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VOLUME 35, NUMBER 2, SUMMER 2020

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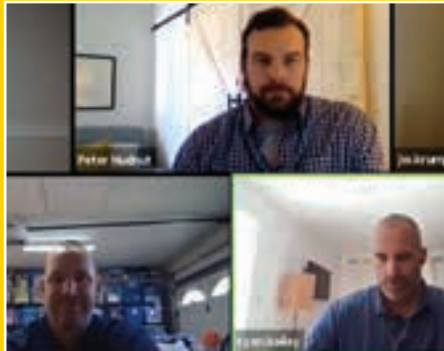


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ON THE COVER...

Despite no matches or practices, the water polo community has stayed connected during the pandemic.

Art by [Instagram.com/WaterPoloBanarer](https://www.instagram.com/WaterPoloBanarer)



pg8 **TYR ReCaps**
#AtHomeUSAWP
Zoom Calls, Challenges, Workouts & More



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Max Irving
Tokyo Hopeful Shares His Journey
To Water Polo's Biggest Stage

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> Academic All-Americans Honored





Water Polo Moving Forward On Multiple Fronts With Meaningful Action

Challenged by the ever-present threat of COVID-19 and heightened recognition that racial injustice remains omnipresent in our society, USA Water Polo has begun the process of finding new ways forward. COVID-19 has required significant changes in our programming schedules and in the programs of our clubs. The cries for racial justice remind us that water polo is not an island; rather racial inequality impacts our members and our sport in ways that deserve thoughtful action.

As much of the nation reopens for business, water polo is beginning to regain its footing. During the shutdown, USAWP cut its annual expenses by one-third and pivoted from providing national events and high-performance training and camps to supplying needed professional development and member programming via online platforms. With the Tokyo Olympics postponed until 2021, we also have been mindful of the plight of our national team athletes, whose odyssey to the Olympiad has been extended for another year.

National Junior Olympics has been rescheduled for late fall, and ODP programming has been reorganized into more easily traversed regional models. All that's been lacking is water. Now that pools are again coming online, albeit with new social dis-

tancing requirements, we at least can get back to club practice and conditioning. One silver lining is that we all need to work harder on our position in the water and basic passing and ball-handling skills; in other words, until full contact is allowed again, this is the perfect opportunity to return to fundamentals.

USAWP also has established a formal Racial Equity and Reform task force, led by Four-time Olympic Medalist & Board Member Brenda Villa and Chief High Performance Officer John Abdou. Since issuing a statement a few weeks ago in support of racial equity, I have received many responses. While a clear majority of members stand arm-in-arm regarding the need for greater equity and inclusion in water polo, I also received concerns that we were "going political" and that we should "stay in our lane." These and other perspectives have been reviewed and discussed by our board and staff. While acknowledging that our community is centered around water polo, there has also been unanimity that racial inequity exists in our sport, and that we have a moral obligation to act.

Establishing a task force with distinguished leadership is only a first step toward broader action. In the coming weeks and months, Brenda and John will appoint task force members, solicit feedback from our community, review current processes and procedures to ensure they are free from bias,

and ultimately bring forward a set of recommendations to make our sport more inclusive and fair. We will provide regular updates on the work of the task force.

Growing up in the greater Los Angeles area, I was a fan of the legendary UCLA basketball dynasty, and especially of Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who later returned to lead the Los Angeles Lakers to five NBA championships. Abdul-Jabbar wrote an Op-Ed for the LA Times recently, which I encourage everyone to read. One observation that he made stuck with me:

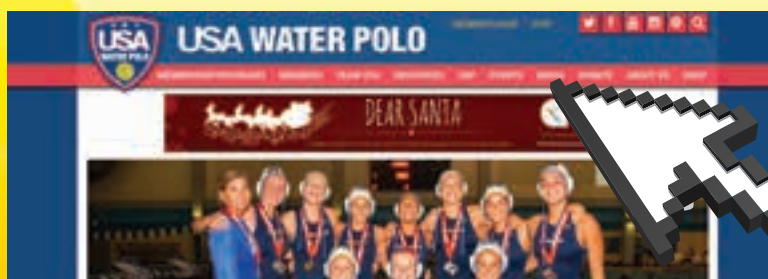
Racism in America is like dust in the air. It seems invisible — even if you're choking on it — until you let the sun in. Then you see it's everywhere.

It is up to us to keep the sun shining in our sport and to educate ourselves about the need for racial equity. We must work with everyone in our water polo community to ensure that our sport is free from prejudice and fair to all, especially to people of color. The work that we've begun will help us welcome all who wish to participate in our sport with a spirit of appreciation for our differences, inclusiveness, and mutual respect.

Chris



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If you have a comment or question concerning *Skip Shot* magazine, send in a letter to the editor. You can write to *Skip Shot* Magazine: c/o USA Water Polo, 6 Morgan, Suite 150, Irvine, CA 92618 or send an email to: media@usawaterpolo.org

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My Music

ALIYAH COHEN, RAIDER WATER POLO, FL

“8TEEN” by Khalid

—One of my all-time favorites. It gives me such a peaceful feeling, and I can't help being in a good mood after I listen to it.

“Magic in the Hamptons (ft. Lil Yachty)” by Social House

—My teammates and I always blast music when warming up for games to get our blood flowing. This song almost always is played, and we love singing along.

“Another Day in Paradise” by Quinn XCII

—My teammates and I love playing this song when we have a long car ride to games.

“Forever Young” by Rod Stewart

—Definitely a throwback, but it's a great one.

“Laughter in the Rain” by Neil Sedaka

—Perfect to listen to on a rainy day; it always puts me in a good mood.

INSIDE

Instagram

A three-pack of pictures from one of your favorite Team USA athletes. Be sure to give them a follow!

Melissa Seidemann
@mseidemann

Women's Senior National Team—
2x Olympic Gold Medalist



(((WHAT WE'RE HEARING)))

Excerpts from water polo themed podcasts

THE TONY AZEVEDO PODCAST RELEASES A NEW EPISODE EVERY WEDNESDAY. IT'S HOSTED BY 5X OLYMPIAN AND SILVER MEDALIST TONY AZEVEDO AND CO-HOSTED BY STAND-UP COMEDIAN AND COACH DAVE WILLIAMSON.

BELOW IS AN EXCERPT FROM EPISODE 4 WITH GUEST MAGGIE STEFFENS:

DAVE: When you were growing up, Maggie, all of your siblings played water polo as well. Did all of that competition within your family affect you?

MAGGIE: One hundred percent. I was the youngest of four, so it was basically us trying to make up and create as many competitions as possible and me trying to win but usually losing, and then doing it all over again the next day. We had so much fun with it, and we were laughing on a

family Zoom call the other day saying, “What if this was 15 years ago, and we were all in quarantine together?” We were laughing and bringing up some games we used to play as kids, like we had this long hallway upstairs and had a game where we'd take a soft soccer ball and throw it, trying to get it past each other at opposite ends of the hallway. It was SO FUN in the moment, all four of us were like, “That's the best game ever!”

TONY: That's the same game my sister and I used to play! Maybe that game is the secret to success for athletes!

MAGGIE: We learned so much about water polo from it! It taught you how to become fearless with someone throwing a ball at you, and to be able to block and move and manipulate—and also how to anticipate where they are going to go and learning their moves. Without my older siblings,

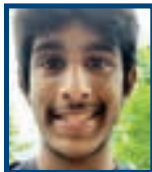
I would not be an Olympian. I absolutely believe that.

TONY: This COVID generation has an opportunity to be one of the smartest and best group of water polo players ever if they are using the time to concentrate on where they need improvement, whether it's flexibility or leg strength, and also studying film and participating in the many virtual chalk talks and trainings that many people have been offering, because it's something many players haven't had access to before or didn't have time for.

Subscribe to *The Tony Azevedo Podcast* on Apple Podcast, Stitcher, Spotify, or almost any podcast platform. Follow on Instagram at @TonyAzevedo8 and @DaveWComedy.



Your thoughts on...



Sreekar Kakumani—
Tiger Water Polo, Pittsburgh, PA

What you've missed most about water polo: Not being able to see my coaches and teammates. They all help me

to be a better player, and not being able to go to practices and interact with them is a major setback.

How you've stayed water polo-ready during COVID-19: Working out regularly and trying my best to eat healthier.

Favorite non-water polo quarantine activity: Probably playing football with close friends and family. It's lots of fun and can be good exercise as well.

Your favorite quarantine snack item: Tortilla chips and guacamole. It tastes great and is healthy as well.

Zoom calls/Facetime/online video chatting: Online video chatting platforms such as Zoom and Facetime are great ways to connect with friends during COVID-19 and are great resources for institutions to interact with people.



Haley Peterson—
Southside Honey Badgers,
Friendswood, TX

What you've missed most about water polo: Being able to get in the water with

my friends and teammates at practices and tournaments.

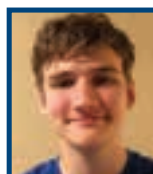
How you've stayed water polo-ready during COVID-19: I've been trying to eat healthier meals and running around my neighborhood so I was prepared to jump right back into the water!

Favorite non-water polo quarantine activity: Painting as well as messaging my friends online!

Your favorite quarantine snack item: By far popcorn because it's a crunchy, salty treat!

Zoom calls/Facetime/online video chatting:

Video chatting with friends, coaches, and classmates really helped with some of that quarantine boredom and was quite fun!



Daniel Johnson—
Dynamo Water Polo Club, Atlanta, GA

What you've missed most about water polo: The spirit of competition water polo provides. In all levels of play,

from 12U to Masters, water polo is such a physically and mentally competitive sport.

How you've stayed water polo-ready during COVID-19: I've been spending lots of time doing cardio and lifting weights in preparation for the return to the pool. My favorite way to get my cardio in is by taking my dog on long walks.

Favorite non-water polo quarantine activity: Music. I love to play and write music, and quarantine has been a great time to do that.

Your favorite quarantine snack item: Definitely beef jerky. It's very high in protein and very low on things that aren't protein.

Zoom calls/Facetime/online video chatting: Zoom calls have played a large role in quarantined life. Our team did weekly Zoom calls before we opened back up, and we got opportunities to learn from some huge names in the sport.



Gianna Nocetti—
American River Water Polo Club,
Sacramento, CA

What you've missed most about water polo: Seeing my teammates who are some of

my best friends, and a few of them live far away

How you've stayed water polo-ready during COVID-19: My family purchased an inflatable water polo goal, and my brother and I have been swimming at our local club that's recently opened. I also have been doing the ODP virtual workouts.

Favorite non-water polo quarantine activity:

My family loves playing board games. Everyone is super competitive, so often it gets very heated, even for a simple game of Jenga.

Your favorite quarantine snack item: Cheez-its and cream cheese. Don't knock it 'til you try it! I can't put into words why I like it, but I recommend it to anyone who hasn't partaken.

Zoom calls/Facetime/online video chatting:

A great way to connect with anyone whether they're friends, family, teachers, or coaches during a time when seeing people in person may not be possible.



Julia Fryrear—
Northern Illinois Polo Club,
Libertyville, IL

What you've missed most about water polo: Seeing my teammates because they're

some of my best friends and my family. I also miss the feeling of being in the water.

How you've stayed water polo-ready during COVID-19: Lots of Zoom workouts, yoga, dog walks, and watching games.

Favorite non-water polo quarantine activity: Watching Netflix. I now have lots of recommendations to offer.

Your favorite quarantine snack item: Homemade chocolate chip cookies because they're fun to make and have a delicious outcome.

Zoom calls/Facetime/online video chatting:

Zoom calls are nice because you get to see people—but it's not the same as the real thing.

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"USA Water Polo is thrilled to work with NCSA to support and educate the student-athletes of our sport about the college recruiting process."

– John Abdou, Chief High Performance Officer, USA Water Polo





AT HOME WITH USA WATER POLO

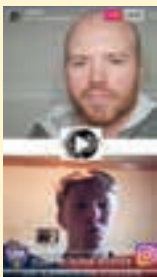
Senior Season Cut Short

We heard from athletes at high schools and colleges around the country as they described what their teams and schools have meant to them and what's next.

Abigail Shelby,

St. Agnes Academy/Viper Pigeons, Texas

At the beginning of the season we always take a trip to Florida to get our team together. We might not do as well as we want, but it's a good way to start the season. We always have so much fun, like last year we did really well, and we weren't expecting to come out playing that well, and it was very exciting to see how our season started and how far we could go.



Cameron Cullen,

Guyer High School/Thunder, Texas

I'm very excited to see where water polo will go in Texas. Hopefully it'll start expanding into more universities. I'm a big University of Texas football fan, so for them to add a collegiate-level water polo team

and for other schools to do it across Texas would be great to see. The high quality of water polo that would develop would be amazing.

Justin Rothermich,

DeSmet Jesuit High School, Missouri

It means a whole lot to me because, like I said, water polo isn't that big here, and it's really great for my club and high school because I'm going on to play in college, and that can get a lot of publicity for my club team and my high school. I'm not going to take it lightly. Just really looking forward to going out and doing my thing.

Jenny Farler,

St. Benedict High School, Tennessee

Honestly part of it is just the surprised look I see on people's faces when I say I play water polo in high school or for a water polo club. In Memphis, there are people who have no idea what water polo is, and I love that kind of surprise factor, and I love being able to do something that's so challenging, and I think I've become a better person because of water polo, and I think I've seen a lot of other people grow from it, too.

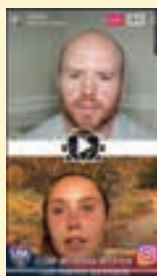
Diana Fernandez, Siena College, New York

I would love just if water polo was included in the

summer leagues. Anything that I could get my hands on in my free time. I will start school in the fall, and I know we have winter leagues here. I did it back in the day, and I will continue to do it until I can't swim anymore, really. I don't plan on leaving water polo fully.

Jesse Ransone, UC San Diego

I like the physicality of it for sure, and there's something about swimming down the pool with your teammates and then executing a play or scoring a goal. I like the camaraderie as well, and it's taught me discipline and respect. I've learned a lot from water polo, and I'm grateful for that.



Heidi Ritner, University of Michigan

I'm definitely excited for next year. As a team we were doing really well. I felt I was playing better than I have been in a while, so I'm hopefully going to be able to replicate that with my team this coming season.

Shelby Sorrells, Olympia High School, Florida

When I first started water polo, I wasn't very aggressive in the pool, I was really timid, but I learned the most fun part of the sport is being aggressive and getting in there. There aren't a lot of other sports that allow that aggression, but water polo is a really good mental game as well. It requires a lot of understanding and knowledge. The combination of those elements is something I'll miss.

Taylor Quintero, Gulliver Prep, Florida

There's something special about it. There's nothing in the world like being part of a team. You know your teammates have your back, and you have theirs.

Elle Frederickson, Shorewood Shorecrest (combined team), Washington

My favorite memory is hanging out with the girls and getting to spend time with them. Because we're from two different schools, our spring water polo season is the only time we get to see each other every day. I'm definitely missing that the most.

Claire Tuttle, Hudsonville High School, Michigan

I'm going to miss the physicality. I love water polo for

how physical and hands-on it is. I play 2-meter defender mostly, so I do get stuck with getting a couple jabs to the gut or kicked every once in a while. The rush of it is so fun.

James Padilla, Duke City, New Mexico

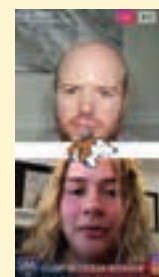
It's been great. My club Duke City Aquatics is from the west side, and almost everyone who's played there for the last four years has been part of my club, so it's been really nice for me. But we've had a lot of new people come in, especially from the largest school in New Mexico. Our camaraderie because we're all in the same part of town is great.

Christina Hicks, Punahou School, Hawaii

I think right now is an opportunity to learn a different side of the game and learn about my own weaknesses. I'm not always going to have time to think about these things when I'm just grinding in training, so I feel like that's going to be really important. The entire world is at a standstill, so this is our opportunity to get ahead.

Jimmy Cronin, Metea High School, Illinois

When I first went to the Junior Olympics, I realized I wasn't ready to give it up when my senior year came. Granted I didn't know we would only have one game, but I definitely enjoy and love the game and the passion. I love competition, too. We're always competing at different levels, so I thought McKendree University was the perfect fit.



Lainey Eckholm, Naperville North High School, Illinois

My favorite moment was my sophomore year. We were playing against our rival Naperville Central, and we hadn't beaten them in a really long time, and that was the goal of all the seniors and the

whole team. So the whole time we were focused on beating them, and when we finally did, it felt so good.

Kate Gregory, Olympus High School, Utah

I definitely have made some of my best friends from the team, and every practice our coach emphasized to always have fun, and so we always laughed with each other and had fun. I'll definitely miss that.

In mid-March water polo stopped across the country. Seasons were canceled, practices were stopped, and pools were closed. To help keep the water polo community connected, USA Water Polo launched “At Home with USA Water Polo.” Three months later #AtHomeUSAWP continues to host interviews, instructional videos, contests, workouts, cooking lessons, and challenges.

In this section we highlight some of the great moments over the last few months honoring senior athletes in high school and college who had their careers cut short, reflective moments with some Olympic greats, and much more. A big thank you to the water polo community for coming together during this time to share your thoughts, ideas, and visions.

Growing the Game—Genai Kerr and John Abdou talked about ways the sport can grow around the country

Genai Kerr, 2004 Olympian

Enjoy what you’re doing. If you’re in high school water polo, don’t worry about the future too much. Enjoy the process. These are the biggest moments: The friendships you’re building, the competitions you’re playing in. And then when you enjoy that process, you’re prepared for the next level. So for me to see this continued growth across the country is amazing.

John Abdou, Chief High Performance Officer

Anytime you guys are in a position of leadership, when you’re talking to the leaders out there in your communities, work to set up competitions. Events and competitions really drive getting addicted to the sport. We used to call water polo this “thing,” this “virus” you can pick up—and once you’ve caught it, you’re part of something that never really leaves you.



4X Olympic medalist Heather Petri told us what makes a great teammate

It’s just about focusing on what you can do and what you can improve and how to grow and how to best make your teammates good, too—because if you raise them up, they raise you up. It doesn’t matter how. I don’t need to be in the scoring column. Maybe being the leading scorer is motivation for some players, but it doesn’t have to be the only thing. Something that was so important for me was making sure our team was cohesive and checking in. I loved my connections with my teammates. I put a lot of effort into that, so if that’s your jam go for that because that’s supposed to be a very valuable part of a successful team.

5X Olympian Tony Azevedo talked about leadership

I think about the leaders in the water pulling players aside, talking as a team. One of the things we used to do is all go to coffee. It became a mandatory thing after practice, and we’d just try to sit there and figure out how everyone clicks, because yes, there are individuals in our sport—tons—but a lot of us just sit there and say, “He doesn’t care about anyone except himself.” But I would put it back on you and ask, “How much have you invested in understanding that guy?” Because all of us have something that motivates us and makes us click. And when you figure that out next thing, you know you have a team.



USA Water Polo members told us what water polo meant to them and how it kept them healthy

What does water polo mean to me? It’s a collection of my best memories and friends, a place where everyone is held accountable for their part of the team. We all accept each other for our mistakes, but we push one another to be better than the rest, never stopping and never leaving someone behind.

—Jack Schroeder

I was 10 years old when I first started playing water polo. I was overweight, unhealthy, and pre-diabetic. At the time I was playing basketball and swimming. Those sports didn’t help me lose the fat I needed to lose. Luckily for me my parents found water polo, and I figured I should give it a shot because I pretty much tried every sport a 10-year-old boy could play. Now five years later I’m not pre-diabetic, and I’m in the best shape I’ve ever been in. So, when I think of water polo, I think of it as my savior from an unhealthy lifestyle.

—Reid Thorson



AT HOME WITH USA WATER POLO

Thanks For Joining Us

Here is a look at some of the fun content we've shared with you over the last three months. All of our instructional videos and interview features are available on-demand at YouTube.com/USAWP. While we've been out of the pool water polo all showed up on Jeopardy, at SELF Magazine and more.



Two weeks during "At Home with USA Water Polo" were dedicated to the 20-year anniversary of the 2000 Olympic Games as well as the 40-year anniversary of the 1980 Olympic boycott, among other conversations focused on the history of water polo.

On Sydney 2000, the first Olympic Games to include Women's Water Polo

Liz Weekes, Gold Medalist, Australia

Definitely the fight to get the sport into the Games, because that was the turning point in my life. But I feel that it was bigger than just me, though. Yes, it's awesome winning the Gold Medal; you feel completely satisfied and relieved, but just to be part of that first-ever women's water polo Olympic competition was really special. And whether it was Gold, Silver, or Bronze, what it meant for women in the sport I think it was bigger than being on the podium. It also was the future for women in the sport, so definitely that was the turning point and means much more to me.

Brenda Villa, Silver Medalist, USA

Being in front of that crowd. I don't think there's been a women's water polo game that was that highly attended. Now when I think back 20 years, and I'm just like, "What a magical place. What a magical moment." Even with most of the crowd cheering against us, I was just grateful to be in that tournament and in that moment.

Maureen O'Toole, Silver Medalist, USA

Since there were only six games, every single game was so important, and I remember in our little house we had three goals posted on the wall. The first goal was to make the semifinal. The second goal was to win the semifinal. The third goal? "Well, we're in the Gold Medal game! We may as well win the Gold medal!" It was more like one goal at a time because it was a round robin, and we had to get ourselves into that semifinal.

Julie Swail, Silver Medalist, USA

We had a slogan—"Los Al Style"—which means we're just going to play water polo like we do in Los Alamitos. It's just in a different spot, so everything seemed really familiar, but I do remember being on the lane line for the first sprint, and it was like, "This is it! We are seconds away from our first Olympic water polo game!" So that was noteworthy and exciting.

Heather Moody, Silver Medalist, USA

Beating the Netherlands was huge because of their history. I think that win was something we all took home, back to the Olympic Village, really hanging our hat on like, "Yes, we did it! And we're here!" Like Sports Illustrated saying we would be number five. I think that was motivational and gave us a little bump into the Games. But we were really focusing on one game at a time and one day at a time.



The 2000 U.S. Olympic Women's Water Polo Team reunited prior to the 2016 Olympic Games.

#AtHomeUSAWP



Hall of Famers Peter Schnugg and Chris Dorst shared their memories from a painful moment in Olympic history—the 1980 boycott

Peter Schnugg

The most important takeaway is that the journey is the reward—the ebbs and flows of what happened over the previous 10 years and the previous Olympics. It would have been phenomenal to have played in the 1980 Summer Olympics and win a Gold Medal, but I had those 10 years before. The constant drive of trying to become better, trying to be part of a group that gets better as a group—that’s really the reward, and nobody can take that away from me. I have that, and I’ll always be grateful for that.

Chris Dorst

I think there was a shared sense that we’d been through something pretty interesting and unique and part of American history. I don’t think anyone in today’s game realizes how good our 1980 team was. We came from nothing to becoming a dominant international team. We had some of the best players in United States history.

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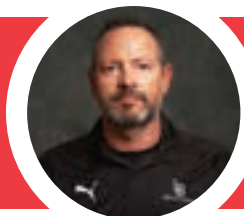
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MORE ON THE 2019 USA WATER POLO HALL OF FAME INDUCTION CLASS:



**GAVIN
ARROYO**

Now well established as one of the premier water polo coaches in the country—at Long Beach State and with the USA Water Polo Men's National Team—Gavin Arroyo first made his name in the water. One of the best aquatic athletes to come out of southern California in the 1990s, Arroyo was named swimmer of the year and water polo player of the year as a senior at Villa Park High School. From there it was off to the University of California, Berkeley, where Arroyo immediately helped the water polo team win three straight NCAA Championships including an undefeated campaign in 1992. At the same time, he began carving out an important role on a veteran USA Men's Senior National Team and made his Olympic debut at the 1996 Games in Atlanta. The next year Arroyo helped the United States to a Gold medal finish at the FINA World Cup—the second World Cup crown of the decade for Team USA. Arroyo capped an eight-year run with the U.S. with a second-straight Olympic Games appearance in 2000 in Sydney. While starring for Team USA, Arroyo was one of the first American athletes to become a mainstay abroad, enjoying a seven-year career in Greece and Spain competing for Vouliagmeni, Glyfada, CN Barcelona, Olympiakos, and CN Barceloneta. Arroyo remains entrenched in water polo as a high-level coach, now in his 14th season leading Long Beach State and having won MPSF Coach of the Year honors on three occasions. Currently the acting ODP technical director, having helped implement fundamental development frameworks for more than 20 years, Arroyo also has been in charge of the Men's Development and Junior National Teams the last five years.



**GARY
ROBINETT**

A former water polo player at the high school, junior college and Division 1 college levels, Gary Robinett turned to coaching age group and the high school levels before he found his calling in the water polo world as a referee. A high-level water polo official for more than 25 years, Robinett whistled at high-level international, collegiate, high school, and age-group competitions. An administrator at the 1984 and 1996 Olympic Games handling field operations, Robinett wore the whites at the FINA World Cup and Olympic Qualification Tournament in a career that spanned more than 85 international matches. A familiar face in domestic water polo, Robinett worked 23 NCAA Men's and Women's Championships, including 10 title bouts alongside three U.S. Olympic Festivals and eight Junior Olympics championships. An advocate for referee growth and enrichment when Robinett wasn't refereeing a game himself, he helped others improve their craft serving as an instructional chair for SCAF and DCSCAF and the supervisor of officials for the MPSF. A teacher for over 40 years at Valencia High School in Placentia, California, Robinett remains involved in the sport as a member of SCAF, officiating girls high school water polo, and most recently joining the American Water Polo Collections committee.



**KELLY
RULON**

Kelly Rulon arrived on the world water polo stage as a teenager joining the USA Senior National Team during her freshman year at UCLA. The 19-year old Rulon arrived in Athens, Greece, for the 2004 Olympic Games on the heels of helping UCLA win the 2003 NCAA Championships, the first of four she would earn. In 2004, Rulon and Team USA battled back from a heartbreaking semi-final loss to claim Bronze in just the second Olympic Games to offer women's water polo. The following year Rulon was a medal winner again, taking Silver at the FINA World Championships while adding another collegiate title with UCLA. She stepped away from the National Team in 2006, but not from water polo; she soon became one of the most dominant players in the game. In



USA Water Polo is proud to announce the 36th induction class for the USA Water Polo Hall of Fame. The five-member class boasts three Olympians, a veteran referee, and an influential water polo executive. Two-time Olympic medalists and 2012 Olympic champions Kelly Rulon and Elsie Windes join two-time Olympian and decorated coach Gavin Arroyo. Also being honored are veteran referee and Olympic Games administrator Gary Robinett and former USA Water Polo executive director and aquatics historian Bruce Wigo.

More information on the Hall of Fame Induction Luncheon will be shared when available. For more information on the Hall of Fame, including a look at all the past inductees visit USAWaterPolo.org

2007 Rulon capped her star-studded career in Westwood with another title and Cutino Award honors as the best player in the college game. She was the first Bruin to win four NCAA team titles and holds the record for most goals scored. Rulon embarked on an international club career in Italy that saw Len Cup, Italian league titles, and being named the best international water polo player in the world in 2010. The year before she was lured back to the National Team ranks by her former collegiate coach Adam Krikorian, and the two picked up where they left off, claiming Gold at the FINA World Championships. After World Cup and Pan American Games crowns, Rulon found redemption from Athens with Olympic gold in 2012 in London. She's remained involved in the sport coaching age-group water polo with Corona del Mar Aquatics in southern California.

participation in conjunction with the YMCA, opened Junior Olympics to all comers, and developed a variety of much-needed coaching materials. Wigo assisted in the production of videos and other promotional materials in an effort to bring women's water polo to the Olympic Games, a feat achieved at the 2000 Games in Sydney while also placing a premium on the health of men's college water polo and growth of the women's game. He hasn't strayed far from the sport or the aquatics world, serving as CEO of the International Swimming Hall of Fame for a dozen years and more recently working as a consultant to various aquatic-related organizations and museums.



**BRUCE
WIGO**

Bruce Wigo's involvement and impact on water polo in the United States is so extensive it's hard to summarize. Stretching more than 50 years and involving a countless number of projects and initiatives, Wigo simply was all about pushing water polo forward. Introduced to the sport in the late 1960s at the Philadelphia Athletic Club by USAWP Hall of Famer Paul Barren, Wigo competed in AAU water polo before swimming took priority in his college years. He circled back to the sport in the 1970s, first as a coach for the U.S. Virgin Islands and then with the New York Athletic Club's Saturday morning youth program, where his son Wolf was introduced to the sport. He served as Zone 1 chairman and was a collegiate referee before taking on the role of interim executive director of USA Water Polo in 1991, an assignment that would last more than 12 years. In that time, working with a dedicated corps of volunteers, Wigo delivered on multiple fronts. He played a key part in securing a new training facility in Los Alamitos, boosting membership and installing coaching staffs for the Men's and Women's National Teams that set the stage for success for years to come. Back on the domestic scene Wigo helped track down new sponsors for the organization, increased youth



**ELSIE
WINDES**

In a sport long dominated by California athletes, Elsie Windes put Oregon women's water polo on the map at the Olympic level. Hailing from Portland, Elsie followed in the water polo footsteps of her father Doug and sister Lucy. She was a standout player in the age-group ranks in Oregon, claiming a high school championship at Beaverton while competing on the club scene with Tualatin Hills. Discovered by USA Water Polo National Team staff during a 1997 clinic, she went on to become a three-time All-American selection at the University of California, Berkeley, and more recently a Cal Hall of Fame inductee. Elsie joined the national team in 2006 with her sights set on the Olympic Games. An integral piece of Team USA's staunch defense, Elsie immediately made an impact helping the red, white, and blue to an undefeated 2007 campaign, which included a FINA World Championship. Windes made her Olympic debut in 2008 as Team USA claimed Silver in Beijing before adding another World Championship title the following summer in Rome. The wins continued as Windes was part of Team USA's first FINA World Cup title in over 30 years with a Gold medal in New Zealand in the summer of 2010. Windes' Team USA career culminated in London in 2012 as the United States earned Gold for the first time in program history. Now a wife and mother of three, Windes was recently back in the pool for a scrimmage with her sister's water polo club, bringing her water polo journey full circle.



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THE SAFESPORT ACT

On February 14, 2018, Senate bill S. 534 - Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017 – was signed into law, becoming effective immediately.

This legislation amends the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990 and the Amateur Sports Act of 1978 and, among other things: (i) extends reporting duties; (ii) expands civil remedies; and (iii) designates the United States Center for SafeSport (the “Center”) to serve as the independent national safe sport organization.

The bill imposes a duty on amateur sports organizations, including USA Water Polo and its adult members, to report suspected sex-abuse to local or federal law enforcement or to a child-welfare agency designated by the Justice Department, within 24 hours. Failure to report is subject to criminal penalties.

U.S. Center for SafeSport is the independent national safe sport organization responsible for delivering education and resolving allegations of misconduct within the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic movements.

REPORTING

Report sexual misconduct to the U.S. Center for SafeSport: All sexual misconduct matters such as child sex abuse,

non-consensual sexual conduct, sexual harassment or intimate relationships involving an imbalance of power, must be reported immediately to the U.S. Center for SafeSport by visiting SafeSport.org or at 1-720-531-0340.

If a crime has been committed, report it to local authorities: Contact local authorities if you have a reasonable suspicion that child sexual abuse or neglect has occurred. All reports of child abuse or sexual assault of a minor must also be reported to local authorities. Reports of abuse not involving a minor may also be reported to local authorities.

Contact USA Water Polo for other kinds of misconduct: Other forms of misconduct include emotional or physical misconduct, bullying, hazing or harassment may be reported to USA Water Polo for handling in accordance with USA Water Polo’s grievance procedures. Please visit USAWP’s SafeSport website for more information.

SafeSport crisis line for 24/7 crisis support: A 24/7 hotline has been established by the Center for crisis interventions, referrals and emotional support. This confidential and secure helpline 1-866-200-0796 is operated by RAINN, the nation’s largest anti-sexual violence organization. Life-threatening emergencies should call 911.



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A portrait of Max Irving, a man with a beard and short hair, wearing a blue hoodie, looking slightly to the right. The background is a blurred American flag.

Max Irving's Big Impact From Long Beach & Beyond

by Robert Nilsen

Max Irving is a three-time NCAA Champion with the UCLA men's water polo team and is one of 19 players attempting to make the roster for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics which will now be held in 2021. Irving grew up in Long Beach, CA, which is known as a hotbed of water polo talent having produced Olympians such as Tony Azevedo, Chi Kredell, Robert Lynn, Adam Wright, and many more. Irving began his water polo career at Shore Aquatics where all those past Olympians played. First though, he began swimming at Seal Beach Swim Club when he was 7 years old after his mom, who swam herself, introduced him to the sport. At the age of 10 he tried water polo and was hooked.

"I fell in love with the game and found out that I had a little bit of a natural ability and instinct and inclination for it," he says. "So I had a lot of fun and kind of stuck with it from then on."

Growing up as an African American in a white-dominated sport, Irving never felt uncomfortable: "I'm one of the few African Americans playing this sport, and that's something I take pride in. I know there are other notable African American players such as Women's National Team goalie Ashleigh Johnson and BJ Churnside who played at SOCAL and Stanford, but yeah, I definitely took pride in it, and I still take pride in it, and I'm honored to represent the African American community."

Irving played with Shore Aquatics starting with the 10 and Under group and continued to 18 and Unders with his brother Quincy right alongside him. Irving credits his success—and that of his teammates—to Long Beach's great aquatic tradition and all of the great coaches he played under who were either past Olympians or top collegiate stars.

"We would always do well," Irving says regarding his time with Shore. "We had a good group of core guys who went on to play at Division 1, 2, and 3 levels. We had Garrett Barth as one of my 10 and Under coaches, Clint Wilson who was at Long Beach State as my 12 and Under coach, and Scott Swanson who played at UCLA. We also had Chi Kredell who was an Olympian and another one of my coaches and Robert Lynn who was an Olympian and assistant coach with the men's team."

What he learned the most from his time with Shore Aquatics? "I loved going to training every day because of all the coaches I mentioned. I got to become better at the game. I really loved the game, and the game really embraced me. Also, the connections I've gained through the game are lifelong, and that's why I would encourage everyone to play the game of water polo. I've had opportunities that I could never have imagined."

Irving also would play water polo for Long Beach Wilson High School where he was one of just two freshmen who played on the junior varsity team their first year. And he says his time at Wilson helped shape him into the player he is today.

"You walk into the pool every day and see like 12 CIF Championships hanging on the board. You see all the records and the countless Olympians on the board from Tony Azevedo to Adam Wright and swimmers like Tim Shaw to guys who went on to play NCAA water polo like Scott Swanson, Matt Sagehorn, Thomas Hale, Clint Wilson—plenty of guys," he recalls. "And that's why I got really

entrenched in Long Beach's deep and rich aquatic tradition, and that really motivated me to be on their level. I always had someone or something to look up to. So I wanted to be the best player I could be and hopefully one day win a CIF Championship, which I was able to accomplish."

Winning that CIF Championship was the top moment from his time at Wilson: "The overall joy was playing in that game and ultimately winning that game. I remember that it was so much fun playing in it because our fans and a great portion of the student body watched it. We had a ton of fans, and it was a really rowdy crowd."

While playing in high school Irving always knew he wanted to play collegiately, and he wound up choosing UCLA after going on a recruiting trip. "After seeing the players and how connected the team was, I couldn't really envision going somewhere else. It was a big family, and that's something that I really liked. Plus, UCLA is an awesome academic school besides being great at water polo."

While at UCLA Irving won NCAA titles in 2014, 2015, and 2017. The last one was the most special as he and his teammates took down favored crosstown rival USC. "We lost like six seniors, and no one really thought we had the firepower or experience to win. No one really thought we would be able to do it, but the group of guys we had training in the water every day knew what we were capable of, so when the time came to play in that big game, we were all ready. We stepped up, played well, and won."

Irving's National Team career didn't get off to the fastest start as he participated in the Olympic Development Program but wound up getting cut from the Coastal team his first year. However, after going back to his club and training even harder, he made his first pipeline team and was selected to go to the UANA Junior Championships. "Dusty Litvak was our coach, and we ended up taking Silver, and it was a great experience," he recalls. "It really opened up the door for international water polo and how much fun that can be and how awesome it is to represent your country. It was really cool to be part of a team made up of the best players from one age group and seeing the level I need to maintain to compete at a high level and continue to make those teams."

Following that tournament Irving was selected to play at the FINA Youth World Championships but eventually ended up slipping off the National Team radar until his great performances at UCLA earned him a call-up to the senior team for the 2017 FINA Intercontinental Tournament. "I was honored," he says, regarding the call up. "I took it very seriously. I knew I was given an opportunity, and it could be my only opportunity, so I did everything in my power to help our team win, have fun, play with confidence, and continue to try to make the teams."

Following his performance at that tournament he was called up for his first major FINA event—the 2017 FINA World League Super Final—and then the FINA World Championships. "What I took away most was the level of intensity and seriousness that everyone played with," he says recalling what he learned from those tournaments. "Everyone's out there playing to kill, willing to do anything in their power to give themselves an advantage—and it had a lasting impression on me."

After college Irving was unsure about his water polo plans. He first signed up to be the volunteer

assistant coach for the UCLA Women's Water Polo team. So, Irving did that for a few weeks, but then his National teammate, Chancellor Ramirez, approached him about playing abroad since one of his club's foreign players wasn't coming back. Irving remembers: "I was, like, I'll for sure consider it, but I didn't really know if anything would come of it, and then as I continued to think about it and talk it over with my family and UCLA head coach, Adam Wright, it seemed this would be the best opportunity to be able to continue to grow and develop."

Irving went on to play for CN Posillipo in Italy with Ramirez before moving on to Hydraikos in Greece where he now competes. Last year Hydraikos finished in 6th place in the Greek Championship, and this year they currently sit in third. "The club was satisfied with me, so they asked me to return, and I decided to come back this year," he says. "Alex Obert, my National teammate, came with me, so that really helped us out a lot. We've gained a lot of experience from playing over there, and we're doing really well right now. My biggest takeaway would be the amount of games and game exposure. It's great to have pretty high-level games every week, so you're playing very consistently—and the more you play, and the more you train at a high level, the more you're going to continue to grow. That's why I think I've really grown a lot within these past two years."

When he isn't playing for his club overseas, Irving is playing with the U.S. National Team. To start the year the team traveled to Greece, Italy, and Australia for training trips that included games against Greece, Hungary, Australia and Italy. "In Greece we scrimmaged a lot, pretty much every day, which was a great experience—especially playing a good Greek National Team," he adds. "We got to scrimmage them at least once a day for seven days straight and afterward played one game. So, one takeaway was counter defense. That's something we wanted to focus on and continue to focus on. It's just good to be able to play against these European teams—same with the Serbian series last year. Then when we have a high-level game in the Olympics or the FINA World Championships, it will feel just like one of the many club games we played. So, having that exposure to these players and the speed of the game, exposure to what happens during the game, and just being more familiar with everything is beneficial."

Next up the National Team traveled to Australia for a three-game series. "We lost our first game, I think by one goal, and won our second game by one or two goals, but then the third game got away from us," Irving says. "We gave them some things we don't usually give up. They had a few center goals and shots from the perimeter that we'd like to have taken away, but all in all I think it was a great experience for our team—and there are some newer guys with us now who have great game experience."

Currently the National Team isn't training due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but Irving can't wait to get back to training: "I'm excited to start passing to the post and doing 6-on-5s. So excited to get back in the water and work with my teammates on getting the ball into the zone and our zone attack. Also entering the ball to our center and always working on connections, timing, understanding with my teammates, and understanding the system and everything we're doing so that when it's time to play we can just go out there and do our best."

And now that the Olympics have been delayed a year, Team USA is waiting for their schedule leading up to the competition. Irving also is focused on his goals while he waits for play to resume.

"Try to commit to water polo, to give water polo my full attention and all my effort right now," he says. "Being an athlete, you have a very small window of playing the sport you love—and especially to play it at this high level—so I'm going to do everything in my power to be the best water polo player I can be. That's my goal for this year: To give all my energy and effort to water polo."

Lastly, Irving has several pieces of advice for athletes aspiring to make the National Team: "I would say to try to listen to your coaches and watch water polo, such as all the games from the LEN Champions League. Also you should be watching the National Team's exhibition series, as well as international competitions such as all the FINA events: World League Super Finals, World Cup, and World Championships. Take away as many small things as you can when you watch these games. Also try to work on the fundamentals: swimming with your head up, changing direction quickly, being stable on your legs, having the ball in a position where you can always pass it and always shoot. Just work on those foundations and fundamentals because then, no matter where you go—high school, college, club—you'll be able to be successful, and you'll be able to build upon that foundation of strong fundamentals."



CONGRATULATIONS TO BEN HALLOCK ON HIS SECOND STRAIGHT CUTINO AWARD HONOR

For the second straight year the Stanford Cardinal center won college water polo's highest honor as the best player in the country. Hallock helped Stanford to the 2019 NCAA Championship last December in Stockton, CA. Due to the pandemic, the women's college season was canceled and no Cutino Award winner was selected. We join The Olympic Club in looking forward to recognizing a winner for both men and women in 2021.

Photos courtesy Stanford Athletics



PETER J. CUTINO WOMEN'S AWARD RETURNING IN 2021



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A DAY IN THE LIFE

Zairis Padilla, AquaTex Water Polo Club Round Rock, Texas

AquaTex Water Polo Club was the first USA Water Polo club back in the pool as states began to reopen during COVID-19. Learn more about their return to the pool at their Twitter account @AquaTexPolo.



9:00am: I'm usually up pretty early. I like to start my day by eating a good breakfast. I personally believe eggs are the superior breakfast food because you can have them in so many different ways. I tend to choose scrambled because they are quickly and easily made and so versatile.

10:00am: During quarantine I've taken up water-color painting as a new hobby. I decided to head to the park to practice some landscapes while also getting some sun, fresh air, and exercise. I painted my favorite spot I found while walking on one of the trails, because it was so peaceful and calming.

12:30pm: For lunch I really wanted a sandwich, but we were out of bread. Since we had just bought some yeast, I decided to try making my own. Though I was confused at first, and it started out looking weird, in the end it actually ended up turning out great. My sandwich was delicious, and afterward I decided to just relax and watch some TV.

2:00pm: At the beginning of this year I challenged myself to read 50 books by the end of 2020. In order to achieve that goal, I've tried to set an hour or two aside every day to read. Today I decided to read outside since it's such a nice day. I'm currently reading *Fountains of Silence*, and although I'm not far into it, I'm enjoying it.

4:00pm: Every Friday since the beginning of quarantine my family in Puerto Rico and I started a Zoom bingo game. Basically we hop on a Zoom call and play a couple of rounds of bingo. I actually won one this time, which I hardly ever do! I look forward to this every week since it keeps us connected even though we live so far away from each other.

6:30pm: Today my family decided to order food. We always eat dinner at the table together and talk about our day and what's been going on in our lives. This is our way of keeping up with each other and staying united through all that goes on in our lives.

7:15pm: My sister and I head over to water polo practice and do dryland with the rest of the team. Since AquaTex was one of the first teams to get back in the water a couple of weeks ago, following all social distancing guidelines, this has been a source not only of exercise but also of excitement throughout quarantine. I'm glad we were able to get back to practice so quickly and safely.

USA WATER POLO ANNOUNCES RACIAL EQUITY & REFORM TASK FORCE

A new task force charged with ensuring zero tolerance of racism and expanding access to water polo for all—especially people of color, was announced today. Jointly commissioned by USA Water Polo Board Chair, Mike Graff and CEO, Chris Ramsey, the Racial Equity and Reform Task Force will be co-chaired by legendary athlete and board member, Brenda Villa, and Chief High Performance Officer, John Abdou. Appointments to the task force will be announced in the coming weeks, which will include water polo representatives from diverse experiences, backgrounds, geographies, and skill sets.

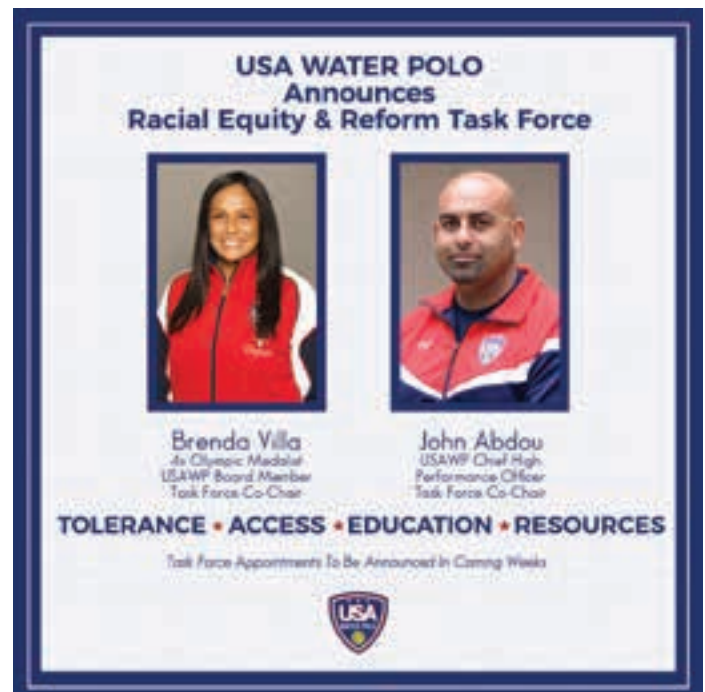
Among the issues expected to be addressed by the task force recommendations are:

- **ZERO TOLERANCE:** Ensure USAWP organizational processes at national, regional, and club levels are free from racism and bias, and include meaningful remedies to safeguard accountability
- **ACCESS:** Increase participation in water polo among communities of color, including partnerships with clubs and other relevant organizations that will expand access to water polo aquatics facilities
- **EDUCATION:** Provide curriculum and other educational tools to promote a water polo community of respect, dignity, and fairness to all, especially people of color
- **RESOURCES:** Expand resources for the promotion of tolerance and accessibility within the sport of water polo

About Our Co-Chairs:

Considered one of the greatest women's water polo players of all-time, Brenda Villa led Team USA to medals in four different Olympic Games culminating with gold at the 2012 Olympic Games in London. The longtime captain of Team USA, Villa helped bridge the gap from the pioneer era of women's water polo prior to inclusion in the Olympic Games to the present-day success that has seen consecutive Olympic titles.

Since her retirement from international water polo, following the 2012 Olympic Games, Villa has pursued another passion, giving back. She is the co-founder of Project 2020, a non-profit organization committed to providing aquatic opportunities for those in under-resourced communities. Working within the Northern California community of East Palo Alto and East Menlo Park, Villa paired high school coaching with Project 2020 efforts hoping to mirror the offerings she received during her youth where sports were available regardless of financial status.



A senior executive at USA Water Polo, John Abdou oversees the senior national teams and the Olympic Development Program in addition to events, coach and referee education. Working in unison with Senior National Team Head Coaches Adam Krikorian and Dejan Udovicic, Abdou leads in implementing their technical vision throughout ODP and the USA Water Polo pipeline system.

Formerly the associate head coach for men's water polo at the University of California, Santa Barbara and Director/boys' head coach of the Santa Barbara Water Polo Club, Abdou also spent five years coaching at Bucknell University, the last two serving as head coach of both the men's and women's programs. Prior to moving to Lewisburg, PA he served as the boys' and girls' Water Polo Coach at Burbank High School while also teaching US Government, AP Psychology, and History classes. Abdou earned his undergraduate sociology degree from the University of California, Irvine, where he also played varsity water polo. He earned his Master's degree in Education from Bucknell in 2009.

OPTIMIZING DEVICE AND TECH USE

Authors: Ray Kreienkamp, M.D., Ph.D.; Naresh Rao, D.O., FAOASM

Over the last few months, water polo training has become more reliant on technology than perhaps ever imagined. Athletes have become dependent on their phones and computers for meetings and training sessions.

While these devices have allowed athletes to maintain a connection with the sport, they also have exacerbated some poor use habits, leading to a surge in complaints of neck pain, eye discomfort, headaches, and poor sleep. Though device use will likely decrease as water time increases, we'd like to emphasize some important points regarding the proper use of devices for optimal health:

1) TAKE BREAKS

Time spent in front of screens can add up quickly, and neck discomfort, eye strain, and headaches can develop as a result. So taking breaks is essential for optimizing productivity and health. Technology use should not impinge on you getting 8 to 12 hours of sleep daily, depending on your age, and at least one hour for exercise, even in these COVID-19 times. Scheduling breaks is an effective way to force stepping away from technology. Scheduling tasks that don't involve devices throughout the day also is a helpful strategy to break up the monotony.

It's also important to give your eyes a break, as they can become dry and irritated with prolonged screen use due to decreased blinking. Consider trying the 20-20-20 rule: Try looking away from the device for 20 seconds at an object 20 feet away at least once every 20 minutes. While this isn't always possible, small planned breaks can give the mind and body needed time to recuperate.

2) POSTURE IS IMPORTANT!

Pain that develops from using devices often results from poor body positioning. Look around, and you'll notice that most people are stooping over their phones or computers, bending their necks into uncomfortable positions for prolonged periods of time, all of which place additional, unnatural stresses on the body. But optimizing device positioning can decrease stress on the body. Position device screens so you can read them by looking down without bending your neck. Focus on keeping your head in a neutral position, with your neck back and your ears over your shoulders. When sitting at a desk, sit up straight. Avoid using devices while lying in bed.

3) STRETCHING AND EXERCISE CAN HELP

Maintaining a strong and flexible back and neck can help mitigate stressors associated with using devices. Chin tucks are a common stretch that can alleviate neck pain and increase the strength of muscles tasked with pulling the head over the shoulders. Perform this exercise while seated upright, looking straight ahead, with your ears directly over your shoulders. You can repeat this stretch multiple times throughout the day. Levator scapulae stretches also can be helpful, since these muscles help with neck flexion, extension, and rotation. While sitting up straight, perform the exercise by turning your head to one side and look down toward your armpit. Feel the stretch, which sometimes can be increased by gentle hand pressure. Stop if you feel pain. This may be repeated multiple times to stretch the muscle.

In the end, it's fortunate that there are so many devices that have allowed athletes to stay connected during these challenging times. Utilizing these simple tips can keep your body primed for the next challenge, in the pool or otherwise.

DIRECTING YOUR ENERGY IN MOTION

Depending on where you live, pools are beginning to open, and there are some opportunities for practice with your team. Although practice may not be as free as it is normally, the excitement and enthusiasm to return to playing and training is surely starting to grow for many of us.

There also may be those athletes who share a mixture of excitement and nervous energy. With everything we experience in the normal functioning human condition, we must recognize that these internal mixes of emotions present opportunities to direct them in a useful way. In order to work on redirecting and reframing what we experience internally and externally, it's helpful to engage in some mental training.

In sport psychology literature, how our anxious energy can support our ability to perform—depending on our perception and ability to manage it—has

been widely examined and explored. Often our emotions sweep us off our feet in the face of certain circumstances, especially those we don't expect. Think about a referee's call!

When you train your mind by practicing how you would like to respond rather than reacting, you find ways to direct that "e-motion" more effectively. "E" stands for energy and "Motion" is the direction the energy is moving. All circumstances carry human emotional responses whether happy, angry, sad, surprise, shock, or afraid.

Our ability to self-monitor is a matter of experiential training with structure and guidance. A quote by Jon Kabat-Zinn captures this idea:

"You can't stop the waves, but you can learn how to surf!"

One very useful tool that can help you "learn how to surf" that I've observed athletes benefitting from is the acronym A.A.P.A. It stands for:



By Brian Alexander,
ODP Mental Skills Coach

Acknowledge—Improving every response, both internal and external, starts with self-awareness and understanding what’s happening now. If you can distance yourself from the circumstance, then you can understand it with more clarity.

Accept—Normalizing what you’re experiencing and what’s influencing you doesn’t just “happen”—it’s practiced. You might find that you progress through stages to arrive at the point where you accept your present state—and when you do, you find yourself free to choose your response.

Plan—You might think about setting goals, but planning for action can be the smallest and simplest step in the right direction. On a team your plan almost always includes what’s most important to help your team through your role.

Act—Once you decide to act, you are now in control of your process. Results of your actions may vary. They are an opportunity to continue working toward improving the details.

The reality is that our game and ability to perform at the level we desire may not be where we want them. We need to acknowledge this. With the right mental framework, you can work with yourself rather than against yourself. You will find so much more value in this approach!

Brian Alexander is a certified mental performance consultant through AASP and the mental skills coach for DDP and the Men’s Senior National Team. If you would like to work on your mental training and learn more, download and start using his WellU Mental Training app on your mobile device.

Contact Brian through his website: www.athletementalskillscoach.com

Learn more about the WellU app and podcast: www.wellumentaltraining.com

SHOOTING FOR COLLEGE

BY ANGELA KRAUS

COLLEGIATE WATER POLO RECRUITING IN THE COVID-19 ERA

The outbreak of COVID-19 has drastically impacted multiple aspects of the recruiting process for prospective student-athletes hoping to play water polo for colleges or universities. To protect the sports community, the NCAA in March 2020 issued rule modifications governing everything from academic eligibility, in-person recruiting, athletic scholarships, financial aid, and much more. Additional changes will continue as more is learned about COVID-19 and resocialization progresses.

A big part of the athletic recruiting process is for aspiring student-athletes to let prospective coaches know they exist. So, how can aspiring student-athletes—especially those graduating from high school in 2021, 2022, and 2023—navigate the recruiting process in this most challenging and ever-changing climate? The high school classes of 2021 and 2022 (rising juniors and seniors) are in a critical recruiting period; they are most immediately impacted and more affected by the rule changes than younger athletes.

Below is a summary of each major component of the rules governing the NCAA athletic recruiting process,* reflecting updates through June 5, 2020, followed by a brief examination of the impact on aspiring student-athletes, and suggestions for advancing the process in this very challenging climate.

NCAA RULE CHANGES RELATING TO ATHLETIC RECRUITING

Recruiting dead period: The NCAA recruiting rules imposed a blanket temporary dead period which remains in effect until at least July 31, 2020. This affects high school students graduating in 2021, 2022, and 2023—but most immediately rising juniors and seniors who will graduate in 2021 and 2022.

Campus visits: Official and unofficial campus visits are not permitted during the dead period. Also coaches are not allowed to meet face-to-face with aspiring student-athletes on or off campus or do any in-person scouting.

Telephone/video calls: During the dead period, coaches and prospective recruits can still communicate via email, phone, text, video calls, and social media as follows:

- Student-athletes: Coaches and prospective student-athletes (committed or uncommitted) are allowed to participate in recruiting telephone/video calls. Time spent by a student-athlete on calls with a coach counts toward the maximum eight hours per week of countable athletically related activities and may not occur on the student-athlete’s required day off.

Uncommitted prospective student-athletes and their family members are allowed to participate in telephone/video calls initiated by coaches and with any members of colleges or university staffs (coaches, athletic departments, or admissions departments).

- Institutional Staff Members: Any college or university staff members (such as officials in the athletic or admissions departments) can partici-

pate on telephone/video calls with prospective student-athletes.

Expenses related to cancelled official and unofficial visits: Colleges and universities can decide whether to reimburse prospective student-athletes for personal expenses incurred as a result of cancellation of official or unofficial visits. In the context of water polo, this may affect high school students graduating in 2021 (rising seniors) who might have been invited to participate in “junior days” or similar unofficial visits.

Participation in virtual team activities: After completion of high school graduation or transfer academic requirements, committed prospective student-athletes are allowed to participate in virtual team activities. Uncommitted prospective student-athletes are allowed to observe but not participate in virtual team activities one time per institution (and in the case of multisport prospective student-athletes, the teams that are recruiting the prospective student-athletes).

Virtual camps and clinics that do not include prospective student-athletes: College or university coaching staff members are allowed to participate in institutional and non-institutional virtual camps and clinics that do not include prospective student-athletes.

Suspension of NLI Signing Period; issuing institutional athletics aid agreements (athletic scholarships): As of April 16, 2020, the 2020 signing period for institutional financial aid agreements between colleges and universities and prospective student-athletes resumed and is underway until August 1, 2020. This affects high school students graduating in 2020.

NCAA Eligibility Center: Some of the academic eligibility requirements/prerequisites (number and distribution of completed courses) have been temporarily and partially waived. Note that each division (I, II, or III) has different course eligibility requirements. To determine how the sudden interruption in the 2020 school year will impact the eligibility of students in the high school classes of 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023, see COVID-19 Response FAQ for temporary and partial waivers of academic eligibility requirements, http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/COVID-19_Member.pdf

Note: Academics and athletics go hand in hand for all student-athletes. But it's especially the case for water polo players since the sport generally is not regarded by colleges and universities as a revenue-generating, top-tier sport. So often the academic requirements for prospective collegiate water polo players are more rigorous than for athletes participating in other intercollegiate sports. As time passes and the COVID -19 pandemic hopefully recedes, expect the NCAA eligibility requirements to be completely rein-

stated. Depending on the colleges or universities they are interested in, as well as the NCAA's eligibility requirements, prospective water polo student-athletes must pay close attention to and fulfill the more rigorous academic standards and entrance criteria required by their target schools.

IMPACT ON HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2020

Since 2020 graduates participated in and substantially completed the athletic recruiting process before the COVID-19 outbreak, they are largely unaffected by the temporary restrictions on recruiting. They are more likely to be impacted by rules governing the conduct of collegiate practices and competitions. Since the women's 2020 water polo season ended so abruptly, some incoming college freshmen may be affected by athletes already in colleges who elect to extend their NCAA eligibility periods to compensate for the incomplete 2020 season. Athletes should check with their college coaches and the athletic departments of their colleges or universities for instructions on how to prepare for and proceed with their collegiate athletic careers.

CONCLUSION

As of this writing, many aspiring water polo student-athletes have not played for months and eagerly look forward to the day when pools reopen so they can resume the sport. Hopefully soon, the COVID -19 pandemic will recede, and resocialization will progress. Expect the NCAA eligibility requirements to be completely reinstated and live scouting and evaluation opportunities to eventually return to pre-COVID-19 normal. But also expect the best practices developed by aspiring student-athletes and coaches to survive and become permanent parts of the collegiate athletic recruiting process.

For more information on this topic, read an expanded version of this article at USAWaterPolo.org.

**For the full text of COVID-19 changes to NCAA recruiting rules, see https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/compliance/d1/D1GOV_COVID-19ActionChart.pdf*

QUESTIONS? Write to Angela Kraus at angela@shootingforcollege.info. Angela Kraus is an experienced and certified college counselor providing comprehensive college counseling services to help students prepare for and ensure eligibility for graduation from high school and admission to colleges. A special focus of her practice is advising high school athletes as they pursue the athletic recruiting process, with emphasis on water polo players.

REFerendum BY LEVON DERMENDJIAN

Greetings All,

First and foremost, I hope you and your families are doing well amid the pandemic.

As all sports have come to a halt, athletes across the country have found ways to keep active and stay in shape. It's essential that officials do the same. Below are some things our officials can do right now to stay engaged and prepared so they don't miss a step.

Social Media: Over the past few months we have increased our social media presence with educational videos, slides, "you make the call" videos, and quizzes. Plus, several very informative podcasts and coach/referee discussions have been released via social media. Our handle is @usawpreferees for Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Give us a follow!

Online Referee Schools: We are offering our referee school online free of charge to USAWP members. This is a great opportunity for members who are interested in officiating to take advantage of this course. It's a convenient opportunity for our returning referees as well since this certification is required every two years for all referees. Keep an eye out on our social media accounts for more information. You also can find upcoming referee schools in your USAWP profile page by clicking on "coach/referee schools" in the menu on the left side.

YouTube Videos: One of the best ways for referees to improve their craft is to watch games. YouTube has a plethora of high-level and youth-level games with some of the highest-level referees officiating.

The more plays you see and absorb, the more likely you'll be able to quickly determine the appropriate calls when similar situations arise for you.

Read the Rule Book: It's always a good idea for all referees to refresh their knowledge of the rules. This time is a perfect opportunity not only to review FINA/USAWP rules, but also NCAA and NFHS rules as well. Also FINA has a water polo rules guide that further explains and provides clarity for many of the rules. This can be found on the FINA water polo rules page and is definitely worth the read. 2020 USAWP rules can be found on our USAWP website under "Rules and Compliance."

Signalization: Use this opportunity to practice and improve your hand signalization. Make sure they are crisp and clear. As a reminder we are encouraging referees to signal more often, especially for calls away from the ball. We want coaches and spectators to understand what is being called.

Finally, this is a great time to spread the word to others about getting involved in officiating. As always, we are in need of more officials, especially in certain parts of the country like Texas which recently approved high school water polo as a state-sanctioned sport beginning in the fall of 2021. Start your knowledge and certification now with these great resources so you will be ready to go once we are back in full swing!

Levon

That Mask You Wear Might Be A Gift Of Love—From A Water Polo Player

By Michael Randazzo @randazzma

It's become a defining question for the pandemic: Are you—or aren't you—wearing a mask? And by so following—or flouting—health experts' guidance, are you helping protect yourself and others from COVID-19, or inviting a spike in the coronavirus' deadly curve?

The starkness of the situation makes the gift of a mask not only a generous gesture but also potentially a lifesaving one—which invites the story of a network of mask-makers from all over the country who are supplying handmade masks to a COVID Recovery & Rehabilitation Unit in Baltimore.

It's an effort spearheaded by Heather Walenga Wheeler, a therapy manager at the University of Maryland's Rehabilitation & Orthopedic Institute, which celebrates and promotes collective efforts and a team approach to beating the virus.

"Whether they're machine-stitched or hand-stitched, these are not mass-produced. They are being sewn by individuals," said Cynthia Kelleher, the institute's CEO and Walenga Wheeler's boss. "The love going into this is incredible."

That affection is fully within the scope of Walenga Wheeler's mindset as a medical professional—and as head coach of the Washington Wetskins, a water polo team based in the District of Columbia.

As COVID has spread throughout the United States, a number of gravely ill victims who've survived find themselves in need of extensive rehabilitation to regain their former health.

Photo courtesy Heather Walenga Wheeler



A sample of some of the coverings created by Walenga Wheeler's mask making team.

According to Kelleher, patients who have been on ventilators for two to three weeks or in a hospital for extended stays are too sick to go home or even to be attended to by skilled nursing staff.

"You'd be weakened, too, if you spent that much time on a ventilator or in a hospital bed," Kelleher said by telephone. "They need an acute rehab stay in a cutting-edge facility."

On May 1, UMD's Rehabilitation & Orthopedic Institute in Baltimore opened a 22-bed COVID Recovery & Rehabilitation Unit, one of a handful of such centers nationwide equipped to provide coronavirus victims a bridge back to life.

An essential item in short supply

The acute need for PPE—the personal protective equipment necessary to protect medical professionals combating the virus, including masks—has been widely reported; and the Institute suffered from shortages like many other facilities. As the time neared for recovering patients to encounter their loved ones, Walenga Wheeler—a former college water polo athlete, first at the University of Maryland and then at George Washington University—was inspired to tap an extended network of water polo players for supplies.

"Dave Bartolone, a coach I had [at the University of Maryland], used to say that playing water polo prepares you for the rest of your life," she said.

Walenga Wheeler knows all about the value of teamwork. For the last few months, she's been on the receiving end of masks, hand- or machine-made, from all over America.

The impetus for this openhandedness came from her involvement with the Wetskins, a team she's coached for and competed with for more than a decade. To identify anyone interested in helping out, Walenga Wheeler took to social media.

"I just posted on the [Wetskins'] Facebook page; from there I started getting everyone texting me or emailing me or responding," she said. "Even one of the guys who plays on Charm City, a team that the Wetskins helped to [start], connected with someone who gave me masks."

Photo courtesy Heather Walenga Wheeler



Washington Wetskins Head Coach Heather Walenga Wheeler spearheaded an effort to create masks for medical professionals in need.

The movement has snowballed. Not just locally but donors from California—where the water polo is strongest—sent masks or supplies, all borne out of a drive to defeat the implacable enemy that is COVID-19.

"The Wetskins have been around for a long time, so our networking goes across states—the national network is big," their coach said. "And they're helping not only my hospital, but also lots of hospitals and community partners that require assistance right now."

'How can we get the message out to get these masks to the places that need them most?'

Walenga Wheeler's boss may be the most appreciative of the "polo network" effort.

According to Kelleher, it wasn't so easy for health providers to ask for or accept help despite the obvious and sometimes desperate need.

"Honestly, one of the hardest things for health care workers to do is ask for help," she said. "We're supposed to be the ones offering help! But [it was] Heather's leadership, her communication, her teamwork—and being able to say: 'Hey, we need some help.' We needed those fabric masks."

With the still-scarce supply of medical-grade masks—particularly the N95 model prized for its ability to screen out 95% of airborne particles, Kelleher described a typical protective sequence for her staff. A cloth or "travel" mask is worn from the car to the facility, a medical mask is used for patient work, and the cloth mask is used for cafeteria trips and when leaving at night.

That Mask You Wear (Continued)

Fabric masks donated for staff and family not only preserves medical masks but also relieves some of the stress of PPE being in short supply.

“We were having a lot of anxiety because we only have so many medical masks,” Kelleher said. “Heather and her team are like having the cavalry come to your rescue—the timing could not have been better.”

It’s about teamwork—and, strangely, polo

Bartolone, Walenga Wheeler’s former coach from Maryland, knew that water polo prepares you for anything—even a pandemic. And her team-centered approach to athletics served her well as she problem-solved the mask shortage. It

also revealed a side of her to staff members who had no idea what their colleague’s passion for a little-appreciated Olympic sport was all about.

“I have a large staff [and] have consistently talked about my water polo team as an example [of] how they might reach out to different community partners in order to assist with the effort,” she said. “That has allowed us to have a dynamic discussion about me—not me, Heather, your coworker, but me, Heather who does other things like coach and play water polo.”

For Kelleher, a swimmer who misses her twice-a-week pool regimen, the metaphor is that the team can succeed in beating back the virus.

“One of the things about rehab is [it’s] not individual,” she said. “It is therapy coming together, nurses coming together with physicians, and patients and their families coming together to continue that journey.”

“It’s teamwork, borne, if you will, for acute rehab,” Kelleher added “And I think [there are] so many parallels between that and water polo, because it’s teamwork-driven.”

The architect of the effort appreciates that it’s a great story about more than just the masks.

FarmLink Project Helping Re-Distribute Food To Those In Need

By Aidan Reilly, Brown University Men’s Water Polo

The FarmLink Project started as a way to keep families fed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Back in April, I had been home from Brown University for a month and was figuring out how I would spend the rest of my junior year while I took classes online and quarantined in Los Angeles. This led to plenty of free time, and subsequently an unhealthy amount of Internet surfing. But then I stumbled across a New York Times article detailing how farmers were being forced to bury millions of pounds of their produce because their usual distributors (schools, restaurant chains, etc.) shut down indefinitely.

Meanwhile, I became aware that a local food bank where I used to volunteer was burning through months of food storage. As the economy tumbled, millions of Americans who lived paycheck to paycheck were faced with layoffs and food insecurity.

This dichotomy of food being buried while Americans were struggling to feed their families didn’t sit well me. Nor did it sit well with my childhood friend James Kanoff, a sophomore at Stanford. We worked to contact one farm mentioned in the Times article, Owyhee Produce in Idaho. Offering to pay the minimum cost they needed to give their workers paychecks, we got a truckload of onions shipped down to the foodbank in Los Angeles. We realized this was a repeatable process. I had a conversation with Will Collier, my friend from Brown Water Polo, and his brother Ben, and learned they were independently trying

to tackle the same issue. So, the four of us teamed up and invited friends from Brown and Stanford to join us in our efforts. After a month, we had moved 100,000 pounds of food by any means available to us. Asking friends and family members for donations, we rented trucks ourselves and unloaded boxes at food banks.

Fast forward to today—two months after FarmLink’s inception— and we’ve moved 3.4 million pounds of produce to communities in 26 states. The FarmLink team is comprised of more than 100 students from all over the United States, volunteering hours each day to help expand our effort. We move the surplus food between farms and food banks thanks to Uber Freight, which partnered with us for free amid the pandemic.

However, the country is opening back up. Restaurants around the country are serving again, and supply chains are returning to normal. The farmers we’ve been working with are slowly getting back on their feet. This is great news for the country but suggests a new responsibility for us at FarmLink regarding the platform we’ve created. In short, food insecurity and food waste are not going



Photo courtesy Aidan Reilly

College students, including water polo athletes Aidan Reilly and Will Collier launched the FarmLink Project to help get families fed during the pandemic.

anywhere. As the economic repercussions of the pandemic continue to echo, America is facing potential famine conditions. And under normal circumstances, billions of pounds of food are wasted along the food production chain, and one in two children will not know when their next meal will be, Feeding America projects.

At FarmLink, we are entirely focused on making sure we continue to eliminate food waste while fighting food insecurity. We are working every day to adapt to new sources of food waste as the country begins to open back up.

Widespread hunger is not going anywhere in the U.S.—but neither are we.

If you’d like to donate or get involved, please visit us at www.farmlink.org or on Instagram @farmlinkproject.

Dreams of Polo Past... *A Poem by Ann Bundy – SODA Moms Masters Water Polo Team*

Vowing to get to practice on time but tardy yet again;
Shouts of greetings across cars and echoing through the locker room.
The cacophony of simultaneous conversations starting, ending, and repeating.

Feeling my cold body trying to generate one last bit of heat from the frigid air.
Watching our respective temperature check rituals as an insight into our personalities...

The risk takers, those impervious to cold, some of us asking for validation before taking the plunge.

Photo courtesy Ann Bundy



The SODA Moms are excited to get back in the pool!

The smooth feel of a good ball inflated to support a great grip,
Watching the spin of a well-thrown pass hurtling toward your partner;
Catching a ball and releasing it in one deceptively smooth move that took years to master.

The joy in your heart as we line up for the start of our scrimmage,
Looking at your friend across the pool who is now yours to guard.
The beat of your heart while swimming as fast as you can and calculating what to do next.

Andrew's whistle calling out what you know you did but hoped he wouldn't catch;
Those drama classes you observed your daughter in were not for naught!
The sound of the ball hitting the back of the net with an emphatic YESSSSS!

Eyes stinging, skin drying, ears filled with water that continues its joyride all day,
The bite of a calf cramp, the knock on your noggin from behind you didn't see coming,
An errant elbow delivered faster than Door Dash pizza during these pandemic days.

Raucous women who have loved many, birthed babies, taken care of businesses and others,
Women of substance caught in the jaws of a game that has grabbed their hearts and minds and bodies and won't let them go...
I would even kiss the filthy floor or liberate the drains of our collective hair to play together again!





HOT SHOTS



Welcome to Skip Shot Magazine's **KAP7 HOT SHOTS** page, featuring shots from your fingertips. The person who submits each issue's best photo will receive a free Kap7 men's or women's water polo ball. For more information on Kap7 visit www.kap7.com

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- 03 - Joseph Goldhardt
- 04 - Leslie Avery
- 05 - Sirpa Kuns
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01



02



03



04



05



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