

Heartland Swim Association

The Heartland Swim Association (HSA) started back in 1977 when the El Cajon Swim Team and the La Mesa Swim Team merged together. More coaches, more swimmers and more parents formed a bigger and stronger team. HSA's home pool is at El Cajon High.

The first coaches were Mr. Ken Thiltgen and Mr. Darrell Swenson. They coached from 1977 - 1980.

In 1980, Doug Russell became Head Coach. Mr. Russell won a Gold Medal in the 1968 Olympics in the 200 Butterfly. He even beat Mark Spitz who holds the record for the most gold medals at one Olympics.

John Weckler was the next Head Coach from 1984 to 1991. In 1988, former HSA swimmer Joanna Zieger qualified for the 1988 Olympic Trials and later, won a bronze medal in the triathlon at the 2000 Olympics.

Present Head Coach, Pat Tope, came to HSA in 1991.

The following people are HSA swimmers who became Junior National Champions. Joe Bruckart won the 400 Individual Medley in 1997, Jeff Rollins won the 100 butterfly in 1998 and in 1999, Joe Bruckart won the 200 Individual Medley and 200 Freestyle.

The Olympic Trials is one of the highest competitions you can go to in swimming. Alison Terry qualified for these trials in 1992 and 2000, so did Joe Bruckart in 2000 and 2004, and Will McLaughlin and Felicia Castaneda in 2004.

Many of these swimming careers started with the HSA Summer League. Younger children learn the basic strokes at pools all over East County and

on weekends they compete in fun swim meets. Last summer, over 600 children were in this program.

Those who really like swimming can move on to the year round program. The practices are longer and harder and the competition gets serious. The first step is Junior Gold with Coach Kelli Dole for children 6-11. Then after that is Coach Kevin Eslinger and the Gold Team for 11-14 year olds. After that is Pat Tope's Group, the Senior Team and Doug Selby's Senior Development Team. After high school, there is the Master's Team coached by Coach Chuck Hay.

HSA is making history for El Cajon by coaching children so they can set records, go to the Olympics and even swim the English Channel like HSA swimmer Becky Jackman and HSA coach Carol Sing.

My name is Hannah Stevenson and I swim on the Junior Gold Team with Heartland Swim Association. I had a great time learning more about my team. Maybe 20 years from now, a 3rd grader will write about HSA again and maybe write about my older sister, Tess Stevenson being a gold medallist in the Olympics...and maybe even about me.