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Swimming alumni turn to coaching

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Over the 24 years **Pete Hovland** has coached swimming and diving at Oakland University, plenty of talented athletes have gone through his program. Several earned Mid-Continent Conference and NCAA Division II Swimmer of the Year awards, and four participated in recent Summer Olympic Games.

After leaving the pool, many also have gone on to have highly successful coaching careers. More than a dozen have served as either head or assistant coaches at the NCAA Division I or II level or coached various other teams. Based on these facts, you could say there's definitely something in the water at OU.

"It's extremely flattering to see so many go on to coach," Hovland said. "All of these people have similar characteristics. They were some of the best students with the highest grade point averages; they were people who looked to excel and didn't accept mediocrity; and they were all outstanding as individuals. It also shows that they developed a variety of skills while at OU. And after leaving Oakland, they were in a position to contribute right away. They represent our program and the university very well."

Former OU swimmers who currently are head coaches at the NCAA level include:

Arthur Albiero, University of Louisville – Albiero earned a BA in psychology with a minor in exercise physiology from Oakland in 1996. He was an 18-time All-American swimmer at OU, earned three NCAA titles and was a three-time Scholastic All-American. Albiero spent four years as an assistant coach at the University of Alabama before becoming head coach at Louisville.

Eric McIlquhan, University of Alabama – McIlquhan earned a BA in psychology with a minor in history from Oakland in 1992. He won 15 NCAA Division II individual and relay titles at OU and held the national record in the 100 butterfly. He was an Academic All-American as a senior and earned a prestigious NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship. He served as assistant coach to the Egyptian swim team during the 1996 and 2000 Olympic Games and was head coach at the University of West Virginia before joining Alabama last year.

Colleen Murphy, Truman State University – Murphy earned a BA in history from Oakland in 1997. She was named an All-American five times and was a three-time Academic All-American. Murphy served as an assistant head coach at Truman for two years before assuming the head coach position in 2002. In her first year as head coach, she guided the women's team to its third-straight first-place finish at the NCAA Division II national championships, and she was named 2002-03 NCAA Division II Women's Coach of the Year.

Sean Peters, Wayne State University – Peters earned a BS in environmental health from Oakland in 1994. He was a four-time NCAA National Champion and was named an All-American 13 times. He became head coach at Wayne State in 2001 after serving as assistant men's and women's swim coach at Oakland from 1995-97. For the past three years, he has been named GLIAC Men's Coach of the Year.

Sue Novitsky, University of Illinois (women) – Novitsky earned a BA in biochemistry from Oakland in 1991. She was a two-time Division II All-American and served as a student assistant coach for the 1991 Division II national championship team. She joined the Illinois staff in 1994 as a volunteer coach for the women's team while completing her graduate degree in kinesiology. She was promoted to assistant coach in 1997 and became head coach in 2000.

"All of them are passionate, fiery individuals, and these characteristics probably carry over into their coaching," Hovland said. "It takes a tremendous amount of dedication and sacrifice to be a head coach. Coaching is a lifestyle – to be successful at any level you have to be passionate."

Hovland also attributes much of their success to Ernie Maglischo, his former coach at California State-Chico.

Maglischo joined Oakland in 1979 and brought Hovland with him as his assistant in 1980. That year, Maglischo led Oakland to its first-ever Division II title in any sport. He currently is retired and living in Scottsdale, Ariz.

“Ernie is one of the top swimming minds in the world, and I have tried to follow in his footsteps. His books on swimming are considered to be the bibles of our sport,” Hovland said. “I think a lot of OU’s success is because of him and the way he approached our sport. At Chico State he made us all attend his Intro to Swimming class and lectured us on physiology and the mechanics and theory of swimming. I love that approach, and there weren’t many swim coaches who were doing that back then. He is a coach who is also a scientist, and he can relate to the kids.”

Hovland remains in touch with each of his former swimmers who coach, though he speaks with them more as a peer than a mentor.

“We talk monthly,” Hovland said. “Some call for words of encouragement or look for advice. We talk as equals and share information about how our teams are doing. It keeps the relationship special. There’s a kind of bond between us that hasn’t vanished.”

Hovland and his teams currently are preparing for the National Independent Conference (NIC) Championships, which is at Oakland University Wednesday, Feb. 25, through Saturday, Feb. 28. Preliminaries will be held each day at 11:30 a.m. with the finals at 6:30 p.m. For more information, visit the [OU Athletics](#) Web site.

SUMMARY

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