



Georgia Masters Newsletter Swimming in Georgia June 2018

Swimmer Profile — Dan Beatty



By Elaine Krugman

The most enjoyable aspect of interviewing swimmers for “Swimmer Profile” features has been learning something interesting and surprising about each one. My interview with Dan Beatty was no different. Did you know he was born in Guyana? Do you even know where Guyana is located on the world map?

Dan’s father was a Lutheran pastor and did missionary work for ten years in this small country located east of Venezuela, in South America. Two years into his work with the Lutheran Church, his wife gave birth to Dan in the city of Georgetown. Eight years later, his parents moved the family back to the U.S.A., in North Carolina.

It was in his new community where Dan became a swimmer. “Guyana is a fairly poor country, so there are no pools or opportunities to swim; so, I didn’t know how to swim when I came back to the

States.” There was a pool and a swim team near his new neighborhood, so this was a great opportunity to learn. The requirement to make the team, though, was to be able to swim one length of the 25-yard pool—a bit of a challenge for a boy with no formal training. “My Mom couldn’t remember how long it took me to do one lap, and it didn’t look like I was moving forward at all. To her, it seemed like a long time, but I made it all the way over the one lap of the pool, and I could join the swim team,” Dan said with a laugh.

A natural at his new sport, Dan swam summer league from age nine through 8th grade, coached expertly by a local college coach who encouraged his swimmers to continue swimming year around, in high school, and in college. Taking his advice, this enthusiastic swimmer joined six of his teammates in a carpool and swam for a YMCA team, and then the Mecklenburg Aquatic Club.

Following high school, Dan swam for Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, and was voted Team Captain in his senior year. He continued swimming after college, joining a Masters program at the YMCA in Dayton, Ohio where he landed his first

computer programming job. This motivated swimmer enjoyed Masters so much that the first thing Dan did when he was relocated to Detroit, and then again to Houston, was look up the nearest Masters swimming program. Then, when the computer programmer moved to Atlanta for work in 1995, his first goal was to find a Masters team once again. He found the Killer Whales and has been swimming with them ever since.

One of the things Dan likes about Masters is the mix of people involved in the sport. "Swimming is something that you get people from a lot of different interests and jobs, but it seems like what everybody has in common is being self-motivated, driven, and successful in whatever field they do..."

It's always interesting to meet and see the different people. "[At Nationals], it's neat to see that many people that have the same interest in the sport competing together in all different age ranges, different levels, and different interests in the sport, and all coming together for a meet."

What is it about swimming in particular that has kept Dan in the pool since struggling to complete that 25-yard tryout when he was nine years old? As he explained, "I like the feeling of being in shape, and I like the feeling of working out. I had my annual physical this week, and all my blood work was in line with where it should be. I think the exercise itself helps you not only physically, but mentally. I like competing, too. The meets give me a reason to continue going to practice and continue swimming."

In addition to the personal fulfillment Dan enjoys, he is doing it with his family in mind. "I like to keep in shape as I get older, too, but for me right now in this point in my life, I am setting an example for my family-- to keep in shape and how exercise is important, not only when you're younger, but when you are an adult, too. My sons are 12 and 14, so I stress to them the importance of getting a good night's sleep, eating right, and exercising. It's one thing to tell them that, and it's another to show them by example," Dan said.

Living a healthy lifestyle is particularly important for Dan, too, because of a health scare he had several years ago. When you are out for a few months and faced with something potentially serious, and then you are able to get back in and swim and workout, you kind of appreciate it more. I think about that when I'm swimming now and appreciate that I am able to swim as fast as I am and keep up the pace that I do."

That pace? In a word, FAST. As a new Masters swimmer at the age of 23, Dan was ranked 1st in the country in the 200 IM, 100 Breaststroke, and 200 Breaststroke; and, 2nd in the 100 and 400 IM. To date, he has earned 72 individual and 20 relay USMS Top Ten Achievements, as well as a total of six Georgia state records in the 45-49 and 50-54 age groups.

The amazing thing is that Dan has slowed down much slower than many of his peers. "I've been really surprised as I've been keeping in shape how level my times drop-off has been over that time and how I've been able to maintain a good pace in racing and in practices. For a while there, I was out of college maybe five or six years, I was doing about one second slower for a 200 IM. I was taking off the summers... But, lately, I have been swimming through the summers, too, and that one second drop-off has stopped. I've been able to maintain that pretty close. I'm only four seconds slower than when I

was 30 for a 200 IM, twenty years later.” Dan explained, adding that he keeps his race times in perspective as he gets older. “I kind of accepted that my college times were the best times I am going to do, but that’s ok. I only compare back to the last year or maybe the last two years and compare that as I have been going. When you’re almost thirty years in Masters, you kind of have to do that, or you’re going to get discouraged. I’m trying to focus on where I am at presently rather than where I was.”

Dan’s training program includes swimming four sessions per week for an average of 4,000 yards per workout, focusing on the 100 and 200 distances of both IM’s and the four strokes. In addition, he lifts weights and does shoulder exercises with stretch cords twice per week, along with core work (planks and sit-ups).

At one of these upcoming meets, Dan hopes to break 1:00 in the 100 IM again—an achievement he last made in Birmingham when he won gold at the 2017 National Senior Games. “I always try to make the Top 10 in my times, but I’m trying to focus on the time that I want to do,” he explained about his goals in general.

Those goals include more Georgia records. “As I’m getting older now, the state records for Georgia are more in reach than ten years ago when they were out of reach for me; so, I look at races where I may be able to set a record. For example, back at St. Nick’s, I pointed to the 800 Meter Freestyle that I wanted to set the state record in; so, I focused on it in training. I had a pace that I wanted to do, and I trained it for three months leading up to the meet. I broke the record, so I was happy about that!” That record also earned him a 5th spot on the USMS Top Ten Achievement list.

For other swimmers who have goals to improve their race times, Dan has this advice, “I’ve always looked at swimming as a learning, evolving sport. For me, it’s just not going in everyday and doing what I did twenty years ago. The strokes and techniques have evolved since I was in college thirty years ago. I try to look at the top people in the sport. Today on the Internet, it’s just amazing the underwater videos of the Olympians. When somebody breaks a World Record, there’s a video of it. Look online and look at what they’re doing underwater, what technique they’re doing or read about somebody analyzing their technique. Try to incorporate that into your stroke, too.” Studying stroke technique, training, and competing at meets all takes a lot of time, and dedication. Dan is thankful that his family has been with him on his journey. “With a busy life and taking care of your two sons, it really helps that I have an encouraging wife who supports me taking the time to swim four days a week and go to meets and cheers me along the way.”