

THIRTY YEARS IN THE MAKING: Coach Bob Rettle leaves lasting legacy in swimming, kids

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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville swim coach **Bob Rettle** seems to be perfectly at home on the side of a pool, where he has been the past 30 years influencing younger people to bigger things than just swim accomplishments.

Rettle marks 30 years as the Edwardsville YMCA Breakers swim coach this year. He is also the Chuck Fruit Aquatics Center general manager and one of the innovators behind the pool. With the help of Christian Rhoten, the high school boys and girls head swim coach, they have helped put Edwardsville on the map with the Chuck Fruit Aquatics Center. The pool came about because of a donation from the Chuck and Sharon Fruit and the Chuck Fruit Foundation. The impact of the pool will be ever lasting in the swim community, not only here but far beyond.

Rettle has four top-notch swimmers graduating who have been on a national stage for several years – **Kate May, Elizabeth McPherson, Caroline Caton and Jane Russo.**



Likely one of Rettle's top swimmers of all-time in his camp now is backstroke/freestyle swimmer **Bailey Grinter**. Grinter has qualified for the Olympic Trials in the 50 free and 100 backstroke and is being recruited by nearly every college in America. She recently toured Harvard and the University of North Carolina and has had several other schools interested in her, including the University of Florida.

Rettle said this year's senior girls were all "terrific," and some of the best he has had with Edwardsville's Breakers. He added that Grinter has unlimited potential in national competition. Rettle and Rhoten will be preparing Grinter with the Olympic Trials in mind from now on.

"Bailey is a great kid," Rettle said. "I think she will make a lot of progress once July hits. Almost every college is after her, I know the entire SEC is recruiting her."

Rettle said seeing the kids become productive adults in society is what he gets the most satisfaction about as a coach and swim director. Generations of swimmers now come back to see him and he stays in touch with many from the past. It is not uncommon for a Breakers' swimmer in college or long after college to stop in at a practice or meet and say hello to Coach Bob.

“I don’t think of myself as an important person, but I just have a job to do,” he said with the swimmers. “My job is to lead them the right way.”

Rettle said he once coached both parents of one swimmer – Cohen Osborn, who has great future potential. With 30 years of coaching at all different levels, he has left his impact on literally generations.

The Edwardsville coach/swim director said his team has great volunteers and without them it would have been impossible to run the meets or the program overall. For Rettle, he said he couldn’t think of anything else he would want to do than coach and direct the pool.

“I love working with pools and swimmers,” he said. “This is a perfect job for me.”

Rettle expressed thanks to YMCA Executive Director Gary Niebur for hiring him when he was a broke, young man to head the Breakers’ swim team. Rettle thanked Niebur for his long support with the YMCA and Niebur also returned the sentiment by saying Rettle had been great for the YMCA and the swimmers all these years, making such a difference in their lives. Rettle also did a big salute to the Dr. Lynda Andre, Dennis Cramsey and Dr. Ed Hightower, before he retired, for their help and assistance in making the Edwardsville High School program and Chuck Fruit Aquatics Center what is today.

Rettle said he loves working with Christian Rhoten, the high school head coach, Sam Shaw, the assistant, both who swam with the Breakers before moving on to bigger and better things.

The Chuck Fruit Aquatics Center now reaches people throughout the region and far beyond with colleges and St. Louis schools even renting the facility to train. Recently, the Area 12 Special Olympics Swim Meet was held at Chuck Fruit.

When Rettle looks from the pool deck down to the water and then back up at the Chuck Fruit scoreboard, he smiles and says, “This facility really is a dream come true.”

The dream is something Rettle and others in the Edwardsville community envisioned and now it has happened. Soon, the Edwardsville team will have a swimmer in the Olympic Trials in Bailey Grinter, which shows how far the program has come.

