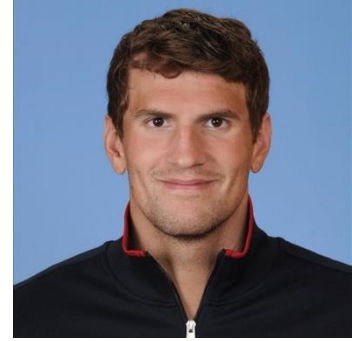


Charlie Houchin's YMCA Swimming roots run deep. His father, Eddy, swam for the YMCA in Birmingham, Alabama and won Y National Championship titles in the 50 Free and 200 Fly in 1974. Charlie, his older brother, Joe, and younger sister, Abby, spent more than a decade with the Y team in Raleigh, NC in the late 1990s and early 2000s. All three graduated from the YMCA of the Triangle Area (YOTA) program and went on to swim in college, as did his sister-in-law, Mallory, who is now a coach at NC State.



Reflecting upon his experience in Y Swimming, Charlie quickly says, "There is a lot of really good growing up that happens." He is the first to admit that he sometimes tried the patience of his coaches and parents, but he credits them with guiding him to success in and out of the pool. In 2014 he completed his swimming career which included two gold medals at the 2011 Pan American Games, a gold medal at the 2013 World Championships and a gold medal for Team USA at the 2012 Olympic Games. Today he is the founder and CEO of HydroXphere, a company that created Meet Central. It's an app that can run an entire swim meet, tailored specifically to seasonal and summer swim programs that do not have automated timing systems.

The Houchins made the YMCA an extension of their own family. Eddy and Jane, both All-American swimmers at NC State, volunteered in several roles from meet director to chaperone to fundraisers. "We felt appreciated as volunteers and always felt like our opinions mattered," says Jane. "There was a partnership between parents and coaches." Together, the parents and coaches created a values-centered environment for the swimmers where expectations were consistent at home and on the team.

"My parents never worried about me at the Y. They knew it was a safe place with strong, positive leadership examples. Support systems in Y Swimming are the backbone of the whole experience. I saw my coaches and teammates more than I did my parents. The whole YMCA formed a supportive community where my teammates and I could learn tough lessons and thrive," reflects Charlie. Jane agrees. "The coaches allowed Charlie and his teammates to push some boundaries and understand consequences. These are pieces that helped them become the people they are as adults."

While Charlie has achieved success that most athletes only dream about, he and his parents recognize that the medals and records are not the most impactful part of his career. "He always understood that how you behave toward others is just as important as whether you win or not," shares Jane. Charlie adds that the people and relationships he built in Y swimming that are still important to him now. "Some of my best friends today were people I first met on the Y team." As for his YMCA championships and national records, he admits, "I have absolutely no idea [how many I earned]. However, I can tell you all of the funny things we did while cheering [for teammates]." And that makes Charlie just like every other YMCA swimmer.