

# Life in LAMORINDA



Robert with Lauren 8 and Michael 5



News exchange in the morning cold



Swimmers at Orinda Country Club



from left to right: Courtney Nelson, Hanna Schoenberger, Julia Giovanni and Claire Giovanni



## Surviving Swim Team

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Driving into the parking lot of Miramonte Swim Club, Zeidenberg was surprised by how much "stuff" people were unloading from their cars: gym bags, blankets, awnings, coolers, chairs, and even sleeping bags. She soon learned how valuable those sleeping bags would become at the 3-hour meets on Wednesday nights. "Those are cold nights," she said. "It's freezing, it's late; I just wanted to go home."

She started packing a swim

team survival pack to help her get through it: swim parkas, sleeping bags, extra clothes. "If it's really hot, I pack lots of sunscreen, water, big hats, a mister bottle," Zeidenberg said. She bought long, fleece-lined swim parkas, goggles, and practice suits that she found half-price online at www.thefinals.com. "As a parent on a budget, you breathe and realize you can do this."

Lafayette resident Marti Kohen has been a swimmer most

of her life, so when she signed up her son, Evan, when he was 8-years-old, she thought she knew what to expect. But even for this veteran swimmer, the "parent involvement was a bit of a surprise," she said.

Kohen, whose two children have now been involved with a swim team for the past 10 years, says you have to prioritize and let your kids decide what they want to participate in. "It's important for parents to recognize you can

participate as much as you want. If your child doesn't want to compete, you can sign them out."

And parents can volunteer in different ways. "You can volunteer your time at Pizza Days, or do the communication, updating the website," said Kohen. Subs are available so if you have little kids, you can pay them to work the meet for you. "There's a lot going on, but it's a community and you ask other parents for help."

The most challenging aspect for new parents, says Orinda resident Amy Meckfessel, is learning the ins and outs of swim team. "The basic aspects of how a meet is run, what jobs are involved, what heat and lane your child is in for each race, and all the swim language is challenging for parents." It takes nearly a full season to get comfortable with it, she said.

Meckfessel's four children fall into different age brackets at

Sleepy Hollow Swim and Tennis Club in Orinda, with four different practices each day, so she understands the demands of swim team, yet she remains a true believer in the sport. "There are daily opportunities for success, and the sport of swimming teaches valuable life lessons."

Kohen and Zeidenberg could not agree more. "Once you adapt, and just see it as part of your summer experience," Zeidenberg said, "you can make it fun."

## No Pain, No Game

### Thirty years and still swinging

By Cathy Tyson



Go Daddies

"I'm lamenting throwing the ball because my arm is so sore, but I'm here despite the pain because of friendship and camaraderie," reports Paul Coupin of Orinda. Lafayette resident Chris Caldwell is sporting not one, but two knee braces this season. "Yep, got 'em sliding into home a couple of years ago, I live in pain," he says half-jokingly.

What compels a 12-year old girl to forgo having a birthday party and instead plan to attend the Opening Night of the "Go Daddies?" It's because for as long as she can remember she has tagged along with her daddy on Tuesday evenings.

Way back in 1977, the original members of what is now known as the "Go Daddies" got together for a friendly local adult-league game of softball at

Wagner Ranch. Then the team was known as "Vintage House," because that's where many of the founding members worked: Ignacio Vega, Josh Nichol, Bruno Walker, Eric Schroter, John Campagna, Jimmy Roux. Little did they know, these pals started what has become 30-year summer ritual.

Back in the day, when the guys were single, the tradition was to play the game, then have the whole team head to the Moraga Barn for hotdogs and beer. Sometimes, remember they were younger then, even go bowling at the Rheem Bowl, post game. These guys may have a little gray hair, but they've outlasted the Barn, the bowling alley and the Vintage House.

"As the team grew, it morphed into our summer family, and has grown to embrace our



Captain Ignacio Vega

children," says Team Captain/Owner, Ignacio Vega. He generously pays the fee and keeps track of the post-game parties at members' houses. "The

first question my kids ask on a summer Tuesday is, 'where's the party at tonight?'" Because of the number of players, wives and children the after-party has moved to players' backyards.

Taking the mound for season thirty, Vega, President/CEO of Village Associates Real Estate is still smoking his trademark cigar and wearing his signature "Nantucket Red" shorts while he pitches. When it's the Daddies turn at bat he retrieves the cigar when he's safe on first. Greg "Oogie" Miller is always good for a number of inspired howls/barks. Jim "the Norse God" Larsen heckles the peanut gallery, and Paul Coupin is showing off his new goatee - its all part of the "Go Daddies" experience. The easy, laid back bond these men share is one of the reasons they keep coming back year after year. Priceless.

You'd hardly know the average age of the players was fifty. Brun-dog Walker scored the first run of the game and was only slightly winded. Time marches on and this season, David Banister, college graduate and son of one-time member John Banister, is playing.

"What it boils down to is men playing as boys for a few hours a week. We greet each other warmly, needle each other endlessly and laugh all game long. The recurring collective experience is what keeps this ball rolling along," sums up Tom "Franko" Tyson.

In the last inning, Matt "Bye-Bye" Rei hits a stunning homer. When asked the final score, Bart "Bartatola" Penfold says, "A lot to a little." Actually it was 16-8, good guys. They'll be ready to take the field next week, after some Advil.

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