



The Spin Lob

The Boys Water Polo Blog for Cincinnati, Ohio

If you would like a topic discussed on the Spin Lob, just let know.

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January 2018 Winter ODP Blizzard Edition



USA Water Polo
Olympic Development Program

With the winter in full force here in the tri-state, it was a good time to hunker down and read up on some water polo, unless you were part of the great trek north for ODP. For the second time in the last two months, Cincinnati players, along with players from across Ohio and the Great Lakes Zone met up for the Olympic Development Program up in Michigan. This program is

put on by USA Water Polo and has some local ties. Cincinnati players have made many appearance over the years and this year was no exception.

In the ODP camps of 2017, there were 13 Cincinnati players that took part in the camps from Mason, Sycamore and Princeton. Caleb Bloodworth of Mason was among the skilled elite to be selected to represent our zone on the Great Lakes Zone team. In the first camp for 2018 which took place in December another large group of Cincinnati players took to the roads to train in Michigan with the rest of the Great Lakes Zone. In 2016, Mike McDonald from Mason and Patrick Hudak from St. Xavier made the Zone team and the year before Jackson Tomas from Mason made the selection.

Do you have a story from your trip to ODP? We would love to hear it and put it in our follow up editions. Send it to cinciwaterpolo@gmail.com

To learn more about ODP, we sat down with the Youth Coach, who happens to be a Cincinnati local, Paul Splitt as well as Coach Jessen Link of Sycamore's Lady Aviators who attended to the National Holiday Camp in December.

Cinci WP: Coach Splitt, that you for taking the time to talk with us. Many people have heard about the term ODP and many have participated, but not everyone knows a lot about it. Can you tell us more about what ODP is?

Paul Splitt: ODP stands for: Olympic Development Program. This is a system put together by USA Water Polo. The end goal of ODP is to select a National Team for 3 different age groups. Those age groups are: Youth (17&U), Cadet (15&U), and Development (14&U). This is done by having camps in each zone of the US, Ohio falling into the Great Lakes Zone. There are goals that implemented such as developing fundamentals for athletes, professional development for coaches, and professional development for officials. Coaches are invited to attend the camps and opportunities are set up for officials to get a chance to see what is being taught and allowing them to officiate games.

Cinci WP: Who are the coaches of ODP and what is your role in ODP?

Paul Splitt: The current coaching staff for the Great Lakes Zone is:

National Team Coach Rep: Nikola Malezanov (Current Cadet National Team Head Coach)

Youth Head Coach (17&U): Paul Splitt

Cadet Head Coach (15&U): Jim Staresinic

Development (14&U) & Zone Head Coach: Matt Latham



My role as the Youth Head Coach is to evaluate, select, and coach the Youth Team. I am also in charge of encouraging new players and challenging kids that are trying to make a National Team. This is my favorite part of being an ODP Coach. The evaluation of athletes is a constant process through the camps and the selecting of the team happens after the 2nd of 2 camps.

Once the team has been selected, it is my responsibility to take the team to the National Championships in California (San Francisco this year), and compete against all of the other zones in the United States. I also send out evaluations to all of the kids that made the GLZ Team. Last year the Youth team finished 9th Nationally (Top Non-California Team) and the Cadet & Development finished 14th Nationally. [There are 16 total zones across the US including Hawaii]

After the National Championship tournament there is a gathering of all the teams and coaches where the National Team Coaches announce the top 48 kids at the tournament who are invited to the National Team Selection Camp. The NTSC is the final stage of the ODP process. This is a 4 day long camp that takes place in Orange County in March. As the Youth Head Coach for the GLZ I get to coach at the NTSC and also help select the Youth National Team, and at the completion of this event I send out player evaluations to the group I got to coach.

Cinci WP: Following along on Twitter, we saw lots of pictures and tweets with Olympians at the camp. Is this something unusual?

Paul Splitt: Olympians are standard at every Olympic Development Program camp as reps from National Team staff. The Olympians will vary, but in the 5ish years I've been doing this we've had maybe 5 or 6 different Olympians. The goalie coaches that attend from the National Team staff run their workouts, and the others assist.

Cinci WP: That is an awesome experience and chance to learn for the players. How does that all work and who was all there this time?

Paul Splitt: This weekend we had National Team reps such as Betsey Armstrong, Brian Alexander, Bryan Lynton, and Nikola Malezanov. Armstrong ran the goalies on her own. Alexander is the National Team mental coach. Lynton has been the National Team head coach for Development for years and is now

the ODP Technical Director. Nikola is the National Team Head Coach for Cadets. It's all pretty fluid and collaborative. We have a set plan going into the camp, and we stick that pretty tightly. We have regular coaches meetings to discuss and map out who does what according to the pre-set plan. Also the plans are the same nationally. All camps teaching same things. It's a pretty cool experience, but it's also pretty standard for any of the Zone Camps.

Cinci WP: Thanks Coach Splitt. Those are some pretty big names. For those who may not know who those names are, here is a great break down of what they do besides ODP.

Paul Splitt: Cincinnati Mavericks Head Coach and Moose Water Polo Director

Matt Latham: Spartan Club Coach (MI), President of Michigan Water Polo Association, Michigan State University Head Coach (You will remember his club team from the New Year's edition)

Jim Staresinic: Tiger WP Coach, Oversees <http://www.waterpoloplanet.com/>

Nikola Malezanov: Washington and Jefferson University Coach

Betsey Armstrong: Gold Medalist Goalkeeper

Brian Alexander- Former Men's National team water polo player

Bryan Lynton: Elite Water Polo Club and Murrieta Valley Head Coach (CA)

Cinci WP: Coach Link, thanks for sitting down with us to talk about the Holiday Camp. You are the head coach of the girls team at Sycamore, but you were able to go and be a part of Boys USWP Holiday Camp. The USA Water Polo's Holiday Camp was started in 1985 and remains one of the USAWP's greatest annual events. Each year athletes and coaches from across the country have convened at the USA Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado to learn from the best coaches in our country. In 2009, the Holiday Camp was moved under the guidance of the Olympic Development Program (ODP) with the intent of continuing the tradition of conducting the Holiday Camp with an emphasis on the long term development of athletes and coaches. Also, in 2009, referees were added to the Holiday Camp. This camp sounds amazing. What was that like?



Jessen Link: It's somewhat awe inspiring walking around the campus where countless olympians have dedicated their lives to relentlessly pursuing excellence. The culture and atmosphere of the Olympic Training Center could best be described by three words, printed upon a solitary banner across the pool deck: "We Train Here". From the moment you step on campus, the message is simple -- You're here to work.



Equally impressive was the talent, work ethic, and desire to grow exhibited by the athletes. In addition to taking on the challenge of developing new physical skills and techniques, the athletes were also pushed to develop the mental aspect: how to approach a practice, how to train, how to develop internal motivators. I found it incredible to see how receptive such young athletes were to these high level skills, and how quickly they were able to apply these skills to their game.

Cinci WP: Part of this Holiday camp is for referees and coaches. What type of development was it for the coaches?

Jessen Link: The Great Lakes Zone was well represented with Eli Fellers (official) and myself in attendance. While the athletes rested, the coaches kept working. Crammed into each day were three or four coaches meetings covering a range of topics but primarily focused on the methodology of instruction and the logistics of constructing practice/season plans and goals. Additionally we dove into how to develop stronger mental skills and internal motivation in athletes.

Cinci WP: Thanks Coach Link. This weekend was the final GLZ camp before they make the zone team selections. We will keep everyone posted if any of our local players make the selection and follow their progress through the spring.

There are some big things coming to Cincinnati over this spring and summer.

February: Nutty Invite hosted by the Ohio Squirrels at the University of Cincinnati

April: Nike 5 Meter Camp with Olympian Genai Kerr hosted by the Marlins WP at St. Xavier

April and May: Great Lakes Zone League at Bowling Green

June: Cage Cap Goalie Camp hosted by Marlins WP at St. Xavier

July: Cincinnati Shoot-Out Jose Cerda Memorial Tournament

July: Tony Azevedo Camp hosted by St. Xavier and the JCAF at St. Xavier High School

Check out our next edition in February where we get a bit squirrely and go nuts talking with Mike Jones about the Cincinnati's Adult Master's Team the Ohio Squirrels the tournament they host, the Nutty Invite in February.