

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

She is an SCSC legacy. Her dad was President of SCSC for six years, her older brother and sister swam here daily, and she was a fixture on deck since the day she was born; literally taking her naps in the stroller while her siblings worked out. So, it was little surprise that Julie Varozza took to the water and made a huge splash! Julie swam for SCSC for 18+ years, retiring in 2000 after the Olympic Trials.

Her swimming accolades are impressive. In 1999, she was the NCAA Champion in the 1650 freestyle, competing for the University of Georgia under Coach Jack Bauerle (2008 Beijing Olympic Women's Coach). While at the University of Georgia, ('95-'99), Julie was a 4-time All American. She was a National Team member for three years, a two-time participant and medalist at the World University Games ('97, '99), and reached a world ranking of 4<sup>th</sup> in the 1500 M freestyle in 1996. Before retiring in 2000, Julie was a finalist at the Olympic Trials.

Today, Julie is happily married to current SCSC Board member and two-time Olympian, Yann de Fabrique. They have two young children, Zoe and Sebastien.

I recently had the opportunity to talk to Julie about her SCSC experience.

### **Q: What has swimming meant to you?**

The sport of swimming means so much to my life. The lessons it has taught me are the life lessons I use on day-to-day basis. Just to name a few: patience, consistency, goal setting, and hard work. When using those four things in life I have learned that I can accomplish whatever I put my mind to.

Swimming has also given me the opportunity to travel all over the country and world. Through swimming I've made lifelong friends and had incredibly special experiences that never would have been possible otherwise.

### **Q: When you think of your personal SCSC experience what comes to mind?**

When thinking of my SCSC experience I have extremely fond memories of *team unity*. We had enormous team pride just going to meets and wearing our world famous "Blue and Gold"! I clearly remember that all our swimmers back then were very determined to try to win Zones and Far Westerns, and we almost always won. Our relays were a huge success at meets. We were always ranked top in the nation in nearly every age group, which contributed to the "team" feel. Every swimmer wanted to be on an SCSC "A" relay team and the competition at the club to be on the "A" relay was deep.

I also remember growing up and looking up to the older swimmers who were training at SCSC. I would be in awe of how fast they were. Each summer we would have dozens of swimmers from colleges all over the country that would train with us and represent SCSC at Nationals. They were such great role models for us younger kids. They taught us how to work hard, have team spirit, and what it was like to be a collegiate athlete. Some of them were on the National Team and some were even Olympians. I remember thinking "WOW! I'm swimming in the same lane as Pablo Morales!"

When I became a collegiate athlete and came home to train here for the summers, I remembered how I felt being the younger one and looking up. I would try to pass down what I had learned and share my experiences with the younger kids. I also would encourage the younger kids to have SCSC team pride and what it meant to me

## *Out of the Blue (continued)*

**Q: Did you dream of making the Olympics? Why is that important/or not?**

I always wanted to make the Olympic team! Why not? It was the ultimate experience and meant that you are the best of the best! The last swim meet of my career was Olympic Trials in 2000. I was the third fastest ranked swimmer in the USA that whole year leading up to trials and was ranked third going into finals in the 800m freestyle. They only take the top two finishers per event. Well, I didn't make it... but I sure had fun trying to! To be that close, was worth every lap I ever did, every set I ever wanted to get out of doing, every meet leading up to that day, because I knew I'd tried as hard as I could and I had *fun* doing it! I walked away from this sport making life long friends, traveling the world, and accomplishing goals I never thought I could have.

*Out of the Blue* will become 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.