

February 2005

Thank You Coach Dave

The board of Stingray Swim Club would like to thank Coach Dave Kelsheimer for all the encouragement, passion, dedication and creative energy he gave not only to the swimmers, but many others and in some ways, the entire nation.

Shortly after his arrival in Cayman, Coach Dave was instrumental in the formation of Stingray Swim Club, an age-group competitive swim club, focused on developing young swimmers. Throughout his tenure he gave up most of his weekends and many evenings, helping the club learn how to run a swim program effectively. Initially he steered our home meets and encouraged us to bring in swim officials to train us to run our meets properly; thus creating a volunteer parent team second-to-none, yet like so many other pool decks.

He pushed us to purchase the club's electronic timing system and to create the website (www.caymanswimming.com) that connected us with each other and the rest of the world.

We would like to thank Dave for his clear emphasis on personal excellence and work ethic. Chasing easily measurable 'personal bests', not 'hardware', works well for swimmers of any level or age. Dave taught that it's up to the individual to define their success, set his or her own goals and work hard to knock off those goals, one by one. Having three swimmers, still in high school, come up thru Stingray Swim Club's age-group program to reach the 2004 Olympics was an achievement the Club hardly thought possible in the early years.

We would like to thank him for encouraging our kids to not just shoot for the stars, but also in giving them the tools and showing them a path to the top. He defined 'the top' as access to discounted education (college scholarships) and qualified participation in the Olympics and other world class meets. Dave's path was strewn with plenty of training, (age-appropriate) which meant lots of early mornings (more often than not for seniors), and constant challenge.

Thank you Coach Dave, for creating a disciplined program, where showing up on time, ready to work, is just the start. Thank you for your example of consistency, (one missed morning in the last eight years, followed by each family receiving a phone and written apology by 9am!). Thanks for being willing to be the bad guy, so parents didn't always have to be. Dave wasn't always easy to deal with and didn't try to be anyone's best friend. He was the coach and the results speak for themselves.

Thank you for challenging us to see beyond our own pool deck and the Caribbean, (although all those Carifta medals were great!) by insisting on and using travel as incentives and reality checks. By advising the Club in developing an overseas meet program which developed and educated our swimmers, developing the poise that international competition demands and giving them the opportunity to reach qualifying time standards. Thank you for offering a good program of meets for the young island-bound local swimmer, with or without hopes of feeding into a national team.

Thank you for insisting on regarding our youngsters as athletes; not just by limiting junk food on trips, but also creating a terrific team of volunteers and

professionals that helped with massage, physio, nutrition, sports psychology, dealing with the media, marketing and more.

Thank you for all the exposure to excellence. Your contacts brought 32 Olympic medalists to our pool deck; conducting clinics without the usual \$40- \$150 clinic fees charged elsewhere. Many of the visiting athletes came when at the top of their game and fame, and then returned our hospitality by welcoming our swimmers on the pool deck of the world's top meets. Thank you also for bringing other world class international coaches here, with the opportunity to talk to them.

Thank you for World Swimmers Party, still an incredible idea and a fabulous event.

Thank you for running nine years of the Caribbean's only swim camp, giving local kids the opportunity to experience a swim camp without overseas airfares. Those 'Camper Vs Counselor' Relay races were amongst some of the most exciting, hard fought moments ever at the Lions Aquatic Center.

Thank you for pushing us to create the Von Kanel Swim Camp scholarship that has already benefited not only five 12 year old Mississippi swimmers, but also all of us who took the opportunity to get to know each of them.

Thank you for your concern for the children NOT in the swim program, for never giving up on the dream of what a 50 metre pool could do for Cayman.

Thank you Dave, for your volunteer duty as a special constable during those rough weeks immediately following Hurricane Ivan, demonstrating your true concern for Cayman. And for contacting (even visiting some) the displaced swimmers, getting them into swim programs, giving them an outlet to burn off energy and make friends while doing something at which they were good.

Thank you for putting Cayman on the world swim map. Your expertise and passion created some controversies and so much success. You have set precedents and standards, hopes and expectations we will have to work very hard to uphold, much less take to the next level. But you've taught us, hard work and controversy are nothing to be afraid of, the kids are worth it. Words are not enough, but Thank you.

The board of Stingray Swim Club.