

long beach 908

OLYMPIAN ISSUE

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page 70



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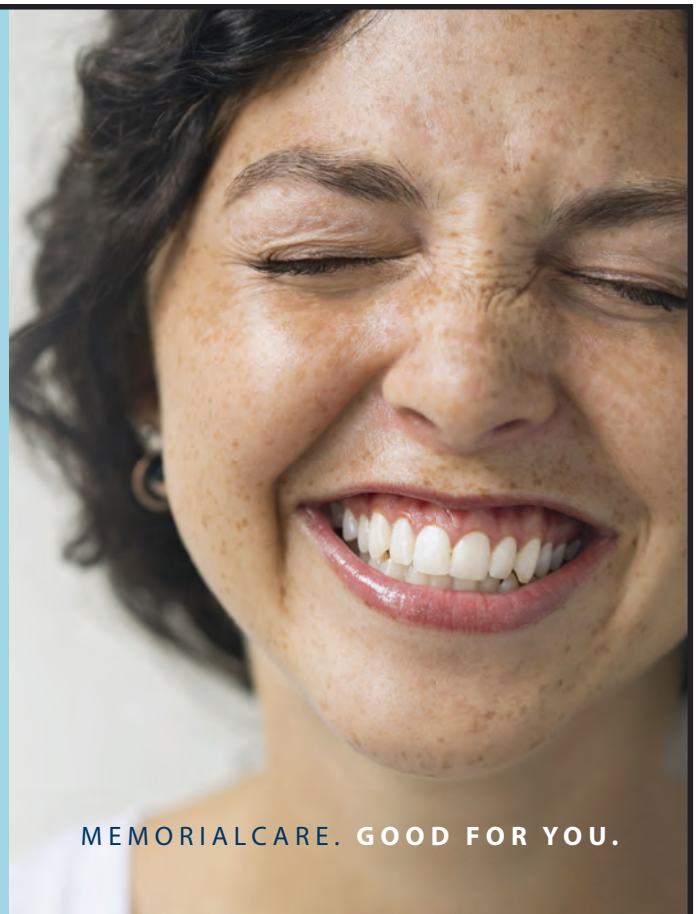
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Let me tell you something I love about Olympians. Or at least the Olympians in this magazine. No matter how many times they've been asked to describe the experience, none of them are jaded. They talk about their experiences, emotions, and stories with an intense vivacity whether they competed 4, 8, 16, or 52 years ago.

Let me tell you something I love about Long Beachians. There is a refreshing down-to-earth plasma running through the blood stream in this city. The people here aren't in the business of being "fake" when you

talk to them. That personality trait extends to the contingent of world class athletes who happen to live here.

This Olympic issue documents those two admirable qualities in some of the most interesting and exciting interviews we've ever printed. The stories these Olympians tell are truly funny, incredible, and one of a kind. As a result, we did a few things in this issue we haven't ever done before.

1) We've printed almost the entire magazine in a Q&A format. No reason for some charlatan writer like me to butcher these gems. 2) We're offering the full interviews on our website at www.lb908.com. We printed everything we could afford over the next 70 pages but these Olympians had so many great stories we felt we had to share the extended versions with our readers somehow.

Our website is simple and easy to navigate. I promise we are not greedy enough or savvy enough to put a bunch of pop-up video ads on there to ruin your online experience. So if this content really interests you, I encourage you to check out a few of the extended versions. They are really great reads.

For me, there are three fascinating, recurring historical themes in these interviews, about which Olympians offer intriguing first-person accounts. First is the Israeli hostage crisis at the 1972 games in Munich; second, the 1980 boycott of the Moscow summer Olympics; third, the rare account many of these Olympians can give about traveling to communist countries during the Cold War where they encountered those incredibly different cultures. These are stories you can't hear from anyone else.

Rich Foster, long-time USA Water Polo president and Long Beach resident, shares some great stories about traveling to these other cultures on our website. A big thank you to Rich for helping us round up all these aquatic icons from our city. Local sports writing legends Bob Keisser and James McCormack were also instrumental in compiling the extensive information about Olympians in this magazine. You can read more about their thoughts on "why" Long Beach has produced so many Olympic athletes in our "Press Guys" article on page 68.

Finally, a big thank you to Dan Gooch and the Century Club for all their help in putting together this sports issue. I invite you to read about the Century Club's incredible impact on our city on page 66.

It is certainly remarkable how many elite athletes have come from our city. Hundreds of Olympians. But perhaps what's more telling is how many of these world-class, world-famous athletes are willing to sit down with our local magazine at a local restaurant and share the most thrilling moments of their lives with their friends and neighbors in this city. Enjoy this issue, please support our advertisers, and go USA.

908 LONG BEACH

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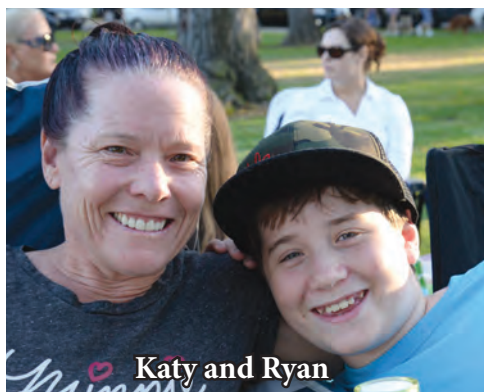
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Pastor Ramon Urrutia

By Jonathan Murrietta

Growing up in Ilobasco, El Salvador, Pastor Ramon Urrutia remembers the moment he became a Christian at age 7, and he always knew he wanted to proclaim God's Word. As a child, Urrutia would put on a church service with his sister for the other neighborhood kids.

"My sister would lead everyone in song, and I would preach," Urrutia recalled.

Perched under a mango tree, 7-year-old Urrutia gave rousing sermons before all the kids. When the message concluded, they all went out to play.

Today, 51-year-old Urrutia is still preaching, only now it's at The Long Beach First Church of the Nazarene. Here, he leads Spanish services for 25 spirit-filled congregants.

"I want people to come to the church and feel welcome and at home," Urrutia said.

Spanish services at the Long Beach Nazarene are Sunday mornings at 10:45 a.m. and Friday evenings at 7 p.m. Before each service, Pastor Ramon gives each person an opportunity to stand before the congregation and share a personal need or receive prayer.

"Each service is dedicated to walking closer with God, praying and seeking Him, as well as helping and loving each other," Urrutia said.

In his teens, Urrutia began preaching at different churches throughout his



native El Salvador. He came to the U.S. at age 20, and soon became connected with the Church of the Nazarene. He started pastoring a church in Whittier, California until he got the call to start a Spanish ministry full time at the Long Beach Church of the Nazarene.

Since then, the church has been blessed with Urrutia's knowledge of the scripture and his compassionate soul.

"The mission statement for our church is caring for and serving others to bring hope; Pastor Ramon is exemplifying that sentiment with the Spanish congregation," said Lead Pastor Brad Paradee.

Pastor Ramon is currently teaching a series on spiritual warfare. He spends a few months at a time teaching a specific theme from the Bible to his congregation, going in-depth on each topic. Past themes included How to Live a Christian Life, Servanthood, The Family of Christ, and more.

"The Lord has protected and helped me my entire life," said Pastor Ramon. "I just want to give back to the Lord and to others because I've been given so much."

This summer, Pastor Ramon will take part in the church's traditional outreach to areas of Mexico including Tijuana, Ensenada, and Rosarito, providing kids a backpack filled with school supplies. "For every \$5 donated to the church from special gifts, a child gets a backpack," Urrutia said. "It has helped thousands of kids in Mexico."

Pastor Ramon has used his life to serve where the need is greatest, where people are thirsty for God and hope.

Together, Pastor Ramon Urrutia and The Long Beach First Church of the Nazarene are living out Christ's command to "encourage one another, while stirring up each other in love and good works." —Hebrews 10:24-25 ■

You Name it, They'll Fix it! Computers, Tablets, and Phones!!

By John Grossi

When a guy and his wife work at great corporate jobs; travel the world; and live in six different countries over 20 years -- then give it all up to run a small business right here in Long Beach ... well, we call that living the 908' dream.

Barry is from South Africa and Leila is from Australia, so why did the Lewis couple choose to settle in Long Beach? Well, as Barry explains, "The weather here is a lot better for my passions (golf and piloting a private plane) than the UK. Plus we had vacationed here before and love the Dodgers."

So that explains Long Beach, but why Infiniti Computer Services on Spring St?

The "IT" couple has the perfect background in computer services and repair, both having worked in the industry for many years. At Infiniti, Barry saw an opportunity to breathe new life into the centrally located store, adding staff, services, and reliability to a business that's ready to grow.

Infiniti Computer Services can build/fix/repair Microsoft, Apple, and Linux computers, tablets, phones, you name it! Any and all IT services for hardware or software, virus removals, upgrades, hard drive replacements, Wi-Fi routers, networking, cabling.

Barry and his bolstered staff provide a free diagnostic and quote for all services and will assist you in their store or on site at your home or business.

"We do our best business in virus removals and hard drive replacements,"



New owner Barry Lewis in front of Infiniti Computer Services

says Barry. "Those two problems encompass so many of our services, and create the highest traffic at our store."

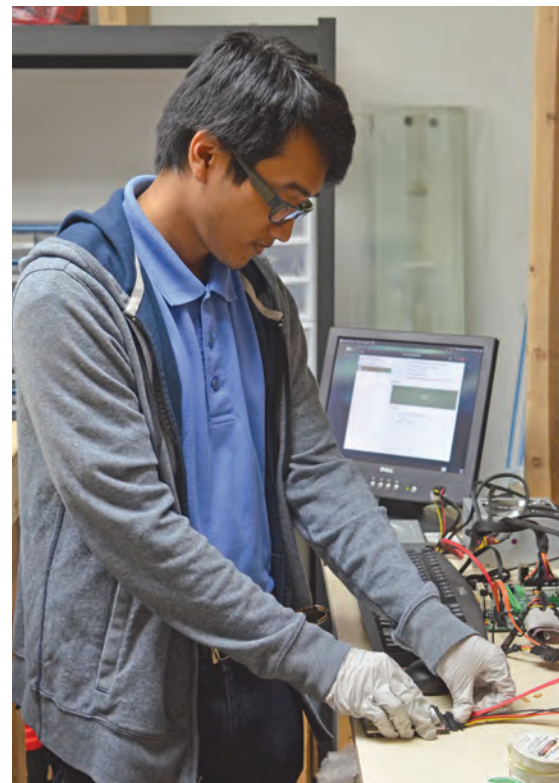
"We see a lot of virus issues. One thing becoming especially prevalent is ransomware where the hacker will basically encrypt your files then charge you to decrypt them."

Failed Windows 10 installations are also a common issue because Microsoft has been forcing the upgrade on its users.

Other commons at Infiniti Computer Services include the fixing of cracked screens, and building computers from scratch. Many users want a custom hard drive configuration, or to use an older operating system on a new computer.

Barry and Leila took over Infiniti Computer Services in April and are excited to become a true community center in this increasingly tech world. We all rely on our phones, tablets, and computers so much that when a crash occurs, having Infiniti nearby is truly like having a dependable doctor down the street.

Services at Infiniti are usually about 2/3 the price at bigger stores like Fry's.



No appointments are necessary, and diagnostics are free. Software problems are often fixed in a day while hardware repairs take a week at most.

Infiniti Computer Services is now open 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, and 10-1pm Sat. Stop by and see Barry, Leila, and their staff anytime and welcome them to the best small business community in the world... the 908! ■



CREATING COMMUNITY, ONE CUT AT A TIME

Static Salon

By Jennifer Newton

“Nobody will ever not feel welcome here. That’s our promise,” says Static Hair Salon owner RaChelle Daniels.

And with that statement, Static Salon of Long Beach sets itself apart from all other salons in this area. Because when they welcome community, they mean it!

Static Salon has been a part of the Long Beach community for a decade, celebrating their 10th anniversary this September. Formerly located in the Pavilion’s Shopping Center at Spring and Los Coyotes, Static Salon recently relocated to a beautiful new space at 2310 Bellflower Blvd., adjacent to Los Coyotes Diagonal and the 405 freeway (in the Farmers & Merchant Bank center).

Committed to giving their guests (they refer to clients as guests because they strive to treat them like guests in their own home) the ultimate salon experience, Static looks to utilize the unique gifts and tools of each stylist to inspire and serve others.

“I love it here in Long Beach,” said RaChelle who moved here 17 years ago from Kansas. “Long Beach has that small town feel where community is still important. So it feels like home to me.”

RaChelle has worked hard to extend that small town feel into her salon environment, creating it to be a catalyst for community.

From a “family style” community table with games and puzzles (You won’t find a typical waiting area here!) to a beverage and candy bar for guests to enjoy, everything about Static fosters a sense of togetherness and family.

“We have one small black couch to sit on and this huge community table to sit at while you are waiting for your appointment or your color is setting. You wouldn’t believe how many times I’ve seen 4 people try to cram on that little couch in order to avoid sitting together at a table,” said RaChelle. “But once they do sit at the table, they start to interact, converse, or play a game together...and it’s like magic. And that’s the goal! Getting to know your community. Needless to say, we’re getting rid of the black couch.”

Static not only creates community, it fosters community involvement:



PHILANTHROPIC ENDEAVORS

- Volunteering with the Women's Shelter of Long Beach (<http://www.womenshelterlb.org/>).
- Going out into the Long Beach community and giving free hair cuts to the homeless population.
- Collecting donations of purses and toiletries to create personal care packages for homeless women.
- Collecting coats, blankets, scarves and gloves during the winter to give to homeless Long Beach residents.
- An annual tradition of going out on Christmas Eve and handing out care packages to the homeless.
- An upcoming Casino Night Fundraiser benefiting the Women's Shelter of Long Beach, hosted in the new salon location.

"There is such warmth when you can change someone through a haircut," said RaChelle. "Whether it's in the salon or on Skid Row. A fresh haircut can really change a person's outlook and give them hope."

Static Salon is proud to be an Aveda Concept Salon, adhering to the high standards of the Aveda brand. This in-

cludes the promise of going above and beyond your typical salon service with hand massages, makeup touch-ups and neck and shoulder massages. They also use Aveda's 97% natural color line and sell Aveda products exclusively.

"We are really good at what we do, and every stylist here is amazing," says RaChelle. "But, Static isn't just a salon; it never has been. It's a vessel to make a difference. And we are really good at that too."

Book your next hair appointment at Static Salon by calling 562-430-5100, or visiting them at <http://www.staticsalonandspa.com/>.

STATIC SALON SPECIALS

Men's Day Wednesday

Wednesdays are all about you guys! Enjoy free beer, a hot towel treatment and 20% off your service.

Fraternity Friday

Fridays are for the Frats with \$20 haircuts for all fraternity brothers.

Sorority Saturday

Calling all CSULB (and any other school's) sorority sisters! Enjoy 25% off any service on Saturdays.

Other great specials include \$25 off for all new guests; 10% off for pre-booking your next appointment; and a March Madness bracket where guests can win a year's worth of free services! (No one has won the prize...yet.)

STATIC'S SOCIAL LIFE

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- <http://www.staticsalonandspa.com/>

STATIC SALON SERVICES

- Men's & Women's hair cuts
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Advertiser Spotlight

For this issue, 908 Magazine Publisher John Grossi sits down with our long-time back cover sponsor Michele Kreinheder to learn more about her real estate business and to thank her for supporting 908 magazine for the last four years.



Q: What made you decide to become a real estate agent in East Long Beach?

A: I've always wanted to be a realtor. When I graduated college, that's what I wanted to do. I won't bore you with my whole life story but it took me a while to get here.

When I finally started my business I said, "Well, this is where I live, this is what I know." So I focused my business on East Long Beach and the Los Altos area. I'd been active in the community, so it fits me.

Q: You started in 2010, and it's been about six years now. How have your expectations changed from then to now in your business?

A: I'm sure there are some small nuances that I could dwell on but overall I had thought so long about what I wanted to do that my expectations have come to reality more than anything. Everything I envisioned, everything I wanted to do, how I wanted it to work, it all came together.

Q: Can you talk about the pros and cons of being a realtor and having your own business?

A: My favorite part is that I have control of my business. I had worked in sales for many companies, a lot strictly on commission. I always had really strong feelings on how selling should be approached and I always felt a bit hamstrung. I really love working for myself and being able to make decisions on how to make my business better. The downfall of working for yourself is that it is scary. Now you're making the decisions and you're making decisions about spending money.

Q: What would you look for in your dream home?

A: It's funny because I get to see many nice properties with incredible features that I often say "Gosh, I wish I could live here." But at the end of the day, I just love my Los Altos home. I don't plan to go anywhere else soon.

Q: As a resident of East Long Beach, there's plenty of real estate agents I can call, what makes you

unique and why should I call you first?

A: Yes, there are a lot of good agents. I think I know the market in East Long Beach well, but more importantly I think I have this program of selling real estate dialed in. I have all my systems in place. My marketing is excellent, as you know, being on the back of your magazine! (laughs)

I really do care about my clients. I think a lot of people say that, but I know that I live and breathe for my clients and I'm always going to put them first.

I've talked to a lot of your clients and I've heard great testimonials. And yes of course, she's got great marketing, she's on the back of Long Beach 908 magazine.

Thank you, Michele for being our back page sponsor for so many years.

I just want to thank you for having me on your back page, I just love being there, and I feel extremely lucky to be there. So thank you, John. ■

A list of Long Beach Olympic athletes:



* This is a list of athletes we know have lived or trained in Long Beach. We realize we may have left some deserving athletes off of this list. It is not on purpose and for that we are sorry. Please enjoy the rest of our Olympic Issue!

Earl Thomson	Hurdles	1920
Harry Prieste	Diving	1920
Norrie Graham	Rowing	1932
Charles Mccallister	Water Polo	1932, 1936
Harold Mccalister	Water Polo	1932, 1936
Dick Barber	Long Jump+Relay	1932
F. Calvert Strong	Water Polo	1932
Art Lindegren	Swimming	1936
Dixon Fiske	Water Polo	1936, 1948
Bob Richards	Pole Vault+Decathlon	1948, 1952, 1956
Greta Andersen	Swimming	1948
Edwin Knox	Water Polo	1948
Roy Cochran	Hurdles+Relay	1948
Mel Patton	Track+Field	1948
Janet Dykman	Athletics	1952
Pat McCormick	Diving	1952, 1956
Bob Horn	Water Polo	1956, 1960
Chuck Bittick	Water Polo	1960
Chick McIlroy	Water Polo	1960, 1964
Ron Crawford	Water Polo	1960, 1964, 1968
John Rambo	High Jump	1964
Mary Jo Peppler	Volleyball	1964
Linda Cooper	Diving	1964
Dick Hammer	Volleyball	1964
Martha Watson	Long Jump+Relay	1964, 1968, 1972, 1976
Wendy Cluff*	Gymnastics	1968
Susie Atwood	Swimming	1968, 1972
Cathy Rigby	Gymnastics	1968, 1972
John Van Blom	Rowing	1968, 1972, 1976
Bruce Bradley	Water Polo	1968, 1972
Bob Seagren	Pole Vault	1968, 1972
JoJo Starbuck	Figure Skating	1968, 1972
Monte Nitzkowski	Water Polo(coach)	1968, 1972, 1980, 1984
Gene Davis	Wrestling	1972, 1976
Dwight Stones	High Jump	1972, 1976, 1984
Ed Ratleff	Basketball	1972
Tom McKibbin	Rowing	1968, 1972
Steve Genter	Swimming	1972
Mark Lutz	Athletics	1976
Joan Van Blom	Rowing	1976, 1984
Tim Shaw	Swimming+Water Polo	1976, 1984
Diane Braceland	Rowing	1976
Luann Ryon	Archery	1976
Karen McCloskey	Rowing	1976
Jan Palchikoff	Rowing	1976
Liz Hills	Rowing	1976
Claudia Schneider	Rowing	1976
Bruce Furniss	Swimming	1976
Anita Miller	Field Hockey	1976
Valerie Brisco	Track+Field	1980, 1984
Jody Campbell	Water Polo	1984, 1988
Kelly McCormick	Diving	1984, 1988
Debbie Green	Volleyball	1984
Pat McDonough	Cycling	1984

Leon Foreman	Official	1984
Steve Hegg	Cycling	1984, 1996
Pat Etem	Rowing	1984
John Siman	Water Polo	1984
Denise Curry	Basketball	1984
Ken Lindgren	Water Polo(coach)	1984
Natalie Williams	Basketball	1984
John Shadden	Sailing	1984
Cindy Brown	Basketball	1988
Doug Kimbell	Water Polo	1988, 1992
Pete Melvin	Sailing	1988
Bob Ctvrtlik	Volleyball	1988, 1992, 1996
Keba Phipps	Volleyball	1988, 1992, 1996
Pam Marshall	Athletics	1988, 2004
Robert Cannon	Triple Jump	1988
Joe Hudephol	Swimming	1988
Tee Williams	Volleyball	1992, 1996
Jack Rose	Decathlon	1992
Kyle Kopp	Water Polo	1996
Ricardo Azevedo	Water Polo(coach)	1996, 2000, 2004
Chris Oeding	Water Polo	1996, 2000
Lisa Fernandez	Softball	1996, 2000, 2004
Joy Fawcett	Soccer	1996, 2000, 2004
Charlie Ogletree	Sailing	1996, 2000, 2004
Danielle Scott-Arruda	Volleyball	1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012
Brian McDonough	Cycling	1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012
Maureen O'Toole	Water Polo	2000
Sean Burroughs	Baseball	2000
Andrea Anderson	Track+Field	2000
Chi Kredell	Water Polo	2000
Misty May-Treanor	Volleyball	2000, 2004, 2008, 2012
Tony Azevedo	Water Polo	2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016
Ryan Bailey	Water Polo	2000, 2004, 2008, 2012
Robert Lynn	Water Polo	2000
Bryan Woodward	Cycling	2000
Antonio Cruz	Cycling	2000
Pease Glaser	Sailing	2000
Guy Baker	Water Polo(coach)	2000, 2004, 2008
Anett Davis	Volleyball	2000
Chris Segesman	Water Polo	2000
Adam Duvendeck	Cycling	2004, 2008
Adam Wright	Water Polo	2004, 2008, 2012
Jackie Frank	Water Polo	2004
Tayyiba Haneef-Park	Volleyball	2004, 2008, 2012
Lashinda Demus	Track+Field	2004, 2008, 2012
Lauren Wenger	Water Polo	2008, 2012
David Lee	Volleyball	2008, 2012
Bryshon Nellum	Track+Field	2008, 2012
McKayla Maroney	Gymnastic	2012
Esther Lofgren	Rowing	2012
Chay Lapin	Water Polo	2012
Jessica Hardy	Swimming	2012

Pat McCormick

*Q&A with 908 writer Jonathan Murrietta at
Schooner or Later on Alamitos Bay*

Q: Can you tell us about growing up in Long Beach?

A: When I was a kid I lived in Naples. I would go out to the canals and do cannonballs off the bridges, splash the boats, and would often get into trouble. I also remember the time I took in a baby seal as a pet. I had him in my bathtub at home and my mom walked in to find the seal splashing away, getting the bathroom all wet and barking up a storm. She made me promise I'd return the seal to the ocean, but my neighbor built me a pond for him and we kept him in her backyard. The seal would follow me around everywhere.

Q: So what was the first step that took you to the Olympics in 1952?

A: I used to swim in Alamitos Bay. I loved to compete, whether it was swimming against other people at the beach or throwing a ball. Anyway, they had a 1-meter springboard out there on the barge, and I would spring off of that thing and see how high I could go. Pete Archer taught me how to do my first half gainer dive. I had great, supportive people around me in Long Beach.

One day, somebody from the Los Angeles Athletic Club saw me springing on that board and asked me to try out for a club team. My mom worked overtime for me to buy a ticket to take a trolley to Los Angeles for my tryout. Once I got there, I thought it was really neat inside [the L.A. Athletic Club]. People were looking at me funny because I came to my tryout without any shoes—I didn't know any better. I made the team, and that's where it all started for me. I competed in the Olympic trials in 1948 and missed qualifying by one-hundredth of a point.



Q: What was it like when you made it to Finland for the 1952 Olympics?

A: It was overwhelming. It was a difficult Olympics because even though they were the Summer Games, it was really cold in Finland, and the diving competition was outdoors. I remember shivering in my bathing suit, but I was able to stamp out a list of dives.

Q: Well, you barreled through the cold and won the gold medal in both the 3-meter springboard and 10-meter platform events. What was it like winning two gold medals?

A: When they raised the American flag and played the Star Spangled Banner during the ceremonies, I was crying away. I get emotional even thinking about it now [wipes a tear away].

Q: You took part in a third flag raising ceremony of sorts during the '52 Olympics. Can you explain?

A: Avery Brundage was the U.S. Olympic Committee president at the time

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **1952, 1956**
- Sport: **Diving**
- Notable: **Only woman diver ever to win two gold medals in two consecutive Olympics.**
- Long Beach Connection: **Grew up here, attended Lowell, Rogers, and Wilson High and lives a block away in Seal Beach!**



and for whatever reason, he didn't like us too much. So my teammates and I decided we would sneak into his office and steal his underwear. Well, we found a flagpole and put his underwear up for the whole world to see. He was pretty mad to say the least [laughing].

Q: What was different about your training heading into the 1956 Games in Melbourne?

A: I got pregnant with my son, Tim. But I swam until the day I delivered, and I could work out in the gym until I was about five months along. The most important thing for me was to maintain my level of consistency. Some of my competitors didn't think I could do it—deliver and raise a baby, all while making it to another Olympics, but I proved them wrong.

Q: You won the gold medal yet again in both the 3-meter springboard and 10-meter platform events, becoming the first diver to ever win two gold medals in back-to-back Olympics. You're still the only woman to ever accomplish that feat. What does that mean to you?

A: That memory is so special for me—to do something that nobody had ever done and to maintain that record, feels really good. The Melbourne Olympics in '56 were different because in the first Olympics, it was just great to be there. But I wanted to dominate in Melbourne and push myself to do what nobody else thought possible, especially for a woman. ■



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Cathy Rigby

Q&A with 908 writer Jennifer Newton over the phone from her studio McCoy Rigby Entertainment

Q: Cathy, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us! We love to hear about successful and inspiring Long Beach residents.

A: I was born at St. Mary's in Long Beach, lived in Lakewood on Palo Verde, and attended St. Joseph's Catholic School for a few years before moving to Los Alamitos. My mother was treated for polio at Long Beach Memorial, and I trained in Long Beach with my gymnastics team. So I have a pretty good history there.

Q: What was the popularity of American gymnastics in the Olympics when you were on the team?

A: Gymnastics wasn't really on the radar for America until the 1968 Games. The Cold War contributed to the interest. And the growing popularity of television made people more aware of what was going on in the world. I was 15 and one of the youngest American athletes, so I got a lot of press locally and internationally. When I made it into the Top 20, the United States saw opportunity in the sport. We hadn't been able to do that in the past.

Q: How does American gymnastics today differ from when you were training for the Olympics?

A: [Laughter] Unlike today where you have these incredible teams and facilities, our main practice space was at St. Stephan's Lutheran Church in Long Beach. There would be a Bible study on one side of the room and we would run through the hallway to a vault in the multipurpose room. Your balance beam was sometimes the curb of the street. We practiced our floor routines at the local high schools and junior highs. Even when I made the Olympic team, we still trained there.

Our coach, Bud Marquette (also from Long Beach), had a job during the day working for the Long Beach Library System. So, while we did have a coach, we had to figure out a lot on our own. We spent about 7 hours a day practicing, and we were accountable for practicing on our own a lot more.

Q: What are some of your fondest memories of your time at the Olympics?

A: Back then, I was so young. We ate, slept and drank the competition. There isn't a time you are not serious and completely focused. But, for me there was one moment that



stands out. I was on the balance beam during the Olympic games and the pressure was serious. You have one chance to do everything perfectly. I had a very brief moment in the midst of competition where I could take it all in. I was thinking, "Here I am, looking at the crowd. My mom and dad are over there. My coach is here. This is really cool." It was such a clear moment. Subtle, small and for one brief second I was totally present.

Q: Did you have time off while you were there? Did you get to enjoy the hosting countries?

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **1968, 1972**
- Sport: **Gymnastics**
- Notable: **The first American woman ever to medal in the World Gymnastics competition**
- Long Beach Connection: **Grew up here and learned the balance beam by practicing routines on Long Beach's curbs!**



A: You didn't really sightsee back then. The day before the tragedy in Munich we had just finished competition and decided to take a little train trip around Munich to Gemund. Our coach didn't understand the train schedule and we ended up missing the last train back to the Olympic Village. There were 6-7 of us Americans stranded in this little city, and no one spoke English. A very gracious older man and his wife took us into their home, fed us and gave us a place to sleep for the night. We had no idea what was going on at the Village until we got back the next day. But the juxtaposition of what had been happening there, and the unconditional kindness shown to us in Gemund was remarkable to me. It showed the two drastically different sides of humanity.

Q: What did you learn from your time as an American Olympic gymnast?

A: The great thing about gymnastics is that it showed me anything is possible. Everybody starts at the beginning with the things that aren't as fun to do. But you know that if you are willing to work and put in the practice you are going to get better. Gymnastics helped me learn to overcome barriers. When I started singing and acting later in life, I didn't know if I could do it but I thought, "I'm going to do it anyway!" ■

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Bruce Bradley

Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi at Legends Sports Bar on 2nd St

Q: What memories stand out from your Olympic career?

A: I think one of the most notable memories for any of us was walking into the stadium at Opening Ceremonies—it just blows you away. My entry came in Mexico City in 1968, and it was a huge stadium. The U.S. team was one of the last to enter. When we finally walked in, there were 100,000 people roaring for us—that really makes the hair stand up on your skin, it's really cool.

I also remember the terrorist attack in Munich in 1972. We had finished our competition at the end of the first week and had a celebration that night. We were coming back to the Village after curfew, so we were sneaking back in, climbing over the fence. It was the exact same time the Black September guys supposedly came over the fence. The timing was so close, they could have been the ones that held us up to climb over. We had no idea what was going on, we just thought other athletes were sneaking back in. We didn't find out till the next day.

Q: Was there a standout moment or game for you during the Olympics?

A: In 1966, we watched the European Championships in Holland, and the East Germans won. They were big and fast, and taking [performance] drugs, just like the Russians were. They were among the best teams in the world at that time, along with the Yugoslavs and the Hungarians.

In the '68 Olympics we ended up playing the East Germans and beat them for fifth place. The U.S. team wasn't supposed to do anything at that



tournament, but we placed. As a result of that loss, the East Germans stopped their men's water polo program for a number of years.

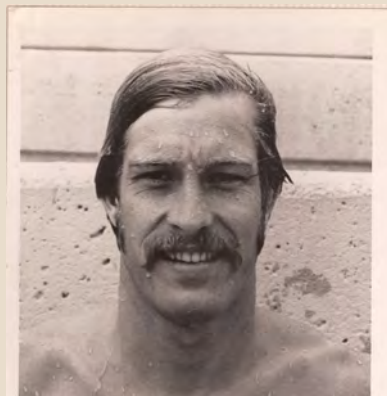
Q: What about in 1972? You were the high scorer in that Olympic Games.

A: The 1972 games are kind of a blur to me. I know I was the high scorer but game-by-game I don't really remember specific scoring. I do remember putting out a guy's eye following through on a sweep shot against Italy. (laughs)

We got the bronze medal for the first time in 40 years that year. I remember our final game against Russia. If we beat them, we would have got second place. We were ahead of Russia in the fourth quarter 4-2, but we never got the ball back. It was a Spanish communist referee, and at that time only one referee worked the game. Every time we swam down they called an offensive foul on us until the very end.

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **1968, 1972**
- Sport: **Water Polo**
- Notable: **High scorer in the 1972 Olympic and considered one of the all-time great American water polo players. Unde-feated as a player in 4 years at UCLA from 1964 to 1968.**
- Long Beach Connection: **Grew up here, went to Millikan and still lives here!**



Read our full interview with Bruce Bradley at www.lb908.com

Russia scored two goals during the last minutes, and then they killed the clock for a time. The referee just took the game away from us. There were a lot of politics outside the pool that we couldn't control.

Q: Tell us about playing abroad and the differences between playing the U.S. and Europe?

A: Playing abroad makes you proud to be American, but from a water polo standpoint, some of the European countries are pretty cool in how much they care about the sport. We played in a little beach town in Italy, and it was a total water polo community. They have a game on every Thursday night and during the game everyone is down at the pool watching the game. It's a 5,000-seat stadium in a town of 25,000. It's pretty amazing. The Mediterranean countries take really good care of their water polo programs.

We pretty much broke the barrier for Americans by medaling in '72. When the national team concept came into fruition, we finally started making some money—even though we only got \$1.25 per diem back then. (laughs) That was our ante money for the poker games between practices, but at least it started something. ■



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John Van Blom

*Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi at
EJ Malloy's Sports Pub on Broadway*

Q: Have you lived in Long Beach your whole life?

A: I've lived in Long Beach since high school. I started off in Manhattan Beach and moved to Long Beach my sophomore year to go to Wilson.

Q: You were a rower there?

A: Yeah, that's where I started rowing, even though it wasn't a school-sanctioned sport. There was a Rowing Club at the boathouse down at the end of Marine Stadium, and there was a coach there who wanted to coach high school kids, so they announced it at Wilson over the morning PA—I went down and gave it a try.

Q: So you never tried it before and thought it would be fun?

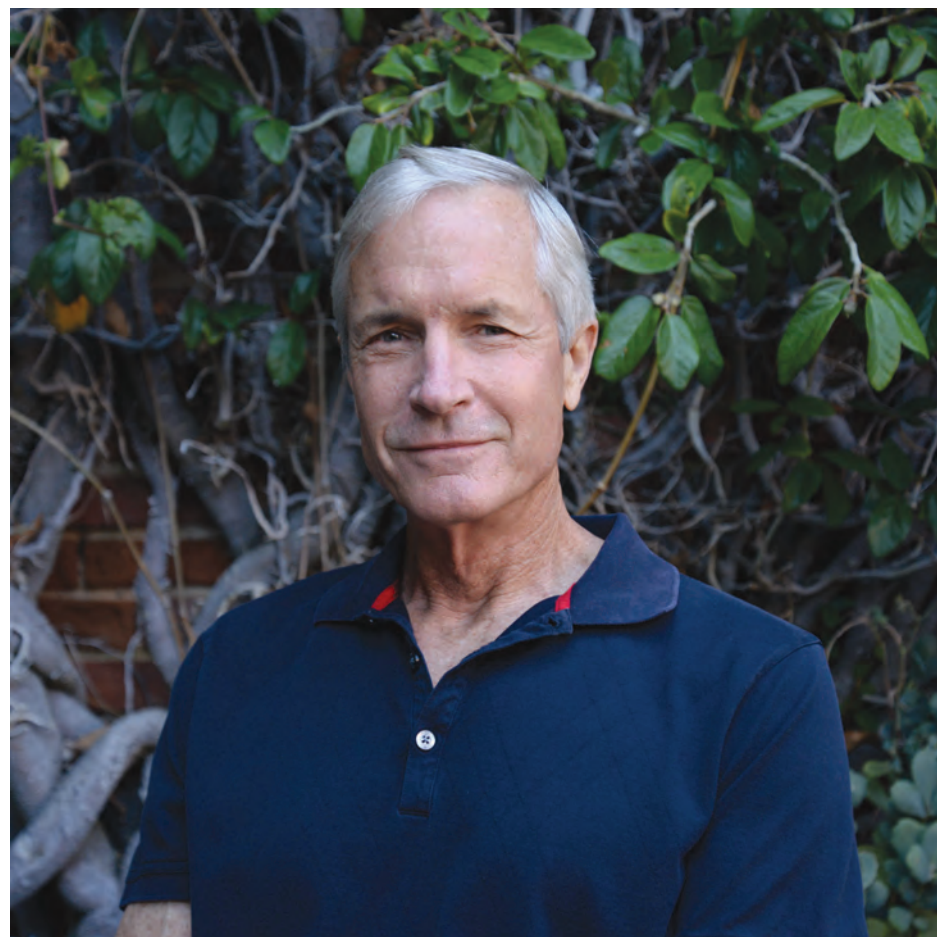
A: Well, I grew up around the water. In fact, we were living on a boat at the time in the Long Beach Marina. Each morning, I would row a dinghy across the bay to catch a ride to school. In the afternoon, I would go back home again, so I was familiar with the water.

Q: You won the 1968 Olympic Trials as a single sculler here in Long Beach. What was that like?

A: There was a moment in the boat after the race was over, where I realized that I won the event, and that I was going to Mexico City as the single sculler for the U.S. It was definitely pretty moving.

Q: What was that first rowing event in the Olympics like for you?

A: I ended up finishing fourth in Mexico. We were at over 7,000 feet of altitude, so it was physically really tough. Not everybody adapted the same to the altitude. I felt I was at a little bit of



a disadvantage, and that I could have done a little better, but it was a good performance and I was happy with it.

Q: Your wife Joan Van Blom, was widely considered the greatest female athlete to compete in the sport of rowing. She passed away in August 2015 after a battle with brain cancer at age 62. I know it's tough but can you talk a bit about Joan?

A: She had a great personality—she was very friendly and open. She was a fun person to be around. She also was extremely competitive and focused. She was able to work really hard and had a lot of natural endurance. Women would come to Long Beach from all around the world to train, but it really was Joan and then everybody else. She was in a different league. I think a lot of people would coast after getting to a level like that, but she kept pushing herself harder and harder. She wasn't satisfied just to be ahead, she wanted to demolish them. ■

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **1968, 1972, 1976**
- Sport: **Rowing**
- Notable: **Helped establish West Coast dominance in rowing**
- Long Beach Connection: **Has lived and trained here ever since high school!**



Long Beach Junior Crew

By Jonathan Murrietta

Whether you have aspirations of becoming a national or world champion athlete or you're just looking to get in shape this summer, Long Beach Junior Crew (LBJC) is a great place to start.

Rowing is one of the fastest growing NCAA sports, and LBJC currently boasts over a hundred young men and women participating in rowing today. The organization is thriving and dedicated to continuing the great tradition of junior rowing in Long Beach.

LBJC offers summer rowing camp for first time beginners to intermediate levels. Campers learn basic boat handling, water safety, rowing techniques and race strategy, and will gain an appreciation for teamwork and sportsmanship through practice and competition.

Three sessions remain this summer from July 18–29, Aug. 1–12, and Aug. 15–26. Camps take place Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Or sign up for a 1/2 day from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at a discounted rate. Team tryouts for Long Beach Junior Crew's competitive program take place in September.

"Our mission is to be known as much for the quality of our rowers, as for the quality of our rowing," said Keith Johnson, President of LBJC.

Established in 1986, LBJC has produced some outstanding talent and national champions. In 2015, members captured events at the Head of Charles Championships in Boston, and US Rowing Youth National Championships held in Sarasota, Fla. Since 2008, LBJC has sent 17 rowers to represent the United States in international



2015 Head of Charles Championships– Youth Women's 4+ – Gold Medal 1st Place: Kelly Boyle (University of San Diego 2020), Diana Felix (University of Virginia 2020), Kailani Marchak (UC Berkeley 2020), Katie O'Donnell (UC Berkeley 2020), Emma Cruz (University of Pennsylvania 2020)



competition—three of these rowers became world champions. These successes have brought interest from college coaches, who in turn have offered academic preference, scholarships, or both to select LBJC rowers.

LBJC rowers race and train at Marine Stadium, the site of the 1932 Olympics, which provides 2,000 meters of straight water (the standard distance for national and international rowing). The pristine Pete Archer boathouse, named after the "Grand Old Man of Rowing" himself, has equipment bays for rowing shells, a weight-training room, a kitchen, offices, and separate women's restroom, shower, and locker facilities.

The newly expanded boathouse was

dedicated in 2007. Fantastic facilities, perfect weather, and ideal water conditions make Long Beach a haven for cultivating the sport of rowing and grooming its next young stars. ■

2016 Youth National Championship Results from June 11th, 2016:

•Lightweight Women's 4+

Gold

•Women's Double (W2X)

Gold

•Women's Quad (W4X)

Bronze

Susie Atwood

*Q&A with 908 writer Jonathan Murrietta at
Nico's on 2nd St. in Naples*

Q: How did you first get introduced to the sport of swimming?

A: When I was 7 years old, we were at a party and a boy fell into the pool—the paramedics had to revive him. That really spurred my parents to give my brother and me swim lessons. They took us to the local YMCA in Lakewood, where I learned to swim. It just so happened that the coach, Jim Montrella, was starting a swim team. He was my coach all the way to the Olympics.

Q: You participated in your first Olympics at age 15. What was it like being in the Olympic Village?

A: I was in awe. It was fun to run around and look at all the athletes. It was a great experience, but it was a long time to be away from home. I had never been away from home for that long before. When I came back from my first Olympics, I started late at Millikan High School and first quarter was almost over. I still managed to get A's in all of my classes, except for in PE. My teacher gave me an incomplete because I hadn't participated in PE, while I was at the Olympics. I was like, "Are you kidding me?" [laughs]

Q: What are your most treasured swim career accomplishments?

A: Winning the silver medal in the 200 backstroke and the bronze in the 100 backstroke in 1972 were two of my biggest accomplishments. I also have fond memories of the years between my two Olympic runs. During those years, I won 18 straight national championship titles in the backstroke—the first one was right after the '68 Olympics at the Belmont Plaza Pool. I won in the 100 and 200 backstroke and was super psyched to win in front of a packed crowd—all the local people I



knew were there. It was tremendously exciting and was a great place to win! My most memorable win was when I broke my first world record at the National Championships in Louisville, Kentucky. That was probably the highlight of my career.

Q: What is one of your favorite funny stories from the Olympics?

A: I was in Czechoslovakia with the national team in 1969, just after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. To help keep us safe and secure, our chaperone would lie in the hall of the hotel to make sure no one was going out. My roommate and I came up with this great idea to crawl along the ledges outside of our hotel window down to the other hall where our friends were. We climbed out and looked down to see several guards with their guns drawn, pointing up at us. We waved and said, "It's okay, we're with Team USA!" And we continued down the ledge to meet our friends. It was crazy! ■

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **1968, 1972**
- Sport: **Swimming**
- Notable: **Won 18 straight national championships in the backstroke in the years between her Olympic medals**
- Long Beach Connection: **Grew up here, attended Millikan and is now a local State Farm agent!**





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Ed Rattleff

*Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi at
Fantastic Cafe on Studebaker*

Q: You grew up in Ohio, so what made you choose Long Beach State in the first place?

A: I wanted to get out of Ohio and go somewhere warm, and I didn't think I was good enough to play for USC or UCLA. I was set to go to Florida State when Coach Tarkanian called and invited me to Long Beach. I didn't even know who Tark was. He had called me a couple times but I never answered his call because I couldn't pronounce "Tarkanian." (laughs)

Q: We hear you were quite the baseball player--why did you choose basketball over baseball?

A: Out of high school, I was drafted by the Pirates and wanted to play pro baseball, but my mother told me I had to go to college. I don't know how your mother was, but I did what she told me. So, I came out here for a basketball scholarship and played both sports. I never thought I was that good really, I just liked to play, and I liked to win.

In my sophomore year, I got hit by a ball while pitching, and I broke my thumb. When Tark saw the cast, he walked me down to the baseball office and said, "He's not playing baseball anymore." And that was it. I loved baseball and thought I was pretty good, but basketball overtook it. I was there for a basketball scholarship, so that was it.

Q: What was your first impression of the Olympic village?

You see everybody, and you say hello, but everybody is pretty busy. There was a wrestler named Chris Taylor, who has now passed away, but he was 400 pounds and we became friends. He would chase me around for fun. He was a great guy. I met a boxer by the



name of Jesse Valdez, who was from Houston. He was a great boxer, who got cheated out of the gold medal by the Russians. The village was full of interesting people.

Q: You were a part of the 1972 Olympics, which involved the Israeli hostage crisis at the Olympic Village. What was that like?

A: We saw the guys in the hooded masks, we saw guys with guns walking around, and heard a lot of the stuff that went on. I thought it was people partying because there was a discotheque below us where you could go partying. I slept through it. The next day, I heard what had gone on and they ushered us out of the village to keep us away from it.

Q: Obviously the most famous and disputed part of the Olympics for you was the famous gold medal game, and I'm sure you've been asked about it a few times.

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: 1972
- Sport: Basketball
- Notable: Part of the '72 USA basketball team that vowed to never accept their silver medals
- Long Beach Connection: Played at Long Beach State and has lived here ever since. Is now a local State Farm agent.



Read our full interview with Ed Rattleff at www.lb908.com

In the final game against Russia we were down, and we put a press on them and started running like we should have been doing all tournament. We caught them, and that's when Doug Collins had to shoot two free throws. In the U.S., the rule is you can call timeout before the free throw, after the free throw, but not during. In international ball, you can only call timeout before the free throw. Once the ball is shot, the ball is in play, and no timeout can be called. When Doug Collins made the second free throw, they threw the ball in, they shot it and missed, and we won.

Then the referees said Russia had called time out, which they couldn't do—it's considered a technical foul. But, they gave them the time out. The clock was set back three seconds, the Russians took the shot and missed again—so we won a second time. After that, more excuses, and they turned the clock back for a third time. Their guy knocked our guy down, and they won the game. We didn't agree—we thought we had won it, twice. Later on that night, before the ceremony, we decided that we weren't going to accept the medal.

When we came back to America, I didn't know if we would be accepted. I've always been taught that whatever you believe, you stick with. A lot of people had seen the game and they knew we got cheated. That support here was great. ■

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Tom McKibbon

Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi at Enrique's Mexican Grill on PCH.

What is it like being at the Olympic games in 1968 and 1972?

In Mexico City the people were so wonderful and the times were so wonderful. I remember walking through the tunnel for the opening ceremonies and hearing "Ladies and gentlemen, the United States of America!" You just swell up with pride that you are an American Olympian.

I went to Munich as well. I didn't go to the closing ceremonies for that one because that was the year of the hostage situation. The Olympics were postponed for 24 hours and as it turned out all the charter flights were leaving so we had to miss the closing ceremony.

Was that scary for you being there during that hostage crisis?

It wasn't really scary. Everybody in the world knew what was going on more than we did because all our news programs were in German. We were in these big buildings and you could look across the courtyard and that's where the Israelis were. You could see the guys with the masks and the guns. We realized something was going on but we didn't know what. Even though we could see these guys. It didn't make sense to us what was going on.

Do you remember feeling an added level of pressure rowing at the Olympic level?

There's a funny psychology to athletics and sports. Unless you've done it, it's not intuitive. Initially you race to win, but then when you win, you race to not lose. All you care about is not losing or embarrassing yourself. The trials are even worse than the Olympics themselves because once you make the team



some pressure is off. To think about missing the team after training for so long would be heartbreaking.

What is your favorite part about being an Olympian?

They say it's like the Marines. Once a Marine always a Marine. Once you're an Olympian you're always an Olympian. It starts becoming normal after a while. You don't necessarily realize until you're my age what a great opportunity we had. The fact that we not only saw the open window but also jumped through it and lived our best life is something I'm proud of.

How did you first get into rowing?

We had just moved to Long Beach from Michigan. I vividly remember the day I saw a poster at Long Beach State. It said "Crew builds men, men build crew. No experience necessary, six feet or taller." It jumped out at me. I went home and said to my wife, "I think I found my sport. I want to be a rower." ■

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **1968, 1972**
- Sport: **Rowing**
- Notable: **Went to a 3rd Olympics in 1976 as the coach for Joan (Lind) Van Blom, and also as a coach in '84 and '88.**
- Long Beach Connection: **Attended CSULB, trained here and taught at LBCC for 40 years**



Read our full interview with Tom McKibbon at www.lb908.com

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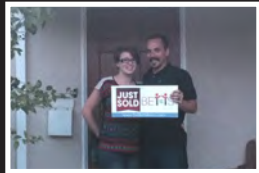
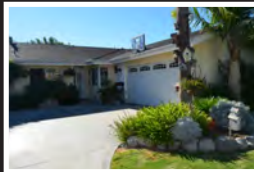
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Pat Etem

*Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi at
Boathouse on the Bay Restaurant*

Q: How did you initially get into the sport of rowing?

A: Title IX really was the whole impetus for me getting into rowing. 1978 was the first year of implementation of Title IX, so colleges were pretty desperate to build women's sports teams. All across the country, but on the west coast in particular, rowing was a way to fill spots for women athletes. I remember they had these huge boats in the quad on UC Berkeley campus; you'd walk by and see rowers, along with the coach, recruiting tall women who looked like they could become successful athletes. I was also enamored by a poster on the women's gym wall that was of a gorgeous image of a boat at sunset under the Golden Gate Bridge—I remember thinking, "That looks magical!"

Q: You sat in the 1980 and 1984 Olympic shells. First off, what were your memories from the boycott in 1980?

A: I went from this intense hope that President Carter would lift the boycott, to extreme remorse and sadness when he didn't. But first and foremost, just to be in contention to make the Olympic team certainly kept me going in those years. We still had our summer competitions—we went to Europe and competed. We had great races. It was the first time that the U.S. beat the Russians and East Germans. It was phenomenal. It was glorious to be in that boat, but it was a shame that we couldn't show off our talents to the whole world.

Q: And in 1984, what were some of your memories from those games rowing in front of a home crowd? How did you do?



A: It was great and thrilling for me. Walking into the opening ceremonies in Los Angeles was amazing. To see the crowd going wild when the athletes came out—it was something else. I walked in with Joan Benoit, the marathon runner who would eventually go on to win the gold for Team USA that year. Seeing other athletes compete was a real treat too—I saw Greg Louganis dive; he was such an artist with his diving.

We did well—got fourth by a hair. We were just beaten by the Australians. It was great competing in front of a home crowd, but oddly enough, it would've been nice to be abroad as well because that's part of the magic of the Olympics—getting to travel to foreign lands and new places.

Q: On that note, what was it like being a world traveler as part of the Olympic rowing team?

A: To travel and compete all over

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **1984**
- Sport: **Rowing**
- Notable: **Had to sit out her first Olympic games due to the 1980 American boycott**
- Long Beach Connection: **Lives here and has raised a family here-- all Wilson graduates!**



Jody Campbell

Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi at California Pizza Kitchen on PCH

Q: The 1980 men's Olympic water polo team was a gold medal favorite until President Carter implemented his boycott of the Olympics. As the youngest player on the team, what was your perspective on all of that?

A: In 1976, USA water polo didn't qualify so there were quite a few players who stuck around and trained for those four years leading up to the 1980 Olympics. Seeing those poor guys getting it ripped out from underneath them—that was the impact. Back then, there was no professional water polo and they were making sacrifices to travel and pay their way.

Q: What do you think your biggest strengths were as a water polo player?

A: I think I was a very smart player. I wasn't the biggest player. I was around 6'2, 180 lbs. The guys who play my position [center] are usually 6'7, 240 lbs. But I think the best players aren't necessarily always the biggest and strongest. You have to be smart to play this game.

Q: What are some funny memories that stick out from your Olympic career?

A: During the Opening Ceremonies in 1988 in Seoul, they had all these doves fly and do this big swipe of the stadium and they were supposed to fly away. But many of the doves went to hang out and perch on the rim of the torch. So when it came time to light the torch, those doves didn't move and many of them caught on fire.

Another memory is from the 1984 Opening Ceremonies, where with the United States being the host country,

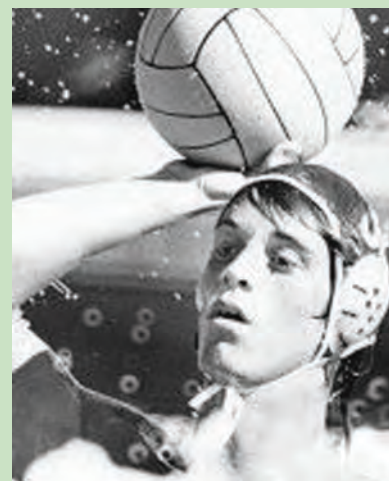


all the USA athletes came out last. Everyone was jockeying to be that last person to walk out of the tunnel. So I decided to hang out in this little bathroom until all the guys left and then I would be the last one out there. And I remember there were two track guys in the bathroom at the same time as me, so I went over to go talk to them. One of them turned out to be Carl Lewis.

The next thing we knew, our teams were a third of the way down the track already. I remember the two track guys just running, they were probably only going half speed, but they were flying down the track and I struggled to keep up with them on foot, being the aquatic guy [laughing]. If you ever watch that footage from the '84 opening ceremonies, you'll see me jogging down the track trying to catch up with the rest of my team—I literally was the last person to come out of the tunnel into the Opening Ceremony.

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **1984, 1988**
- Sport: **Water Polo**
- Notable: **Helped the team win two consecutive silver medals playing the center position.**
- Long Beach Connection: **Grew up here, attended Wilson High and still visits often!**



Read our full interview with Jody Campbell at www.lb908.com

Q: What are some of your favorite LB hangouts?

A: I love taking my family to Joe Jost's [tavern on East Anaheim Street]. Schooner or Later and the Boathouse are also some of my favorites.

Q: What is a fun or funny memory you have of playing water polo at Wilson?

A: Back when I was in high school, the girls' synchronized swim team would always put on a synchronized swimming show. And it was tradition that the water polo guys would try to perform a legitimate routine as part of the show. So one year, one of my friends had the great idea to bring some of that yellow dye shark repellent to put in the pool during the show to make it look like someone peed in the pool. But little did he know that solution was extremely concentrated and he ended up turning the whole pool yellow. I remember the organizer of the show was so upset at us [laughing].

Q: What advice would you give an aspiring Olympian?

A: There is a formula for success I think. Never stop learning. Listen to every single coach. I believe there is no such thing as a bad coach—they are essentially donating time to your development. You really have to work harder than everyone else around you. And you have to become a student of the game. ■



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Debbie Green

Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi at Aroma Di Roma on 2nd St.

Q: Were you pretty serious about volleyball from a young age?

A: Oh no! I hated it. Hated it (laughs). I was terrible. Nobody wanted me on their team but my dad made me keep playing. I started training my freshman year in high school and by junior year, I was on the national team—for world championships. All I did from my freshman year to junior year was train.

Q: Let's talk about the U.S. Olympic boycott in 1980—what was that like?

A: We had trained year-round at the National Center in Colorado Springs for two years. We were the first team to train year-round like that. We gave up our college scholarships; we didn't work; we trained. It was tough. You start to think, do I want to keep doing this for the chance of representing the USA in the Olympics?

Q: Was it a tough decision for you?

A: If the Olympics in '84 were in a different country I don't think I would have gone, but the thought of playing at home was too much to resist. How would I feel if I am sitting on my couch watching my teammates compete in the Olympics, and I'm sitting on my couch? I I wanted to be on the court, not on the couch.

We got to play in Long Beach. That's what made the Olympics so special was playing right in our backyard. It was so exciting! It was so USA, so patriotic, people were chanting and Long Beach Arena was truly ours. We were home.

Q: Are there any specific memories you remember from playing?

A: We had to beat Brazil to get to the medal round and we lost the first 2



games of the match so we had to win the next three to keep our hopes alive. We won the third and fourth games, but in the fifth—the tie breaker—we were down. We came from behind to win and that was probably the most exciting moment.

Beating China in pool play was really great too, but then four nights later we lost to China in the gold medal game. That's really the moment I'll never forget—that loss.

Q: Did you ever get over that loss?

A: I still remember that last point going down in '84 and my first thought was, "Wow, we've let so many people down." So many people who wanted us to win and were rooting for us, and we let them down. That's what it was about. Not that we didn't get the gold.

I learned a lesson while watching Misty May play in Beijing though. I remember being so nervous watching her in

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **1984**
- Sport: **Volleyball**
- Notable: **Won the silver medal at Long Beach Arena in '84. Considered the greatest women's setter of all time.**
- Long Beach Connection: **Lived here and coached at Long Beach State for 23 years. Now lives in Seal Beach!**



the finals, but then I thought, 'Gosh, what if she doesn't win, would I be less proud of her?' And the answer was no—I'd be just as proud of her. Then I sat there in Beijing thinking, 'Wow, maybe that's why I'm here, to teach myself.'

Q: What is the best part outside of playing that you remember about the Olympics?

A: The best part for me was closing ceremonies. In opening ceremonies nobody knew who we were. They knew Mary-Lou Retton, Carl Lewis, some of the other individual athletes. During closing ceremonies people were yelling for the volleyball team and we're like, "Oh, that's us! People know who we are!" We had arrived. One of our goals was to promote women's volleyball in the U.S., and during closing ceremonies we thought, "We've done it!"

Q: What has Long Beach meant to you?

I moved here when I was really little. We left in the summer I was going into 5th grade, and I remember crying because I loved it here. Every summer I'd go to the bay with my friends, and we'd spend all day there. I knew, when I got old enough to move out on my own, I was coming back to Long Beach. And we did. It's a community, and I owe Long Beach a lot. Having the opportunity to play in the Olympics and to work with amazing athletes at Long Beach State—it's very special. ■



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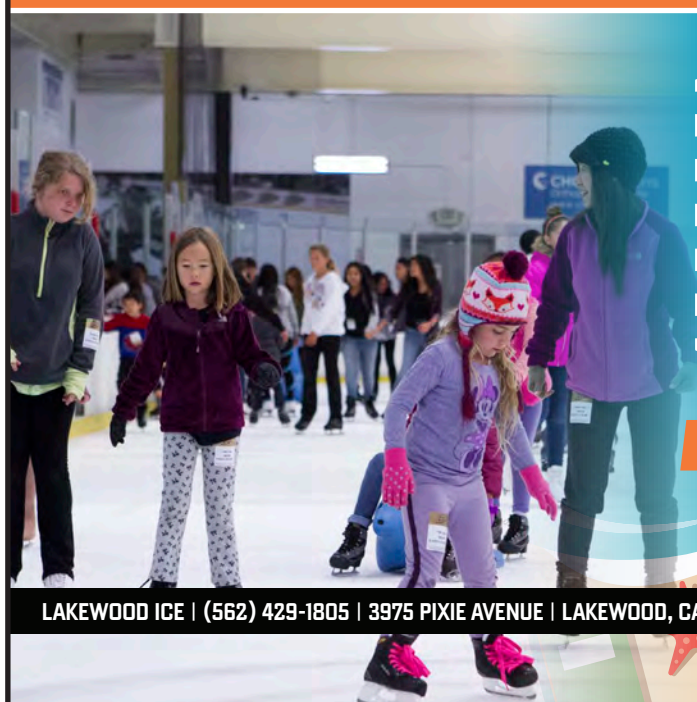


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Steve Hegg

Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi at La Parolaccia on Broadway

Q: What inspired you initially to become a professional cyclist?

A: What inspired me was the Winter Olympics in 1968. I saw the five-time Olympic gold medalists Jean-Claude Killy (alpine ski racer) in action, and he was my hero. Fast forward a bunch of years, I started riding a bike to cross train for my ski racing. I immediately got more skilled at cycling than I ever was at ski racing. So I just kept cycling. By 1983, I went to the Pan American Games in Venezuela. We won the gold medal in one of the events, and then the Olympics was all I could think about.

Q: Can you talk about what your training was like heading into those '84 Games?

A: When I was training for the Olympics, the Russians and the East Germans were the ones to beat. So, when I was in the weight room with my teammates, we'd always heckle one another. "Five more for the Russians, two more for the East Germans," we'd say to each other to push ourselves. We were always just going for it. For nine months, my times in the 4000-meter pursuit kept getting faster and faster. I knew I could do well in those Games.

Q: What was it like when you made it to the Olympics in 1984?

A: When I finally got there it was just incredible. Team USA was the underdog—we weren't even known in the sport. Every single session was sold out and there were huge crowds. It was awesome to be on a stage with such a crowd. And it all worked out for me really well. It was the most successful Olympics for USA cycling. And to get the individual gold was everything that I could have imagined.



Q: What was your favorite memory from the 1996 Games in Atlanta?

A: One of my favorite memories from the '96 Games is that Greg LeMond, who was Sportsman of the Year, invited me to a Sports Illustrated party. I had this following of friends from Long Beach who wanted to come, so I asked Greg if they could come too and he said, "Yeah, sure." I remember when we all walked up the steps of this Sports Illustrated party, and Greg LeMond told the guy at the front that we were with him. That's probably my coolest Olympic moment. That was a good time!

Q: What would be your advice to an aspiring Olympian?

A: Training for the Olympics is not just a four-year endeavor. You have to devote everything to make your dreams possible. It's at least a 10-year journey, but if you really want it, don't ever give up. ■

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **1984, 1996**
- Sport: **Cycling**
- Notable: **Won gold and silver medals in '84 Olympics for track cycling.**
- Long Beach Connection: **Has worked and lived here since the Olympics.**



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Bob Ctvrlik

*Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi at
Schooner or Later on Alamitos Bay*

Q: Do you think playing other sports in high school helped you in your Olympic volleyball career?

A: I think I had the perfect storm of preparation for my volleyball career by playing both basketball and tennis at Wilson. I was offered college scholarships in both sports. The skills I learned in those sports, like hand-eye coordination, really served me well in my volleyball career. I am 100 percent a proponent of cross training.

Q: How did you first learn how to play volleyball?

A: When I was growing up in Long Beach, the Bay Shore playground had volleyball courts on one side, and basketball courts on the other. There were about ten kids that played volleyball during the summer. Len Julian was the park director who organized the volleyball games. I played there each summer on those hot, asphalt courts—we were crazy kids [laughs]. It was interesting because out of the ten kids who played in that Bay Shore park volleyball league, three or four of them went on to get college scholarships in volleyball.

Q: Describe the journey that led you to play on the Olympic team.

A: After graduating from Pepperdine, I was invited to try out for the USA volleyball national team. I was pretty surprised because I hadn't really played that long, but I said, "What the heck, why not?" The team had won a gold medal in 1984, so I was trying to beat out eight gold medalists. It was intimidating—they were the big name players. I made the team, and then sat on the bench for a year-and-a-half.

In those days the team was struggling



to beat the Russians in international tournaments. We couldn't seem to get over the hump. We'd make it to the final game, but couldn't beat the Russians in the finals. We were playing in the Goodwill Games in the Soviet Union, and I got the chance to play after one of our players was injured. We beat the Russians in the final. It was me and five gold medalists.

Q: What are some of your standout memories traveling with the international team in those years?

A: We traveled about six months out of the year. I remember going to Cuba each year, which was kind of fun. Time stood still over there. You'd see the cars from the 1950s still being used. One interesting thing was that when the Cubans came to the U.S. to play, they always wanted to go to Kmart. They would come out of the store with car tires and car batteries to fix their cars back home—it was the most bizarre thing you'd ever seen.

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **1988, 1992, 1996**
- Sport: **Volleyball**
- Notable: **Helped USA win a gold medal in '88 as a starter and the youngest on the team.**
- Long Beach Connection: **Grew up here, attended Wilson High and still visits often!**



Read our full interview with Bob Ctvrlik at www.lb908.com

Q: Your first trip to the Olympics was in 1988 for the Seoul, South Korea Games. What was it like being part of a gold medal-winning team?

A: It was an unbelievable experience. But for me it was nerve racking because we were ranked number one. I was the young guy on the team and most of the guys were gold medalists already, so if we didn't win, I felt like it would be my fault. It was a lot of stress.

Q: And in the following Olympics in 1992 for the Barcelona Games, what memories stick out for you then?

A: One of my coolest memories from the 1992 Games was walking into the stadium with the Dream Team. It was a big deal to see all those players, like Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan, and Karl Malone, right beside me.

Winning a bronze medal in those games was a major accomplishment. On a Saturday night at 10 p.m., we lost to Brazil 17-15 in the fifth set, crushing our chances for gold. The next morning, we had to wake up and play Cuba, who we hadn't beaten in three years. We played great and won the match and the bronze. To lose your hope of winning the gold medal and still wake up the next morning and win a medal was a great feat. ■

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Lisa Fernandez

Q&A with 908 writer Jonathan Murrietta at
Super Mex on Spring St.

Q: What was the first real stepping stone in realizing your dream of becoming a star softball player?

A: My father played semi-professional baseball in his native country of Cuba, and my mom played in a local women's softball league. They realized my potential from an early age.

It all started with a Long Beach coach, Al Mendoza. He spotted me in a sports clinic at Mayfair park and invited me to play fast-pitch. Early on, he gave me a trophy with an engraving that said, "You're going to be something one day." That's something that always stuck with me—and I still have that trophy.

Q: What was particularly special about your first trip to the Olympics in 1996?

A: That first Olympics was awesome because the Olympics that year were played in Atlanta, Georgia, and I had the home crowd rooting for me. I felt like I was not only playing for Team USA, but for all the women softball athletes who preceded me—those greats in the game including Joan Joyce, Sharron Backus, and Bertha Tickey, who paved the way to make softball, and women's athletics, recognized on a global scale, but who never got a taste of playing on a national team in the Olympics.

Q: What were some of the fun highlights from your trip to the Olympics in 2000?

One of my most vivid memories was the team voodoo shower, because things weren't going our way. We had lost three straight games in early round robin play and needed to win the rest of the round robin games to qualify



for the final. We decided that we had to get this voodoo off of us, so we went into this huge shower—the whole team with our uniforms on and everything—and we washed our uniforms and never wore them again. In the team meeting that night, we got in a circle, passed a ball around and refocused. It must've worked because we made it into the medal round beating each of the three teams we lost to earlier in the tourney to win the Gold Medal.

Q: Before the 2004 Olympics, your team had a day training with the Navy Seals. What was that like?

A: That was an amazing experience—we actually had to take part in the drills. Among many tough drills, we had to climb a 4-story rope ladder. I was thinking, I am an Olympic athlete, I can't afford to fall off this rope ladder. In the next drill we had to carry a boat over our heads and go into the cold ocean, flip the boat over and get in. The motto the Navy Seals taught us

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **1996, 2000, 2004**
- Sport: **Softball**
- Notable: **Widely considered the greatest softball player of all time. Has three gold medals.**
- Long Beach Connection: **Grew up and still lives in the city. Her kids attend Newcomb.**



Read our full interview with Lisa Fernandez at www.lb908.com

was, "So what?" We needed it the next day at practice. We were so sore yet went through the full workout. It is amazing what you can do when you put your mind to it.

Q: What memory stands out from your international travel?

A: When qualifying for the Junior Pan-American games, I remember traveling to Guatemala and seeing the soldiers holding machine guns in the airport and there were tanks on the streets. At the end of the day, it gave me an appreciation for where I am from.

Q: Your team was dubbed, "The Real Dream Team" after the 2004 Olympics. What did life look like for you after the 2004 Games?

A: In 2004 our team set a goal to not just win games but to dominate. And dominate we did. Outscoring our opponents 55 to 1. I was fortunate to have an amazing Olympic games both offensively (leading the tourney with a .546 batting average) and going undefeated in the circle, pitching both the semi and finals games to win the Gold Medal. I remember going to the White House and getting to meet President Bush. I have always embraced being a role model. It is overwhelming to see the impact being an Olympic athlete can have. I treasure the opportunity to help create passion in our youth. I am now a mom to 2 amazing young boys! ■

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Maureen O'Toole

Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi at the Gondolas in Naples

Q: How did you first become introduced to the sport of water polo?

A: I was 7 years old when I started swimming for Coach Don Gambril. In the offseason one year I got my first taste of water polo at the Belmont Pool in Long Beach—I loved it. I moved to club level at 13 years old and played club all the way through my retirement.

Q: Can you tell us about going out for the boys' team at Wilson High?

A: I think a lot of it starts with the coach, and I always had really great coaches who respected me as a person and as a player. My teammates would treat me the same way. Another girl friend of mine was on the team, and we both wanted to be treated the same as the boys. I played with the likes of Jody Campbell—he taught me a lot because he was a very physical, smart player. I was on boys' varsity for two years.

Q: So how did you get to the Olympics?

A: To this day, I remember reading one sentence in the San Francisco Chronicle, "Women's water polo added to the 2000 Olympics in Sydney." I kind of laughed and was like, yeah right. Then my national team coach, Sandy Nitta, called me and confirmed the news and asked me to come out of retirement. My daughter Kelly was five at the time so it was a big decision.

I thought about it for 30 seconds and decided to go for it. My life completely changed after that—a few months later I was playing in the world championships in Perth, Australia, and then we



started training full time in Los Alamitos. I moved my family down south and got a puppy that we named Sydney.

Q: What was it like being the oldest player at 39 on the USA Olympic women's water polo team?

A: I wasn't going to get any better but I had a lot of experience and that is the way I looked at it. I think the average age of our team was 22. It was difficult being in my late 30s and going through that training and surviving it. We trained seven hours a day, six days a week. I think I had the mental toughness because I played so long and had a swimming background, which helped me as far as recovering, but it was still the hardest thing I have ever done.

Q: What was the gold medal game like?

I remember everything about that game. We were in this little room before the game and there was this lady standing outside our room telling us,

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **2000**
- Sport: **Water Polo**
- Notable: **Widely considered the greatest women's water polo player of all time.**
- Long Beach Connection: **Grew up here, attended Wilson, her brother Mike owns Gondola Getaway in Naples!**



"Five more minutes...three more minutes," until game time. Everyone was really nervous and when we marched out, I remember thinking it would be so cool to see my [daughter] Kelly in the massive crowd. It was just a sea of people. It was 9:30 at night and we were the final event. NBC had brought my family down to the front. As we walked to the side of the pool, where the pre-game presentations were taking place, I saw Kelly hanging over the edge of the stands yelling out, "Mommy! Mommy!" That was an incredible moment.

The score was 2-2 going into the fourth quarter. Australia scored with a minute-and-a-half left to go in the game, bringing the score to 2-3. We were down with 25 seconds left. I went in to set, and we scored, tying the game with just 12 seconds to go. One thing led to another and Australia shot a goal from seven meters out and just like that, it was over. We lost the gold medal in the final second. That was a really hard way to lose.

After the game, NBC was there with their big cameras coming towards me, and they brought Kelly down too. She noticed that I was upset and she started crying. I was really upset that we lost but I realized ultimately it was about the journey and I am really proud we got the silver. ■



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Misty May

Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi at The Crooked Duck on PCH

Q: Tell us about the road to your first Olympics.

A: In 1999, I left the National team and partnered with Holly McPeak. For teams to qualify for the Olympics, it is usually a two-year process earning points on the international tour, but we only had one year to make it happen. We couldn't afford to lose. We qualified during the last tournament, despite the fact that I was injured. It was amazing, but it was an enormous amount of pressure. Unfortunately, we didn't make it to the medal round in 2000.

Q: What did you learn from that first Olympic experience?

A: We were just so young back then—it was 16 years ago, I was just 22. You just don't know. If I could take back some things or change some decisions, I would. But it was such an honor just to get to that point.

I believe that it's important to learn from the losses. Every loss should teach you something. For me, that loss fueled a fire inside of me. I wanted to go back. I wanted that feeling of wearing the red, white, and blue again.

Q: How was it playing with Kerri Walsh?

A: I knew it was going to be a process, with anything new it's a process. When we started, we had different expectations and different energy—she wanted everything to happen right away, and I kept saying, "It will come, it will come." We balanced each other out.

We only won one tournament that first year we played together. We saw a lot of finals, but couldn't get that one, until Portugal. That was our first win. From that point on, it was an uphill



climb. From the very beginning we were a very physical team, but we didn't have the experience or mental side yet. We fine-tuned our skills and mental game and things started to go our way.

Q: How did each Olympic experience differ for you?

A: Each year was its own journey, and I loved them all the same. It's a great accomplishment to say, "I gave it my all, and this is what happened."

In 2000, we were so young, and we just came up short. In 2004, Kerri and I had blinders on. We were so focused that we didn't let ourselves enjoy the whole experience. We were the heavy favorite to win and after we did, we jumped right into the AVP Tour.

I thought that 2008 in Beijing would be my last Games. We had lost to China early in the year and ended up playing them in the rain on their home turf for the gold—it was a lot of pressure. But,

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **2000, 2004, 2008, 2012**
- Sport: **Beach Volleyball**
- Notable: **Three-time Gold medalist and the greatest of all time.**
- Long Beach Connection: **Lives here, played at CSULB, and is now the coach at LBCC.**



Read our full interview with Misty May-Treanor at www.lb908.com

we did it again! During those games, I allowed myself to feel the energy of the games. We did a little sightseeing and watched some of the events. I wanted to take it all in.

I really didn't know I'd come back for London in 2012, but we did. I was just coming back from an Achilles injury, and we weren't the favorite to win this time. Although we may not have been the strongest team physically, we had a strong mental game and the experience to win. And, we came back to win the three-peat—which had never been done before.

Q: So, the big news is that you will be taking over the Long Beach City College volleyball program. Why did you make that decision and what are your plans?

A: I love Long Beach and everything about it, and I've always wanted to coach collegiately—I just didn't know when. But I'm sure people are going to want to know why I'm not coaching Division 1. I grew up in the community college environment, as both my parents coached at Santa Monica City College, so I understand that level. When the position opened up at LBCC, it was perfect timing. I was ready to plant both feet on the ground, and Matt and I want to be settled—right here in Long Beach. We are going to start a sand program, and my goal is to get LBCC back on the map for women's volleyball. I'm really excited for the team and the challenge. ■



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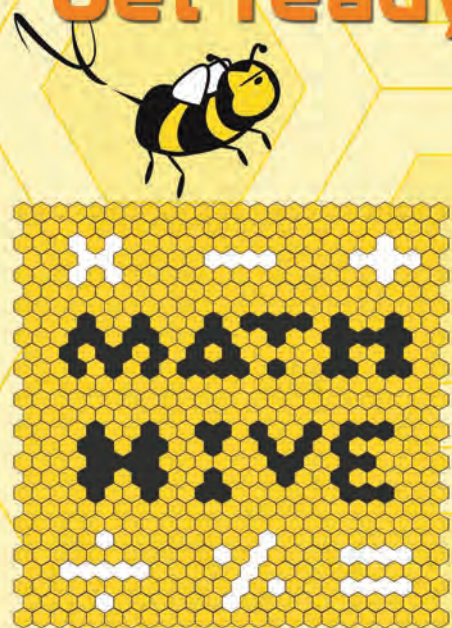
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Tony Azevedo

Q&A with 908 writer Jonathan Murrietta via Skype from his training grounds in Europe

Q: This summer, you'll be returning to Rio de Janeiro, your birthplace, for the 2016 Olympics. What are your thoughts about coming full circle?

A: It's pretty amazing. When I was sitting there listening to the announcement for the location of the 2016 Summer Olympics, I thought, 'Who could be luckier than me?' It's either Rio where I was born, or Chicago in the U.S.—it was a win-win. When they announced the Olympics would be played in Rio, I was very excited.

Q: In the 2000 Sydney Games, you were the youngest American water polo player in history to attend the Olympics—what was it like to be in Olympic Village as an 18-year-old?

A: It was incredible. I remember seeing Yao Ming, and Serena and Venus Williams—seeing all the athletes was pretty amazing. But I think the thing that I was most in awe about was the dining hall. It's this humungous hall that has flags for all the countries and has cuisine from every region in the world.

Q: Do you have any funny stories that your older teammates did to you back then?

A: It was a team tradition that if it was your first trip you had to shave your eyebrows. So going into my senior year of high school they took my picture with my shaved eyebrows and posted it all over Long Beach. It was funny.

Q: Can you just talk about some of the differences from being the youngest guy on the team to now being the veteran player?

A: When you're the youngest guy, everything is new to you—you're just going with the flow. I remember looking up to the older guys and thinking that whatever they say goes. I played my heart out and didn't really understand or take in the pressure because as a kid you're just there to play. As a veteran, you take it more seriously. You need to make sure to focus on the same things you do at home in practice—otherwise you can get distracted. The Olympics are this huge 'Disneyland' for athletes, and it's easy to lose focus. I have a different role with the team now. I'm one of the guys who people look up to, and I'm the one that tells them what to expect.



Q: How has living in Long Beach shaped your life?

A: Growing up in the aquatic capital of the United States made me who I am today. As a kid I used to train at Belmont Plaza Pool or at Long Beach State. I felt so lucky because the national team would train at Belmont Plaza and so would my high school team [Wilson]. I eventually got to train with the national team there.

Q: What were the most memorable wins and losses in your career?

A: My most memorable win has to be when we beat Serbia in 2008 to get to the gold medal game. Most people thought

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016**
- Sport: **Water Polo**
- Notable: **One of the best players of all time.**
- Long Beach Connection: **Grew up here, attended Wilson High and recently bought a home here!**



we were going to lose that game—we hadn't beat Serbia in probably seven years. That made it quite a win and quite a journey. My most memorable loss was losing the gold medal game in 2008—being so close after so many years of training and then all of a sudden having it all taken away.

Q: What are your plans after the Olympics, and will this be your last?

A: After every Olympics, I go home and sit down with my family and reassess my career and what's next. I'll do the same after Rio. One of the things I want to do is grow the sport of water polo—that's always been my dream. I'm going to continue with my clinics in Long Beach—I really want to play a part in making a difference in an athlete.

Q: What is your advice to an aspiring Olympic athlete?

You've got to dream big but conquer the little details every day. One of the things I remember doing was writing down all my little goals—one of them was being a starter on my high school team at Wilson, then it was winning with the team, then it was being MVP of my high school, and then it was going on to Stanford for college. If you set small goals along the way, it's going to be a lot more doable than shooting straight for an Olympic gold medal. If you don't have the pathway to get there, the journey is going to be a lot more daunting. ■

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Ryan Bailey

Q&A with 908 writer Jonathan Murrietta via phone

Q: What was it like that first time you went to the Olympics in 2000?

The Olympic Village was always the neatest part of the Olympics for me, aside from playing in the games. The dining hall is where you get to see all the athletes. I remember seeing Yao Ming—I'm 6'5" and barely came up to his armpit.

Q: Your Olympic teammate, Tony Azevedo, shared a funny hazing story involving you and your refusal to have your eyebrows shaved before the 2000 Olympics, and that you were willing to take on any teammate hazer of yours who tried. What ended up happening?

A: It was tradition that the team would shave your eyebrows before your first big trip. But it never happened to me. I backed up into a corner and said, "Ok, bring it on." Needless to say, it never happened [laughs].

Q: You're a four-time Olympic athlete. Of all your Olympic games, which stand out the most?

A: The highlight of my career was playing in the 2008 Beijing Olympics because we won the silver medal. We earned it. We played together for a long time and worked hard over a long period of time.

Q: You were the leading scorer on the team in the 2012 Summer Olympics. Did you know that would be your last Olympics?

A: I definitely knew that was going to be my last Olympics. It was disappointing because I felt like we had the opportunity to do well, but it just didn't come together for us. Scoring goals is one thing but I wanted to win



games. Individual stuff doesn't matter. It's all about winning and being a good teammate.

Q: Walk us through an average day of Olympic training.

A: You go into the weight room at 7 a.m., lift until 8:30, jump in the water at 9, practice until noon, get lunch, take a nap, and then come back to practice at night from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. I did that almost every day for 16 years.

Q: Why do you love Long Beach?

A: Throughout my Olympic career I played with many Olympians on the water polo team from Long Beach. I had great role models—Jody Campbell, Chi Kredell, Kyle Kopp, Robert Lynn. These guys were Olympic water polo players and they're all from here. Long Beach produces tough guys with a relentless work ethic. I'm proud to be from here. There's a reason why I lived all over the world and still ended up in Long Beach. ■

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012
- Sport: Water Polo
- Notable: Made four consecutive Olympic teams playing the center position.
- Long Beach Connection: Grew up here, attended Millikan and still lives here!



Read our full interview with Ryan Bailey at www.lb908.com

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Chi Kredell

Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi at Legends Sports Bar on 2nd St.

Q: What was it like playing the most physical position in the pool?

A: Well, one college season I had my nose broken seven times; I was punched in the face by a spectator after a game at Pepperdine, knocked out; and in the Goodwill Games, I came to St. Petersburg in Russia with two red eyes. The announcer, a famous Olympian water polo announcer interviewed me and said, "You look like heck, what is wrong with you?" It was just the nature of the position. It's kind of like guarding Shaquille O'Neal—you're just going to get beat. Part of the game is showing the referee, "Hey, I'm getting beat up down here!" Because that's the way you get an offensive foul and then it's your ball.

Q: What's it like playing water polo in Europe?

A: Playing overseas was a lot of fun. You find out how big the sport is in other countries. But when you lose, it's all your fault because you're the foreigner. You have to have thick skin.

When I played professionally in Greece, we were in the Champions League with all of the top teams from each country. I had to play against a Yugoslavian team in the playoffs, and it was really hard for my [Greek] club team to get me into the country because in 1997 the U.S. was bombing Yugoslavia. They paid \$2,500 to get me a visa. At first I thought I wasn't going on the trip because I'm American.

By halftime, I was kicked out of the game. They were burning trash cans inside the stadium, it was just craziness. I managed to score three goals that game, and after the game they



put a microphone in my face in front of the huge crowd of spectators and they asked me all political questions. Not one question about the game. The questions were, "We know you're an American, what do you feel about the war? Do you have compassion for the Yugoslavian players' families?"

A lot of tough questions. I basically just told them I am one person and obviously I feel very bad for everyone here in Yugoslavia. I handled it very well. When I was finished with my interview, the translator who was speaking to the crowd came up and hugged me—I became like a superstar. Everyone loved me and started coming up to me. Grandmothers were giving me kisses. To me it was the highlight of my life. It beats going to the Olympics, it beats playing professionally in Europe, just that moment I had with the people of Yugoslavia who didn't know me. It was amazing and really special.

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **2000**
- Sport: **Water Polo**
- Notable: **He and his wife Kristin Barth-Kredell are now directors of Shore Aquatics**
- Long Beach Connection: **Lives here, attended Wilson High and is dedicated to the continuation of Long Beach aquatic success in our youth!**



Q: You've had ups and downs while training for the Olympics. You were on the 2000 Olympic team, but you were also the last one cut in 1996. What was that like for you?

A: It was hard. It was really, really hard. I went from being a starter, while six guys sat on the bench, to being cut. Leading up to that, I never once sat the bench. That disappointment was difficult, but helped me as a person in life. It kept me very grounded. I worked 110% to make the next team.

Q: What part of your game set you apart to make you an Olympic level athlete?

A: You always hope you make an Olympic team, but I never thought I was good enough or big enough. I truly don't believe I was a great water polo player—I was just different from everyone else. I had upper body strength that not a lot of my competitors had. I would throw some muscle out there and guys would kind of move away. I never personally thought I was a great water polo player, but I worked my butt off for what I wanted.

My job was never to go out and be the leading scorer of the game, my job was to protect our players. If guys were hitting them our coach would tell me to get out there and handle that. My job was to give our guys a good shot. ■

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Tony Cruz

Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi at La Parolaccia on Broadway

Q: What initially sparked your interest in becoming an Olympic athlete?

A: During the 1984 Olympics, I begged my dad to take me to the Olympic road race. Halfway through the race, we got close to the finish line and I saw the U.S. win the gold. It's one of those indelible impressions I have as a kid. I turned to my dad and told him I was going to go to the Olympics and cycling was going to take me there.

Q: Tell us about your experiences at the Olympic Trials.

A: I had to win the Olympic trials. There were three positions picked by coach selection, and they had already been determined. There was one spot left. It's so funny because you go into the race as a team but with only one spot left, the gloves come off in those last 25 miles. I went for it. I just keyed off of every move going up the road. I had to be really smart and find the opportunity to seal the deal. Crossing the line, I knew I had it. And then it was really weird, everything just went into slow motion. I had flashbacks from when I was a kid, riding with my dad, crashing my bike, you name it. It was this one little moment when everything just kept rushing back and then all of a sudden, I was like, "I did it!"

Q: What memories stick out about your trip to the 2000 Sydney Olympics?

A: I have a huge family and I had to figure out how to take as many friends and family as possible to the Olympics with me. I ended up taking 21 people. I didn't go to Opening Ceremonies and didn't even stay in Olympic Village because the coach wanted us to stay



focused. Meanwhile, my family was hanging out in all the Olympic hospitality areas, while I was training. At least they got to enjoy the experience!

Q: You have been a Long Beach resident since 1999. What's your favorite thing about the city?

A: Long Beach is such a family friendly city. I was coming to Long Beach when I was a teenager because I had some racer friends who lived out here. By the time I was 17, I told myself that when I could afford a house, I would buy it in Long Beach. Long Beach is great because it is a melting pot of different cultures and ethnicities.

Q: What are you doing now?

A: I'm a bike ambassador for Long Beach. I recently helped launch the Bike Share program in Long Beach. At Bixby Park, I'm going to host a summer bike camp, and hopefully inspire a new generation of Olympic cyclists. ■

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: 2000
- Sport: Cycling
- Notable: Won US Road Cycling Olympic trials in Jackson Mississippi
- Long Beach Connection: Raised his family here, and is the Bike Ambassador of Long Beach.



Read our full interview with Tony Cruz at www.lb908.com



Kids from all over the city enjoy riding their bikes around Bixby Knolls each month with their parents. Themes like “Zombie Ride” and “Ugly Sweater Ride” make each ride extra fun!

Kidical Mass Bike Rides are a fun and fit way to explore Bixby Knolls!

By Blair Cohn

Each third Sunday of the month at 1:00 pm the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association (BKBIA) leads its Kidical Mass event. This is a family-friendly bike ride around the greater Bixby Knolls area. The event is FREE to everyone and open to cyclists of all abilities and even kids in trailers being pulled by their parents. Helmets for kids are mandatory. The route changes each month and is approximately 4.5-miles long. Meet us at Georgie’s Place, 3850 Atlantic Avenue, and you will enjoy our DJ playing reggae music. When you finish the ride there is complimentary ice cream for everyone!

Kidical Mass is a legal, safe and FUN bike ride for kids, kids at heart, and their families. The first ride was held in April 2008 in Eugene, Oregon and has now spread to dozens of commu-

nities throughout North America and into Europe. The rides are meant to be family-friendly bike rides through a community. They generally meet at a park and end not too far away at another fun spot (park, ice cream shop, pool, or special event). Each community figures out the type of ride, routes, locations, and events that work best for their area families.

All types of bikes, trailers, trail-a-bikes, Xtracycles, longtails, bakfiets, Long Johns, tandems, folders, trikes, and whatever rolls are welcome! We celebrate the fact that kids are traffic too and aim for family fun on vehicles that don’t hurt the future! It’s a great excuse to pedal around town with your family.

Each month we have a fun theme that adds to the experience of the ride, including: Zombie Ride, Ugly Sweater Ride, Bike Messenger Ride, Leprechaun Watch, and the Adventure Ride. And each August we present the “Iron Kid Award” to the kid who has improved the most over the last year. Three of the last four winners have been four-year-olds!

Why a kids’ bike ride? The City of Long Beach has invested resources into new bike infrastructure and creating “bike friendly business districts” across the whole city. The BKBIA joined the national Kidical Mass movement as a way to help activate the neighborhood, bring the community together, and show off the business district. Teaching bike safety to kids is a critical component each month before we begin each ride. Hand signals are reviewed before we set off and staff members lead the ride and act as course marshals along the route. Also, staff is on hand to help pump up your tires and make minor adjustments to your bikes.

See you at Georgie’s Place, 3850 Atlantic Avenue. Come a bit early to meet and greet other riders. The ride begins promptly at 1:00 pm. Bring a helmet! ■



Find us at: Instagram/Twitter @BixbyKnolls or Facebook.com/BKBIA #KidicalMassBK

Adam Wright

Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi via phone from UCLA where Adam now coaches

Q: What are some of the best memories from your first trip to the Olympics, the 2004 Athens Games?

A: For most of us, it was our first Olympic Games, and we didn't know what to expect. I'll never forget the pre-game introductions, and walking into a stadium of 10,000 people. That first game was do or die. When the Star Spangled Banner started playing that's when it hit me—we were in the Olympics, and right away we were in a game that if we lost, it would be difficult for us to continue on in the tournament. We were ahead the whole way and then Croatia tied it. With two seconds to go, Tony Azevedo hit a shot to win the game for us.

Q: During your Olympic training, you coached a little bit at Wilson High School. What was that like?

A: I was an assistant coach and got to be a part of four great years of Wilson water polo. I always knew that I wanted to coach someday. Some of the greatest influences in my life were coaches, and I thought it was a unique opportunity to have an effect on people. I worked with Tony Martinho and Klaus Barth, which was really special for me. Long Beach is a really special place for aquatics. Not necessarily because we are natural watermen, but because we have people who are dedicated to the sport, and to teaching kids and molding them into the best they can be. I am lucky I got to be a part of it.

Q: You are the water polo coach at UCLA. Is there a difference between playing and coaching?

A: Playing is much easier. Nobody really understands everything that goes into coaching until you actually coach



yourself. You have to hope that you did everything right in practice because once the game starts, there is no going back to change what you did as coach.

Q: What were your standout moments playing in the 2008 Olympics?

A: We were able to put something together that was super special for this country. That's what makes it so amazing—we had our backs against the wall, and yet we were able to win the first medal for USA men's water polo since 1992. I'll never forget facing Serbia in the semifinals to win that silver medal—we put down probably the best game in the history of USA water polo. When that buzzer went off, it was an out of body experience. So many things flashed through my mind, all the way down to when I was a kid, playing with some of these same players as an eight-year-old in Long Beach. Although we didn't get the gold, it meant so much to us to win the silver medal. ■

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **2004, 2008, 2012**
- Sport: **Water Polo**
- Notable: **Starter in three consecutive Olympics**
- Long Beach Connection: **Grew up here, attended Wilson and now head coach at UCLA!**



Read our full interview with Adam Wright at www.lb908.com

Adam Duvendeck

Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi at La Parolaccia on Broadway

Q: What first inspired you to become an Olympian?

A: When I was 12 years old growing up in Santa Barbara, I had the chance to join the junior community team. My coach was Rory O'Reilly, a cyclist on the 1984 Olympic team. Looking up to him was something that inspired me to be an Olympian. There's some crazy statistic about how a high percentage of Olympians knew they wanted to become an Olympian when they met an Olympian—that was true for me.

Q: When did you realize you had the talent to become a pro cyclist?

A: It started off with winning the junior National Championships. I won quite decisively. I had the opportunity to move out to the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs. I graduated high school a half year early to move out there. Once I was at the training center, I realized that I was truly a part of this Olympic community. You're with all these other athletes who share the same vision as you.

Every morning, you go to that cafeteria and you're sitting next to the wrestlers and the volleyball players and all the people who use that as their home base to prepare for the Games. For me, I was young but felt that I had an outside chance of making the team for Sydney in 2000. But, it didn't happen. I was so close, seeing one of my friends make the team gave me the drive to spend another four years of my life dedicated to making the team four years later.

Q: Your cycling career has taken you all over the world. What's been your favorite venue?

A: I'd probably go with the Velodrome



in Moscow, Russia just because there's no other track like that in the entire world. It's an indoor 333-meter beautiful wood track and is extremely fast.

Q: What are your favorite memories from the 2008 Beijing Games?

A: We became friends with the tennis star James Blake and we caught up with him in the Olympic Village after his defeat to Roger Federer to go to the medal round, and he was just crushed. So we decided to go out for a drink to cheer him up. But we were in Beijing—we didn't know where to go. I called up some NBC producers I had met, thinking that they knew the area better, and it turns out, they were going out that night to celebrate Al Roker's 52nd birthday. They invited us to come along. Here we were with the NBC crew like Matt Lauer, Al Roker, and Meredith Vieira. We all went out for a night of karaoke. It was super funny—something that would have never happened to me outside the Olympics. ■

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **2004, 2008**
- Sport: **Cycling**
- Notable: **Claimed two elite National titles at U.S. Track Cycling Championships.**
- Long Beach Connection: **Trained here for the Olympics and still lives on the Peninsula.**



Lauren Wenger

*Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi at
Aroma Di Roma on 2nd. St.*

Q: Tell us about your journey to the Olympics?

A: I started playing water polo in high school at Wilson. I played soccer when I was younger and always dreamed of becoming an Olympian, but I didn't know which sport would take me there until I found water polo. After high school, I got a scholarship to USC, which was my dream school. I give a lot of credit to Adam Wright, who was our assistant coach at Wilson. He just kept saying, "Lauren, if you can get faster, you are going to be on the national team." He saw my talent before I could even grasp it myself, so he worked with me one-on-one. He really believed in me first.

Q: What was it like being a first-time Olympian in 2008?

A: I remember walking in with all my teammates in our matching gear and getting our badges—that's when I thought, "This is for real." We all had tears in our eyes. It was so amazing to see the United States flags in the crowd during the Opening Ceremonies in Beijing. All these flashes are going off and you feel like a celebrity.

Everyone forgets that I have a silver medal from Beijing, but that one is really important to me because it gave me the motivation to go for another Olympic Games. I wasn't done yet.

Q: There were high expectations for USA women's water polo coming into the London Olympics in 2012. Can you describe how the team rallied around that pressure?

A: We definitely had high expectations to win a gold medal. We had been at three Olympic Games and medaled at



every single one. We had all the medals from other international tournaments also, but we were missing that Olympic gold. We were ready to make history.

Q: What was it like being a part of the first Olympic gold for USA women's water polo in 2012?

A: I have goosebumps just thinking about it. We played Spain and they were beating everybody at that time. We were down early in the first quarter in the gold medal match, but we got some momentum and took the lead. We anxiously waited for that clock to tick down to 0.00 seconds. We were all crying and jumping in the pool when it was over and we realized we had won the game. Looking at our families in the stands that had supported us all those hard years was amazing and emotional. This was our time. We had made history.

Q: What kind of a whirlwind awaited you after winning the gold?

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **2008, 2012**
- Sport: **Water Polo**
- Notable: **Helped the team win a silver medal and the first ever gold in Women's Water Polo.**
- Long Beach Connection: **Grew up here, attended Wilson and now lives in Naples with her family.**



Read our full interview with Lauren Wenger at www.lb908.com

A: It was midnight by the time we finished the post-game interviews and got out of there. The next morning, we got up early to do the Today show with Matt Lauer. We had been trying so hard to grow our sport and trying to educate people on why water polo is such a cool sport. Winning the gold medal definitely gave water polo some attention. When I got home, I participated in the Long Beach parade of Olympians. It was cool to be celebrated. We'd be walking down the street and people were saying congratulations. It was awesome!

Q: What does your life look like now?

A: My husband is a firefighter, working for the city of Ontario. We have a daughter who will turn three in August—she was born exactly a year after we won the gold medal, so she's our gold medal baby. And we just had our second daughter. Life is great!

Q: Finally, what is your favorite thing about Long Beach and what are some of your favorite LB hangouts?

A: I love how much people enjoy the outdoors here. Everyone is so active. If they're not at the beach, they're at the park, or on 2nd Street. I always come to Aroma di Roma—that's where I'd always go for coffee before practice—and we like to take the family to Riley's [on 2nd Street] for dinner. I still swim at the Long Beach Yacht Club. ■



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Jessica Hardy

Q&A with 908 writer John Grossi via email while preparing for Olympic Trials

Jessica Hardy watched the 2000 Sydney Games on television in awe of the gold medalist swimmers and set out to follow in their footsteps. As a freshman at Wilson High School, Jessica played water polo for strength conditioning and to improve her swim time. After school, she would work out at the Belmont Pool.

In high school, her talents began to shine. During her junior and senior years, she won the Individual CIF Championship and was named National High School Swimmer of the Year.

The highlight of Jessica's career came in the 2012 London Olympics, where she won two Olympic medals—a bronze in the 4x100-meter freestyle relay and a gold medal in the 4x100-meter medley relay.

Hardy's swim career has taken her all over the world. Her favorite countries include Australia and Brazil.

Hardy was kind enough to answer a few questions for 908 Magazine's Olympian issue, despite her hectic schedule, as she competed at the Olympic Trials for a bid to Rio. Unfortunately, she did not qualify for the Olympic team and after the trials, posted on social media that it was probably the last race of her career.

"But today is the first day of the rest of my life," she said. That life includes paddle boarding across the bay, as well as riding through the Naples canals in Long Beach. Here are a few additional interesting tidbits about Jessica's Olympic experiences and her love for Long Beach.



Q: What is your most incredible Olympic memory?

A: Seeing my husband, Dominik Meichtry [a three-time Swiss Olympic swimmer] in the athlete's village for the first time in 2012 was amazing. He represented Switzerland, and I was with the USA. We'd been apart for a long time with different training camps. It was awesome to share the experience with him!

Q: Where is your favorite location to celebrate your victories?

A: I love having my friends and family to our house in Naples.

Q: Why are you proud to call Long Beach home?

A: I love the small town feeling that it has. We don't have the traffic or tourists that LA or the OC have, but we get all the same perks—great weather, great people. Without Long Beach, I would never have realized my dream. ■

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **2012**
- Sport: **Swimming**
- Notable: **She has won 28 medals in major international competition, 14 gold**
- Long Beach Connection: **Attended Wilson and now lives in Naples with her husband!**



LATANYA SHEFFIELD

LONG BEACH STATE TRACK AND FIELD



LATANYA SHEFFIELD, A FORMER OLYMPIAN AND AMERICAN RECORD HOLDER, HAS SPENT FOUR YEARS AS AN ASSISTANT COACH AT LONG BEACH STATE. SHE WORKS WITH THE SPRINTERS, HURDLERS, AND RELAYS. SHEFFIELD HAS BEEN SELECTED TO TEAM USA'S COACHING STAFF FOR THE 2016 OLYMPIC GAMES IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, WHERE SHE WILL WORK WITH THE WOMEN'S SPRINTERS AND HURDLERS.

McKayla Maroney

Q&A with 908 writer Jonathan Murrietta at Nekter Juice Bar at Marketplace

Q: When you arrived for the 2012 London Games, what was the Olympic Village like?

A: It was so cool seeing all the athletes in the Olympic Village. I got to meet Michael Phelps, Ryan Lochte, Usain Bolt. It was fun being in that environment—with everyone so focused and in the same boat as you.

Q: Describe how it felt when you stuck that landing.

A: It was a miracle. There were definitely angels flying around me at that time. It was so surreal. The Olympics in general are such an electric environment. But I had to zone all that out. I had trained my entire life for this and had to just remember all those days in the gym when it was just me. I was in my own bubble after I stuck that vault, and even though the crowd went wild, I didn't hear anything. It was like a deafening silence.

Q: Your individual vault didn't go as well. After a fall, you ended up with the silver. How did you feel about that moment?

A: At first I didn't get it. I questioned, "Why did this happen?" That's what's crazy about the Olympics. People who are "supposed to win" don't win sometimes. Unfortunately, I was dealing with so many different injuries. Right before I did my second vault, I said, "God, let whatever you want to have happen to me, happen." That vault taught me a lot. In life, it's not how you fall, it's how you get back up.

Q: Standing with the silver in the individual ceremony sparked your infamous "not impressed face." How did that change your life?



A: After the "not impressed face," I just had so many people following me around wanting me to do the "not impressed face" with them in pictures. We had to have so much security—it was insane. I didn't expect that at all.

Q: It's been a few months since you announced your retirement from competitive gymnastics. What are you up to now?

A: Right now, music is my biggest priority. I want to break into the alternative-pop industry. I've done some acting too. I'm also developing a photo-editing app, writing a book, and developing a leotard line, so I have all these different things I'm working on.

Q: Are you still involved with and interested in gymnastics?

A: Gymnastics will forever be a part of my life. The girls who are going to be on the next Olympic team are my best friends in the whole world. I'm definitely supporting them when in Rio. ■

Quick Facts:

- Olympic Years: **2012**
- Sport: **Gymnastics**
- Notable: **Helped the team win a gold medal and took home silver in the individual vault.**
- Long Beach Connection: **Trained here and still lives here. Her siblings attend Minnie Gant and Wilson!**



Read our full interview with McKayla Maroney at www.lb908.com

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MORE NOTEWORTHY OLYMPIANS...

FROM LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA!

By Andrew Douglass

Long Beach has earned its reputation as one of the finest sporting towns in the United States. It's home to hundreds of Olympians whose successes reach beyond their respective sports and into the community. With the abundance of athletes that this city claims, it is nearly impossible to give each and every one the credit they're due within the confines of a single magazine. With that being said, the athletes listed below include some of the track and field greats, members of the esteemed U.S. men's and women's water polo teams, and Olympians who played on the Long Beach State Volleyball team. We've also included a tribute to a beloved figure in the local and global community who has since passed away, Joan Van Blom. We hope you enjoy reading about these great athletes as much as we enjoyed writing about them.

TRACK AND FIELD

Earl Thomson, originally from Canada, lived in SoCal and attended LB Poly before joining the RAF during WWI. Although he suffered a gunshot wound to the chest prior to the 1920 Olympics, he competed for Canada anyway, and took home gold in the hurdles, thus becoming the first LB-associated athlete to win Olympic gold.

Martha Watson, a long jumper and sprinter, was the first woman to compete in 4 Olympics as a track athlete. She qualified for her first Olympics while at Poly and was coached by local legend Ron Alice, who held coaching jobs at Wilson, Poly, Long Beach State, Long Beach City and USC.

John Rambo attended Poly where he played on the 1960 CIF basketball team. He won the bronze medal in high jump at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and was drafted to the NBA just a year afterwards.

Bob Seagren runs and organizes the Long Beach Marathon. He set an Olympic pole vault record and won gold at the Mexico City games in 1968.

Dwight Stones was the NCAA indoor and outdoor high jump champion for Long Beach State in 1976. Stones won two bronze medals and set three high jump world records during his Olympic career ('72, '76, and '84).



Bryshon Nellum

Jack Rose was the Long Beach State track coach for 25 years. During his stint as head coach he presided over notable Beach track alumni like John Rambo and Dwight Stones. Legend has it that Rose took a light from the '84 Olympic torch and lit his water heater, which has remained lit to this day.

Lashinda Demus, a 3-time Olympian, took silver in the 400 meter hurdles at the 2012 London Olympics. The Wilson High alum still holds the national high school record for the 300 hurdles.

Andrea Anderson was part of the Long Beach Poly track team that became the first American school to win the 400 and 1,600-meter girls' relay at the Penn Relays. She went on to win gold in the 4x400 relay at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney.

Bryshon Nellum played wide receiver at Long Beach Poly and overcame a shooting that left shotgun pellets in both legs to qualify for the 2012 Olympics. Most recently, he helped the US take home gold in the 4x400 relay at the 2015 World Championships.

WATER POLO

Ron Crawford played on the US Men's Water Polo Team for the '60, '64 and '68 Olympic games and was the first American to crack the International Water Polo Hall of Fame. Prior to his Olympic success, he led the 49ers to a state championship and took All-American honors in both years he played for Beach.

Tim Shaw was selected as Long Beach State's Athlete of the Year three times and won the Sullivan Award while he was a swimmer for the 49ers. He went onto be a part of the world record 4x200 relay team and was a member of the '84 US water polo team, regarded as the best team of all time.

Doug Kimbell was a member of the US Water Polo team in '88 and '92, taking home the silver medal in 1988. He is a member of the CSULB Hall of Fame and his son Jackson currently competes on the US National Team.

Robert Lynn competed in the Sydney Games in 2000 where the team took 6th. The Wilson High grad also presided as an assistant coach for the 2008 team that took silver in Beijing.



Tim Shaw

Chris Segesman was a member of the US Olympic team for the 2004 Athens Games. Segesman previously was a 3-time All-American at CSULB and now coaches the Mater Dei water polo team.

Jackie Frank began her career at Los Al High where she was named an All-American for four years. She was a member of the 2004 US water polo team that took bronze in Athens.

Chay Lapin, as successful as they come during his days as a Wilson Bruin, took home CIF Player of the Year honors in 2004 as goalkeeper for the Bruins. He eventually played his way into a spot on the 2012 US water polo team that competed in London.

Coaches

Bob Horn competed in the '56 and '60 Olympics, played water polo at CSULB where he took All-American honors, and coached the UCLA team for 28 years. He coached the '68 and '72 Olympic teams and earned bronze in 1972.

Guy Baker started his esteemed career at CSULB where he was a star player. He eventually took over as the coach for Beach, which led him to become the head women's water polo coach for the '00, '04 and '08 Olympic teams that took home two silvers and a bronze.



Danielle Scott-Aruda

Ken Lindgren coached the CSULB water polo team from 1972-1979 including local Olympic legend Tim Shaw. From there, he was named as an assistant coach for the 1984 Olympic men's water polo team that took silver in Los Angeles.

Ricardo Azevedo is widely regarded as one of the finest water polo coaches in the world. His resume includes coaching positions at CSULB, the US Men's national team and his current position as the head coach for the Chinese women's national team. His son Tony is widely regarded as the best American water polo player in the world.

VOLLEYBALL

Tayyiba Haneef-Park was named to the AVCA All-American first team during her time at Long Beach State. Haneef-Park competed in the 2004, 2008, and 2012 Olympics and twice won silver.

Danielle Scott-Aruda broke a US female volleyball record by competing in five straight Olympic games (1996-2012). She was a three-time AVCA All-American first-teamer in volleyball and earned All-Big West honors in basketball during her time at LB State.



JOAN VAN BLOM

When the topic of Long Beach Olympians is brought up, few names can be mentioned before Joan Van Blom. As a rower, Van Blom competed in two Olympics where she took home the silver medal and is widely regarded as the best female rower to ever come out of the United States. Undoubtedly she was an outstanding talent on the water, but her impeccable character and warm personality is what stands out to anyone who knew her.

As a teacher in the Long Beach Unified School District for 25 years she touched countless children's lives and taught them the importance of physical fitness. Tom McKibbin coached Van Blom through both Olympic appearances, and had nothing but great things to say about the Olympian. "She was a total delight. She never gave in. She was such an unbelievable ambassador for our country. She had a smile that could light up the world. Everyone loved her no matter where we went."

Her husband John Van Blom accompanied Joan through her Olympic journey and provided insight into her competitive spirit. "She was extremely competitive and focused. I think a lot of people would want to coast after getting to a level like that but she kept pushing herself harder and harder. She wasn't satisfied just to be ahead..."

Joan Van Blom left her mark on Long Beach with the same grace with which she left her mark on the world.

Monte Nitzkowski

A Long Beach Water Polo Coaching Legend

By Jonathan Murrietta

He is responsible for teaching, coaching, and molding many of Long Beach's best water polo Olympic athletes.

His Olympic career began in the 1952 Games. Nitzkowski made the swim team and posted the ninth-best time in the 200-meter butterfly during the 1952 Games, held in Helsinki, Finland.

"The Finns had a great relationship with the USA and just went crazy when we came out marching into that stadium during Opening Ceremonies," Nitzkowski recalls. "I said to myself, 'This is an absolutely great experience. I've got to find a way to repeat it.'"

Though Monte was an Olympian swimmer, he loved water polo and was determined to return to the electricity of the Olympics in his new favorite sport. Nitzkowski earned his master's degree and teaching credential at Long Beach State. Long Beach City College hired him in 1955. In his nearly four decades as the LBCC water polo coach, Nitzkowski helped the Vikings win 32 conference championships. Between 1955 and 1989, Nitzkowski coached many athletes who would go on to play in the Olympics. One of those players was Maureen O'Toole, a member of USA's silver medal-winning women's water polo team in the 2000 Olympics.

"Monte was an incredible coach," O'Toole said. He was such a great coach on discipline—he just drilled you until you did it right. I think he made me such a better player because of



that. He was a big part of my Olympic journey."

Nitzkowski fulfilled his own Olympic dreams, returning to the Games as a water polo coach in four Olympics, acting as the assistant coach for Team USA in 1968 in Mexico City, and then becoming head coach of the team in the Munich, Germany Games in 1972, where USA water polo won its first medal—a bronze.

"I always stressed the tactical side of the game to my players," Nitzkowski said. "I realized if we were going to get a medal, we were going to have to force the Europeans to play a different style of game. We weren't going to win a whole lot of arm wrestling matches against, say, those huge Yugoslavs—we had to find other ways to beat them, and we did—through tactics based upon mobility.

In 1976, USA failed to qualify for the Olympics and Nitzkowski returned as head coach of USA water polo in 1980, only to run into President Carter's boycott of the Olympics that year.

"We had one of our best teams going into Moscow, but Carter's boycott ended that," Nitzkowski said. "Then

we had to wait two years to get funding again because once you have a boycott, you lose funding. We had a hard time getting the team back together because of the horrendous disappointment of that boycott and the lack of training funds, so it was really kind of a miracle that we even got to the 1984 Olympics." They ended up with the silver medal.

After the '84 Olympics, Nitzkowski coached five more years at Long Beach City College before retiring in 1989.

"Long Beach City College helped me achieve my dreams," Nitzkowski said. "Coaching in a community college is different because every athlete is either coming or going. They're either a freshman or a sophomore—you never have that third or fourth year, so you have to get a lot of teaching done. We just developed program after program."

This year, Nitzkowski will be watching the Rio Olympics from his home in Huntington Beach, cheering on both the USA men's and women's water polo teams.

"I'll be watching with great interest," Nitzkowski said. "Tony Azevedo [captain of USA's men's water polo team] is like a grandson to me. I've known him since he was two years old. He is such a great player. And I'm looking for great results out of the women's team. They have a great shot to do really well this year."

Over the course of 48 years, Monte Nitzkowski has been a monumental figure in USA Olympic aquatics as an athlete, coach, mentor, and administrator. For many in Long Beach, Nitzkowski is both family and a treasure. Asked about how he'd like to be remembered, Monte puts it simply.

"As a teacher," he said. "As someone who cared about both the kids and the sport." ■

Dream in Gold!!



Misty May-Treanor Plays Ball with Long Beach Youth

By Andrea Sampson

Since 2004, interest in beach volleyball has spiked, and much of it has to do with Olympic fans watching Long Beach's own Misty May-Treanor and her partner Kerrie Walsh-Jennings clinch gold at the Athens Olympics, again in Beijing, and for a third time in London. They introduced the sport to a generation of young people and the interest continues to grow.

According to NCAA, sand volleyball added 1.4 million participants between 2007 and 2013, and participation among girls ages 6 to 24 jumped by 45 percent.

In Long Beach, we are lucky to have Misty May-Treanor as part of our community. Besides recently becoming the

Misty May-Treanor offers her new Beach Volleyball Clinic to Long Beach youth of any skill level. Optional practices are held three times a week on Granada St. adjacent to dog beach in LB!

head volleyball coach at LBCC, she also follows in the Long Beach tradition of high profile athletes giving back to youth sports! At her new club—Dream in Gold—kids ages 12-18 can learn the sport of sand volleyball from one of the best.

Dream in Gold (D.I.G.) is a complete beach volleyball program for girls and boys—beginners to established athletes. “The goal is to help kids improve their skills,” said Misty. “I want to promote and teach volleyball the right way.”

The club offers packages that can be tailored to fit busy schedules and includes a uniform and top-notch training. Misty knows that the majority of volleyball players are also playing indoor, so she doesn't want to compete with their schedules. “Kids can train once, twice or three times a week,” she

said. “We don't want to conflict with their indoor practices.”

One of the benefits of D.I.G. is the all-around training. Misty says that as kids advance through indoor programs, they are often focused on a specific position, which limits their training. D.I.G. allows kids to come out to the beach and practice all of their skills without being limited by position.

The D.I.G. staff is a line-up of impressive names, including Skyler McCoy, Tiffany Jestadt-Rodriguez, and Butch May (Misty's dad), and practice is conveniently located at Granada Beach. Private training is also available.

“The point of D.I.G. was to bring beach to the city,” said Misty. “Anyone is welcome—we want kids to keep their options open, learn the game, and have some fun.” ■

For more information visit www.dreaminggoldbeach.com

Remaining BriStrong Now and Forever... Brienne Barth (1981-2016)

By John Grossi

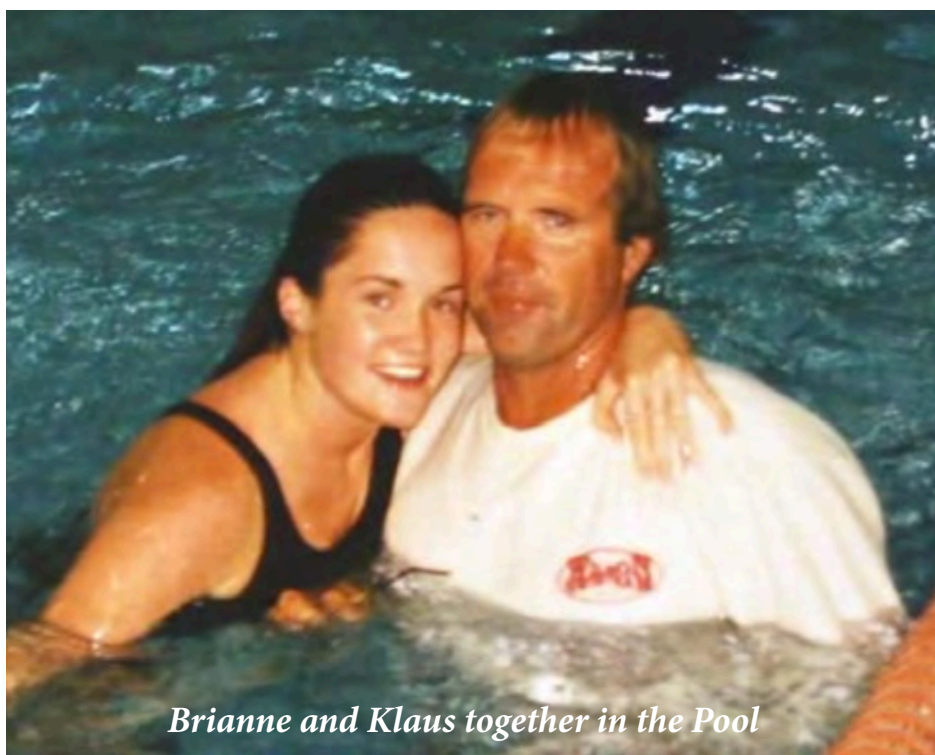
Brienne Barth, long-time Shore Aquatics swim coach and daughter of legendary Klaus Barth, passed away this June. Despite Brienne's close attention to her health care – seeking medical care early on – her diagnosis was delayed. She lost her courageous battle with cervical cancer at the age of 35. Her young athletes cried their eyes out. She had taught these kids, some starting as early as 6 months old, to swim. Some of them have reached the top of their age group in both swimming and water polo.

“Don’t sail me down the river,” Brienne would say with the twinge of a smile and the ever-present sarcasm in her voice. That was one of her famous lines—just like her Dad before her had, “You can do it!” engrained in his athlete’s being. Coming from Brienne the words meant, “Don’t cheat me. Trust me. Trust what I’m doing. Be on my team.” And if you were a part of Brienne’s team, you were golden.

Her successes – in coaching, competing and fighting cancer came from the very base of who she was. Always positive, always loving, always encouraging, always trying harder than everyone else and never giving up. It came more or less from being a Barth.

If you don’t know the Barth’s, you know a family like them. Long Beach is chock full of them—it’s a part of what makes the city so great. The Barth’s are special.

In Naples and aquatic communities and



Brienne and Klaus together in the Pool

beyond, the Barth’s’ house was and still is the place where everyone is welcome. There are always gatherings at the Barth home. Kids and adults alike are drawn to the home where they are always welcome.

Unfortunately, for the second time this decade, we are forced to reflect on the huge impact this family has had on the success of city athletes, due to another tragic, untimely death.

Brienne Barth was and is a shining example of everything that is great, positive, and noteworthy about living in the “Aquatic Capital of America.” Her exposure to aquatics, her success, and her commitment to giving back is fundamental for so many athletes in Long Beach and a reason that this city continues to hammer out Olympic level athletes as if we have a secret mold.

Brienne started at Beach and then Shore as a youngster. Starting with age group swim and water polo, she moved on to beach competitions with LBJG’s, Jr. Olympics, making the national water polo youth team, and winning CIF swim for Wilson High School with her sister Kristin. Brienne then played wa-

ter polo for UCLA and professionally in Nice, France.

In 2006 when Klaus passed, the indescribable impact he’d made on the Long Beach community came to light—especially for his daughters. The outpouring of condolences and stories from hundreds and hundreds of people he coached brought a sense of purpose to his daughters. They needed to be back in a pool.

Kristin re-started a swim program at Shore Aquatics, which at that time was focusing only on water polo. She and her husband, Olympian Chi Kredell, would later go on to become directors of the revamped Shore Aquatics Club, which is still thriving today.

In order to bring back Shore’s national dominance, the club had to focus on the young—the very beginning swimmers—in order to reap benefits in older age groups down the line.

The key to developing the beginners was Brienne. That was her specialty and nobody did it like her. It was the most important lane and she was the best. They called it the guppy tank.

Countless young swimmers and water polo players in our city entered the pool for the first time with Brianne Barth. Whether they were scared, or crying, or too little to know what was going on, Brianne knew exactly what to do with them. She taught two and three-year-olds how to push their limits, always in the water right next to them exuding love, confidence, and positivity.

It seems appropriate now, as we talk about Olympians and the depth and talent of aquatics in the city, to make sure we give Brianne the appropriate recognition. The impact of her coaching career, although it was cut short, will continue to be felt throughout the aquatic community.

For the surviving Barth's, who are still trying to do what's best for the kids of Long Beach, they can take comfort in knowing that we are not going to "sail Brianne down the river."

We will remember her forever, and her students and friends are better off for knowing her. One young student asked this summer, "Is BB teaching swim lessons in heaven now?"

The answer to that young girl is "yes." She's up on the pool deck in the sky with her Dad Klaus looking down on Long Beach, telling us, "You can do it!" and "BriStrong!" ■

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What is the Long Beach Century Club?

And Why Does Long Beach Have So Darn Many Olympic Athletes?

By John Grossi

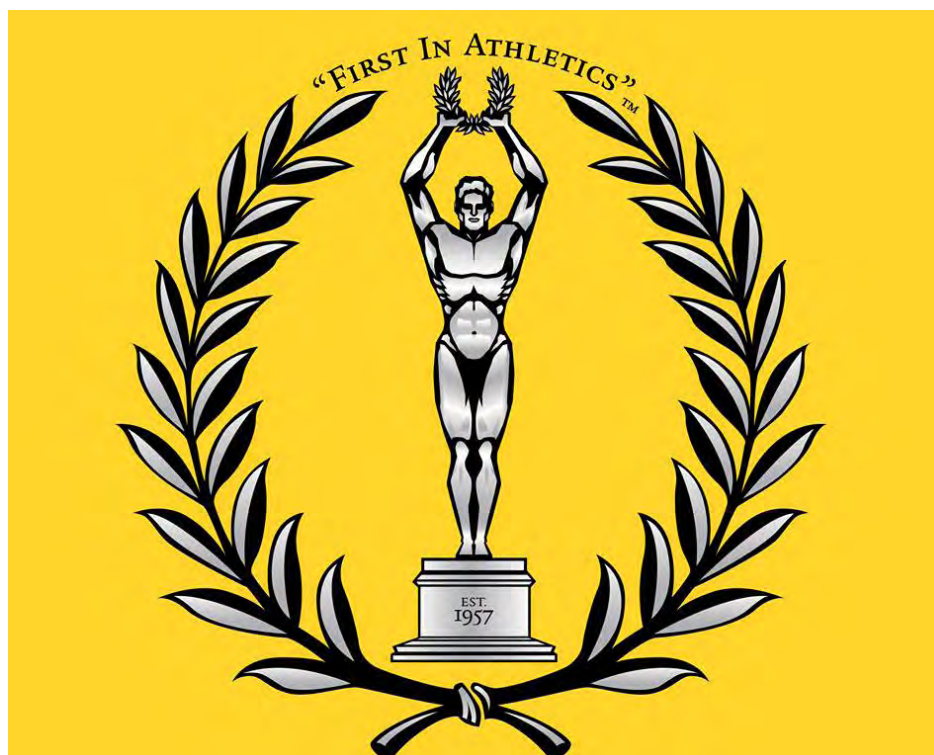
Anyone who knows a lot about the history and success of Long Beach sports will tell you that an integral ingredient to the success formula is the Century Club.

You know the Century Club, right? Sure you do. If you or your kids grew up in Long Beach and played any sports you've felt their presence. Maybe you've been to one of their banquets, or received one of their plaques, or you vaguely remember enjoying some sports related function brought to you by the "Century Club."

But my guess is you don't really know what the Century Club is, because if you really knew what the Century Club was, and any part of you likes the combination Long Beach, youth, and sports...then you would belong to the Century Club. At least that's how it worked for me. The day someone explained to me what the club was really all about, I joined!

So what is the Century Club?

It's not a brick and mortar building or some secret society with a password. It is a group of Long Beach residents -- over 300 members and counting -- that pool together at least \$100 a year



to support middle school, high school, and college level athletes in Long Beach. The members come from every zip code in the city, every school, retired and working, young and old, rich and not so rich, you name it.

What makes the Century Club so appealing, is that once you pay your yearly \$100 membership, you can choose how much extra involvement you desire to give. Here's what the membership gets you:

- 1) The satisfaction that your money is being pooled with hundreds of others' to support athletes and programs in need, and will help carry on the tradition of accessibility and achievement in LB youth sports.
- 2) Invitation to weekly meetings on Tuesdays at The Boathouse (or another local restaurant) where local sports are discussed and exciting speakers regale about everything Long Beach sports.
- 3) Weekly updates via email on the doings of the club, opportunities to donate your time and/or money to individual LB athletic causes, and updates regarding the athletic prowess of our city's athletes.

It's a fantastic club to join even if you never attend a meeting because of the dominant impact Century Club has on athletes in the city. The club helps at all levels...whether it's a struggling high school program hoping to keep up with the resources available to its competitors, or a great Long Beach athlete seeking the resources to become great on the national scene.

One of the most famous and relevant examples of the Century Club's impact on Long Beach athletes was its backing of Misty May-Treanor's beach volleyball career.

After a college career which resulted in an NCAA Volleyball Championship and two individual MVP awards at Long Beach State, Misty decided to make the switch from indoor to beach volleyball. The sport had little to no backing and players had to pay their own way to compete on the tour. Misty, a humble local girl just out of Long Beach State, turned to a source that has helped decades of athletes in need - the Century Club.

The local sports enthusiasts (like you and me) that make up the club knew

that Misty was a special player. They'd seen her sell out the Pyramid and knew that if she focused on beach volleyball, she would dominate in that playing field as well. So they sponsored her until she could support herself on her play alone...which didn't take long. The rest is history as she is the all time most dominant athlete in the sport winning three Olympic gold medals.

But Misty wasn't the first big name to get her start from the Century Club. Ever heard of a tennis player named Billie Jean King? She turned out to be a pretty great player whose earnings could eventually pay for her world class travel. But that wasn't always the case.

When she was just a 17-year-old phenom at Poly High School who happened to be beating the heck out of everyone she played, Billie Jean Moffitt qualified for Wimbledon. Though her dad ran an honest business in Long Beach called Moffitt's Chicken Pot Pies, he didn't quite sell enough pastries to casually afford a flight to England for his daughter. However, when pooled together, the members of the Century Club and others could help her out.

Talk about another investment that paid dividends to the city. To this day, when asked about her start in professional tennis, Billie Jean King forever thanks the Long Beach Century Club.

So, do you have to be a household name to get a donation from the Century Club? No, in fact most recipients of help are not. For example, the current goal for every middle school athlete in the city is to "go to the banquet." They're talking about the big end-of-year banquet put on by the Century Club for every athlete and his or her family who is part of a championship middle school team. That means every sport and every division, but only Champions. It's a cherished moment for everyone involved and goes a long way in teaching kids to strive to be winners.



Pictured above: Past Presidents Dan Gooch, Sam Breuklander, and Mike Guardabascio with current President Keith Hansen (2nd from right)
To join the Century Club or to ask more questions about what they do please contact head of membership Dan Garcia at dgtiger15@gmail.com

A few years ago when the Poly High School girls' basketball team was playing a travel tournament in Florida, the van with all their gear and belongings was broken into and everything was stolen. The incident was not only devastating to the team, but also created very practical problems. Luckily their coach knew who to contact.

With an organization like the Century Club already in place, it only took a few emails and a "passing of the hat" to pool together the resources to get the Poly team new gear. Others in town also contributed. Long Beach likes to take care of its own.

Being a part of Century Club is easy. Pay your \$100 a year membership fees and then decide what you want to do from there. If you choose to go to a meeting every Tuesday, you will certainly be entertained by dynamic speakers from all over the sports world in Long Beach. Have a few beers and enjoy some hors d'oeuvres while the Moore League baseball coaches share expectations for the upcoming season.

Or hear the story of a local youth soccer team competing in nationals. The guest speakers come weekly and are filled with exciting anecdotes of local prowess from every sport.

It's hard to describe this club's impact because it builds on you slowly. The more events you go to, the more stories you hear, the more athletes you see come back to thank the club once they've "made it," whether that means athletically or financially or both.

Almost everyone we interviewed for this issue mentioned the Century Club in some capacity as a part of their "road to the Olympics." The recognition that the club gives to our youth also gives them something to strive for. The Century Club gives local athletic events and functions the donated time and manpower to run smoothly. Perhaps most importantly they give young athletes in need the required money to level the playing field.

In return Long Beach athletes have shown for decades that when given the chance to compete on a level playing field, they can bring home the gold. ■

The Press Guys

Long Beach 908 Magazine Publisher John Grossi sits down with four sports writing icons from the Press Telegram. James McCormack was sports editor for 45 years, Mike Guardabascio and JJ Fidler are the current "Sports Guys" for the Press Telegram and Gazette newspapers. Bob Keisser is a highly respected southern California sports writer who worked at the Press Telegram for 23 years from 1990 to 2013.

When it comes to Long Beach sports over the last 5 decades, these guys know best. The full interview is online at www.lb908.com. Enjoy their insight!

What are some interesting or funny stories from covering the Olympics?

Bob: In 1988, the Summer Olympics was the biggest sporting event in the history of Seoul, Korea. I remember Korea was so compact, it was difficult to move around in the downtown area. And I was about 6 inches taller than everyone else in the city, so I was just trying to dodge all these smaller people. (laughs) But the people were determined to put on a great event and they really did. I have nothing but positive memories from Korea.

The only real glitch came during the boxing competition. A gold medal favorite ended up winning the silver because of a horrible decision. In another match, a Korean boxer got eliminated, and he sat down in the middle of the ring and wouldn't leave. For literally 25 minutes. The boxing was really a mess from start to finish, but everything else was pretty great.

JJ: In London 2012 the coolest experience for me was going to the USA men's basketball practice. We had press passes to that and were covering Russell Westbrook from Long Beach. But we got to talk to and interview people



Jim McCormack, Mike Guardabascio, and Bob Keisser
(JJ Fidler not pictured)

like Mike D'Antoni, LeBron James, and Kobe Bryant.

There was also this moment after the women's water polo team won their semi-final game that I'll never forget. All the parents and fans of the girls were in front of the pool stadium, and these are people I see all the time because most of the team live in Long Beach and train at the Navy Base in Los Alamitos.

When the team came out of the pool, everyone started celebrating and going crazy. It was pure joy and for 10 minutes we were in Long Beach. Even though we were actually in London, I looked around and I knew everyone's face. It was literally like Long Beach had our own little village in the middle of the London Olympics.

Mike: What's interesting in the run up to this year's Rio games is all this geo-political stuff about the Zika virus

and Brazil's financial status. I think people kind of forget in the aftermath of the games, that that is always the case. For example, in London, the country was on verge of economic collapse while it was spending all this money on hosting the Olympics. That was the big controversy there.

And then there was this huge scandal where the sponsors for the games held about half the tickets and they weren't showing up for events. We'd go to these huge games in the preliminary rounds and all the seats (especially the good seats) were empty.

So the populace thought their leaders were bankrupting their country for these Olympics games that they couldn't attend, while the people with tickets weren't even showing up!

At the same time though, there was this fervently nationalistic pride, that "Hey, you are in our town, at our stadiums,

Read our full interview with the "Press Guys" at www.lb908.com

we built them and this is all happening in London... the greatest town in the world." So it's this really interesting mix of intellectual and emotional issues for me that is what makes the Olympics so exciting.

In your opinion why has Long Beach been so successful at producing Olympic level athletes?

Jim: This is really a special sports community. The thing that's crucial here is the access, from the beginning, for both male and female young athletes to really great coaches. Guys like Ron Alice and Dave Rodda were giving girls the opportunity to excel in track and field long before anyone else was interested, leading to the early incredible stars like Martha Watson.

For any entity, great sports really makes the whole experience better. You see high schools where the sports programs are better, the school is better. There's just a different frame of mind

for the students and the parents. It is a difference maker, there is a value to it. Frankly, it is the same thing as music. Those are two things that make the schools imminently better.

For me the fun part about covering Olympics in Long Beach is this whole home-grown, home-town atmosphere. The athletes are so accessible and you get to know them. You get to see their inner motivation and inner competitiveness in these sports where they are not going to get rich and famous. They just have this drive to be extraordinarily good at something like swimming or water polo, and it's been going on for about a century now and it still exists.

Mike: My favorite thing is not just the history but that it is so Long Beach specific. Lauren Wenger often talks about learning water polo in the Naples canals. That's just part of life here in Long Beach, it's like playing backyard badminton. It's the same going back to

Pat McCormick learning to dive jumping off the pier or the diving board into the Colorado Lagoon.

How do you think your reporting has had an impact on developing great athletes?

Bob: It goes back to a belief that everything is important. At the Press Telegram, we didn't have an attitude that said baseball is more important than this...we had an attitude that said, there is room here for everybody from every sport.

Long Beach is really a special place for that. Covering all these different sports, I learned how much the school district made it possible for athletes to compete on a high level. The city was always part of the process, they had the youth programs, they great coaches, and they were always willing to go the extra yard to make sure we had top notch facilities. ■

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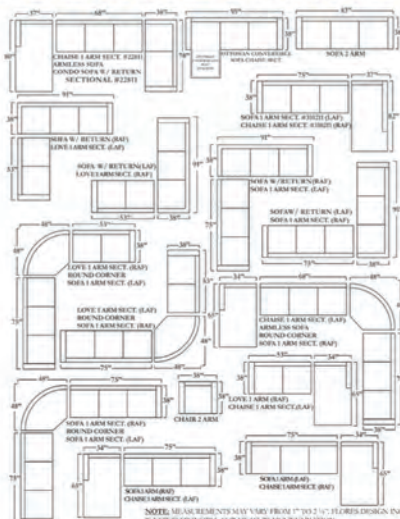
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