

Jodi Brookhart Award Nomination 2022: Sammy Carew

Sammy Carew has been participating on summer swim team since the age of four with the Parkwood Piranhas. During her early years on the team, she was known as "Purple-Pink" due to her affinity for wearing only purple or pink swimsuits. As time passed, Sammy continued her swim journey by first training during her early years with Blue Dolphins and then joining Year round competitive swim teams NSS Durham and Hillsborough Aquatic Club. Sammy is a Senior Champs and Senior Sectionals qualifying swimmer in freestyle, breaststroke, butterfly, and Individual Medley. Sammy also participated on the Research Triangle High School Swim Team where she placed on the podium at Regionals in breaststroke and IM and finished in the top six in IM for the State Division meet. Since Summer 2020, Sammy is the Athlete Team Representative for HAC Team for North Carolina Swimming where she was able to advocate for her fellow athletes and vote on NC Swimming legislation. During her time as an athlete representative she spread her love and passion for swimming by being selected to coach at North Carolina Select Camp and North Carolina A Team Camp. She also coached one of the younger age groups of her club swim team during her senior year of high school, as well as being a volunteer babycoach for Parkwood for many past years.

During the fall of 2020, Sammy was diagnosed with congenital Long QT Type 1 (LQT1) after her very first EKG reading which was abnormal and triggered her Doctor to investigate. Long QT syndrome (LQTS) is a heart signaling disorder, or heart conduction disorder, that can cause fast, chaotic heartbeats (arrhythmias). Long QT syndrome can cause sudden fainting and seizures, and young people with LQTS syndrome have an increased risk of sudden death. Treatment for long QT syndrome includes lifestyle changes and medications to prevent dangerous heartbeats and other symptomatic episodes. Sometimes surgery is needed to implant a device to control the heart's rhythm. In Sammy's case, she underwent a surgery known as the Left Cardiac Sympathetic Denervation. To learn more information and to help spread awareness please check out the SADS Organization: Sudden Arrhythmia Death Syndromes at [SADS.org](https://www.sads.org)

Initially, Sammy was heavily cautioned by her team of Doctors to stop her participation in swimming, as swimming was considered high risk for a LQT1 patient. Sammy was determined to stay in the sport. After many long discussions, Sammy was allowed to continue to participate in the sport if the following safety measures were put into place 1) Purchase of AED that travels to all practices and meets 2) A designated watcher for all practices and meets who would execute emergency procedures if needed and 3) taking the recommended daily medication which would block adrenaline to the heart and therefore lower the risk of threatening arrhythmias. Sammy persevered in the pool and continued to train despite the physical restrictions and side effects of the medication that lead to the decline of her physical performance. In the winter of 2021, Sammy elected to have the surgery in order to gain back some quality of life, and as a plus be able to return to competing. Through hard work, determination, and grit, Sammy has reconditioned her body to be a competitor in her sport once again. While her LQT diagnosis, taxing medication intolerance, and the Covid pandemic provided new stresses and obstacles, Sammy never quit and her strength of character lead her to finish the race strong! We wish her luck as she starts her new adventure as a rising Freshman at UNC Chapel Hill where she is planning to study BioMedical Engineering.