reach and positive impact through aquatic programming, especially to underrepresented groups, will continue to be a vital part of the future of West Hollywood Aquatics. Invite a friend, regardless of previous swim background, to tag-a-long with you for a workout in 2019.

## 6). Create a Drill!

This COULD have gone with the thoughts on warm-up routine, but is so important that it warrants its own point. So often we get caught up doing the same drills over and over again without giving much thought to how we are benefiting from it. In far too many cases we are not benefitting from our default drill at all because of how automatic it has become. The great thing about drills is that there is no right or wrong way and the possibilities are endless. Experiment with how you move and in isolating portions of your catch/stroke/buoyancy/kick... The sillier you look experimenting the more impressed your coaches will be!

Many of us are discovering that the amount and the way we trained several years ago is no longer working for us. Career, relationships, and yes, age can all affect our training and our performance in the pool.

Most studies examining aging and performance of masters swimmers analyze the records for men and women in the various age groups and conclude that for the most part men are faster than women in each age group and that with advancing age both men and women swimmers' times get slower.

Some more recent studies have analyzed swimmers' performance by following them over a period of time. One study done at the University of Texas in the lab of Hirofumi Tanaka, who delivered the Sports Medicine/Sports Science lecture at the USMS convention this year, was particularly informative. The researchers used training volume data from the USMS database "Go The Distance," where individual swimmers can log workouts. The swimmers were then matched with their times at national championship meets during the same time span. The study used an independent cohort of 98 swimmers aged 20 to 88 who participated in three years of national championship meets and "Go the Distance" and competed in the 50-yard freestyle event.

In swimmers younger than 53 years, training volume was not a significant predictor of performance. However, in swimmers older than 53 training volume did affect performance. Just maintaining the same training volume resulted in slower times, as did less training volume. This effect was even more pronounced as swimmers got older. This is very interesting, as one wouldn't think training volume would make a difference in a sprint event. Another study from Dr. Tanaka's lab showed that dry-land training for masters swimmers did significantly reduce injuries. A third study showed that stroke frequency, stroke length, and propelling efficiency tend to decrease with age.

The takeaway from these three studies is that if swimmers want to counteract age-related decreases in performance levels as they age, or even improve times, they must increase their training yardage and include a higher percentage of technical drills in their workouts. They must also include dry-land training in order to maintain muscle mass, which decreases with age, to maintain bone density, and to avoid injury.

The bottom line: to maintain your performance in the pool as you get older, you have to swim more, do more technique drills, and do more exercise out of the pool. Of course, there is a limit to the extent to which you can counteract the inevitable aging process! Alternatively, you can continue to swim at the same level and learn to live with slower times while still remaining fit and enjoying all that swimming with West Hollywood Aquatics has to offer.



## THE HEALTHY WH20 ATHLETE

BY JESSICA SEATON; WH20 MEMBER SINCE 1990

# KEELY'S KORNER - CHAPTER 3

BY KEELY MacDONALD; WH20 MEMBER SINCE 2016



*Dear Keely,*

*2018 was A LOT. I want to make it to more practices and team events in the New Year. Got any advice on how to handle? TYSM.*

*Sincerely, 2019 Better Be Lit*

Dear 2019,

I hear you. Parts of 2018 could be equated to me on the Sunday morning of a Palm Springs training trip after going out the night before – a mess. That being said, as we approach the New Year, it's always good to make resolutions to set yourself up for success. You asked (and even if you hadn't, I'd probably give it anyway), so here's my best advice:

- 1) **Set goals:** New Year's resolutions can seem kind of silly, and I feel like half the time we don't make them happen (every year I vow to work on abs, and then somehow the entire year goes by without that having happened, WHOOPS), BUT they're aspirational AF. If you want to go to more practices, try telling yourself you'll go 2 times more per month than you have been going. Up it a few months in if you're holding strong. You're a swimmer – goal setting is as natural to you as being buoyant is to me.
- 2) **Plan ahead:** If you know you want to go to IGLA or Nationals or a Palm Springs training trip this year, think ahead so you'll be prepared. It's a lot easier to go to practices knowing you're building up to something within a time frame. And the anticipation will get you all keyed up and ready to go. And trust me, you want to go to meets and team events – those are the things that will make 2019 your best year yet!
- 3) **Be kind to yourself:** This is basically my entire 2019 personal resolution, but I think it fits here. Even if you have a goal and you don't meet it – be it a time standard, a certain number of practices you want to make, or attending certain team experiences – cut yourself some slack. Life happens and when it does, remember that at the very least you're part of a loving and fit community in our WH20 family, and that it's pretty fucking awesome that you can swim more in one practice than most people do in an entire year. So push yourself, but self-care too, bish.

So, 2019, that's what I got. Those might seem obvious, but I've found these are the keys to success when it comes to #SwimGoals, so hopefully you find them helpful.

Wishing you a happy and wild New Year,

Keely

# SPMS REGIONALS

BY CARLO MORANTE, WH20 MEMBER SINCE 2018

Hundreds of swimmers gathered at the Brenda Villa Aquatics Center over the weekend of Nov 30th-Dec 2nd to swim at the 2018 Southern Pacific Masters Regionals. This was my first "real" swim meet in 4 years. Part of me had forgotten the dreadful feeling of waking up extremely early every day of the weekend, the lack of circulation after putting on a tech suit, and the frustration of swimming in a hot-mess called a warm-up pool. However, the celebrations after great swims, the jokes cracked, and the competitive fun of our relays all reminded me of why I am glad to be a part of this swim team. Those pieces reminded me of the true essence of the sport.

The previous Masters swim team that I swam for only had about 20 people. Because of this, I was SHOOK at the turnout WH20 had for this meet. Over 40 of our swimmers showed up to challenge themselves, represent the team, take cute Instagram pictures (@Keely and @Sam), and eat from Craig's snack bag. This swim meet served as an annual memory for many of the veteran swimmers from the team, but this also marked the first swim meet with the team for many folks, like Nikita Bondarenko, Max Bley-Male, and me. Regionals was definitely an opportunity to form new bonds, strengthen already-existing friendships, and be supportive of the hard work people have put in all year in the pool.

While community was being built on the bleachers, once we stepped up to the blocks, competition mode was 100% in full force even between teammates. Relays brought in competitive fun within the team with several WH20 Men's relays (daddies vs twinks) all competing for (and actually achieving) first place and bragging rights. In addition, our Mixed relays were a force to be reckoned with and our Women's relay did an incredible job while forcing Coach Juliet out of retirement via a killer 100 Fly. To add onto our



team's accolades, we had two high-point winners, Liz Vucinich and Nikita Bondarenko. They both dominated their age-groups and won a super cute towel (who doesn't like a good towel???). Lastly, WH20 climbed up two spots from last year and finished 3rd overall! Clearly, we're not just good looking, but we are also fast.

I think it's safe to say that this weekend wouldn't have been as successful if everyone hadn't come together and shown up as the best versions of themselves. From the hard work of our coaches, to the support of the Water Polo team at the meet, to the positive vibes that every athlete brought to the competition pool. I am sincerely happy to have experienced this weekend with these athletes and to be a part of such a loving team. WH20 stay cute, stay fast, and stay great!



# BOB NEALY MEMORIAL WATER POLO TOURNAMENT

BY JASON BRAUN, WH20 MEMBER SINCE 2017

On December 8-9, 2018, the WH20 water polo team made a splash at the Bob Nealy Memorial water polo tournament in San Juan Capistrano. The tournament is traditionally one of the premier tournaments in the country, attracting many teams from all around California, the hub of USA Masters Water Polo. For the second year in a row, WH20 took two full teams, with enough people to fill more than two line-ups each.

The A Team played in the "open" bracket. The B Team played in the "classic" bracket with an experienced player joining them in each game to provide a little more rest and fire power during the games. There was much to cheer for throughout the weekend.

In the classic bracket, the B Team had a lot of opportunities to be tested by other great teams who have been playing the sport for much longer. No matter what position the WH20 players found themselves in, our teammates played with confidence and an acceptance of the challenge they had in front of them. Notably, Vicki and Audrey frequently found themselves guarding the biggest players in the pool, but our defense was keen on helping out and shutting that offense down with quick thinking and commitment to playing as a group of teammates instead of individuals. Lacey, Charlie, and Andres provided a presence in front of the cage and acted as a distraction to allow outside shooters including Nick, Jackson, and Jack Blackwood the

chance to light up the goal. The main victory for the B Team was the chance to test our mettle against other teams outside of practice. Throughout the tournament, the B Team grew as a team and people had a great time participating in completion under the WH20 banner.

In the open bracket, the A Team found themselves in new territory. Leading up to the tournament, there was much talk about the "kinds" of teams we were going to be facing at this tournament. In our first game, the A Team matched up with Santa Monica. Coach Mike had made it a point to be ready for our first game by getting in early, warming up, and being mentally prepared to play in the first game of the weekend. We executed, and it paid off. The A Team opened the weekend with a WIN in our first game against a team that proved to be a formidable opponent to other teams. The A Team played four more games over the weekend and ended up with one win (and a close game overtime upset with two other teams playing each other) away from playing for 3rd place overall in the tournament. Similar to the B Team, the A Team mentally stayed in close games against other teams with deeper levels of player experience, by playing as a team and shutting down easy scoring opportunities on defense. WH20 came away with two wins this weekend, one up from last year, and a huge sense of belonging amongst the top talent in California Masters Water Polo.



Some shout outs for out-of-the-pool excellence go to:

- **Audrey Kim aka "Snack Queen"**. Audrey kept the players well-fed at the pool with her assortment of Traders Joes goodies.
- **WH20 swimmers Antoine, Colin, Carlo and Craig**. Thanks for coming out to cheer us on in Orange County. It felt really great to have the support of you guys at our games.
- **Lacey Rainwater**. As water polo rep, she took on the role in a very efficient manner by enrolling teammates in shared efforts and delegating to willing teammates, tasks that make the weekend more special, instead of putting it all on her shoulders. Great leadership!
- **Coach Mike!** We would like to recognize Mike for 10 games coached, managing the playing time of 25+ players over two days, and for the hours of preparation it takes to put our best foot forward in Southern CA water polo. Thank you coach!
- **Jon Kelly**. For being responsible for the action shots taken over weekend when he wasn't in the water.
- **Sam Binkow**. One of the primary objectives was to be in the pool, early, to warm up each game. You were consistently the first one in each time. Thank you for being a great example.

# HOLIDAY PARTY

On December 22 WH2O celebrated the holiday season at our annual holiday party. It was great to see everyone dry and looking festive! A special thank you to Jim Ballard for opening up his beautiful home to all of us, and for making all those delicious desserts. And many more thanks to Olivia Karlin and her family for planning and executing such a fun event. Here are some photos of the party. You can find more photos of the party by clicking [HERE](#).

