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**Brian Bacharach,  
Cal Water Polo Great, Returns to Coach and  
Teach at His Alma Mater...  
De La Salle**



*By Matt Martinez, Student Intern*

Recently, I had the opportunity to spend some time with newly hired De La Salle water polo coach, **Brian Bacharach** (referred to as BB below). Brian, a De La Salle and recent UC Berkeley Grad, is one of the most accomplished water polo players in recent memory. He has enjoyed all kinds of success in the pool, including, most recently, an NCAA title while playing at Cal. Brian took some time out from his busy day to sit down with me and answer some questions...

**ATOM:** So, what is it like coaching your alma mater?

**BB:** It's a challenge - coaching in general. I've just been playing water polo for so long, that now, being on the deck... almost a surreal feeling. Again, it's challenging, but very fun. I absolutely love begin back here!

**ATOM:** You played water polo and also swam at DLS. What was it

14 & Under Girls JO Qual.Tournament  
 NCS Swimming Championships  
 Four WC AQUANUTS make 2008 Olympic Team

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 Mitchell and Mom Inspire Heim-Bowen  
 2004 Olympic Gold Medalist Brendan Hansen  
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like being a two-sport athlete in high school? Mainly, how did you find time to balance everything in your life?

**BB:** (laughs) Actually, for a time, it was three sports. Freshman and sophomore year I also played basketball. And, it was very hard to balance everything. Though, I love sports, and the sacrifices are worth it. I love to compete, even now; it's not something that goes away. As an athlete, I always loved being in season. Being in season, playing any sport, I just had so much fun, and conversely, being out of season made me bored. I just had nothing to do.

**ATOM:** Well, apparently everything worked out fine for you in high school. So, of course, you would have to end up choosing a college. Why did you eventually pick Cal?

**BB:** Well, I had a short list of schools. I wanted to attend Cal, UC Santa Barbra, UC San Diego, or Stanford. I actually didn't even get into Stanford so that was off the list. So, basically, my final decision was based off of water polo. I knew Cal was the best polo school of the three (Cal, UCSB, UCSD), and I wanted to play my college ball at the highest level.

**ATOM:** So now that the school phase of your life is over, what is it like living in the "real world"? What are some new challenges?

**BB:** Well, I'm still really trying to figure it all out. I want to use my time to my advantage, since it seems I have less and less of it every day. Its very different than college, a lot more serious. But, I think I'm getting on the right track.

**ATOM:** Okay, well, how about a look back, what was it like making the transition between high school and college water polo?

**BB:** Well I've been on a lot of different teams, been coached by a lot of different people, and the best thing I picked up from all that was the experience. All I really needed to work on was getting faster, getting stronger, and being able to play at the same level as guys who had been playing longer than I had.

**ATOM:** So with that in mind, what was it like playing for Cal?

**BB:** It was awesome! I just loved how we could compete with each other day in and day out. It wasn't always the most enjoyable thing to do, but it was by far the most rewarding. Especially with winning NCAAs at the end, with the same group of guys I'd been with for so long; it was just incredible!

**ATOM:** What were your favorite/least favorite parts of being a college athlete?

**BB:** My favorite thing would have to be being part of a team at

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[USA Swimmer, Jocelyn Phillips](#)

school, especially at a school like Cal, with all the tradition involved there. I also loved being able to compete every day, it didn't matter if you were having a bad day or something, you always had to come to play. I'm also thankful for the opportunities I had, being able to play in so many big games, the NCAA title game, the Big Splash, the MPSF (Mountain Pacific Sports Federation) Tournament. And, of course, my least favorite thing would have to be the morning workouts. Those are tough. Plus all the distractions of college; you've got to have a ton of self-control.

**ATOM:** But all that hard work eventually paid off, right? NCAA Championship and captain of the Cal water polo team your junior and senior year. Let's talk about the game itself...

**BB:** Oh, WOW! I don't even know where to start. It was really the greatest game I've ever been a part of... simply amazing! The last game of my senior year, which made it intense enough, plus the fact that it was the National Championship game. The whole team was just so fired up! We all went into the game with the attitude that we would do just about anything to win. Adding to the intensity was the fact that we were playing USC, the defending national champions, and we were playing the game at LMU. This was basically a home game for them. And since the Big Game was that weekend, we didn't have as many fans as we could've had there. All in all, it was just incredible! The atmosphere was unbelievable. And I was even more excited since I was in my first NCAA title game, in the last game of my career.

**ATOM:** What a feeling. So, I heard that some time after the game you got to meet the President of the United States?

**BB:** Yes, I did. That was an experience I'll never forget. All the NCAA champions got to meet the President. They put us in this room and the President comes in and talked to us about the game. It was a very neat opportunity. And I think he must have been very busy, there were 27 different teams in the White House that day.

**ATOM:** Now, including your success at the college level, I understand you played professionally for a while?

**BB:** Yes, I played for a professional water polo team in Australia. That was another amazing experience, as well. I really enjoyed soaking up another culture. The Australian people are just great. There so much more relaxed than Americans, that is, unless you get them near a pool. For how relaxed they are outside the pool, they're just the opposite in it. They take their water sports very seriously. Just being there was the experience of a lifetime. That's one thing I'll never forget.

Local Artist Suzy Wear  
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 Josh Scott-Syracuse University  
 Hannah Hair-Vista Diablo  
 Billy Hayes-De La Salle  
 Coach Mike Heaney-Walnut Creek Aquabears  
 Chris Danesi-Terrapins  
 McCall Dorr-Orinda Aquatics'  
 Kelly Koch-Diablo Valley College  
 Olympian Jeff Rouse

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 Blake Henderson  
 Sean Peneyra-Vista Diablo  
 Sam Craven-Vista Diablo  
 Jocelyn Chang  
 Ryan Wall  
 Dewing Park 8&un Girls  
 Jimmy Bailey-Diablo Valley College  
 Blake Henderson  
 Chelsea Allard  
 Suzanne Heim-Bowen  
 Dave Boatwright  
 Kate Dwelley  
 Lauren Rogers

**ATOM:** Do you see any more polo in your future? Maybe a tryout for the Olympic team?

**BB:** Well, potentially I could. Probably not, though. I'd have to put a lot of work into it and I just don't have that kind of time right now. I'm still trying to figure everything out at this point, so it's probably a "No." But, it still is very hard to walk away from the game, even now.

**ATOM:** Last question- Through your entire career, who do you see as being the greatest influence of your life?

**BB:** It would probably have to be my parents. Especially with me going to Australia. The team paid for a lot of things, but not everything. I really depended on my parents for a lot of other expenses. And of course, I can't forget their ongoing support for me throughout the years.

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