

SWIMMER PROFILE: LAURA TEMPLIN

By, Elaine Krugman



Prior to becoming coach of the Athens Bulldogs Masters Swim Team, Laura Templin had a long history in and around the pool during her 42 years. “I have been a competitive swimmer all my life. I started at the age of 5. I swam summer league, swam clubs, swam through high school, swam in college at Auburn and have worked in the swimwear industry since then. I worked three years at TYR, 9 years at Speedo, and then when we moved here to Athens, I sort of stepped away from things. I began to feel better in my body and feel like myself again after having three children, I started to get back in shape and decided to get back in the pool. I had been swimming a little bit but not really serious in any way or being consistent by any means... I found a team here, found some friends, and it snowballed from there,” she recalled.

Originally from Muncie Indiana, Laura was such a successful swimmer during her school years that she was inducted into the [Indiana High School Swimming and Diving Hall of Fame](#) in 2012. She then went on to become an NCAA 11-time all-American at Auburn, and an American Record holder in the 200 Medley Relay as a member of a three-time NCAA Champion team.

Following a 15-year hiatus from racing, Laura joined United States Masters Swimming (USMS) in 2018 when she moved to Athens, Georgia. As she explained, “It was interesting how when I did start racing again, I really didn’t have any expectations. I tried to not put pressure on myself. I don’t allow myself to get nervous or think about the race until that first whistle blows. That’s my rule because it is fun now. It should be fun. It should be about connecting with people and doing something you love together and having a good time. There’s no need for hyperfocus for me. That’s not what’s going to fill my cup. And, if I get into that sort of mindset, it ends up being a really great experience for me. Seeing everyone else, and how much their cups are being filled through swimming. One of my fitness swimmers who just retired from owning her own fitness program here in town gave me some advice that I have taken to heart. She said, ‘Pick an event that’s going to get you excited to swim and you’re looking forward to doing and maybe you won’t have any expectations for...’” Since Laura was a breaststroker and sprinter in college, she took her teammates advice and chose the 200 Backstroke and 200 IM as her “no expectations” events. That turned out well, because she won a bronze medal in the 200 IM at Spring Nationals this year and took nearly four seconds off her seed time. Although she placed fourth in the 200 Backstroke, she took about ten seconds off her seed time! Oh, by the way, she also won gold in the 50 Breaststroke, and silver medals in the 100 Breaststroke and 100 IM.

Laura knew she also had to be realistic in her expectations for her core event race times, since she was now 20 years older, not able to train every day, and had a family as well as a business. She thought it would be counterproductive to compare her race times to what she had swum in college, but she has been quite successful compared to her peers. Since 2018, Laura has accumulated 15 individual and 6 relay Top Ten Rankings in USMS. In 2023, she was an All-American in the 50 and 100 LCM Breaststroke as well as a relay All-American in SCM.

“There is something about the peace of the water, being in the water, back and forth. If I’m having a bad day and I just go jump in the water, I instantly feel better. It is something I’ve trained over the years to get me that feeling of peace. And the quietness of the water just helps quiet my mind and relax me and gets me into a really good mental state. Nothing else in the world can do that for me... Swimming is now for my mental health, and that’s my social time. I like to think of it as finding my community, finding those people that think like I do. Have that competition, but also are excited to get in the pool, work hard, have some fun, and enjoy this sport.”

Laura’s role as the Bulldogs coach has been a fulfilling experience for her as well. As she recalled, “I had been coaching a little bit in Minneapolis just for fun. I had been coaching with the Aquajets in Minneapolis, 1-2 days a week. My daughter was also just starting swimming at that time, and I had dabbled in the Masters team they have there... When we moved to Athens, it was sort of like finding your community. I think of it in the same vein as how people find a church to go meet people; I go to the pool to find my community. I feel like if I can walk into a pool and meet the swimmers who are there, I feel like those are going to be my people... That’s what I did when we moved to Athens. I found the team. They said, ‘We need some help with Masters.’” Laura knew she could be a Masters coach. She had experience coaching age group, her mom is a coach, and brother was a coach as well, so she consulted them about workouts for Masters swimmers. “I sort of fell into that role, and it has been amazing... I enjoyed the group of people and getting to know them-- getting to see a different side of the sport. It wasn’t necessarily quite as intense or competitive per se, but I loved that they still had that fire... they inspire me.”

What does Laura enjoy most about coaching? “I think being able to use the knowledge I have gained over 37 years of swimming and be able to share that with someone else and help them reach their goals. I gained this knowledge through experience, through working with some incredible people, some absolutely phenomenal coaches, and to be able to share it with my team and watch them improve—it’s like when you have the answer, you want to help someone get to where they want to go. Not that I have all the answers yet, but I certainly enjoy the challenge of when they put out their goals to me, I love saying, ‘Ok, how can I help you get there.’”

Laura credits her mother and brother for much of the knowledge she gained and shares with her team. Her mom, Pam Swander, has coached at every level of swimming and currently coaches Carolina Aquatics in Columbia, South Carolina. She previously coached at Clemson, Indiana University, Swim Mac (Charlotte, NC), and USC where Laura's brother, Kevin Swander, was also a coach. About her mom, Laura said, "[She is a] huge proponent of female coaches in the sport and that's really cool to see... She's been coaching since I was little and was always on the deck with me." And, about her brother, a former Indiana University swimmer and 2004, 2008, 2012 & 2016 Olympic Trials competitor, she said, "He has taken his passion for coaching into what he is doing now (financial planning), and it's really cool to see how that has transitioned for him."

As for her best advice for you, readers, Laura recommends concentrating on technique and balance. "The technique focus; bringing it back to the core, bringing it back to your balance in the water; you have to be really good at the fundamentals. When you nail the fundamentals and start to swim faster more often." Laura continued, "When I add in my dryland and the weight room piece, I get a little more explosive outside the water. That's what tends to help me the most in the pool."

After talking with Laura about her swimming and coaching, I was curious to hear about the business she started after moving to Athens. She has a bachelor's degree in industrial design and had worked in product development for TYR and Speedo designing goggles and other "hard goods." Laura also worked in sales for TYR, so she was well prepared to be an entrepreneur. "I recently started my own swimwear company. I couldn't find a play suit that fit me as well as I wanted it to, so in 2020, I started [L.T. Swimwear](#)... I create premium women's swimwear. It's that perfect play suit that fits and acts like your competitive swimwear, but it's meant to be worn all day, and to play; and it's really comfortable but it still fits like active wear. That's where I started with my brand, and I design and create all of my swimwear with a manufacturer in Baltimore. I import all my fabric from Italy and design it myself." Laura also carries towels and accessories— "I have everything you need for your beach bag for playing with kids, a day at the beach, at the pool..."

Between swimming, coaching, running her business, and having a active family life, Laura sure keeps busy! But swimming is her passion and USMS is a major part of that. What is it about Masters that she cherishes the most? "The community. Developing the community for sure," Laura replied emphatically.