

ARMY SWIMMING & DIVING

Summer 2014

The 2013-2014 Season: "Unquestionably the best"

The Army men and women's swimming and diving teams advanced another level over the course of the 2013-2014 season. "This was my eighth season at West Point," says head coach Mickey Wender, "and it was unquestionably the best. We are not where we want to be, but it's within sight. We're getting there." Twenty of the 46 Academy records were broken, 17 plebe records were reset, and there were 55 adjustments to the all-time, **top-10 lists**. The men and women retained their standing in the Patriot League championships (second and fourth, respectively) despite the addition this year of very strong teams from Boston and Loyola universities.

"What the results and records don't show are the enhanced work ethic and attention to detail," Wender says. "The mindset of doing whatever it takes to be competitive with any of the teams we face is settling in among the swimmers and divers. That's a huge step forward for the program."

The highlight of the first half of the season was December's Army-Navy competition in Annapolis. The meets were arguably the fastest in the history of the rivalry. Some of the

winning times were ranked nationally through much of the season. The Army women set seven Academy records, the men five. Many of them represented significant drops to long-standing records. Danielle Nuskowski ('17) broke a 16-year-old record in the 500 free by two seconds and won the race. Earlier in the meet, she broke a 25-year-old Academy record in the 1000 free. Ariana Bullard ('17)

set both butterfly records by a total of three seconds and won the 100 fly. Natalie Beale ('16) broke both of her backstroke records by nearly three seconds.

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From the Coach....

I have four long-standing goals for the program: everyone improves, win all our meets including the Patriot League championships, be represented at the NCAA championships, and endow the program.



Head Coach Mickey Wender

The adjacent article summarizing the '13-'14 season, and co-captain

Brendan Lorton's comments (pages 3-4) show that the program is making headway with the first three goals. The fourth goal -- endowing the program -- ensures that future generations of athletes will always have an opportunity to swim and dive for Army.

Within just the last year, we have raised our endowment from approximately \$100,000 to nearly \$1.2 million in cash and commitments. Our short-term goal of \$1.5 million to the Army Swimming & Diving Endowment is within reach. And we have our sights long term on an endowment of \$5 million. At that amount, the interest will cover our annual operating expenses in perpetuity. Your donations and support in time, money, and energy are greatly appreciated. Every dime you give goes back to supporting the cadet-athlete experience.

As we head into the 2014-15 season, we have 18 rising firstie swimmers and divers (9 women and 9 men) who are committed to raising the standard of training and creating the family environment from which champions will evolve.

Our competitive schedule this season will feature some old rivals as well as some new challenges. In particular, we are excited to add Michigan State and Buffalo to our dual meet schedule. We will also travel to Boston University in November for a winter invitational.

On the men's side, Chris Szekely ('16) was the first Army swimmer under 20 seconds in the 50 free breaking a 15-year-old Academy record in the process. He also set the Academy record in the 200 free. Sean Regan ('17) won both fly events and set an Academy record in the 200. Sam Mo ('16) was the first cadet under 50 seconds in the 100 back, breaking the record Kenny Yacynych ('14) set last season. "Though the score of each meet might indicate something else, we swam very well," says Wender. "What we aren't able to do yet is match Navy's depth."



Molly Mucciarone, 50 Free Patriot League Champion

After completing the **dual meet season** (the men were 9-3, the women 6-6), the teams returned to Annapolis for the Patriot League championships, where Academy records continued to fall, four in the first day: both men's and women's 200 medley and 800 free relays.

In the remaining three days of the meet, Bullard reset

both of her butterfly records and captured two first places. She was named the Patriot League Rookie of the Year for the women. Molly Mucciarone ('16) defended her 50 free title and teamed with Bullard, Grace Hamilton ('14), and Kelly Hamilton ('17) to win the 200 free relay in Academy-record time. Mucciarone, Bullard, Grace Hamilton, and Krista Barta ('15) broke the two-year-old Academy record in the 400 medley relay by four seconds and finished second. Jessica Burkett ('17) lowered the 400 IM Academy last set in 1989.

The men's 400 medley team of Mo, Colin Kanzari ('16), Michael Dustin ('15) and Will Viana ('15) finished third with an Academy record. Regan broke the 200 fly record he set at the Navy meet. And Zach Woods ('15) was second in the one- and three-meter diving. The Army men finished second behind Navy and ahead of Boston University. The women were fourth behind Navy, Bucknell and Boston.

Five Army swimmers - Bullard, Kelly Hamilton, Mucciarone, Regan, and Szekely - made the All-Patriot League team. Seven others - Burkett, Dustin, Mo, Viana, Woods, Danielle Ullman, and Devin McCall - made the second team. "Although we're very pleased with our performance this season, we are far from satisfied," says Wender. "Our athletes are committed to doing whatever it takes to accomplish our goals and I couldn't be more excited about the future. The best is definitely yet to come."

The Navy dual meet will be at West Point, and we are also looking forward to Columbia, BU, George Mason, American, Colgate, and Lafayette at Crandall Pool this season.

As a staff we are always searching for ways to help our cadet-athletes improve. Until recently, each coach primarily focused on specific event groups (sprint, middle, stroke, distance). We trained our swimmers almost exclusively within these set groups. Although effective, I felt there is a better way to ensure the swimmers get exactly what they need out of the process.

This spring we have taken a more "interactive" approach to training. By cycling the swimmers through various groups, lanes, and coaches, we have created a more fluid process that we feel will be much more effective. It allows us to create match-ups between swimmers who may not otherwise have a chance to work together. It has also put more sets of eyes on each swimmer, providing additional feedback and insights. We're looking forward to expanding on this approach in the fall.

Thanks again for all you do to help our team succeed. Your support and attention helps our cadet-athletes consistently raise the bar in training and exceed their expectations- in and out of the pool.



Zach Woods, second team All-Patriot League

Meet the Swimmers

Brendan Lorton was one of four captains of the '13-'14 men's and women's teams. What follows are his memories of the last four years of swimming at West Point.

What was the highlight of the 2013-14 season?

I imagined my last Army-Navy meet would go like this: ruthless fans, great atmosphere, Army winning the first relay, taking five individual first-places, winning the last relay, and beating Navy for the first time in 28 years. *Twenty-eight years* – a staggering, downright ugly number. My senior year, I kept telling myself, was the year we beat Navy. Obviously, that didn't happen, so why is it still my highlight of the season?



I remember standing on the side of the pool and looking at my guys cheering their faces off and watching Dan Ruckman, my co-captain, swim so hard that he puked. Man, the Army team was louder than all of Navy's parents combined. I remember John Blickle swimming the fastest he ever swam. Sean Regan killed the 200 butterfly. Chris Szeckly finally went 19 in the 50 free. The 50-second barrier in the 100 back was broken. New records were set. I never thought I'd see an Army-Navy meet this fast.

After the meet, as Dan and I looked at the team of warriors that swam their hearts out, we knew there was no way we could be disappointed. The team kept their heads up because we had a brotherhood called Sigma – what we call Army men's swimming – and I'd take that over a win against Navy any day.

How did the program move forward during your time at West Point?

When I came to the team four years ago, it was pretty good, but we also liked having a good time. Then sophomore and junior year arrived and the team began to build with new recruits, increased motivation, and faster times. In 2012-13, academy records fell like gravity as we narrowed our focus to loftier goals – beating Navy, winning Patriots, making NCAA cuts. The 2013-14 team was, by far, the fastest team I've been a part of and more important, the most cohesive. You could feel the closeness as you walked into the locker room. There was a vibe. The guys were always ready to swim hard and puke their lunch up during practice. There was some magic in the air this year and the team became a place where the guys became true brothers. I think this strong brotherhood fostered a winning environment where crazy fast times could become a reality.

What personal accomplishments are you most proud of?

I'm really proud of the team's leadership – the firstie and cow classes – because we created a winning environment that focused on the Sigma tradition of brotherhood. We were always the loudest team on deck, yet always professional. A Navy old grad told me that, in his mind, we won the star meet because our humbleness and professionalism trumped Navy's. This environment also led to the team becoming the best of friends, or true brothers. We ate together, we continued the Plebe traditions – Brickgame, “there's a pole

“I suggest to those future swimmers to never take any small experience for granted. Trust me, you'll want it back.”

Meet the Swimmers

in the pool”, and we went out together on weekends. Cows always did their best to enforce “the standard,” while the firsties implemented the vision of a winning Sigma team.

Why would you recommend someone come to West Point and swim or dive?

If you want to be part of a real team, come to West Point and swim. This team – Sigma – is a brotherhood. The men that look down on our program today from the rafters at Crandall Pool are guys like Dennis Zilinski (KIA, Iraq, 2005) and David Bernstein (KIA, Iraq, 2003). Both men were captains because they cared for the team and they strived to make the program better. They led from the front and they paid the ultimate price. Sigma is a team effort. You wake up at 5:00 am so you can swim in the morning with your brothers. You get swole in the weight room and then fall flat on your face during a lactate set. This team keeps everyone accountable. I remember hitting a rough spot this year and my co-captain slapped me in the face telling me, “Snap out of it because the team needs you.” So, back to the question – if you want a part of the best team in the nation called Sigma, a top-50 NCAA program, and the world’s premier leadership institute, then come to West Point.



“We had a brotherhood called Sigma.”

What do you remember most about your swimming experience?

I go back to my plebe year and how I got 100 hours with a couple teammates. I can still feel the cold air and the wet turf of Michie Stadium on my body as the group completed what seemed like 500 yards of log rolls as punishment. During my yearling year, I remember how close I got with the team during Buckner and how we swam to “Sigma Rock” and spray painted AMΣ on the rock...we were so cool. Cow year I attended Combat Dive School with Dan Ruckman. And this year I was part of the best team I have ever been a part of. There have also been BBQs, football games, ultimate Frisbee games, games of “Brickgame,” and stories that only we know. I remember it all and I suggest to those future swimmers to never take any small experience for granted. Trust me, you’ll want it back.

Did you accomplish what you have hoped to at West Point?

I really didn’t set huge goals before coming to West Point because the “military thing” was new to me. When I got here, I set my eyes on some personal goals. Attending Dive School was one goal that I checked off. Another goal was a great summer leadership experience, which happened when I was a Buckner CO. I had two swimming goals: be a four-year varsity athlete and get faster. I was blessed to letter all four years while at West Point. If I were a freshman on the team now, it would be impossible for me to letter because our team is so fast. I was able to get faster in my first two years, but my great experience and bond with the swim team heavily outweighed faster times.

Army Swimming and Diving 2013-14 Awards

Lieutenant General John Phillips Daley Award (women's captains):

Bre Davis and Grace Hamilton

Captain Michael W. Kilroy Award (men's captains):

Brendan Lorton and Daniel Ruckman

Rex Storch Award (most valuable female):

Molly Mucciarone

Most Valuable Male:

Chris Szekely

Most Improved Female:

Kelly Hamilton

Most Improved Male:

John Blickle

Most Valuable Female Plebe:

Danielle Nuskowski

Dorothy "Skippie" Buncher Award (most valuable male plebe):

Devin McCall and Sean Regan



Chris Szekely, Men's team MVP



Kelly Hamilton, Women's Most Improved

Stephen Childers Award (most improved sophomore or junior):

Dion Hart

Most Inspirational Female:

Danielle Nuskowski

Most Inspirational Male:

Brendan Lorton

Joe & Anna B. Stetz Award (senior leadership/performance):

Grace Hamilton

Class of 1923 Award (senior leadership/performance):

Kenny Yacynych

Class of 2014 Branch Selections and First Assignments

John Blickle -- Medical School -- Uniformed Services University

Breawna Davis -- Engineer -- Schofield Barracks, Hawaii

Grace Hamilton -- Engineer - Ft. Bragg, North Carolina

Brendan Lorton -- Infantry -- Ft. Lewis, Washington

Benjamin Quay -- Navy Special Warfare -- (cross-commission)

Daniel Ruckman -- Infantry -- Schofield Barracks, Hawaii

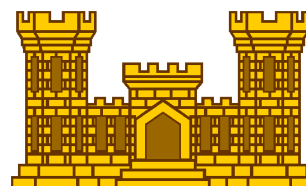
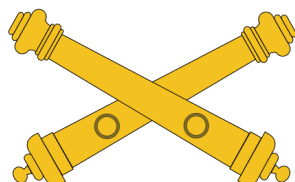
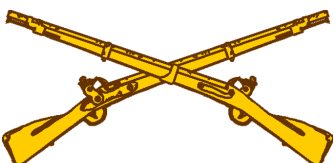
Rita Snyder -- Medical School -- Georgetown University

Lara Stouffer -- Adjutant General -- Ft. Hood, Texas

Danielle Ullman -- Field Artillery -- Ft. Hood, Texas

Juliette Wallerstein -- Air Defense -- Ft. Hood, Texas

Kenneth Yacynych -- Aviation -- Ft. Rucker, Alabama



Alumni Connection

Kerry O'Hara, '67 (*far left*), wrote to say he recently traveled to California to celebrate the 70th birthday of his brother **Tim**, '65 (*far right*). Kerry's niece, **Colleen**, '94, and her husband, Oliver Laurence made the trip as well. The four are pictured before a hot-air balloon ride.

Kerry, Tim, and Colleen were all backstrokers at West Point. Kerry was a team captain, academy record holder, and an All American. He finished as high as fourth at the NCAA championships in the 200 back. He left active duty as a major after 11 years and retired from the Army as a reserve colonel. His civilian career was in human resources. He retired in 2007 as director of HR for a utility company in Vermont.

After three tours in Vietnam, Tim left the Army and became an attorney. He still practices law in California. Colleen has worked for Dell for 17 years. She lives in Austin, Texas, with Oliver and their son.



Three swimmers from '73 had a reunion of sorts this fall at the Eastern Michigan football game. **Bill Deatherage** (*left*), the captain of the '73 team, had a career on Wall Street after serving 11 years as an infantry officer. He is now semi-retired and living in New Jersey. He and his wife Mary have two sons.

Kevin Murphy (*center*) served 21 years as an intelligence officer and retired as a lieutenant colonel. He lives in Virginia Beach and does contract work for the federal government.

Tom Slear (*right*) got out of the Army after five years and spent a number of years teaching high school math and coaching swimming. He now writes full-time for magazines that vary from *AARP* to *Boys' Life*. He has four daughters and lives in Annapolis with his wife Liz.

Peter Witteried, '54, passed away in January. He was arguably one of Army's best swimmers ever, achieving All-American status in seven individual events and a relay. The captain of the '54 team, Peter was a finalist three times at the NCAA championships.

Peter served 30 years as an artillery officer, including a tour in Vietnam as a battalion commander. He retired as a colonel. In recent years, Long Beach, California, was his home. He is survived by Betty, his wife of 58 years, a son and daughter, four grandchildren, and two step-grandchildren.

(Please let us hear from you so we can share what you have been up to with other former West Point swimmers and divers. Send an email to Tom Slear at tslear@comcast.net, or give him a call at 410-268-4773. The more details the better. Be sure to include your graduating year. Deadline for the fall issue is August 15.)