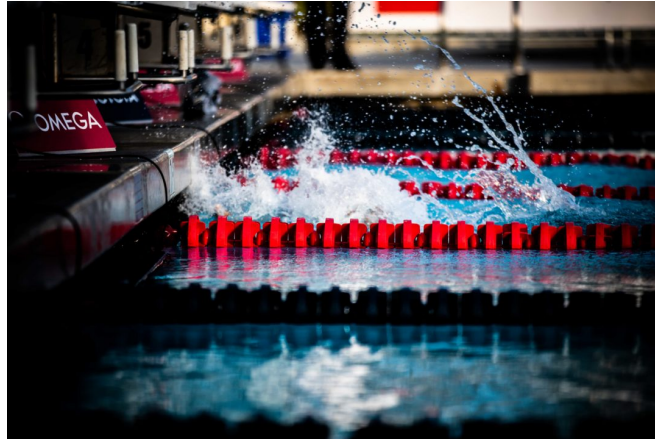


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BSN SPORTS SWIM TEAM OF THE MONTH: ORINDA AQUATICS



Orinda Aquatics is a year-round USA Swimming Club out of Moraga, CA, that has over two decades of experience developing elite swimmers in and out of the pool.

BY SWIMSWAM PARTNER CONTENT

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BSN Team of the Month, News

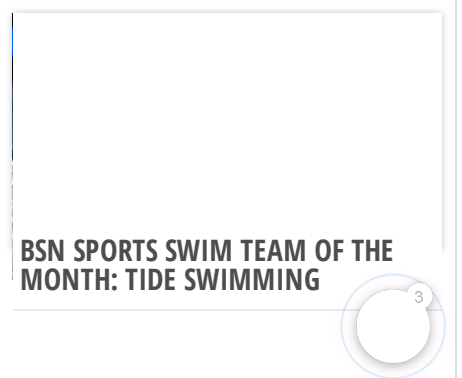


While swimming around the world still looks a lot different than normal due to the effects of COVID-19, we're still highlighting and celebrating swim teams from across the country. This month, we're taking a closer at Orinda Aquatics, a year-round USA Swimming club team out of Moraga, California.

Orinda Aquatics was founded by Ron & Don Heidary just over twenty-five years ago and has averaged 150 swimmers throughout its history. The team's home is the Soda Aquatic Center at Campolindo high School in Moraga, CA (East Bay). The facility is a three-pool complex with one fifty-meter pool and two twenty-five-yard pools. Orinda Aquatics hosted the 2018 and 2019 Far Western Championships. The team has been very fortunate to have been in the water training at near full capacity since June, and held its first sanctioned intersquad meet in February.



MORE BSN TEAM OF THE MONTH



We spoke with longtime head coach **Don Heidary** to get a sense of what makes Orinda Aquatics special, as well as to get some of his thoughts on coaching in general. We usually like to ask separately about coaching philosophy and team chemistry, but with Orinda Aquatics, it's clear that those two aspects are so intertwined, we'll just let Heidary address them together.

The team motto and mission is to put "Character First" in swimming and in life, and it translates to "the better the person, the better the athlete, the better the swimmer, and the better the team and culture", which is lived daily by the coaches and the swimmers. Through weekly meetings and daily dialogue, we discuss (demand) basic virtues of service, humility, respect, compassion, work ethic, and leadership. These have become the very foundation of the program and the backbone of the team's success. Other sources of pride include fifty collegiate team captains, 40-50 collegiate athletes annually, and a Senior Group GPA, of 100 swimmers, of approximately 4.0.

Orinda Aquatics has aggressively pursued the highest levels of culture and performance throughout its history. As one of the top smaller teams in USA Swimming (USA Swimming Virtual Club Championships scoring), Orinda Aquatics has achieved tremendous success over its history, producing over 25 Olympic Trial qualifiers and developing over two hundred national-level swimmers. The team also places over 80% of its swimmers in top collegiate programs, with 2021 swimming commitments to Harvard, Brown, Texas, MIT, University of Chicago, Rollins, Middlebury, Pepperdine, and Saint Olaf, to date.

The team's chemistry is extraordinary and is based on deep mutual respect and an unwavering and engaging partnership with our athletes. This is best embodied in Orinda Aquatics' travel, as the staff (of three) prepares and manages all travel with up to 90 senior swimmers, with no chaperones, and impeccable behavior (ASCA Team Travel presentation 2019).

Most teams, especially ones that have been established as long as Orinda Aquatics, have a unique or iconic set. Heidary described Orinda's...

For nearly two decades the team has run a Thanksgiving Theme Workout for all of the senior group and alumni. The workout replicates a Thanksgiving meal, and depending on how "hungry" one is, it can be close to 9,000 yards. The "meat" of the meal is a freestyle threshold set, and there is an IM (vegetable medley) set. And of course, there are "seconds" and "thirds". Dessert is relays and the dishes are pool covers. Every detail is laid out down to "take a sip" as a 50 easy. We average over seventy-five swimmers each year with the senior group and collegiate swimmers. Additionally, returning alumni from the past two decades stop by to visit.

While coaches accrue plenty of experience over decades on deck, that doesn't mean struggles or challenges disappear over time. Heidary touched on a couple struggles he and the rest of the Orinda Aquatics' staff face when it comes to developing swimmers in and out of the pool.

BSN SPORTS SWIM TEAM OF THE WEEK: STAMFORD SAILFISH AQUATIC CLUB

BSN SPORTS TEAM OF THE WEEK: CHELSEA PIERS AQUATICS CLUB

BSN SPORTS: HELP US SAVE COLLEGE SWIMMING

BSN SPORTS SWIM TEAM OF THE WEEK: HURRICANE AQUATICS

BSN SPORTS SWIM TEAM OF THE WEEK: FULLERTON AQUATICS SWIM TEAM

BSN SPORTS SWIM TEAM OF THE WEEK: NASHVILLE AQUATIC CLUB

Our structural struggle is developing a deeper age-group program in an area that is heavily populated with summer-league programs (a swimmer cannot do both) and an extremely competitive water polo community. As such our team has consistently been 60% high school/senior swimmers and 40% pre-high school/age-group. The learning curve becomes very steep to a national level when the average starting age is thirteen to fourteen. Our personal struggle as coaches is always wanting to do more for the kids in terms supporting their character growth and integrity as they grow up in a world which doesn't always support such values.

Last but not last, it's always great to hear about coaches memories, and one of Heidary's favorites is a race that folks who have been following high school swimming for a while may remember as one of the best in history.

*After starting the team in 1995 with twenty summer-league swimmers, Orinda Aquatics won the 2000 Women's Junior National Championship Meet (West) in Anchorage, Alaska with under seventy-five swimmers on the team. Orinda Aquatics took over twenty swimmers to the meet that year. **Kim Vandenberg** was co-MVP, and three of those girls ended up swimming on UCLA's NCAA Medley Relay – Kim, Amy Thurman, and Katie Arnold, who now works for USA Swimming.*

*Without question, the most memorable race in the team's history was the 2013 100 Breaststroke Final at the North Coast Section High School Championships, with **Steven Stumph** breaking the National Public High School record. It was one of the best high school races in the nation that year. Additionally, Ron & Don coached the top two swimmers in the event, the nation, and the event's history, with their respective high school swimmers, **Steven Stumph** – Campolindo and **Charlie Wiser** – Miramonte, both swimming under the National Record.*

BSN SPORTS SWIM TEAM OF THE WEEK: ASPHALT GREEN UNIFIED AQUATICS

Orinda Aquatics is one of 3,000 swim clubs in the United States. How can we grow that number and promote the sport?

ABOUT BSN SPORTS

Founded in 1972 as a factory-direct equipment company, today BSN SPORTS is the largest distributor of team sports apparel and equipment in the United States, with over 3,000 employees across 80 regional offices. At BSN SPORTS we believe that sports have the power to change lives. At the heart of what makes sports happen are the coaches, teachers and mentors who work with young and old alike to build meaningful lifelong experiences. That's why our mission is simple. The more time we save coaches with everything they do off the deck, the more time they can spend changing lives. And that's the real final score.

