

SAN JOSE AQUATICS:
PAST TO PRESENT

An Essay
Presented to
the California Pioneers
of Santa Clara County

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INTRODUCTION

San Jose Aquatics (SJA) is an organization that has promoted excellent swimmers since 1975. It is a competitive swim team organization representing the San Jose community in swimming meets throughout the United States. San Jose Aquatics is a non-profit organization formed to offer young athletes an opportunity to learn and grow in a well-organized swim program. SJA goals are to teach team involvement and spirit, as well as develop individual skills.

San Jose Aquatics was formed in September, 1975, as the successor to the Leland Swim Club, a neighborhood swim club in the Almaden area of San Jose. Since 1972, when the original Leland organization became a year round club and independent from the San Jose Parks and Recreation Department, SJA has progressed from a fledgling AAU swim team to one of the most powerful and respected Clubs in United States swimming. Today SJA places swimmers on many National teams representing our country in international competition and is a consistent top five finisher in United States Senior National Competition—a feat that no other club in the area can claim.

San Jose Aquatics has trained at Gunderson High School since the completion of the pool facilities in the summer of 1976. Originally scheduled for only a twenty-five yard pool, the Gunderson complex consists of a fifty meter main pool and a twenty-five yard diving well. The world class swimming facility at Gunderson High School is in large part due to the interest, campaigning and work of the STA president Dave Steimle. From Dave Steimle to the current president, Wayne Mosher, SJA has worked closely with both city and San Jose Unified School District officials, and fully expects the future to be as progressive and rewarding as the past.

San Jose Aquatics has had three head coaches. Bill Hird, hired shortly after the club was formed, led SJA through the summer of 1981. In 1982, Jonty Skinner was hired to further develop the team. Jonty is a former world record holder in the 100 meter freestyle and received much of his coaching ability under the former U.S. Olympic coach, Don Gambril. These two coaches developed local San Jose talent to a point of impacting the national and international swimming scene.

In 1989, San Jose Aquatics began recruiting for a new world class head coach. SJA received many applications for the new head coach job. One of those applicants was Scott Miller. Scott is a graduate of The University of Louisville. He had a tremendous coaching background in both age-group and senior coaching.

SJA achieved its first National Age Group record in 1977 with the 10 and under boys relay team of Darin Milligan, Scott Averill, Phillip King and Jim Bergevin when they bettered the 200 medley relay time. The same year, Linda Wood became the clubs first National qualifier. Since then, San Jose Aquatics has won four short course and four long course Far Western titles, two Junior National titles, and has established well over sixty Pacific Swimming records. SJA has also established ten national age group records, and in the past three years has consistently placed in the top five in Senior National Competition--the best in the United States.

From 1976, when SJA qualified one relay team to attend Junior Nationals, through 1984, when the club qualified thirty-three individual swimmers and won the Junior National title, to 1986, when SJA won the men's long course Senior National Crown, this organization has progressed through sound management, coaching and parental participation to the point where SJA is viewed in the swimming world as an example of what a club should, and can be. San Jose Aquatics currently has programs, coaches, and teams for every level of experience from the beginning age group swimmer through the senior competitor to the Olympic hopeful.

In the past San Jose Aquatics as a team has traveled to many different places in the United States. These places include: Hawaii, Canada, Washington, Georgia, Texas, Ohio, Florida, Indiana, Arizona, North Dakota, Virginia, and the Carolinas. San Jose Aquatics also in the past has traveled all over the world for individual swimmers. For example, SJA sent swimmers to attend the Good Will Games in Moscow. Swimmers also went to Berlin where SJA held the American record for the 200 freestule and to the Pacific Games held in Austraila.

The swimmers at San Jose Aquatics have many requirements including a code of conduct necessary for all swimmers.

"The overall purpose for your representation of San Jose Aquatics as a swimmer shall be to provide a competitive aquatics effort for the community, provide you with the opportunity to acquire advanced aquatics skills, and to gain increased physical fitness at the same time. It will be required of you to provide and promote amateur and competitive swimming, and emphasize principles of good sportsmanship. Fair play, team awaremess, fellowship, cooperation, and self-discipline will also be required. The overall primary purpose of the SJA, of which you will be representing, is to provide competitive age group, junior and

senior, competitive speed swimming at all times."

San Jose Aquatics over the years has sent multiple dozens of swimmers off to college on scholarships. Some of these colleges include: University of Southern California, Arizona State, University of Florida, University of Texas, and University of Indiana. These are only a few of the colleges that swimmers have attended. SJA offers an opportunity to go to the best swim colleges in the United States as well. Many of the Universities and colleges in California offer scholarship programs to San Jose Aquatics participants.

One to two weeks out of the year, San Jose Aquatics families provide lodging and hospitality for other swimmers who have traveled to San Jose as representatives from countries all over the globe. These foreign representatives come to San Jose Aquatics to observe training methods, facilities, coaching, and to get a general idea about what SJA is all about. In the past four years, SHA has had representatives from Japan twice, Sweden once, and Canada once. While they were here, the San Jose Aquatics organization introduced them to the Mayor of San Jose and the Mayor of Santa Clara. These introductions have helped bring San Jose to world class recognition.

Historically world class swimmers have used the following categories: "B", "A", "AA", "Q", and "Triple A". A swimmer must swim in his age group. His or her age on the first day of a meet determines the division in which he or she will compete for the entire meet. The following descriptions describe each category.

"B" swimmers-This is an initial step for USS age group swimming. The swimmer must have achieved a minimum time but not have surpassed the "A" time requirement in the specified stroke and distance.

"A" swimmers-To enter an "A" meet, the swimmer must have equaled or bettered "A" times in the specific event. "A" time is a time set by Pacific swimming of USS and is revised a necessary and reviewed annually.

"AA" swimmers-The same as for "A" except for that a swimmer must have achieved "AA" times in each event entered. These meets are often AA+ meaning that one must have at least the "AA" time but may have "AAA" (now known as "Q") time also.

"Q" or Triple A swimmers-This is the top rung of age-group swimming and follows the same rules as an "A" meet in that a swimmer must have achieved "Q" times in each event entered.

The Senior High School swimming program is a continuation of the age-group program. No swimmer has ever made the senior meet level without the experience and knowledge of the age-group program.

Senior swimming is divided into two parts: The Junior-Senior program and the Senior program. The Junior-Senior program is similar to the age-group "B" swimmer in that it is designed to introduce the swimmer into the Senior level of swimming. The meet format for both the Senior and Junior-Senior meets is the same. They swim the same events and in almost the same order. The age-grouper is used to competing against someone who is within a year or so of his or her age. In the Senior and Junior-Senior meets, they may be twelve and competing against and eighteen-year old. The swimmer will also find that the events he or she is entering will be somewhat different.

The Senior program, both The Junior-Senior and the Senior meets, are the top level of competitive swimming. The senior meets include such meets as the Olympics, the World Games, and the United States Nationals. They also include such local meets as Invitational Senior meet and, of course, those meets scheduled by Pacific Swimming of USS. The senior program is the ultimate fulfillment since becoming an age-group swimmer. It is not a separate world of swimming, but it is the result of a good age-group program that offers to all the swimmers involved an opportunity to achieve the level they wish to, whether it be an "A" time in an event or making Senior times and striving for the

next Olympic team.

San Jose Aquatics is a non-profit organization and is supported by its main fund-raiser. Bingo. Each member is required to work twelve times a year divided equally by quarter. Four of these Bingos sessions per year are on a Friday night, or the equivalent is determined. by the Bingo scheduler. It is each club member's responsibility to sign up for their Bingo obligation between the fifteenth of the first month in the quarter through the last day of the second month of the quarter. If there are any resulting conflicts it is the member's responsibility to resolve.

San Jose Aquatics has a newsletter that goes out to every swimmer approximately every month. The Swimigram tells the swimmer about future meets and has articles written by the coaches about the most recent ones. Another thing that is important about the Swimigram is that they put one or two positive sayings on the front page. For instance: "A Diamond is a lump of coal that stuck with it." and "Whatever you vividly imagine, ardently desire, sincerely believe, and enthusiastically act upon...must inevitably come to pass."

CONCLUSION

San Jose Aquatics is an organization that has promoted excellent swimmers for almost twenty years. It offers young athletes the opportunity to learn and grow in a well-organized swim program. The facilities are excellent, as are the coaches. The program itself has been to many places and its swimmers are known throughout the world. SJA provides scholarship opportunities and is available to any type of swimmer. San Jose Aquatics is indeed a remarkable organization past and present.

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