

Out of the Blue : Sharing insights and positive perspectives about the sport of swimming from those that have lived the experience. By Cynthia Owens



To my mind, the unsung heroes in life are those who are on the frontlines day in and day out; serving, inspiring, mentoring and leading by example; especially when it comes to our kids. They are usually not the flashy 'stars' or the center of attention, but they are the ones we all remember from our own youth as having made a difference in our lives.

SCSC alum, Melanie Robinson, is one of those people. By the time she arrived at SCSC at age 14, she was a star swimmer....in Texas, that is. As a Texas State Champion, she truly believed she had the swimming thing down pat when she walked on deck to join SCSC. That may be when she had her first taste of 'humble pie'! But if being around all those

great swimmers, national champions and Olympians, was a humbling experience, it also proved to be an inspiration for Melanie. Being up close and personal with the best of the best helped her to grow and improve in all aspects of her life; not just swimming. In addition to the positive impact of her new teammates, Melanie fondly remembers the hours her mother put in driving to and from practice, working at the International Meet every year, timing at her other meets and helping support the team in so many ways. She is thankful for her parent's involvement in making her journey possible, as a youngster. However, more importantly, their support laid the foundation for a lifetime love of the sport.

Unsure of what she wanted to major in after high school, Melanie opted for two years of Community College at De Anza to figure it out, while continuing to swim competitively. Upon completion of her general education requirements her sophomore year, she was a top swimming recruit to UC Santa Barbara from which she graduated, earning her degree in Education.

Melanie just completed 25 years at the Harker Academy as a Teacher and Aquatics Director, passing on her love of swimming to the next generation. During a 2008 school trip with her students to Beijing, China, Melanie seized the opportunity to tour the Water Cube, home of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games (see photo), where swimming history was made. She said it was a phenomenal experience!

Today, with her strong background in competitive swimming, Melanie competes in triathlons. She credits her days competing and training at SCSC with helping her develop incredible life-skills that continue to serve her well, even all these years later. She is planning to pursue her Masters Degree in Education, while continuing her passion for teaching.

I recently had the opportunity to catch up with Melanie and chat about how swimming helped shape her life.

1) What has swimming meant to you?

Wow, that is a great question, as swimming has been apart of my life as long as I can remember! Learning to swim, then moving into the competitive arena was an amazing journey. Swimming teaches you so much about yourself. You have to work hard, and you also play hard too! Training with swimmers from all around the area was great, as you made friends outside of the school realm. Traveling was a huge part of swimming, especially those trips nationally. You really learn a lot about yourself and your fellow teammates. Work ethic, personal goals and committing to the sport are essential. It is all worth it in the long run!

My first job was a summer swim instructor when I was 17 and I have been teaching ever since!! I am currently the Aquatics Director at Harker Academy, along with coaching our lower and middle school students. So I can say that swimming not only provided me with my first job, but also has led me this far in my career!

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2) When you think of your personal experience swimming at SCSC, what comes to mind?

Coming from Texas as a state champion in 1973, I thought, "I got this"! Swimming under George Haines and the many Olympians on the team at that time put me in my place! I had to step up my game big time. I remember making so many great friends and learning so much from all of them. Swimming is an individual sport, but you are part of a team too.

3) Did you always dream of making the Olympic Team? Why or why not is that important?

The Olympics were always a dream of mine. To this day, watching them is so exciting. Not making an Olympic team did not discourage me. The goal was to improve my times and continue practicing as hard as possible.

4) What advice do you have for swimmers just beginning their journey?

I would say truly love the sport and be happy! Put in the hard work as it pays off no matter what. You can take that work ethic and put it toward anything you choose; school, work; the list is endless. Good luck on your swimming journey; it's a great ride!

Out of the Blue is a regular monthly feature in our club newsletter to showcase stories of inspiration, motivation and humor from those who have strong ties to our great sport. Contact Cynthia Owens at: cowens@santaclaraswimclub.org