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JANUARY 2021 • VOL 7 • ISSUE 01

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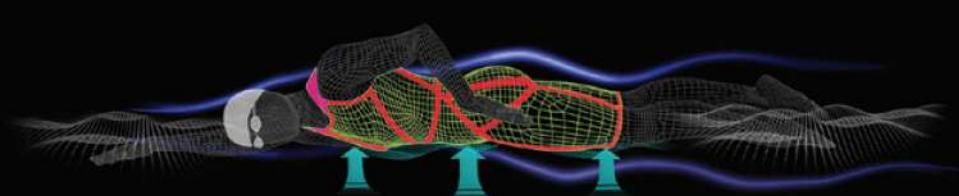
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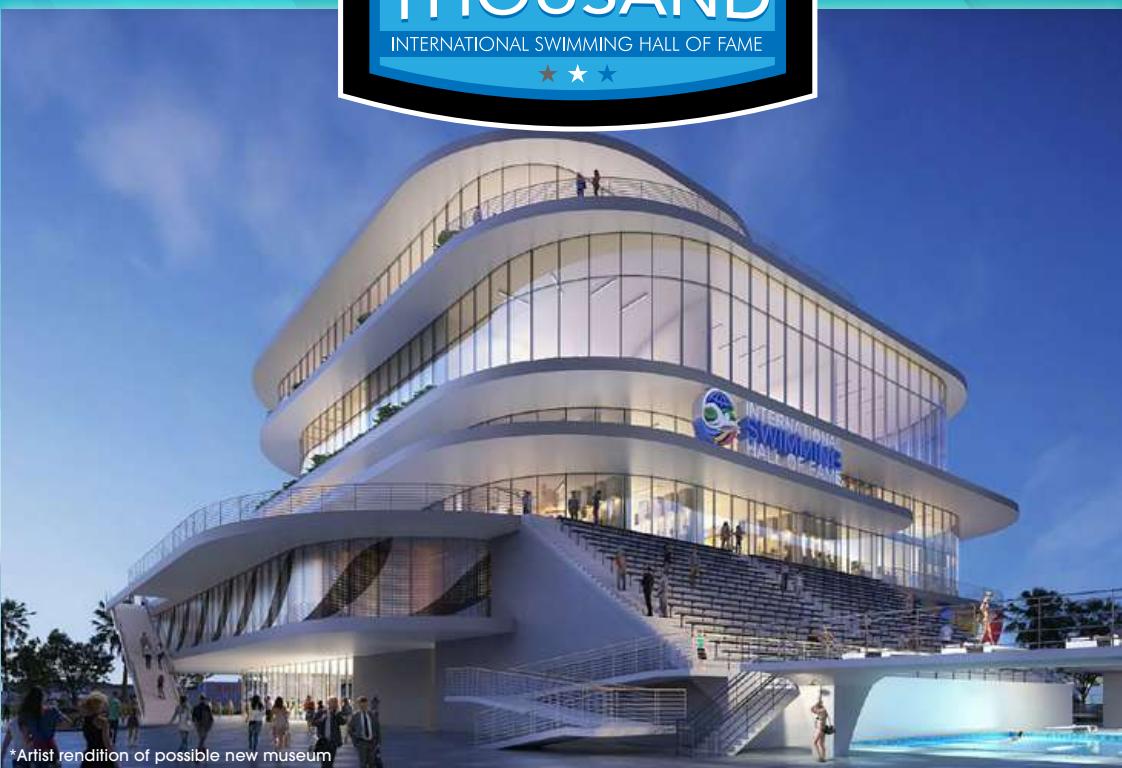
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USA NEWS

008 USA SWIMMING REDUCES TYR PRO SERIES TO TWO SITES DUE TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COVID RESTRICTIONS

by John Lohn

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009 "EXCITED" ABOUT TRAINING, KATIE LEDECKY READY FOR WHAT 2021 WILL BRING

by Matthew De George

In a recent interview with the "Today Show," Katie Ledecky, six-time Olympic medalist and holder of three world records, said she is training hard and looking forward to hopefully representing Team USA for her third Olympic Games.

011 LILLY KING GIVING BACK TO HER HOME CLUB

by Dan D'Addona

As the Newburgh Sea Creatures (Newburgh, Ind.) raise money for its 2021 season, Olympic gold medalist Lilly King announced on social media that she will match all donations up to \$5,000.

012 FINALIZED USA SWIMMING'S WINTER 18 & UNDER NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS MEN'S LEADERBOARD

by Andy Ross

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014 FINALIZED USA SWIMMING'S WINTER 18 & UNDER NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS WOMEN'S LEADERBOARD

by Andy Ross

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WORLD NEWS

016 CAMPBELL SISTERS AND ELLIE COLE FOLLOW COACH SIMON CUSACK BACK TO QUEENSLAND TO PREPARE FOR TOKYO

by Ian Hanson

Australia's Cate and Bronte Campbell confirmed they will leave the Australian Dolphins Swim Team in Sydney and return home to make Brisbane their training base to prepare for the Tokyo Olympic Trials after two successful years training in Harbour City. Joining them is their training partner, Paralympic golden girl Ellie Cole, with the trio all electing to follow Coach Simon Cusack back to Queensland.

019 RANKING THE BEST WOMEN'S SWIMMERS IN THE WORLD FROM 1-25 AS OLYMPIC YEAR ARRIVES

by Andy Ross

Looking ahead to another Olympic year and putting 2020 in the rearview mirror, *Swimming World* compiled a list of the 25 best women's swimmers in the world leading into 2021.

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027 "HAMMER BLOW" AS POOLS IN ENGLAND CLOSE IN THIRD LOCKDOWN

by Liz Byrnes

As England faces its third lockdown due to a new variant of coronavirus, indoor and outdoor swimming pools will have to close and all organized sporting activity and swimming lessons will come to a halt, although indoor elite sport will be able to continue. In response, Swim England's chief executive Jane Nickerson has demanded that swimming pools be included in the list of facilities allowed to open at the earliest available opportunity.

COLLEGE NEWS

030 ALABAMA SHAKEUP: COLEY STICKELS RESIGNS AS COACH; MARGO GEER TO TAKE OVER POST-OLYMPICS

by Matthew De George

Alabama swimming head coach Coley Stickels, who joined the Crimson Tide in April 2019, has resigned his position to focus on preparing athletes for the 2021 Tokyo Olympics. Margo Geer, who is hoping to qualify for Team USA, will replace Stickels after the 2021 Olympic Games.

031 JUDGE GRANTS INJUNCTION BLOCKING IOWA FROM DROPPING WOMEN'S SWIMMING IN 2021-22

by Dan D'Addona

The University of Iowa women's swim team might not be done after this season after all. In December, a federal judge announced the decision to grant an injunction that blocks the school from dropping women's swimming for the 2021-22 school year. The university had previously announced it would cut the men's and women's swimming and diving programs, effective after the 2020-21 school year.

WATER POLO NEWS

032 USA WATER POLO RACIAL EQUITY & REFORM TASK FORCE HOSTS TOWN HALL DISCUSSION ON ZOOM

by Michael Randazzo

In December, USA Water Polo's Racial Equity & Reform Task Force held the second of two virtual town hall discussions about the recently formed group's mission to create more inclusion and equity in a sport that—by almost all appearances—is predominantly populated by white, and often affluent, participants.

034 SIGNS OF LIFE FOR NCAA MEN'S WATER POLO: CWPA TOP 20 PRESEASON POLL

by Michael Randazzo

In what is a very optimistic outlook for NCAA men's water polo, the Collegiate Water Polo Association (CWPA) recently released a Top 20 Preseason Poll—albeit one with a number of caveats...the biggest being: Will anyone be playing?

FEATURES & COMMENTARY

036 FINAL BREATH: THE DANGERS OF HYPOXIC TRAINING AND RISKS OF SHALLOW-WATER BLACKOUT

by Kristy Kinzer

In this commentary, the author suggests that coaches and swimmers should take precautions to avoid shallow water blackouts when performing underwater drills. All training should be conducted by a certified and experienced coach.

039 HOW THEY TRAIN: MIRIAM GUEVARA

by Michael J. Stott

040 DEVELOPING RELIABLE HABITS CAN PROVIDE A MAJOR BOOST

by Brendan Farrar

With the new year upon us, many people take time to reflect on the past and look for ways to improve for the future. The key to improvement is to develop good habits. It's not enough to say you will do something—it comes down to putting in the work and staying true to your intentions.

042 PARTING SHOT



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USA NEWS



USA SWIMMING REDUCES TYR PRO SERIES TO TWO SITES DUE TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COVID RESTRICTIONS

BY JOHN LOHN

USA Swimming has announced that the upcoming TYR Pro Series event, scheduled for Jan. 14-17, has been reduced from a three-site competition to a two-site meet. While the meet will still take place with fields in San Antonio and Richmond, USA Swimming was forced to cancel the Irvine location due to the extension of the Southern California Regional Stay-at-Home Order in place to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

There will be no replacement site for the Irvine locale, but the San Antonio and Richmond sites will be unaffected. The San Antonio meet will feature an invitation-only field that will allow some of the top names in USA Swimming to open their 2021 seasons against strong competition. Both San Antonio and Richmond will host approximately 100 female and male athletes, respectively. All protocols pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic will be followed.

With the turn of the calendar to 2021 and Olympic year, many of the top swimmers in the United States will be using the first Pro Series of the year to start their path toward the Olympic Trials in fine form. For the elite athletes competing later this month, it will be their first competition since the conclusion of the International Swimming League season in Budapest late last year. ◀



[PHOTO BY PETER H. BICK]

"EXCITED" ABOUT TRAINING, KATIE LEDECKY READY FOR WHAT 2021 WILL BRING

BY MATTHEW DE GEORGE

Katie Ledecky is excited about her training and looking forward to the calendar clicking over to 2021, she said in an interview with the *Today Show*.

Ledecky spoke to the *Today Show* seven months ahead of the opening of the COVID-19-delayed Tokyo Olympics. While she's missed competition, the consummate distance swimmer has appreciated the unbroken training time as she seeks to qualify for her third Olympic Games.

"I'm excited," Ledecky said. "I'm really looking forward to having the opportunity to hopefully represent Team USA. I'm training hard and getting ready to go for 2021. ... I'm excited for what I can do in competition next year."

Ledecky, the six-time Olympic medalist and holder of three world records, has spent the time training and working out at home, in addition to finishing her degree from Stanford and taking over the Internet with her in-pool exploits. The 23-year-old is encouraged by the accelerated progress for a COVID-19 vaccine and will gladly be in line to get hers once they're available.

"I'm definitely going to get the vaccine when it's available to me," she said. "I'm so happy to see so many healthcare

workers getting it now, and I know eventually it will be available for all of us, and I'm looking forward to getting it. I don't know exactly how it's all going to work. I'm just going to keep my ears open and make sure I get it when it's available to me."

Ledecky is one of the top American swimmers heading into the Olympic year, thought she'll still face a battle to get to Tokyo in at least three individual events, with the 1,500 freestyle added to the Games to augment the 400 and 800 for the women.

As soon as the Olympics were postponed last spring, Ledecky saw the opportunity for the Games to be a great celebration of global resistance once it was safe for them to be staged. As that possibility inches ever closer, the excitement is heightened.

"I think right when the Olympics were postponed, I started thinking about how special that really could be, with kind of the first time hopefully the world is able to come together and cheer on their athletes," Katie Ledecky said. "And I hope we're in a good place by July of 2021 and it can be a tribute to the world coming together to defeat the virus." ◀



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- Dryland sessions will focus on swimming specific strength and conditioning.
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[PHOTO BY PETER H. BICK]

LILLY KING GIVING BACK TO HER HOME CLUB

BY DAN D'ADDONA

Olympic gold medalist Lilly King is giving back to her home club.

King announced on social media she will match all donations to the Newburgh Sea Creatures up to \$5,000.

The club is raising money for its 2021 season, which will likely include travel costs for the 2021 U.S. Olympic Swimming Trials in Omaha, Nebraska.

"I will be matching donations for the Newburgh Sea Creatures from until December 31st up to \$5000 dollars! Link in bio to donate," King wrote on Instagram.

The Newburgh Sea Creatures have brought up six U.S. national team members, including King, Michael Klueh and 2004 Olympian Bryce Hunt.

King is coming off of a stellar International Swimming League (ISL) season that saw her go undefeated in the breaststroke skins races, leading the Cali Condors to the team championship.

Along the way, she set American records in the 50 and 200 breaststroke in short-course meters.

King earned gold medals in the 100m breaststroke and the 4x100m medley relay at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics. King's success continued as she broke world records in the 50m and 100m breaststroke at the 2017 World Championships in Budapest, earning gold medals in both events.

A standout student-athlete for Indiana University, King

was the first woman to sweep the 100-yard and 200-yard breaststroke all four years, making her an 8x NCAA Champion. In 2018, King also became a 3x Pan Pacific Championship Medalist, winning gold in the 100m breaststroke, and silver in the 200m breaststroke and the 4x100m medley relay. ▶

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> JOSH MATHENY

[PHOTO BY FINA / BUDAPEST 2019]

FINALIZED USA SWIMMING'S WINTER 18 & UNDER NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS MEN'S LEADERBOARD

BY ANDY ROSS

USA Swimming has finalized its leaderboard thus far for the Winter 18 & under National Championships going on throughout the United States from December 1 – 13. Through the two weeks with a lot of swimming going on, USA Swimming has finalized the leaderboard so coaches and swimmers can see where they stack up against the other swimmers competing across the country when the COVID-19 pandemic prevents them from competing in a normal Juniors environment.

NC State freshman James Plage won the 500 while fellow Wolfpack rookie Michael Moore took the 400 IM. Virginia Tech freshman Youssef Ramadan won the 50 and 100 free.

Lukas Miller, also in his first season at NC State, had the fastest time in the 200 free in swimming at the UNC Invite over the weekend, as Texas freshman Zac Van Zandt had the fastest time in the 100 fly in Texas' Invite with TCU. The Longhorns had another champion on the weekend, albeit from 2021 commit Anthony Grimm in the 100 backstroke.

Indiana commit Josh Matheny joined the winner's circle over the weekend with a national age group record in the 200 breaststroke, surpassing fellow Hoosier commit Luke Barr in both the 100 and 200 leaderboard.

Virginia Tech commit Landon Gentry won the 200 butterfly with an impressive swim of 1:43.0 as he will join the Hokies in the fall of 2022 in the rapidly improving Atlantic Coast Conference. Virginia commit Jack Aikins of Swim Atlanta took the 200 backstroke over the weekend in surpassing NC State freshman Michael Moore with a 1:40.92.

Uncommitted Baylor Nelson of Swim MAC Carolina and

Liam Custer of Sarasota YMCA Sharks were the only non-committed swimmer to win an event on the weekend as Nelson took the 200 IM with a 1:45.04 and Custer smashed the national age group record in the 1650 at 14:37.86.

Below is the top eight for each men's event thus far at the 18 & under national championships, now updated through Monday, December 14, 2020.

50 Free

- Youssef Ramadan, Unattached, 19.62
- Seth Reno, South Shore Sails, 19.96
- Anthony Grimm, Mason Makos, 19.99
- Jack Aikins, Swim Atlanta, 19.99
- Kamal Muhammad, Spartan Aquatic Club, 20.03
- Chris Giuliano, TOPS Swimming, 20.15
- Zac Van Zandt, Unattached, 20.15
- Walker Davis, Cavalier Aquatics, 20.17

100 Free

- Youssef Ramadan, Unattached, 43.44
- Jack Aikins, Swim Atlanta, 43.51
- Garrett Boone, Unattached, 43.76
- Seth Reno, South Shore Sails, 43.81
- Lukas Miller, Unattached, 43.90
- Anthony Grimm, Mason Makos, 44.17
- Kamal Muhammad, Spartan Aquatic Club, 44.21
- Zachary McIntyre, Unattached, 44.29

200 Free

- Lukas Miller, Unattached, 1:33.83
- Michael Cotter, TAC Titans, 1:35.39
- Gabriel Jett, Clovis Swim Club, 1:36.04
- Jack Aikins, Swim Atlanta, 1:36.10

Liam Custer, Sarasota YMCA Sharks, 1:36.22
Sebastien Sergile, Swim Atlanta, 1:36.30
Joaquin Vargas, Azura Florida Aquatics, 1:36.42
Nick Radkov, Peddie Aquatic Association, 1:36.75

500 Free

James Plage, Unattached, 4:18.33
Liam Custer, Sarasota YMCA Sharks, 4:18.49
Joaquin Vargas, Azura Florida Aquatics, 4:20.18
Logan Zucker, Swim MAC Carolina, 4:22.83
Zach Kohm, Plymouth Whitemarsh, 4:23.50
Gabriel Jett, Clovis Swim Club, 4:23.50
Cooper Lucas, Lakeside Aquatic Club, 4:23.84
Matthew Fenlon, Badger Swim Club, 4:24.39

1650 Free

Liam Custer, Sarasota YMCA Sharks, 14:37.86
Levi Sandidge, COR Swimming, 15:02.02
James Plage, Unattached, 15:03.32
Trey Dickey, COR Swimming, 15:12.44
Andrew Taylor, Tampa Bay Aquatic Club, 15:18.19
Giovanni Linscheer, COR Swimming, 15:19.21
Mason Edmund, North Texas Nadadores, 15:21.35
Jay Baker, North Carolina Aquatic Club, 15:21.45

100 Back

Anthony Grimm, Mason Makos, 46.25
Tyler Hulet, The Woodlands, 47.04
Will Modglin, Zionsville Swim Club, 47.31
Jack Aikins, Swim Atlanta, 47.49
Nathaniel Stoffle, Spartan Aquatic Club, 47.58
Cade Oliver, Franklin Regional Swim Team, 47.75
Evan Petty, Nashville Aquatic Club, 47.85
Tyler Hong, Unattached, 47.94

200 Back

Jack Aikins, Swim Atlanta, 1:40.92
Michael Moore, Unattached, 1:42.66
Tyler Hulet, The Woodlands, 1:42.87
Hunter Gubeno, Unattached, 1:43.51
Josh Zuchowski, Flood Aquatic Swim Team, 1:44.02
Cade Oliver, Franklin Regional Swim Team, 1:44.08
Noah Rutberg, Unattached, 1:44.17
Tommy Janton, Western YMCA Wahoos, 1:44.21

100 Breast

Josh Matheny, Pittsburgh Elite, 52.02
Luke Barr, Unattached, 52.81
Daniel Worth, Empire Swim Club, 53.07
Arie Voloschin, Dynamo Swim Club, 53.73
Anthony Grimm, Mason Makos, 53.86
Cam Abaqueta, Swim MAC Carolina, 54.05
Henry Bethel, Carpet Capital, 54.07
Kendall Ewing, Unattached, 54.09

200 Breast

Josh Matheny, Pittsburgh Elite, 1:51.38
Luke Barr, Unattached, 1:56.05
Henry Bethel, Carpet Capital, 1:56.77
Adam Fusti-Molnar, Austin Swim Club, 1:56.94
Sam Hoover, North Carolina Aquatic Club, 1:57.18
Zhier Fan, Metroplex Aquatics, 1:57.31
Daniel Worth, Empire Swim Club, 1:57.63
Parker Macy, Irvine Novaquatics, 1:57.94

100 Fly

Zac Van Zandt, Unattached, 45.84
Landon Gentry, Nation's Capital, 46.41
Youssef Ramadan, Unattached, 46.43
Anthony Grimm, Mason Makos, 46.56
Lukas Miller, Unattached, 46.78
Mateo Miceli, Unattached, 47.01
Holden Smith, Race Pace Club, 47.18
Mitchell Ledford, Treasure Coast Swimming Conquistadores, 47.22

200 Fly

Landon Gentry, Nation's Capital, 1:43.03
Zac Van Zandt, Unattached, 1:43.71
Gabriel Jett, Clovis Swim Club, 1:44.71
Mateo Miceli, Unattached, 1:44.86
Sebastian Sergile, Swim Atlanta, 1:45.02
Conor McKenna, Lakeside Aquatic Club, 1:45.02
Cooper Lucas, Lakeside Aquatic Club, 1:45.66
Alec Filipovic, St. Charles Swim Team, 1:45.82

200 IM

Baylor Nelson, Swim MAC Carolina, 1:45.04
Nate Germonprez, Unattached, 1:45.41
Luke Barr, Unattached, 1:45.60
Sam Hoover, North Carolina Aquatic Club, 1:45.61
Lukas Miller, Unattached, 1:45.86
Michael Moore, Unattached, 1:46.08
Henry Bethel, Carpet Capital, 1:46.15
Michael Cotter, TAC Titans, 1:46.52

400 IM

Michael Moore, Unattached, 3:45.12
Sam Hoover, North Carolina Aquatic Club, 3:47.56
Munzy Kabbara, Cypress Fairbanks Swim Club, 3:47.61
Baylor Nelson, Swim MAC Carolina, 3:48.37
Josh Zuchowski, Flood Aquatic Swim Team, 3:48.49
Liam Custer, Sarasota YMCA Sharks, 3:48.97
Sebastian Sergile, Swim Atlanta, 3:49.25
Conall Monahan, Unattached, 3:49.66 ◀



> EMMA WEYANT

[PHOTO BY CONNOR TRIMBLE]

FINALIZED USA SWIMMING'S WINTER 18 & UNDER NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS WOMEN'S LEADERBOARD

BY ANDY ROSS

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Stanford commit Torri Huske – *Swimming World's* High School Swimmer of the Year in 2019 – officially won the 200 free and 200 IM on the weekend, including an impressive 50.2 in the 100 butterfly as she is the current national high school record holder (public) in that event and is one of the top recruits in the class of 2021. Junior Claire Curzan of the TAC Titans surpassed Huske in the 100 butterfly this past weekend as she also had the winning time in the 100 and 200 back.

Virginia commit Gretchen Walsh sits atop the leaderboard in two events as she is another one of the top recruits in the class of 2021 as she won the 50 and 100 free. Walsh is the current national high school record holder (outright) in the 50 and 100 free and could be a spoiler pick to make next summer's Olympic team in a number of events.

Abby Arens of NC State also competed with a win in the 200 breaststroke.

Michigan commit Letitia Sim took the 100 breast unofficial win as she will be joining the Michigan Wolverines in Big Ten country next season.

Long Island's Cavan Gormsen, a rising star 15-year-old on

the east coast, won the 1650 freestyle with a 15:58.97 as the only swimmer to break 16:00. She also finished second in the 500 free to Sarasota's Emma Weyant, who is taking a gap year from the University of Virginia this season, as she won the 500 at 4:38.39 and also took the 400 IM at 4:04.48.

Long Island also got a win from Tess Howley in the 200 butterfly with a 1:53.95 as she is one of the top sophomores in the nation right now.

50 Free

Gretchen Walsh, Nashville Aquatic Club, 21.41

Torri Huske, Arlington Aquatic Club, 21.43

Claire Curzan, TAC Titans, 21.71

Lindsay Flynn, Mecklenburg Swimming Association, 22.10

Kaitlyn Winter, Quicksilver Swimming, 22.46

Emma Sticklen, Unattached, 22.50

Grace Cooper, Unattached, 22.55

Ella Welch, Cardinal Aquatics, 22.58

100 Free

Gretchen Walsh, Nashville Aquatic Club, 47.36

Claire Curzan, TAC Titans, 47.51

Torri Huske, Arlington Aquatic Club, 47.60

Lindsay Flynn, Mecklenburg Swimming Association, 48.15

Teresa Ivan, Mecklenburg Swimming Association, 49.04

Ella Bathurst, Tampa Elite Aquatics, 49.21

Anna Shaw, University of Denver, 49.28

Ella Mazurek, Quicksilver Swimming, 49.35

200 Free

Torri Huske, Arlington Aquatic Club, 1:43.23

Gretchen Walsh, Nashville Aquatic Club, 1:44.66

Emma Weyant, Sarasota Sharks, 1:45.28
Charlotte Hook, TAC Titans, 1:45.38
Ella Bathurst, Tampa Elite Aquatics, 1:45.71
Malia Rausch, Austin Swim Club, 1:45.96
Cavan Gormsen, Long Island, 1:46.24
Blair Stoneburg, Treasure Coast Aquatics, 1:46.28

500 Free

Emma Weyant, Sarasota Sharks, 4:38.39
Cavan Gormsen, Long Island, 4:38.45
Blair Stoneburg, Treasure Coast Aquatics, 4:38.83
Malia Rausch, Austin Swim Club, 4:40.26
Hayden Miller, Cypress Fairbanks Swim Club, 4:42.89
Caroline Pennington, TAC Titans, 4:43.46
Claire Weinstein, Westchester Aquatic Club, 4:44.10
Chase Travis, Unattached, 4:44.55

1650 Free

Cavan Gormsen, Long Island, 15:58.97
Caroline Pennington, TAC Titans, 16:03.21
Chase Travis, Unattached, 16:09.30
Emma Weyant, Sarasota Sharks, 16:09.74
Blair Stoneburg, Treasure Coast Aquatics, 16:14.65
Paige McKenna, Nation's Capital, 16:17.37
Emily Knorr, Mecklenburg Swim Association, 16:19.20
Hayden Miller, Cypress Fairbanks Swim Club, 16:19.72

100 Back

Claire Curzan, TAC Titans, 50.18
Gretchen Walsh, Nashville Aquatic Club, 51.50
Caroline Bentz, Unattached, 52.74
Rye Ulett, Dynamo Swim Club, 52.88
Aris Runnels, Nation's Capital, 53.16
Ellie Waldrep, Baylor Swim Club, 53.17
Levenia Sim, TNT Swimming, 53.17
Ella Bathurst, Tampa Elite Aquatics, 53.23

200 Back

Claire Curzan, TAC Titans, 1:49.35
Rye Ulett, Dynamo Swim Club, 1:52.86
Bella Sims, Sandpipers of Nevada, 1:53.66
Caroline Bentz, Unattached, 1:54.48
Emma Weyant, Sarasota Sharks, 1:54.69
Summer Smith, Bluefish, 1:55.07
Paige Hall, Machine Aquatics, 1:55.12
Felicia Pasadyn, Medina Recreation, 1:55.27

100 Breast

Letitia Sim, TNT Swimming, 59.01
Abby Arens, Unattached, 1:00.12
Grace Rainey, Swim MAC, 1:00.58
Aubree Brouwer, Springfield Aquatics, 1:00.68
Emma Weber, University of Denver, 1:00.68
Alicia Henry, Dynamo Swim Club, 1:00.70

Kaylee Hamblin, Mecklenburg Swim Association, 1:00.79
Jessey Li, Mason Manta Rays, 1:00.85

200 Breast

Abby Arens, Unattached, 2:08.21
Sally Foley, Unattached, 2:08.96
Grace Rainey, Swim MAC, 2:10.25
Letitia Sim, TNT Swimming, 2:10.34
Aubree Brouwer, Springfield Aquatics, 2:10.58
Denise Phelan, Team Suffolk, 2:11.32
Kaylee Hamblin, Mecklenburg Swim Association, 2:11.74
Annika McEnroe, Y-Spartaquatics, 2:12.77

100 Fly

Claire Curzan, TAC Titans, 49.80
Torri Huske, Arlington Aquatic Club, 50.29
Emma Sticklen, Unattached, 51.49
Gretchen Walsh, Nashville Aquatic Club, 51.73
Abby Arens, Unattached, 52.25
Lucy Bell, Fort Collins, 52.36
Tess Howley, Long Island, 52.55
Kiley Wilhelm, Lifetime Swim Team, 52.73

200 Fly

Tess Howley, Long Island, 1:53.95
Torri Huske, Arlington Aquatic Club, 1:54.04
Charlotte Hook, TAC Titans, 1:54.11
Emma Sticklen, Unattached, 1:54.43
Lucy Bell, Fort Collins, 1:54.93
Kate McCarville, Springfield Aquatics, 1:56.63
Renee Gillilan, Fort Collins, 1:56.71
Mackenzie McConagha, Nation's Capital, 1:57.29

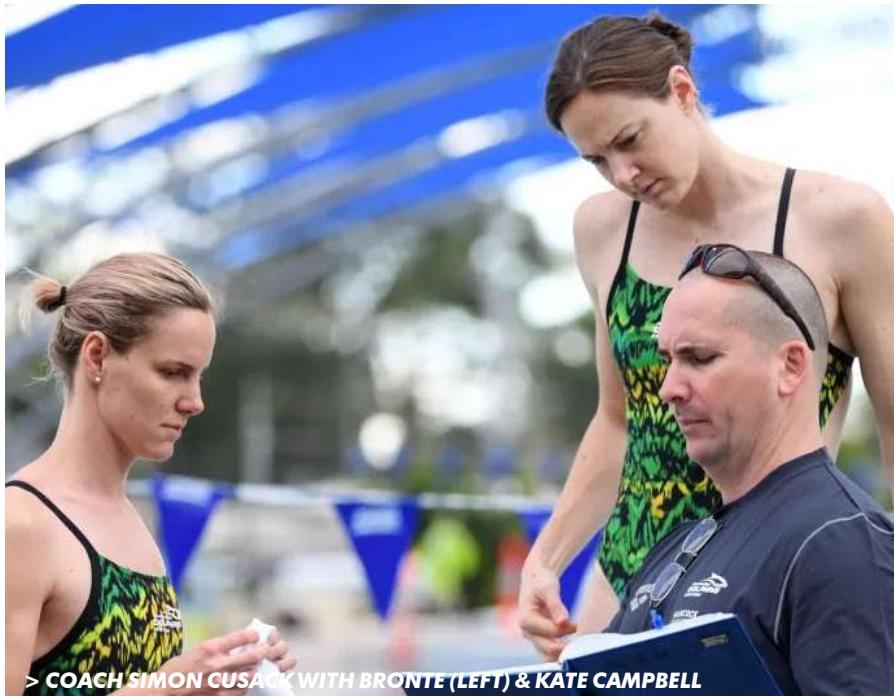
200 IM

Torri Huske, Arlington Aquatic Club, 1:54.50
Charlotte Hook, TAC Titans, 1:56.62
Sally Foley, Unattached, 1:57.44
Abby Arens, Unattached, 1:57.59
Letitia Sim, TNT Swimming, 1:57.72
Lucy Bell, Fort Collins, 1:57.74
Rye Ulett, Dynamo Swim Club, 1:58.42
Brooke Zettel, TAC Titans, 1:58.48

400 IM

Emma Weyant, Sarasota Sharks, 4:04.48
Mia Abruzzo, Plymouth Whitemarsh, 4:10.27
Sophie Duncan, Nation's Capital, 4:11.75
Kate McCarville, Springfield Aquatics, 4:12.22
Summer Smith, Bluefish, 4:12.50
Julia Podkoscilny, Pine Crest, 4:12.91
Annika McEnroe, Y-Spartaquatics, 4:13.40
Eleanor Sun, Nation's Capital, 4:14.25 ◀

WORLD NEWS



> COACH SIMON CUSACK WITH BRONTE (LEFT) & KATE CAMPBELL

[PHOTO BY DELLY CARR / SWIMMING AUSTRALIA]

CAMPBELL SISTERS AND ELLIE COLE FOLLOW COACH SIMON CUSACK BACK TO QUEENSLAND TO PREPARE FOR TOKYO

BY IAN HANSON

Australia's favourite swimming sisters, Cate and Bronte Campbell have confirmed today they will leave Sydney and return home to make Brisbane their training base to prepare for the Tokyo Olympic Trials after two successful years training in the Harbour City.

Swimming World can reveal exclusively that the golden girls of the Australian Dolphins Swim Team will be joined by their Sydney-based training partner, Paralympic golden girl Ellie Cole with the trio all electing to follow coach Simon Cusack back to Queensland.

NSWIS and Swimming NSW have supported the faces of Swimming Australia since their move with Cusack to Sydney in 2018 – swimming out of Pymble Ladies College (PLC) on Sydney's North Shore.

Cusack has coached the Campbell girls since they first began swimming competitively at Indooroopilly turning them into swimming's "Sisters Of Speed" – world champions and Olympic and Commonwealth Games gold medallists.

It was Cusack who requested the move back to his home State of Queensland and the move has been fully supported as a National alliance.

Together with NSWIS, New South Wales Swimming, Swimming Australia and the

Queensland Academy of Sport, it was agreed to support Cusack's transfer of the NSWIS elite group and as members of the NSW Championship winning club the from the "Knox-Pymble Swim Team" on Sydney's North Shore to the Brisbane Aquatic Centre at Chandler.

They will aim to re-ignite the program back in Brisbane on Monday, January 25—although a complete re-union may well be COVID-19 delayed – with Greater Sydney now a COVID hotspot after the outbreak reached 83 in the Avalon cluster on the Sydney Northern Beaches – a population of 250,000 now under threat of a continued lockdown through Christmas.

Cate Campbell, 28, and preparing for a fourth Olympics, has already arrived back into Queensland, pre quarantine restrictions after delivering a swim clinic in Glen Innes in north western NSW on Saturday but Bronte and Ellie are both holed up in Sydney – unsure of their immediate plans for a border crossing from NSW into Queensland.

Twenty-six-year-old Bronte, with her sights set on a third Games in Tokyo, had also planned to be in Brisbane with her sister for Christmas but will now have to remain in Sydney in Bondi, but the 25-year-old is staying positive that she will do everything she can to be in Brisbane to start her Olympic campaign next month.

"The plan is to adjust and re-adjust. It's a timely reminder to be in a place where it is stable because who knows whether they will keep things open down here (in Sydney)," said Campbell.

"If it gets worse (in Sydney) who knows where this will end. It could end up where Christmas is locked down across the city...not the best but we just keep on adjusting. There will be a way (to get to Queensland) whether it's quarantine or rural staying (training in a regional centre like Alstonville or Ballina in northern NSW, close to the Queensland border) that will get me north of the border in time to start training next year."

A six-time Paralympic gold medallist, Cole, was set to spend Christmas in (COVID-free) Melbourne with her parents but has had to quash those plans, after Victoria closed its borders to NSW.

Cole will likely spend Christmas on the NSW Central Coast before also putting similar travel plans in place to be in Queensland to prepare for a tilt at a fourth Paralympics.

In a statement released today The NSW Institute of Sport (NSWIS) said they had been working with key swimming stakeholders to ensure their athletes are best placed to compete at the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic



[PHOTO COURTESY SWIMMING AUSTRALIA]

Games in 2021.

"Following a challenging 2020 with border restrictions being in place, NSWIS, along with our program partners, have supported the relocation of head coach Simon Cusack and his cohort of athletes including Cate and Bronte Campbell, and Ellie Cole to Queensland to ensure their final Olympic and Paralympic preparations will be unaffected should further border closures occur," the statement read.

"Simon will remain a Swimming NSW coach, whilst his swimmers will continue to be NSWIS scholarship athletes and be part of Team NSWIS. The squad have our full support as they continue their preparations."

Cusack was thankful for the cohesive approach from all parties with the COVID-19 pandemic at the heart of a move to ensure a smoother Olympic Trials preparation.

And he has already arrived into Brisbane with his family, saying: "Due to Covid they decided that they would re-position my squad back up to Chandler Aquatic Centre for the remainder of the Olympic preparation.

"With the effects of COVID in the middle of the year that didn't do anyone any good and being away from family wasn't good either.

"I guess with what has happened in Sydney and in particularly how things have changed so dramatically over the last 48 hours the timing could not be better.

"The girls will work on a program I've given them with some work to do up until Christmas Eve and they were will

Continued >>



> ELLIE COLE (RIGHT)

(hopefully) return (to training themselves) on January 4, before our official start on January 25.

"Cate will be up in Queensland and will do a week with Vince Raleigh (at Chandler) and Bronte will now stay in Sydney.

"Once we start in Brisbane, we will operate out of Chandler and also use the QAS facility (the 25m pool) as well as using the QAS gym which will be a huge plus.

"It was so encouraging to see Swimming NSW and NSWIS, on the back of the last two years wanting to let the program go and they wanted to see the full preparation through which was really supportive on their behalf. That support was great."

Cusack said his girls were all able to finish off 2020 at the NSW Championships last week and they were happy to get some solid racing off finishing over with off with the 10x50m club relay wins for Knox boys and Pymble girls.

The former ASCTA coach of the Year said "Everyone is looking forward to kick-starting 2021 and it's a monkey off our back knowing we're not going to be disrupted if the Queensland border closes again.

"We've the National Event Camp up here in February and the National Club Championships on the Gold Coast in April – there was a lot of stuff we would have had to miss out on if the borders did close again. But now (hopefully) it's all looking good...."

And speaking on the move from Sydney to Brisbane, Bronte

Campbell described it as a "six month training camp."

"It's a credit to both the NSWIS and Queensland Academy of Sport and Swimming Australia – everyone has been great," said Campbell.

"I haven't been stressed about it because everything has just been taken care of for me, everyone doing their bit working together.

"I'm not sure this could happen in any other year; all the sporting communities and swimming especially has made us a bit tighter and placed us all on the same side.

"We've all got something to work towards now I feel like the Olympic are about to happen again it's all gearing up..."

But bred in Queensland, Campbell admitted after two years that: "Sydney feels like my home. As much as I'm a Queenslander around State of Origin (rugby league football) time I love Sydney, I love the people down here and NSWIS has been amazing for us.

"I've had a really, really good two years and I'm pretty settled down here ...but its an Olympic Games year so whatever it takes to make it work.

"And we are pretty used to living on the fly, I'm not thinking about it as moving to Brisbane, for me it's like going on an extended training camp and I'll be back to Sydney once the Games are done.

"My boyfriend lives down here, my friends are down here, and it's very much like my life is down in Sydney.

"But we can put things on hold until after the Olympics; we are used to organising our lives around that and we'll just make it work.

"There is always a way to make it work; but it's good to have something so we can hone in on the Olympics a little bit more and get out of the distractions of Sydney.

"There's always a positive way to look at things; it's good to have a training venue locked in and it's good to know we are going to be able to train through to the Olympics.

"That's really what it's all about; that's what we've been aiming for over the last 18 months, to make these Games happen and make it a good Games for us and our squad.

"It's the last step in that you can pretty much do anything for six months... it is the Olympics after all." ◀



[PHOTO COURTESY MINNE KASAPOGLU / ISL]

RANKING THE BEST WOMEN'S SWIMMERS IN THE WORLD FROM 1-25 AS OLYMPIC YEAR ARRIVES

BY ANDY ROSS

Looking ahead to yet another Olympic year and putting 2020 in the rearview mirror, Swimming World decided to compile a list of the 25 best swimmers in the world leading into 2021. There was a lot of fast swimming in the first three months of 2020 (pre-pandemic), and even with an extended time out of the water during the summer, many of the world's elite returned to either the ISL or various regional meets to put up times quicker than expected.

In compiling this list, we took into account what happened in 2019 as well as what each athlete showed in 2020. There was no perfect way to rank every swimmer in the world, but we tried to stay as objective as possible when weighing each swimmer's achievements in the pandemic year of 2020. The ISL swims were taken into account as well as what happened in January and February before the pandemic shut everything down and pushed the Olympic Games back a full year.

So looking ahead to 2021, here are the top 25 best women's swimmers in the world ranked as objectively as possible.

25. Annie Lazor, United States

Lazor had the top time in the world in both 2019 and 2020 in the 200 breaststroke, which should be noted whenever mentioning her name. She has resurrected herself as one of the top breaststrokers in the world after initially retiring after missing the Olympic team in 2016. Now in her mid-20's, she is in line to make her first USA "A" team after winning double gold at the Pan American Games in 2019.

Lazor will have her work cut out for her – the USA women are particularly deep in breaststroke.

24. Ye Shiwen, China

Ye has come a long way since winning double IM gold in London at just 16-years-old back in 2012. Now at 24, she made her way back to the podium at the 2019 Worlds with double silver in the 200 and 400 IM, and also reached the final in the 200 breaststroke. Many thought Ye was done after finishing eighth in the 200 IM in Rio but she is now among the best in the world in both IMs and has also developed into a world class breaststroker ahead of what would be her third Olympics.

23. Beryl Gastaldello, France

Gastaldello really made a name for herself in 2020 during the International Swimming League, putting up the fastest time in the world in the 100 fly and 100 IM, and also putting herself second in the 100 free and sixth in the 50 free. If she can translate that success to long course, she could be sniffing the podium in Tokyo. The sprint events are already particularly stacked with the presence of swimmers like Sjostrom, Campbell and Manuel, but Gastaldello proved she could compete with the best in short course meters, it is just a matter of can she replicate that in the Olympic pool.

22. Minna Atherton, Australia

Atherton had a lot of momentum on her side in the second half of 2019, where she set the short course meters world

Continued >>



> OLIVIA SMOLIGA

record in the 100 backstroke a few weeks removed from her first international medal in the 100 back at Worlds. Atherton had a promising junior career, winning the 2015 World junior titles in the 100 and 200 back, but had a lull of improvement in between then and 2019 where she finally broke through with a silver in Gwangju. Australia, like the US, has a deep talent pool in the backstroke events, and if Atherton can make her way onto the plane to Tokyo, she could be a medal favorite.

21. Olivia Smoliga, United States

Smoliga proved pivotal for the Cali Condors in the ISL this season, leading the world rankings in the 100 backstroke, nearly breaking Atherton's world record in the process. Smoliga had been on a tear in 2019 where she finished with an individual bronze in the 100 back and a gold in the non-Olympic 50 back. Smoliga is a gamer, and will be tough to beat if she is at her best in 2021. In the last couple years, she has also developed a strong 200 back that could land her a place on the team to Tokyo.

20. Siobhan Haughey, Hong Kong

It seems like every time Haughey dives into the pool, she sets a new best time. After just narrowly missing the podium in the 200 freestyle at the 2019 Worlds, Haughey has been on a tear. She had the top 200 freestyle time in the ISL last year, and did not lose a single 200 free race in the 2020 ISL season. She also led the world rankings in the 100 freestyle this year in short course meters with her ISL performances. Haughey was a 1:54 in long course this season and she could be a dark horse gold medal favorite for Tokyo. Hong Kong has never had a finalist in Olympic swimming, let alone a medalist.

19. Katinka Hosszu, Hungary

Even with a disappointing showing at the ISL, where she only had one swim ranked in the top eight in the league – a fourth place effort in the 200 butterfly, this is still the Iron

Lady we are talking about. Hosszu has won five World titles in the 400 IM, and is one of the best racers in the entire world. It will be a huge surprise if she doesn't show up to Tokyo 100% ready to defend her three gold medals she won in Rio – the 200 & 400 IM and the 100 back. Hosszu was a 4:36 pre-pandemic in the 400 IM, and will still not be counted out as we get closer to the Games.

18. Kathleen Baker, United States

Although Baker had an off 2019, she returned in pre-pandemic 2020 with some really eye-popping swims, including leading the world rankings in the 200 IM in February. In previewing the women's backstroke at US Olympic Trials, many are focusing on Smoliga and Regan Smith as the front-runners with Phoebe Bacon as a potential spoiler. But Baker is the reigning Olympic silver medalist in the 100 back and the former world record holder in the event so she should never be taken lightly. At the US Open, she swam another sub-59 to gain some momentum heading into 2021.

17. Yulia Efimova, Russia

Efimova is the reigning Olympic silver medalist in both the 100 and 200 breaststroke, but her status in Tokyo remains up in the air after Russia's flag was banned from the next two Olympic Games. Russian athletes will still be allowed to compete at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics if they are not implicated in doping or covering up positive tests, according to the ruling. Efimova has already served two doping suspensions in her career, so her status for Tokyo is unknown if she is to make it in Russia's deep breaststroke field. But if Efimova is to race in Tokyo, then she will be a gold medal favorite in both the 100 and 200 breast.

16. Hali Flickinger, United States

Flickinger has long been one of the most versatile swimmers in the United States, dating back to her collegiate days at the University of Georgia. Now swimming for legendary coach Bob Bowman, Flickinger has remained one of the best racers in the world, carrying favorite status leading into 2021 in the 200 butterfly after multiple 2:05's in 2019. And in ISL circles, she proved valuable in the 200 and 400 free as well as the 400 IM, all three events she could very well slip into Olympic contention if someone else falters.

15. Kylie Masse, Canada

Masse is the two-time reigning World champ in the 100 back, and also won a medal in the 200 at the 2019 Worlds. She has proved to be a great racer, even in a stroke where it is difficult to see those around you. Masse has a tendency to get her hand on the wall first and consistently crank out 58s in the long course 100 back. She made her Canadian senior debut in Rio, picking up a bronze in the 100 back, and she could upgrade that to a silver or perhaps gold in 2021.

14. Wang Jianjiahe, China

Wang was a 15:45 in the 1500 this year in September for seventh all-time and also sits third all-time in the 800 from 2019. Wang won the bronze in the 1500 at the 2019 Worlds and it is worth noting she just celebrated her 18th birthday earlier this summer. She is still young and has room to improve, which could spell out good things for the Chinese heading into 2021. China's national swim team has looked strong in the last few months and Wang is no exception.

13. Simona Quadarella, Italy

Quadarella gave Katie Ledecky everything she could handle in the 800 free final at the 2019 Worlds, finishing with the silver medal. She won the 1500 World title in Ledecky's absence and is a big favorite to compete for a medal in the inaugural 1500 Olympic final. Now at age 22, she is continuing Italy's strong tradition in the distance freestyle events as she is ranked fourth all-time in both the 800 and 1500 free. Quadarella seemed a little off her game at the Sette Colli in her first meet in the pandemic but many will not count her out heading into 2021.

12. Melanie Margalis, United States

Margalis is perhaps one of the most underrated swimmers in the world. She hasn't won an individual medal at the world level yet, finishing fourth in the 200 IM at the last two Worlds and the 2016 Olympics. She has gotten agonizingly close to an individual medal for so many years, and 2021 could be her best chance. She was a 4:32 in the 400 IM before the pandemic and was a 2:08 in the 200 in December of last year. Margalis had been leading the ISL in both the 200 and 400 IM before exiting for personal reasons, and not many will take her lightly in Tokyo despite her lack of an individual medal.

11. Yui Ohashi, Japan

Ohashi had a strong showing in the ISL this season with the top times in both the 200 and 400 IM after coming off a 2019 where she won Worlds bronze in the 400 IM. With a home Olympics upcoming, Ohashi will be a crowd favorite on night one in the 400 IM and the Japanese crowd could push her to a medal, and perhaps a gold one. Ohashi has been a steady performer the last few years and would be making her Olympic debut in Tokyo if she is to make the team at age 25.

10. Zhang Yufei, China

Zhang had a huge 2020 year in joining the sub-56 club in the 100 butterfly, and also swam a 52.9 in the 100 freestyle. Zhang was on China's mixed medley relay that set the only long course world record of 2020 where she split a 55.3 butterfly in the process. Zhang has flown under the radar in the butterfly events and the 100 free, but if her 2021 is anything like her 2020, then Zhang could find herself on



[PHOTO COURTESY BECCA WYANT]

the podium in Tokyo in more than one event. It is worth noting that China has won two of the last three Olympic gold medals in the 200 butterfly and Zhang was a 2:05 within the last few days.

9. Cate Campbell, Australia

Campbell has long been one of the top sprinters in the world in the last ten years, first reaching the Olympic podium as a young teenager at the Beijing Games in the 50 free 12 years ago. Campbell is still at the top of her game leading into what would be her fourth Games if she makes it to Tokyo. If Campbell is on, she could walk away with a number of gold medals, including the 50 and 100 free, and the three relays – mixed and women's medley, and the 4x100 free. Campbell was underwhelming in Rio in 2016, so she will be looking to avenge those demons this time around in 2021.

8. Ariarne Titmus, Australia

Titmus made headlines in 2019 when she took down the almighty Katie Ledecky in the 400 free at the World Championships. She didn't race much in 2020 but has still been tabbed as a gold medal threat in both the 400 and 200 freestyle at the Olympic Games. It is just a matter of getting on the plane to Tokyo for her. Although Titmus is ranked among the best in the world in her events, Australia is particularly deep in the 200, 400 and 800 freestyle so she will not be able to afford to take it easy at Trials.

7. Regan Smith, United States

Smith was our world swimmer of the year in 2019 after breaking the world records in the 100 and 200 back, becoming the first woman to break 58 and 2:04 in those two events. At just 18, Smith is a big favorite to make a number of events for Tokyo and in the early days of the pre-pandemic 2020 year, she had proved 2019 was no fluke by sitting near the top of the world in both the 100 and 200 back, as well as the 200 fly. Smith is staying one more year with coach Mike Parratto in Minnesota before she heads to

Continued >>



> KATIE LEDECKY

[PHOTO COURTESY BECCA WIVANT]

Stanford with Olympic coach Greg Meehan.

6. Emma McKeon, Australia

McKeon has seemed wildly underrated the last few years, often getting overshadowed by her peers Campbell and Titmus, but McKeon has been a key piece for Australia's women's team since she broke out in 2014. Leading into 2021, she could play a role in four of Australia's relays that all have medal potential – all three women's relays and the mixed medley. Add in the individual 100 & 200 free and the 100 butterfly, and McKeon is arguably one of the most versatile swimmers in the world without needing to throw down a 200 IM.

5. Lilly King, United States

King has been the top 100 breaststroker in the world since winning gold in Rio 2016. She hasn't medaled in the 200 at the world level, albeit with a disqualification in the heats at the 2019 Worlds where she was a gold medal favorite. King hasn't shown her cards in the 200 fully rested just yet, but it is safe to say if she can get through the gauntlet that is the US Olympic Trials, she will be the dual gold medal favorite for the breaststroke events to potentially become the first ever to successfully repeat in the 100.

4. Kaylee McKeown, Australia

McKeown had a big breakout year in 2020, moving up to second all-time in the 100 backstroke and third all-time in the 200. McKeown also broke the short course meters world record in the 200 back this year, putting a target on her back heading into 2021 as the one to beat for Olympic gold. Australia has a deep talent pool in both the 100 and 200 back with Atherton and Emily Seebohm in pursuit, but McKeown has momentum on her side. It is hard to believe she is still only 19, as she chases her first Olympic berth.

3. Simone Manuel, United States

Manuel carries the mantle as perhaps the greatest American sprinter of all-time, winning the last two World titles in the

100 free, as well as the 2019 title in the 50. Manuel also made history in 2016 when she tied for gold in the 100 freestyle as the first black woman to win an individual Olympic gold medal. With that swim, she also became the first American to win that event at the Games since 1984, breaking the longest gold medal drought the Americans had. Manuel has proven time and time again to be a clutch performer in the 50 and 100 freestyle, and with her hand in a number of relays, Manuel could walk away from Tokyo with a big medal haul.

2. Sarah Sjstrom, Sweden

Is the word underrated applicable to Sjstrom – a winner of three Olympic medals and eight individual World titles? Probably not. But Sjstrom has become such a prevalent force in the sport of swimming, winning a World title at age 15 all the way back in 2009, that when you stop and take a look at what she has achieved, it is almost overwhelming. She holds three long course world records in Olympic events and holds two more in short course meters. It is worthy to note that no woman has successfully defended the 100 butterfly at the Olympic Games, something that Sjstrom has a real chance to end in 2021.

1. Katie Ledecky, United States

It is difficult to imagine a scenario where Ledecky isn't the top swimmer in the entire world. She has completely dominated the distance freestyle events since winning Olympic gold at age 15 in 2012. Now heading into 2021, Ledecky is head and shoulders above the rest of the world in the 800 and 1500 free, with some serious pressure brewing for her in the 200 & 400 free where she is the reigning Olympic champ. If Ledecky can touch the wall first after 16 laps in the pool in Tokyo, she would be the first to win the event at three straight Olympics, and just the fourth swimmer to ever to achieve such a feat, joining Australia's Dawn Fraser (100 free), Hungary's Krisztina Egerszegi (200 back) and USA's Michael Phelps (200 IM; 4x), which could cement her as the greatest female swimmer of all-time. ◀



[PHOTO COURTESY MINE KASAPOGLU/ISL]

RANKING THE BEST MEN'S SWIMMERS IN THE WORLD FROM 1-25 AS OLYMPIC YEAR ARRIVES

BY ANDY ROSS

*L*ooking ahead to yet another Olympic year and putting 2020 in the rearview mirror, Swimming World decided to compile a list of the 25 best swimmers in the world leading into 2021. There was a lot of fast swimming in the first three months of 2020 (pre-pandemic), and even with an extended time out of the water during the summer, many of the world's elite returned to either the ISL or various regional meets to put up times quicker than expected.

In compiling this list, we took into account what happened in 2019 as well as what each athlete showed in 2020. There was no perfect way to rank every swimmer in the world, but we tried to stay as objective as possible when weighing each swimmer's achievements in the pandemic year of 2020. The ISL swims were taken into account as well as what happened in January and February before the pandemic shut everything down and pushed the Olympic Games back a full year.

So looking ahead to 2021, here are the top 25 best men's swimmers in the world ranked as objectively as possible.

25. Elijah Winnington, Australia

It is worth noting that Winnington was a 3:43 in the 400 free in December and a 1:45 in the 200 free. People may not know his name just yet, and not being allowed to swim in the ISL this year certainly hurt his stock, but Winnington is a part of a very competitive freestyle field in Australia. The green and gold haven't seen this much depth since

Ian Thorpe and Grant Hackett won the 2001 Worlds final in the 4x200 free relay by six seconds. The Aussies are the reigning World champs in the 4x200 free, and Winnington wasn't even in Gwangju. If he can get out of Australia's Olympic Trials with a spot in Tokyo, he could be dangerous for medals.

24. Wang Shun, China

Wang has flown slightly under the radar the last few years since winning Olympic bronze in the 200 IM in 2016. He followed that up with a bronze in the 2017 Worlds in the 200 IM, but missed the podium in 2019. Wang was a 1:56.2 in October to be ranked second in the world this year. The 200 IM field feels wide open heading into Tokyo with no one really standing out as the heavy favorite. So if he plays his cards right, and he has been a consistent performer the last five years, Wang could see himself at the top of the podium.

23. Ilya Shymanovich, Belarus

Many forget that Shymanovich sits second all-time in the 100 breaststroke in long course with his 58.2 in March 2019. He was unable to follow that at the 2019 Worlds, not advancing past the semi finals. But in this year's ISL, he gave Adam Peaty all he could handle every time they locked horns in the water in Budapest, and a few weeks removed from the league, Shymanovich broke Peaty's world record. Although it was in short course, it is still a world record, and Shymanovich established himself as a player for Tokyo.

[Continued >>](#)



> GABRIELE DETTI

22. Mykhailo Romanchuk, Ukraine

Romanchuk is still searching for that elusive long course gold medal, taking silver in the 1500 at the last two World Championships and also finished off the podium in the 800 free both times. Romanchuk has one of the smoothest freestyle strokes you may ever see, and it is that precision that has propelled him to one of the top distance freestylers in the world. He was a 14:41 in the 1500 before the pandemic and was a 7:43 in the 800 – both swims put him second in the world rankings in 2020.

21. Florian Wellbrock, Germany

Wellbrock showed a great deal of stamina at the 2019 Worlds, winning the 10K open water title, and then over a week later winning gold in the 1500 freestyle. Now he is a distance swimmer, so the grind is not foreign to him, but it is a hard achievement, no matter who you are. No man has ever won the 10K and 1500 in the same Olympic Games, and Wellbrock is certainly in position to become the first to do so. In February before the pandemic, Wellbrock was a 14:46 to solidify his place on Germany's Olympic team.

20. Mitch Larkin, Australia

Larkin was the gold medal favorite heading into Rio in both the 100 and 200 back, ultimately coming away with just a silver in the 200. Since then he has changed coaches and has changed his event focus, becoming more of a threat in the 200 IM than the 200 back. He was back on the podium in the 100 back at the 2019 Worlds with a bronze, and also led off Australia's mixed medley relay that won gold. Larkin will play a big role again in those events and could surprise in the 200 IM – he was the only swimmer to break 1:56 in all of 2019.

19. Kliment Kolesnikov, Russia

Kolesnikov had a promising junior career for Russia, but

had an off 2019 due to illness. He had gotten off to another slow start in the ISL this season but got better each time he swam, and broke the world record in the 100 back short course meters. The backstroke field internationally is stacked and if any of the favorites falter, Kolesnikov could slip in – either the 100 or 200 back. Kolesnikov also has a strong 100 free, which could land him on the podium in the 4x100 free relay at the Games.

18. Gabriele Detti, Italy

It is worth noting that Detti had the fastest time in the world this year in the 400 freestyle with a 3:43 in August. Detti has often been overshadowed by fellow Italian Gregorio Paltrinieri, but Detti has two Olympic medals to his name – with two bronzes in the 400 and 1500 in Rio. Detti is in a good position to win gold in the 400 free in an event that is wide open pending what happens with Sun Yang, and he will also play a big factor in the inaugural 800 free final.

17. Florent Manaudou, France

Manaudou came back in a big way in late 2019, with a strong first ISL season where he seemingly picked up right where he left off after Rio in 2016. Manaudou looked like the sure bet to win the one lap gold medal in Rio before he was out-touched by Anthony Ervin by 0.01. With some soul searching, Manaudou is back in full force and is again a favorite to make his third straight podium in the 50 free at the Games. Manaudou was ranked second in the world this year in the 50 free in short course meters and fourth in the 100.

16. Kyle Chalmers, Australia

It is hard to believe Kyle Chalmers was just 18 when he won the 100 freestyle in Rio, surprising the field that included world #1 Cameron McEvoy and defending Olympic champ Nathan Adrian. Chalmers has been overshadowed by American Caeleb Dressel in the last few years, but his 47.0 silver medal at the 2019 Worlds proved that he should not be taken lightly in that race in Tokyo. In January last year, he went a speedy 47.9 and Chalmers has been known to be a big rest swimmer so expect him to show up ready to rip in Tokyo. And who knows...it may take a world record to win the 100 freestyle.

15. Chad Le Clos, South Africa

Le Clos is still one of the top butterflyers in the world, as the now 28-year-old is looking to medal in this third straight Olympics in the 100 butterfly and is looking to win his gold medal back in the 200 fly after winning in 2012. Le Clos had the top time in the world this year in the 200 fly in short course and was also second in the 100. Le Clos did win the bronze in both the 100 and 200 fly at the 2019 Worlds while battling with a hernia, so he should not be written off going into 2021.

14. Danas Rapsys, Lithuania

Even though he doesn't have any tangible hardware, Rapsys was the fastest man in the 200 free final at the 2019 Worlds, but he flinched at the start and wasn't able to celebrate. But since then, he has had the fastest time in the world in the 200 free with a 1:44.3 at the World Cup, and followed that up with a 1:45 at the FINA Champions Series in January. Rapsys had the top time in the world this year in the 400 freestyle in short course meters, and he will be a big gold medal favorite in both the 200 and 400 free after not advancing past the heats in the 100 and 200 back in Rio. It is worth noting Lithuania has never had a male Olympic gold medalist in swimming.

13. Andrei Minakov, Russia

It is hard to believe Minakov is still 18 as he set the world junior records in the 100 free and 50 butterfly this year. Now as his junior career comes to a close, he will try to make his mark on senior waters. But with a silver medal already under his name in the 100 butterfly from the 2019 Worlds, the ceiling seems to be pretty high for Minakov. Russia will not be able to fly its flag in Tokyo, but if Minakov is to make the Games, he could be in line for a few medals in the 100 fly and 100 free, as well as the medley and freestyle relays.

12. Kosuke Hagino, Japan

Hagino was one of the top swimmers in the world in 2016, winning Olympic gold in the 400 IM along with a silver in the 200, as well as an appearance in the finals of the 200 free. Hagino had some struggles in replicating those performances in the years afterwards and took an extended break from the sport in 2019. But fans were reassured he is back in top form after the ISL season, where he had the second fastest time of the season in the 400 IM and was ranked fifth overall in the 200. With a home crowd backing him in Tokyo this summer, expect him to be a factor in the medals of both IMs as well as Japan's 4x200 free relay.

11. Kristof Milak, Hungary

Milak made a name for himself at the 2019 Worlds when he took down Michael Phelps' legendary 200 butterfly world record, vaulting himself to legendary status at just 19-years-old. He finished off the podium in the 100 fly a few days later, but will still be a gold medal favorite in both butterfly distances in Tokyo. He was ranked second in the world this year in the 100 fly and was fourth in the 200 in long course, proving he is in good shape to follow his world record in 2019 with Olympic glory in 2021.

10. Arno Kammenga, Netherlands

Kammenga has seen age group drops all year, improving from a 59.1/2:08.7 breaststroker in 2018 to a 58.4/2:06.8 in 2020, and is ranked third all-time in the 100 breast and fourth all-time in the 200. Kammenga has found himself as a



[PHOTO COURTESY MIKE LEWIS / ISL]

medal favorite in Tokyo despite never swimming in a World Championship final. But with his rapid improvements in the last 12 months, he is among the best breaststrokers in the world, and could be the first Dutch breaststroker since Wieger Mensonides in 1960 to medal at the Olympics.

9. Anton Chupkov, Russia

Chupkov has been the man in the 200 breaststroke since winning bronze in Rio. He's won the last two world titles and also had the fastest time in 2018. Chupkov set the world record in 2019 with a 2:06.1 as he has rewritten the record books in that event, holding five of the ten fastest times in history, including four under 2:07. Chupkov has also brought along his 100 speed as he could challenge for a medal in that event as well. Seven of the eight fastest performers in history are all still active, and it may take a world record to win the 200 breast in Tokyo.

8. Xu Jiayu, China

Xu is the two-time reigning World champ in the 100 back and the reigning Olympic silver medalist in the event. He has been able to step up to the occasion even if he has swum slower in the finals than in the semis. Xu swam on China's mixed medley relay that broke the only long course world record of 2020 and will definitely have the target on his back heading into Tokyo in the 100 back and the mixed medley relay. The backstroke fields are wide open at the moment but Xu has proved he can get his hand on the wall first in a tight race.

7. Ryan Murphy, United States

Murphy is the reigning Olympic champ in both the 100 and 200 back, and is the world record holder in the shorter distance. After a disappointing 2019 Worlds, he has proven he is still one of the top backstrokers in the world. At the ISL this season, he was ranked second overall in both the

Continued >>



> CAELEB DRESSEL

100 and 200 back, and was an incredible racer every time he dove into the pool. Murphy has a lot of pressure on his shoulders – the United States hasn't lost the Olympic crown in either the 100 or 200 back since 1992, before Murphy was even born.

6. Evgeny Rylov, Russia

Rylov is the two-time reigning World champ in the 200 back and had the fastest time in the world in the 100 back in 2019. Rylov had the fastest time in the world this year in the 200 back in short course meters with his efforts in the ISL, proving he is still the one to beat ahead of Tokyo. And for relay purposes, Rylov anchored Russia's 4x100 free relay at the 2019 Worlds to a silver medal, and the Russians look like the one team that can push the heavy favorites from the United States. Rylov seems to have the perfect mix of speed and endurance that will make him dangerous in both the 100 and 200 back.

5. Duncan Scott, Great Britain

Scott made a name for himself at the end of the 2019 Worlds with a 46.1 relay split on the end of Great Britain's medley relay, which gave them the gold medal. Scott also led off GB's 4x200 free relay at those championships in a time quicker than the gold medal winning swim. We know what he is capable of – it is just a matter of putting it together when it matters the most for Scott. He is very versatile and has a legit chance to medal in Tokyo in the 100 and 200 free, as well as the 200 IM. He will also play a

pivotal role in Great Britain's relays that have a shot at gold in the medley and the 4x200 free.

4. Gregorio Paltrinieri, Italy

Paltrinieri made headlines this summer when he scorched a 14:33 in the 1500 in his first meet post-pandemic. He was under Sun Yang's world record pace through 1450 meters, but did not have the speed to surpass the record on the last lap. With that impressive swim under his belt, many have tabbed Paltrinieri as potentially the first man to break 14:30. If he can successfully defend his Olympic title in the 1500, Paltrinieri could challenge for the mantle of greatest distance swimmer ever – already he has an Olympic gold and two world titles. The only thing missing is the world record, and a second Olympic gold may cement his legacy. And it's not just the 1500, Paltrinieri is a favorite to win gold in the 800 and 10K.

3. Daiya Seto, Japan

Seto was on fire to start 2020, with number one ranked times in the 200 & 400 IM and the 200 butterfly, including an impressive 1:52 in the latter, and a 4:06 in the 400 IM. Seto will have a lot of attention on him leading into a home Olympics, as the 400 IM on night one may be the hottest ticket event of the Games. But Seto's suspension through the end of 2020 for an extramarital affair may hurt his stock heading into this summer's Olympics.

2. Adam Peaty, Great Britain

Is this a controversial placing for the Brit? Well, when you are almost a second and a half quicker than the second fastest man in history in a 100, then no. Peaty has transcended the 100 breaststroke in long course meters, swimming faster than what many people thought was humanly possible when he swam a 56.88 at the 2019 Worlds. Peaty is the huge favorite to win back to back in Tokyo in the 100 breast, and could be the X factor in getting Great Britain's first relay Olympic gold medal since 1912.

1. Caeleb Dressel, United States

The sky seems to be limit for Dressel, who torched the short course world record books in 2020 with all-time marks in the 50 free, 50 and 100 fly and the 100 IM. The men's 100 free field in the US is particularly deep, but many are already penciling Dressel in as the #1 guy to lead the Americans to back to back gold in the 4x100 free relay. It seems like every time he dives into the water, a record is in danger, and even with a lot of hype around him leading into 2021, Dressel could be the face of the Games in Tokyo. He is the gold medal favorite in the 50 and 100 free, and the 100 fly, and will play a role in three of USA's sprint relays with gold medal potential. ◀



"HAMMER BLOW" AS POOLS IN ENGLAND CLOSE IN THIRD LOCKDOWN

BY LIZ BYRNES

Swim England chief executive Jane Nickerson has demanded that swimming pools be included in the list of facilities allowed to open at the "earliest available opportunity" after England was plunged into a third national lockdown.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has confirmed tougher restrictions should be followed immediately in a bid to tackle the spread of the new variant of coronavirus with more than 27,000 people currently in hospital with the disease.

The latest emergency measures mean indoor and outdoor swimming pools will have to close and all organised sporting activity and swimming lessons will come to a halt although indoor elite sport is able to continue.

It was also announced that all schools will close until at least February half-term.

Wales went into lockdown last month with Scotland going into tough new measures from midnight on Tuesday with a legal requirement to stay at home.

Nickerson described the move as "another hammer blow" and called on the Government to provide financial support to operators.

She said:

"We clearly don't want to see pools closing and it's so very upsetting that are we faced with this extremely distressing situation once again.

"Aquatic activity is a lifeline to so many people – not least our members and their affiliated clubs – and that's why we will be doing everything we can to make sure pools are among the first facilities to reopen at the earliest available opportunity when it is deemed safe to do so.

"We will continue to keep fighting for pools to be classed as essential services and exempt from any future restrictions. So many people with a range of debilitating physical and mental health conditions rely on exercise in the water to help them manage their conditions.

"Keeping them closed will inevitably lead to more people requiring treatment from overcrowded hospitals and GPs struggling to cope with an increased workload.

"This is yet another hammer blow to the operators running pools up and down the country and I hope the Government will be giving them the necessary financial support to get them through these troubling times." ◀

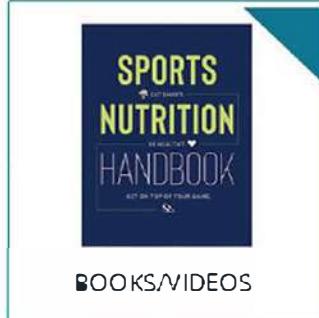


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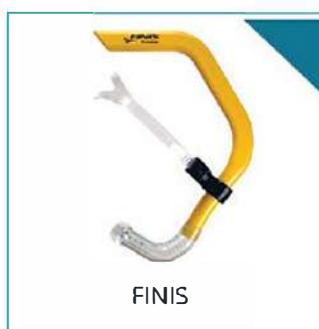
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[PHOTO COURTESY JEFF HANSON / ALABAMA]

ALABAMA SHAKEUP: COLEY STICKELS RESIGNS AS COACH; MARGO GEER TO TAKE OVER POST-OLYMPICS

BY MATTHEW DE GEORGE

Alabama swimming head coach Coley Stickels has resigned his position to focus on preparing athletes for the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, the school announced Monday.

Margo Geer will replace Stickels after the 2021 Olympic Games, for which the 28-year-old Geer hopes to qualify. Assistant coach Ozzie Quevedo is the interim coach.

Stickels joined the Crimson Tide in April 2019, coaching the squad through the truncated 2019-20 season and this fall. Alabama won 15 medals and broke 23 school records at the 2020 SEC Championship and qualified 24 swimmers for the cancelled 2020 NCAA Championships, garnering a total of 57 All-American honors.

"This was not an easy decision, but I've decided it is best to step down as head coach of the Alabama Swimming & Diving program," Stickels said in a university release. "It's been an honor to serve in this position at Alabama. After personal reflection, however, I need to reprioritize my time to concentrate on training athletes for national and international competition, including the upcoming Olympics. I wish the team all of the best going forward and know they are in good hands."

Alabama's women's team is ranked 11th in the nation in the final CSCAA poll of 2020 with the men 14th. Two meets are scheduled for 2021, with Auburn and Georgia Tech on the schedule for January.

Coley Stickels arrived at Alabama after two seasons as Indiana's associate head sprint coach. His prior stops include the Canyons Aquatic Club in California, Phoenix Swim Club in Arizona and Lake Oswego Swim Club, the University of Arizona grad mentoring such swimmers as Lilly King, Abbey Weitzeil and Ronald Schoeman.

Geer is coming off the International Swimming League season with the DC Trident. Like Stickels, she's a University of Arizona product, where she was a 27-time All-American. The sprinter has four World Championship relay medals to her name and won four golds at last year's Pan American Games, including the 100 free and three relays in addition to silver in the 50 free. Geer will swim in her fourth Olympic Trials this summer.

A 2014 graduate of Arizona, she began her coaching career as a volunteer assistant at Ohio State in 2016-17 and assumed the same position at Alabama. ◀



[PHOTO COURTESY CONNOR TRIMBLE]

JUDGE GRANTS INJUNCTION BLOCKING IOWA FROM DROPPING WOMEN'S SWIMMING IN 2021-22

BY DAN D'ADDONA

The University of Iowa women's swim team might not be done after this season after all.

On Tuesday, Dec. 22, a federal judge announced the decision to grant an injunction that blocks the University of Iowa from dropping women's swimming for the 2021-2022 school year.

The university cut the men's and women's swimming and diving programs, effective after the 2020-21 school year.

The decision by Federal District Judge Stephanie Rose came at the end of a hearing on the Title IX complaint filed by four female swimmers, according to the Press-Citizen.

According to the complaint, which was filed earlier this month, the swimmers claimed the university is violating Title IX by dropping women's swimming and diving teams.

The university has argued that it is not a Title IX violation to make the cutbacks, but that program reductions are needed to help balance an estimated athletics department budget hole of \$55 million to \$65 million caused by lost ticket sales and other revenue shortfalls because of COVID-19.

"The University of Iowa last recently completed a four-year review by the Office of Civil Rights on compliance with Title IX in the Athletic Department. In 2019, the Office for Civil Rights closed its investigation with no findings of any violation in the 13 categories of Title IX. The university remains committed to staying in compliance with Title IX," the statement from the university reads. "Diversity, equity, and inclusion are important parts of the Iowa Athletics Department's mission. The elimination of these four sports will not negatively impact our efforts in this area.

In fact, impact on Gender Equity and Title IX compliance was one of the factors used to determine which sports to eliminate due to the fiscal financial crisis created by COVID-19. Finally, the decision to eliminate three men's sports and one women's sport, will impact 64 male student-athletes compared to 38 female-student athletes (roster numbers) and result in the loss of 20.7 male scholarships compared to 14 female scholarships. The university will work hard to support each student-athlete as they go through this very difficult transition."

According to the Press-Citizen, four of Iowa's six coaches and 15 of the 35 members of the women's swimming and diving team have taken new jobs or committed to another school. An additional four are in transfer portals, according to the complaint.

"When you're riding as close to the Title IX compliance line as the university has been ... when a crisis hits, options become pretty limited" for the school to react, Rose said.

The University of Iowa stated that since there is one more year of competition, reinstatement is not possible at this time, since it hasn't been taken away yet. ◀

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WATER POLO NEWS



USA WATER POLO RACIAL EQUITY & REFORM TASK FORCE HOSTS TOWN HALL DISCUSSIONS ON ZOOM

BY MICHAEL RANDAZZO



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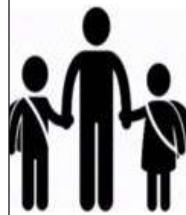
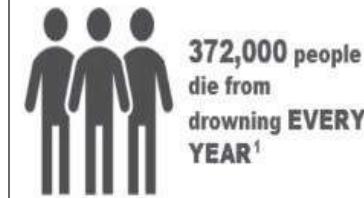
In December, USA Water Polo's Racial Equity & Reform Task Force held the second of two virtual town hall discussions about the recently-formed group's mission to create more inclusion and equity in a sport that—by almost all appearances—is predominantly populated by white, and often affluent, participants.

Co-chaired by John Abdou, USAWP Chief High Performance Officer, the task force's roster is distinguished by both their success in the sport and their collective experience with institutional racism in America. Brenda Villa, who co-chairs the task force with Abdou, also participated in Thursday night's Zoom call. One of the most accomplished polo athletes in American history, Villa is a product of Commerce Aquatics, a singularly unique swim and water polo program in Southern California. They were joined by Felix Mercado, a native of Miami who has made his way to become the head men's and women's coaching at Brown. Mercado made reference to the Alliance for Equity in Water Polo, an affiliated organization.

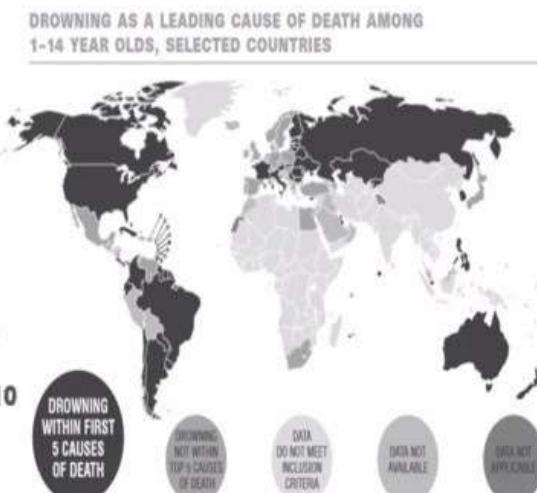
Ted Minnis, a graduate of Menlo Atherton High School in Northern California who was plucked from a coaching position with the Stanford Water Polo Club to transform men's and women's water polo at Harvard, also participated, as did Clarke Weatherspoon, a former player at UC Santa Barbara and one-time Stanford Water Polo Club coach.

Mariko Rooks, a club water polo player at Yale who is in her senior year at the Ivy League institution, provided pointed observations from the task force's research as did Angela Uno, a referee in Texas who also played college ball for the Gauchos. There were also two non-polo players on the call who are task force members: Scott Newberger, a parent whose children play polo in Arizona and who is responsible for diversity and inclusion within the Arizona Air National Guard, and George

KEY DROWNING FACTS



SEVEN out of 10 **AFRICAN-AMERICAN** and nearly **SIX** out of 10 **HISPANIC CHILDREN** are unable to swim²



Globally,
OVER HALF of all drowning deaths are among those aged **UNDER 25 YEARS**¹



School-age **AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES** die in swimming pools at a rate **SIX TIMES** greater than Caucasians and Hispanics / Latino²

> One of the slides presented at the town hall by the USA Water Polo Racial Equality & Reform Task Force

Abele, an employment law expert whose daughter is on the Pomona-Pitzer women's squad.

Missing from Thursday night's town hall were task force members Ivan Munoz, a club administrator with the Northern Illinois Water Polo Club; Chelsea Johnson, a former polo athlete at Princeton who was recently elected to the Southeastern Zone Board; and Tumala Tavana, a former U.S. national team player who was a gold medalist with the American women at the 2012 London Olympics. All three were present on the first town hall Zoom meeting, held on Monday night.

Select discussion points from Thursday included:

- *55% of Americans are unable to swim; in general, water safety is a significant issue in this country*
- *School-age African American males die in swimming pools at a rate six times greater than Caucasians and Hispanics / Latinos*
- *There is a long history of exclusion and discrimination against people of color when it comes to access to water as well as learn-to-swim programs*
- *Understanding who's represented in the discussion—and who's not—when it comes to aquatic sports access is key to addressing exclusionary practices; USAWP intends to revamp how it collects information from its members*
- *The importance of encouraging age group athletes to*

break down barriers between their teammates as well as their opponents

- *Exploring partnerships with aligned organizations, even if they are not natural partners for polo. One noteworthy collaboration was mentioned by Mercado; his college athletes partnered with Providence Boys and Girls Club to provide swim instruction*
- *Also mentioned was Los Angeles Premier's partnership with the Jack & Jill Foundation, a Washington DC foundation seeking to address issues affecting African American children and families.*

Participants on the call raised questions about how to get involved, what sorts of support USAWP might provide for access to aquatics facilities and what are helpful strategies for effecting change among communities that have faced persistent discrimination.

A key consideration in effecting change is funding; a significant milestone is a board designated fund that was created in September. According to Abdou, in a little more than two months, 70 individuals have contributed to the this fund, including 40 first-time donors to USA Water Polo.

No follow up events were announced, but interested parties are invited to email the task force at equitytf@usawaterpolo.org to pose questions, receive updates, and find out how they might get involved with the group's efforts. ◀



> STANFORD WON THE LAST NCAA MEN'S WATER POLO TITLE IN 2019

SIGNS OF LIFE FOR NCAA MEN'S WATER POLO: CWPA TOP 20 PRESEASON POLL

BY MICHAEL RANDAZZO

In what is a very optimistic outlook for NCAA men's water polo, earlier this week the Collegiate Water Polo Association (CWPA) released a Top 20 Preseason Poll—albeit one with a number of caveats. The biggest being: will anyone be playing?

"Due to the fluid nature of the season, the Preseason Polls are the best estimate of programs which intend to compete and should not be considered a declarative/definitive statement of a program's intent to compete during the Winter 2021 season," explained the press release that included the Winter 2021 Men's Varsity Top 20 Poll.

In the spirit of a new year, *Swimming World* is publishing this poll (as follows) with a few observations.

For the first time in its history, Gannon University received enough votes to be included among the nation's top 25 teams. The DIII program in Erie, Pennsylvania, gained national recognition in 2018 when it forged a 19-match win streak, broken by McKendree in the semifinals of the Mid-Atlantic Western Regional Championship.

Likewise, Connecticut College—another DIII program which has also never received CWPA Top 20 poll votes—is listed in the 2021 Preseason Poll.

Also noteworthy was Concordia University Irvine's inclusion in the top 20 for the first time ever; in 2018, the Eagles were 5-19 and 1-6 in Western Water Polo Association (WWPA) play; two years later Head Coach Dreason Barry may have engineered yet another rebuild of the program that he took over in 2015. The last time the Eagles received votes was 2013, when they finished 13th in the final poll of the year.

Joining Concordia in the Winter 2021 poll was Fresno Pacific; the Sunbirds received votes for the first time.

It's important to note that entire Northeast Water Polo Conference (NWPC)—which includes Brown, Harvard, MIT, Princeton and St. Francis, Brooklyn—will not compete this year. Also, the eight schools in the Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SCIAC)—which includes California Institute of Technology, Chapman, Claremont-Mudd-Scrips, La Verne, Occidental, Pomona-Pitzer, Redlands and Whittier—voted in December against men's competition for the 2020-21 academic year. The University of the Pacific—last year's national runner-up—and Long Beach State will not be competing this winter.

As of now, no one can truly predict what competition will look like but the prevailing thought is that the remaining conferences—Golden Coast Conference (GCC), the Mid-Atlantic Water Polo Conference (MAWPC), which will include Iona from the NWPC, the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation (MPSF) and the Western Water Polo Association—will primarily play conference foes.

Here's to good thoughts that collegiate polo play will begin again in the U.S.—perhaps later this month.

Winter 2021 Men's Varsity Top 20 Poll

- 1) (T) Stanford University
- 1) (T) University of Southern California
- 3) University of California-Los Angeles
- 4) Pepperdine University
- 5) University of California
- 6) University of California-Santa Barbara
- 7) University of California-Davis
- 8) University of California-San Diego
- 9) (T) Loyola Marymount University
- 9) (T) Bucknell University
- 11) California Baptist University
- 12) University of California-Irvine
- 13) George Washington University
- 14) United States Naval Academy
- 15) San Jose State University
- 16) Fordham University
- 17) Santa Clara University
- 18) United States Air Force Academy
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[PHOTO COURTESY IRSARA DANIELE / BOLZANO SWIM MEET]

FINAL BREATH: THE DANGERS OF HYPOXIC TRAINING AND RISKS OF SHALLOW-WATER BLACKOUT

BY KRISTY KINZER

Swim parents are used to the daily grind of carpooling their kids to practice, entrusting them to the care of well-meaning coaches for a few hours, then waiting for their dawdling, hot-shower-loving athlete to emerge from the natatorium in one piece. Sometimes they're laughing with teammates and sometimes they're beat from a challenging practice.

The morbid thought that their child may never come back out of the pool back into their loving care is out of the question, right? The coaches overseeing practice are CPR/AED and lifeguard certified, have years of swimming experience under their belts, and couldn't possibly allow one of their beloved athletes, who is usually no more than a few inches from the surface of the water, to drown.

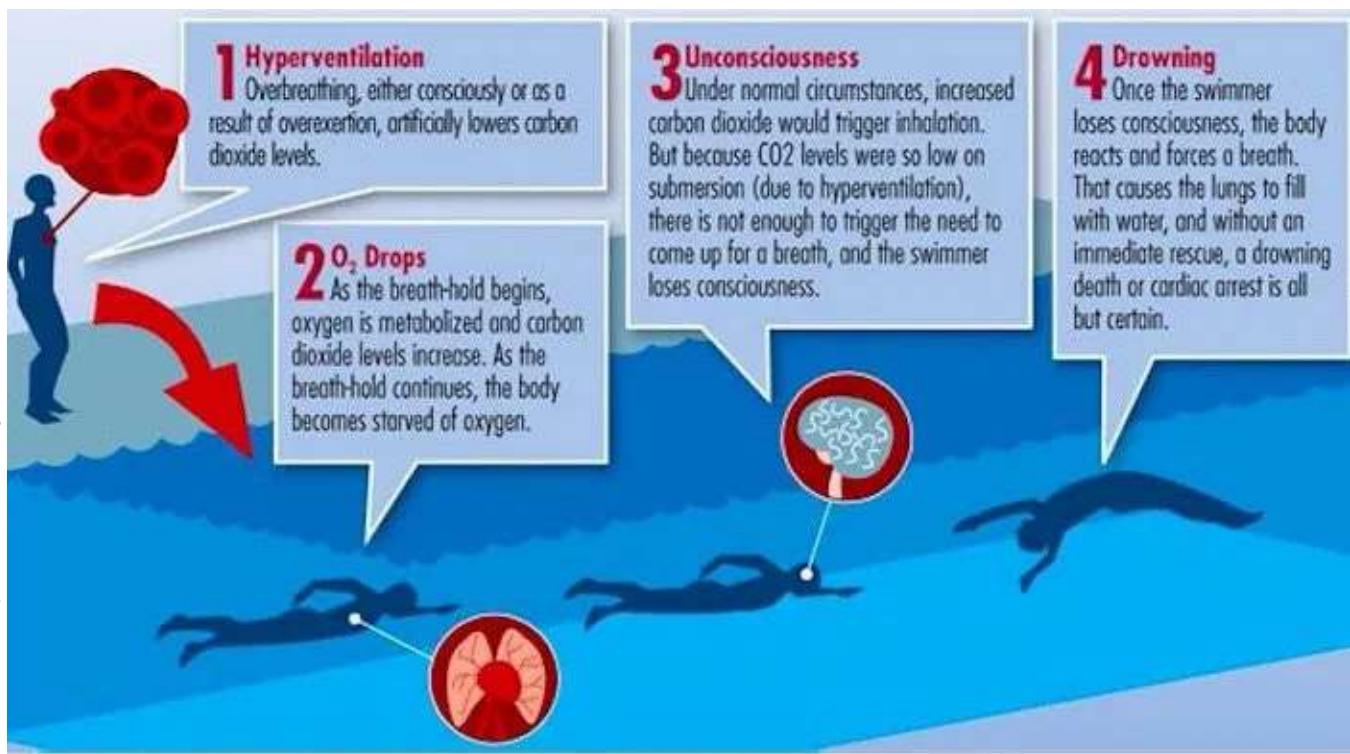
These athletes are swimmers after all, so they have the least chance of drowning than most of the population. Unfortunately, this is not the case for all families. An under-reported accident called hypoxic blackout, aka shallow water blackout, can have debilitating and fatal consequences for those who are training for competition or free swimmers alike.

Many swimmers jokingly use the phrase "water is my oxygen" due to the countless hours they spend at practice. One cannot breathe water, of course, and little scientific backing exists to prove any significant athletic improvement with hypoxic swim sets. Others credit the head-down position practiced during hypoxic sets for decreased water resistance thus leading to faster times. Never mind Nathan Adrian's gold medal at the 2012 Olympics in the 100-meter freestyle where he breathed every other stroke until the last few meters, proving that you can be the best in the world and use oxygen to your advantage.

The Physiology Behind Blackouts

The key to preventing hypoxic blackouts is getting to the root cause of how athletes faint when exposed to breath-limiting, high stress practices. The body's autonomic nervous system controls our breathing at an unconscious level and bases your need to breathe on the balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide (CO₂).

A build-up of CO₂ in the body signals the response to exhale the toxic build-up of



CO₂ and bring in fresh oxygen to nourish our vital organs and muscles; however, when CO₂ levels are relatively low due to hyperventilation, whether intentional or from a difficult practice, our brain loses the ability to signal to take a breath. It thinks we don't have enough waste product built up to require a breath, when in reality, our body needs that breath of air to survive.

Without adequate oxygenation, the brain will start to shut down and the swimmer will lose consciousness. It can take only about two and a half minutes to experience brain damage and death as opposed to the recognized six to eight minutes with a "normal" drowning submersion due to the body's already oxygen-deprived state and the warmth of the pool water. The Shallow Water Blackout Prevention website, created by medical doctor and mother of a blackout victim Rhonda Dawes Milner, gives in-depth detail of the physiological process and tips to prevent hypoxic blackout.

The Scope of the Issue

According to the Center of Disease Control (CDC), nearly 10 people die each day from unintentional drowning and it ranks fifth among the leading causes of unintentional injury death in the United States. Those statistics may be easy to gloss over, but these are all very preventable deaths and include those who spend many of their waking hours trying to improve their swimming abilities. Ironically, most shallow-water blackout victims were experienced and highly competitive swimmers, free divers, Navy SEALs, and spear fishermen. No one is immune to passing out in the water.

The CDC also sites that for every one person who dies from drowning, an additional five receive emergency

department care for nonfatal submersion injuries. Of those five, over half require hospitalization for further care and can experience long-term disabilities from severe brain damage. The loss of functioning ranges from memory problems to permanent vegetative state.

With my nursing experience in the hospital with stroke victims who typically lose functioning to some capacity, most patients state that their worst nightmare is not death but living with a severe impairment. The adjustments for a drowning victim and family to make regarding physical and cognitive impairments from hypoxic blackout are too extensive to cover in detail in just one article.

Drawing the Line

It is the duty of every swim and dive coach to educate his or her assistants, athletes, and parents of the dangers of extended breath-holding in detail. Ground rules should be set early in the season regarding breath-holding practices, if they are even included in the training regimen at all. When teaching individuals to swim, relaxed breath-holding is the key to safety and should have built-in rest periods.

When training competitive swimmers, it is recommended that restricted breathing exercises should only be practiced one drill at a time and with plenty of rest. However, if a swimmer is unable to accomplish a drill, he should not be pushed past his limits and should never be encouraged to resist the urge to breathe. Coaches should not give rewards, have contests, or encourage swimmers to resist the urge to breathe through prolonged breath-holding.

I remember being rewarded with candy for swimming the length of the pool underwater at just 6 years old. My

Continued >>



mom once nearly had a heart attack when she found me practicing holding my breath face-down in the bath tub at that age. I had already been socialized into the swimming community that resisting the natural urge to breathe for extended periods of time was to be celebrated. A high school teammate passed out during a breath-holding set while a teammate lifted him above the surface. He told the coach he was alright and promptly resumed the set.

Coaches acknowledged my athletic success in college due to the length of time I could kick off the wall underwater. Thankfully, nothing bad happened to me. But that unfortunately was not the case for

the following reported swimmers: 14-year-old Louis Lowenthal, Dartmouth University's Tate Ramsden, free diver Whitner Milner, Navy Seal student James Derek Lovelace, and countless others around the world. I highlight these stories and deaths not to put down coaches but to raise awareness of dangers of hypoxic practices and eventually to see a culture change in the sport of swimming.

Though the practice of breath-holding sets can have its merits under appropriate parameters and safe guidance for kick-outs off the wall or extending breathing patterns, many coaches and athletes are unaware of the deadly consequences of hypoxic workouts and tend to push the limits so far as to cause shallow water blackout. Having athletes take their final breath under the supervision of lifeguards, the direction and guidance of CPR/AED and lifeguard-certified coaches cannot continue to be justified- we need to draw the line and raise awareness to stop further preventable tragedies.

Coaches and swimmers should take precautions to avoid shallow water blackouts when performing underwater drills. All training should be conducted by a certified and experienced coach. Coaches and swimmers who use these drills should do so at their own discretion. ▲

All commentaries are the opinion of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Swimming World Magazine nor its staff.

An advertisement for Hasty Awards featuring a variety of swimming-related trophies and medals. The background is dark blue with a large, stylized white logo on the left. The text "ORDER WITH CONFIDENCE!" is at the top left. On the right, there are several items: a "FREE STOCK NECK RIBBON" medal (M-717W, 3"), a large gold "SWIMMING" medal with a wavy design, a "SHARKS" theme insert medal (M-9501UC, 3"), a "MINI CHAMPS" diamond-shaped trophy (B-330FKBM, 7"), and a "DISTRICT 3 CHAMPIONSHIPS" trophy (B-33TRIWM, 7"). Prices are listed as low as \$5.95, \$2.95, and \$1.39. The website "www.hastyawards.com" and phone number "800-448-7714" are at the bottom.

[PHOTO BY HOPE CARPINELLO, NORTHWESTERN ATHLETICS]



A 5-5 dynamo from El Paso, Texas, junior Miriam Guevara hit the Evanston campus two years ago like a torpedo. In her first competitive collegiate meets for Northwestern, she was a part of two school relay records and closed out the 2018-19 college campaign as an NCAA qualifier in the 100 yard back and fly.

She is the Wildcats' school record holder in the 100 and 200 fly (52.20, 1:54.31) and 200 and 400 medley relays (1:36.37, 3:29.48). She also sits fourth in the 100 back with a 53.20, having qualified as a sophomore for last season's NCAA Division I Championships (that were canceled) in the 100-200 fly and 100 back.

Guevara has represented Mexico on both the national and national junior teams, having competed in the 2018 Central American Games, the Youth Olympic Games and the 2019 World Championships.

Says her coach Katie Robinson, "Miriam is a stud and only has just started to scratch the surface of what she can do in college. She is a bright, young lady eager for coaching and feedback. Miriam is a true student of the sport, constantly working to perfect her stroke. Her feel for the water is top level, and her ability and commitment to kicking underwater is world class."

"She is a team player and puts everything on the line for her teammates. I've seen her do a 200 fly/200 back double in a dual meet and push the kicks out to the 15 meters on every wall, winning both events. This past year, she really committed to training the 200 fly on a regular basis. She spends most of her time in the training pool underwater, and her lung control is impressive. I've watched Miriam grow from letting sets get the best of her, to dominating them and encouraging others to keep it up as well."

"Her practice performance can be a sight to behold. For example:

- Her 200 fly broken swims with 10 seconds rest on the 50 walls add up to 1:47s most of the time.
- Recently at the end of a brutal 200 fly training session, she finished with 4 x 100 fly with solid rhythm on 1:20, 1:00 rest, 100 fly as fast as possible. She pushed a

:54-second 100 fly.

- She holds 27s on 50s on :50 for up to 10 in a row (and I bet she could go longer).
- Her fastest 100 kick for time (dolphin kick on her back) is :54."

SPECIAL SET

200 Fly Group

Tuesday a.m. (Nov. 17, 2020)

"The pain that you hold is yours. There is not a single pain quite like it. Nobody else on God's green earth can feel this pain, or have the indescribable feeling of pride you will have when you overcome it. This pain is not your curse, this pain is your privilege." —Arnold Schwarzenegger

- 6 x 100 @ 1:40 (swim, kick/drill, choice) x2 (equipment optional)
- 6 x 50 @ :50 (choice 1-3, descend 4-6, equipment optional)
- 6 x 175 @ 3:00 (50 dolphin kick no board/75 fly no breath, 3 cycles post-breakout/50 free)

2x the following (Round 2 with fins):

- 10 x 50 @ 1:00 (odds = 25 underwater/25 smooth fly, evens = choice)
- 5 x 50 @ :50 fly (no breath off breakouts, no breathing every stroke)

Round 1 = RACE

Round 2 = AFAP (as fast as possible), 100 choice

3x the following:

- 4 x 100 @ 1:20 smooth fly (Round 2 with fins)
- 1:00 bonus rest
- 1 x 100 @ 1:30 AFAP fly
- 300 shake-out (kick/drill/choice by 25)
- Warm-down

PROGRESSION OF TIMES

"Miriam's time progressions from before college through her second year at Northwestern (two-year time drops) are listed below, and she is still hungry for more," says Robinson.

- 200 Fly 1:58.3 to 1:54.3
- 200 Back 1:59.4 to 1:57.9
- 100 Fly 52.4 to 52.2
- 100 Back 54.3 to 53.2 ♦

Michael J. Stott is an ASCA Level 5 coach whose Collegiate School (Richmond, Va.) teams won nine state high school championships. A member of that school's Athletic Hall of Fame, he is also a recipient of NISCA's Outstanding Service Award.



> CAELEB DRESSEL

[PHOTO COURTESY MIKE LEWIS / ISL]

DEVELOPING RELIABLE HABITS CAN PROVIDE A MAJOR BOOST

BY BRENDAN FARRAR

With 2020 behind and a new year upon us, most people take a moment of reflection. While 2020 will go down as eventful and full of surprises, 2021 may present new challenges, or better yet, new opportunities. Even if you aren't someone who makes or believes in New Year's Resolutions, there is always room for growth. In the world of swimming, our seasons may begin in late August or early September, but the new year brings a great time for reflection as many swimmers compete in midseason championships around this time. While you don't need to change your entire lifestyle come January 1, it's comforting to know there is a tool for all of us to use in terms of making positive changes in our swimming careers.

One of the most challenging aspects of change is making a plan and sticking to it. But, lucky for us, humans are built based on habit and pattern. We thrive and perform our best once we develop, fine-tune, and see-through some sort of routine or habit. Yet, more often than not, this is all easier said than done. Think about times in your life where creating a new habit was easy. Maybe you have trouble flossing every day or remembering to hang up your wet towels and suits to dry after practice. Regardless of what it is, as long as you are willing to take action and commit to change, the hard work will pay off. Let's break down this idea of habit and bring it into the context of swimming.

Establishing Habit

The first step in developing a habit is figuring out what you want to change. To make this less overwhelming, start with one thing you want to improve. While there could be many areas for improvement, creating a habit is a process, and losing touch with the process will hinder how well you can implement a new habit. Start small and think of the kinks of swimming: starts, turns, underwater kicks, stroke mechanics. You can even think of things outside of the pool. How early you arrive at practice, implementing stretching or a dynamic warm-up to your routine, what you eat and drink before, during, or after workouts. Choose something that not only resonates with you but you can build off of and use throughout your time as an athlete.

Understanding Habit

Once you have figured out what you want to focus on, it's essential to recognize how habit becomes automatic in our lives. If you've ever been to a gym come the new year, it tends to be full of more members and even new faces. But, as the days and weeks go on, there quickly seems to be a drop in attendance. This is because we feel so good and on top of our game the first couple of days or weeks, but then there is a sudden break in the cycle. We give ourselves a break, perhaps a "cheat day." We convince ourselves that we have done it up to a certain point, and we deserve a



> HALI FLICKINGER

[PHOTO COURTESY MINE KASAPOGLU / ISL]

reward. In all honesty, we need to do quite the opposite. It is important when establishing a routine to understand that making it automatic in our brains and bodies takes a good chunk of time. A habit is a commitment. Research has shown varying figures but overall, engraining a habit into your system can take anywhere from 3 weeks to almost a year. That's why it's important to commit to one or two new habits and allow yourself time for growth in those areas.

Habit in Practice

When going through the habit-making process, it can get extremely overwhelming for many reasons. A top contributing factor is failure or fear of failure. When establishing a new habit, there are going to be times when you mess it up or completely forget, and that's okay. Especially within the first few days or weeks, patience is a virtue. A great way to combat this fear is to write down reminders and place them in places you frequent. Use sticky notes to write down your goal or new habit and put it in your swim bag, in your equipment bag, or even on your door or mirror in your bedroom. It serves as a friendly reminder of what you're working towards and how important it is that you see it through. Another way is to tell others about what you are trying to accomplish. Communicating your newly developed goal with a coach or teammate is a great way to hold yourself accountable. If it makes you feel more comfortable, challenge a teammate to do the same thing, and that way, you are both in this together!

Reflection

One area we tend to forget when it comes to creating a habit is reflection. It's important to check-in with yourself and track your progress through this process. This may look different for each individual, but having something to help you stay in line with your goals and values will only instill this habit even more. Plus, by creating a new habit, you will most likely develop habits in other areas of your life as well. Making a habit can have a prolific impact on your entire lifestyle with just one small, simple change. This is why the idea of habit is more much more complicated than we give it credit, but its complexity is something that has an immense impact on your performance.

One of my favorite quotes about habit is when Jim Rohn said, "Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going." An athlete's determination is based on what they are willing to do beyond the minimum. Don't let another moment go in your career where you look back one day and wish you could change. Create the change now and be an inspiration for others. Just like showing up for practice every day and jumping in may be hard, there is work to be done beyond that point for improvement. It's not enough to say you will do something; it comes down to putting in the work and staying true to your intentions. Take a moment, understand the challenge ahead, and get to work. You can do this! ◀

PARTING SHOT

Carson Foster of the Texas Longhorns gives the "Hook 'Em" salute at his first official meet as a Texas Longhorn in October – a small socially-distanced dual meet with in-state rival Texas A&M. Foster blasted a 3:35 in the 400 IM, lowering the national age group record just a few days before his 19th birthday, and moved to second on the all-time rankings with the third fastest time ever swum.

[Photo Courtesy: **Texas Athletics**]

