

A message from the Head Swim Coach,

The first summer of swimming at the Santa Barbara Aquatics Club is now officially here. As the head coach of the new program I am eager to share my knowledge and enthusiasm for the sport with the community and help develop SBAC into the premier swimming program in Southern California. That's my primary goal, plain and simple.

I'd like to take this time to share my plan for the various groups at SBAC (in the attachment below). It's going to be an exciting summer and I hope that you will come to a practice and see what is happening on a daily basis.

See you at the pool,

SBAC Head Coach
Mark Warkentin

Scroll down for plan...



The SBAC Swim Program

There are 4 basic groups within the SBAC swimming program: senior, development, masters, and water polo conditioning. Each group will have scheduled practices for its members, and each group will develop a culture for success that will best emulate the philosophy of the coaching staff. For the summer of 2009 I will be on deck as the primary coach for novice, age group, senior level swimming, and the masters program. (I will be involved in coaching water polo athletes attending swim practices as well.) As a coach I recognize that each of these group have different goals and must be coached accordingly, however I am determined to blend the program together as much as possible.

You may have questions about your involvement in a particular group prior to signing up for the SBAC program, and I want to outline each of the 4 basic groups now.

SBAC Senior: A commitment to achieving the highest level of success in swimming.

I understand the desire for excellence in sport, and I know that athletes in Santa Barbara seek to reach their greatest potential. As a coach I can help athletes realize that potential. For those that seek success at the highest level I will offer an extensive program of swimming, dryland strength and conditioning, and mental training to prepare for peak swimming performance.

As a swimmer I trained with Erik Vendt, Lenny Krazleburg, Lindsay Benko, Kaitlin Sandeno, Klete and Kalyn Keller, Ryk Neethling, Roland Schoeman, Lacey Nymeyer, Amanda Beard and many other Olympians. In the years leading up to the Olympics I participated in many practices where I found myself head to head racing Michael Phelps. As a teammate of many of the greatest athletes in the sport, I am aware of what it takes to make it to the highest level in the sport of swimming.

Practice sessions for the elite level swimmer will often last up to 2 hours, and some athletes may be asked to attend up to 10 practices a week if they are mentally and physically capable (though most will be asked to attend either 8 or 9 per week). The elite level practice will have a variety of differences based upon stroke and distance, but will be cohesive in one primary aspect: everyone will compete. Athletes will use kickboards, fins, paddles, pull buoys and various other training devices to create an environment for maximum competition.

Elite level swimmers will find themselves involved in a SBAC organized and administered dryland training program. The SBAC dryland program will implement various aspects of training that I learned as an athlete. In addition, two of the SBAC coaches have extensive experience as personal trainers and are eager to offer their skills into creating a comprehensive dryland training program.

In short, the senior program will demand that swimmers be focused in and out of the water. I do not offer a "magic formula" that will catapult a swimmer to the Olympics, but I will challenge every athlete on a daily basis. The serious swimmer will have my attention and commitment to excellence.

SBAC Developmental: The future of the club.

SBAC can only find success at the highest level if the developmental swimmers of the program are encouraged and inspired. I began my swimming career in the novice program at Cathedral Oaks, and every great swimmer comes from equally humble beginnings. The developmental program at SBAC can be the starting point to a career that may lead an athlete to a National championship or an Olympic dream. At the very least SBAC can offer swimmers opportunities to achieve their personal best.

The developmental program can be broken into three subgroups: high school/junior high school, elementary school, and novice programs.

The High School/Junior High School program is designed for athletes that do not have an extensive background in age group or novice swimming but are interested in pursuing personal success in the sport. Katy Freeman, a breaststroke swimmer at UCSB who is now an All-American and USA Swimming National Team member, didn't begin swimming competitively until well into high school. Currently a member of SBAC, Katy is a testament to the fact that no matter how late an athlete begins his or her career, everyone has potential for success.

Having coached the San Marcos High School Junior Varsity Swim team this past year I am familiar with swimmers that are coming to the sport relatively recently. In my experience, the rate of improvement is dramatic and rewarding, and as a coach I take great satisfaction in helping a high school aged swimmer discover personal success. In many instances at SBAC the high school aged developmental swimmers will join the elite program for training sessions. Competitive environments will be established to help developmental swimmers challenge elite swimmers and "raise the bar" for the program. As swimmers begin to familiarize themselves with the program, I will encourage them to make new goals that will hopefully lead them to the senior program.

If senior level aspirations are not held by a particular athlete, the SBAC coaching staff will remain committed to encouraging progress, and physical health.

The age group (elementary school aged swimmers) program will prepare the swimmers for future success in the sport. Swimmers will be asked to make a weekly schedule of practices and challenged on a daily basis in practice. The age group practices will mirror the model created for the senior program so that the transition upward will be fluid.

Swimmers in the age group program will become very familiar with pace clock management and stop watch recording. In addition, age group swimmers at SBAC will discover that they will become students of athletics in general through lessons on self-discipline and healthy lifestyle behaviors.

While the SBAC coaching staff is eager to work with the age group program on a consistent basis, we also understand that other sports and activities are important to growth and development. As a young swimmer I played soccer until I was 12, and played both basketball and tennis as a 13 year old. I focused on swimming exclusively at 14 as a personal choice, but I recognize that many athletes enjoy a variety of competitive activities. SBAC will facilitate many schedules as long as athletes and parents communicate with coaches and are realistic about their goals in the sport.

The SBAC novice program will be fun but structured. Young swimmers will be asked to wear proper swimming attire and follow coaching direction and swimmers will learn the basics of swimming technique and competition in a fun environment. I am currently scheduled to coach the novice program this summer with the help of a variety of assistants, and we are committed to building the novice program into a successful year around venture.

Having spent the last year coaching the novice program at La Cumbre Country Club I have learned a great deal about working with very young athletes. The SBAC novice program will focus on one or two simple skills each day and the athletes will gradually build the confidence, strength and skills necessary to move into the age group program when the time is right.

SBAC Masters: Competitive, challenging, exciting.

The SBAC coaching staff is determined to facilitate a Masters program that will offer a challenging and personally rewarding workout. We realize that masters want to get a good workout, and our goal is to create a challenging atmosphere for everyone. In many instances this summer the masters swimmers will be given the option of competing with the Senior Elite group of swimmers in head-to-head stopwatch recorded workout competitions. (It is not mandatory to compete and practice with the Senior Elite program, but it is an option.)

I will be coaching the masters program in the morning, often in conjunction with the Senior group, and I will be coaching the Masters practice in the afternoons with a variety of other coaches. Every Masters coach at SBAC has personal experience as an NCAA level swimmer and brings a wealth of experience to the position.

For the summer of 2009, SBAC we will be swimming a significant number of practices in the short course yards format. Short course swimming offers a Masters level swimmer the opportunity to change strokes efficiently at each end, helping to diversify the practice. In addition to variety, changing strokes in a swim practice increases muscular strength and development and enhances cardiovascular fitness. For those Masters swimmers that either cannot swim all four strokes, or simply prefer to swim freestyle, the practice will offer freestyle only options as well.

Masters swimmers are encouraged to attend as many practices as possible, but we realize that participation in every practice may be unrealistic. A weekly schedule of typical practices for each day will be available as the season progresses so you can better prepare to attend your desired practices.

Water Polo Conditioning: Get to the ball.

SBAC's water polo program is one of the top programs in the United States. In 2008, the club won the President's Cup, as the most successful club in the country. I know that the key to this success was a solid conditioning regime. Water polo games demand endurance and swimming strength, and an hour and a half swim practice can simulate many aspects of a water polo game. As a coach at SBAC I will ensure that our water polo players can get to the ball faster and are in optimal physical shape for games.

Water polo players are encouraged to join swimming practices based upon their age and ability, and, for those that crave competition, some water polo players will have an opportunity to compete head-to-head with the elite level swimmers on a daily basis. Swimming may add an extra facet to your game that can push you to score that fast break goal. SBAC swim coaching staff is here to help you reach that level and win games.

Swim coaches will always seek to have talented athletes at swim practice, but we understand that your focus is water polo. I intend on communicating with every water polo player and I will encourage them to pursue their sport primarily and use swimming as a resource for athletic success. I know there is a balance between water polo and competitive swimming. I will encourage athletes to excel at both sports simultaneously

and use the training of each sport to benefit the other. I look forward to continuing SBAC's tradition as one of the finest water polo programs in the United States.

Conclusion: Join the fun and excitement, join the program.

I hope that you will join the SBAC swimming program. You'll meet passionate coaches in a safe and positive environment alongside other athletes striving for personal success and growth. Along the way you may find that you've developed some tremendous friendships and been part of some very rewarding experiences.

See you at the pool,

SBAC Head Coach Mark Warkentin