

# LAMORINDA SPORTS

## Orinda Aquatics' swimmers path to college



Orinda Aquatics team with coaches Don and Ron Heidary

Photos provided



Campolindo graduate Steven Stumph, now at USC, holds a national and USC record.

### By Jon Kingdon

If there is a single activity that one is exposed to while growing up in Lamorinda, it would have to be swimming, with some starting in a pool as young as 3 years old.

There are many directions that one can take once the basic skills are mastered. There is competitive swimming, synchronized swimming, water polo, diving and just swimming in general.

Don and Ron Heidary started Orinda Aquatics 25 years ago with a specific goal in mind: "Our environment is for kids that love the sport and want to keep doing it af-

ter high school," says Don. "We have a culture of collegiate pursuit where all of our swimmers, if they want to, will swim in college. There are enough collegiate programs at all levels for anybody that can swim."

The time demands on a swimmer can be exhaustive. Competitive swimmers will get up at 4:45 in the morning, three or four times a week, go to school and then train two hours in the afternoon, doing their homework in the evening. It's when they become high school freshmen that they realize how difficult it can be, says Don: "Most of the kids work through it and find the right balance where

they can do it and maintain and not break down. They push the limit every day, physically, emotionally and academically. It's important that we create an environment with passion that supports kids that want to be better and want to go on and compete in college."

Burnout among swimmers can be a real concern. Often times swimmers come to the conclusion that they are swimming for other people but not themselves, as Dr. Robyn Odegaard, sports psychologist and owner of Champion Performance Development, defines it: "Burnout is anytime someone is held accountable for things that are not within their control, either by themselves, coaches or parents."

For these swimmers it's more peer support than peer pressure, says Jean Follmer, whose daughter will be swimming at Northwestern and whose son will be a junior next season: "They show up at the pool and all their friends are there. Without that, the kids can get burned out and end up quitting. When you show up and you see 40 friends in the pool going through the same program and putting in the same effort, it's encouraging and it really builds a team atmos-

phere. It carries over to group outings away from the pool as well where they all hang out together. They support each other learning how to handle success and disappointment, which translates into other areas in school and life."

Don makes it clear the type of swimmers they want to join Orinda Aquatics: "It has been our ultimate goal that our graduating swimmers not only continue to be athletes at the collegiate level, but that they love the sport of swimming, continue to improve, become leaders on their collegiate teams and are ultimately better people."

From Division I American University (Washington D.C.) to Division III Warren Wilson College (Swannanoa, South Carolina), there are 560 swim teams all over the United States. Not to be overlooked are the over 150 club swimming teams available at the collegiate level.

The Heidarys take pride in the number of swimmers that have gone through their program and continued swimming competitively in college. This past year, Orinda Aquatics graduated 30 swimmers, 25 of which will be swimming for their college or club teams. Of the five not swimming, Daniela Moroz

will be on the sailing team at the University of Hawaii and Andy Kang is going to the U.S. Naval Academy. The other three are going to their chosen school, but the level of competition is above their skill level.

The Heidarys also point to the academic success of their swimmers. Having had swimmers from over 20 different high schools, the overall GPA of the students has always been near 4.0. In an article in Swimming World Magazine, Lindsay Hass looked at the Academic Progress Rate Score used by the NCAA and it showed that "swimmers are among the top performing students when it comes to academic eligibility, retention and graduation."

Don supports those conclusions: "It dispels the myth that you can't train year-round and be a good student. Choosing to make the commitment to be a competitive swimmer is not a casual decision and it tends to deter those without a real commitment in and out of the water," says Don: "We don't get kids that come onto our team that are not academic. We have never had to deal with that. Mature, disciplined and academic kids seem to gravitate to swimming. Between their parents, their personal drive and peer pressure, we just don't have to check their grades. They want to be good student-athletes and go to a good school. They know they can't screw around."

It's the focus and commitment to swimming that carries over to the swimmers' academic work, says Don: "We see kids' grades decline when they're out of the water if they get injured for a few months. Their discipline is not the same as when they're swimming and they have said that school got away from them. They can't do that when they're swimming."

It's Don's belief that there is a college for every swimmer at every level: "It's a support for all of the swimmers - novice, mid-level and elite swimmers - to be collegiate student-athletes and to be leaders in their programs and that is what is unique about our team. As a rule, our graduates don't finish and say that I'm done. They want to swim."

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## Super Swimmers Out in Max Force at the Annual Meadow Mini Meet



Sylvie Portet and Hayden Holloway

Photo provided

### Submitted by Amy Campbell

The 49th annual Mini Meet, hosted by Meadow Swim and Tennis Club, took place on Sunday, July 14. Over 550 swimmers ages 8 and under from the nine clubs that make up the Orinda Moraga Pool Association (OMPA) competed in this year's "Super Hero" themed event. Three-year-old Mathias Montana of Meadow was the littlest superhero to make it across the 25-yard pool this year in a time of 1:23.94. Orinda Country Club took first place, just inching out host club Meadow Swim and Tennis Club by one point, and Moraga Valley Pool took home the trophy for third place.

- 1 Orinda Country Club: 613.50 pts.
- 2 Meadow Swim Team: 612.50 pts.
- 3 Moraga Valley Pool Swim Team: 377.50 pts.
- 4 Orinda Park Pool Swim Team: 303.50 pts.
- 5 Sleepy Hollow Legends: 236 pts.
- 6 Moraga Country Club: 168.50 pts.
- 7 Moraga Ranch Swim Club: 164 pts.
- 8 Miramonte Swim Club: 161.50 pts.
- 9 Campolindo Cabana Club Marlins: 44pts.

Total 2,681.00



Coaches, from left: MVP, OCC and Meadow