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AT Feature:

2004 Olympic Gold Medalist Brendan Hansen Appearance at NorCal Swim Shop

Story by Olivia Johnson, Photos by Heather McCallister



NorCal Swim Shop gave local swimmers a chance to meet 2004 Olympic Gold Medalist (Breaststroker) Brendan Hansen

Long before Brendan Hansen became "Mr. Breaststroke," or even called swimming one of his greatest loves, this easy-going Pennsylvania boy made the cut on all sorts of sports teams, including baseball. It was not until he was 11-years-old that he began to more adamantly pursue swimming. Now, approximately 14 years later, he has evolved into one of the world's finest swimmers, and believes it is essential that children delve into a variety of sports early on. This is very interesting coming from a man who has made swimming his life. But the theory makes perfect sense, and it does not take long to find out that, while he is passionate about his sport,

2004

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he also has a very level-headed and down to earth mentality. This week, however, he was able to share the love of his sport at a swim camp held at his alma mater, UT. Each coach on the staff, which includes Aaron Piersol and Ian Crocker, took a day to delve into their stroke specialty with the kids. Hansen approached his day of breaststroke instruction enthusiastically and made sure the students worked on improving their breaststroke body position, which he believes is essential.

Hansen's level-headed thinking also comes across clearly when reminiscing about the last Olympic Games: "Getting the silver and bronze [editor's note: bronze in the 200 meter breaststroke and silver in the 100m breast] was a little tough for me," he recalls. "But I [decided to] soak up [the experience] and use it as motivation for what I want." He quickly added that standing up on the medal podium with his 400m medley relay team "was awesome!" With respect for his fellow swimmers in his heart and his national anthem playing thick in the air, Hansen recalls it as "something you never forget."

Reflecting back on how he reached that moment displays yet another of Hansen's character qualities: patience. Looking back to the first moment he decided to try and win a spot at the Olympics, he states that he never really thought about what his life would be like. "You don't really think of the outcome, just the goal," he said. "There are different steps for different people. You can't change the steps you take to reach the ultimate goal--you can just change [from that point] and move on. You can't set up a plan." Granted, it takes a lot of sweat and long hours to reach that goal, but Hansen did as he captured his gold medal and three world records. Yet, it is also obvious that this honor does not come to the weak in perseverance. USA Swimming acknowledged this outstanding quality in 2005 when they honored him with their Perseverance Award.

At nearly 25, Hansen is hoping his hard work will yet again repel him into another Olympic Games. Yet, with his special mix of love, passion and perseverance, one would not be surprised to spot him standing strong on the starting blocks of Beijing 2008.

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