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# Campolindo Graduates Bring Back Three Medals from Beijing

*By Jack Fernbacher*

Although Michael Phelps made all of the front-page headlines during the Beijing Olympics, many amazing events occurred including one that brought it all home for Lamorinda. When the eighth-seeded Men's Water Polo team, with attacker Peter Varellas, won the Silver medal the Campolindo Class of 2002 picked up its third medal from its three athletes. "Winning a medal was awesome," says Varellas. "When there was two minutes left in the semifinal game we were getting really excited. We were guaranteed a medal if we beat Serbia, so the bench was going crazy when we were winning." To have three medal winners from a 300-student class of a public high school is remarkable, and Jeff Stevens, Kim Vandenberg and Peter Varellas all came home sporting medals around their necks. "The quality of the sports programs, including the coaches, the community support and organization definitely helped the athletes, and there may be some coincidence in the quality and ability of the athletes," says Peter's mother, Robyn Varellas. "But probably most importantly- the desire, the drive, and the goal orientation of Jeff, Kim and Peter." One of the most impressive teams of the Olympics was the United States Men's Water Polo team. The Americans beat Serbia to make it into the championship game and guaranteed themselves a medal. In the semifinal game, Varellas had one goal and helped the Americans on defense, which held the Serbians to one goal in the second half. In the Gold medal match, Varellas had the first goal for the Americans. Although the Americans lost to Hungry in a hard-fought game, the players were still happy with a silver medal. During the Medal Ceremonies, the American players held their heads high and smiled while receiving their Silver medals. "Although we lost to Hungary, we still felt like we had played really well in the entire tournament," says Varellas. "Water Polo is a small sport, so it was cool to get attention and play well in the Olympics." Swimmer Kim Vandenberg competed in the 4x200m Freestyle Relay in the qualification round and helped the team place second in that round. The U.S. relay team placed third in the finals to give her the Bronze medal as a member of the relay squad. Another graduate from Campo who competed in Beijing was pitcher Jeff Stevens. Stevens helped the United States get to the Semifinals by pitching two shutout innings against Japan. The US Baseball team won third place in the Olympics, giving Stevens the Bronze medal. Competing on the same team was nothing unusual for the trifecta of athletes. Kim and Peter swam together at the Moraga Tennis and Swim Club for several years and on the Campo Swim Team from sophomore year to senior year. Peter and Jeff played baseball together and were teammates in the Pony level and at Campolindo on the freshman team. "I saw Jeff and Kim a lot in Beijing," says Varellas. "We supported each other and rooted each other on at the sporting events." The three Campolindo graduates made the Beijing Olympics interesting for Lamorinda and there is a possibility that some athletes will return to the Olympic stage in London in 2012. Currently, baseball is still out of the 2012 games and Stevens probably won't be on the national baseball team in four years, but for Vandenberg and Varellas London is definitely a possibility. "I am playing professional water polo in Italy next year," says Varellas. "I am going to take my career year by year and just see how the future goes."

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