

SWIMMER PROFILE: JAMIE CHRISTY

By
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In my quest to profile a variety of swimmers, I wanted to interview some of Georgia Masters' younger swimmers. Last month, I wrote about Perry Hull, and now I would like to introduce you to 27-year-old Jamie Christy, a former collegiate swimmer at USC.

Jamie joined United States Masters Swimming (USMS) in April of 2021 and made a huge splash (pun intended!) on the local Masters scene by breaking two Georgia Masters breaststroke records (50-meter and 200-meter) at the 2021 Atlanta Rainbow Trout St. Nick SCM Meet. Her times for those events landed her in the top spot in the country for 2021. In addition, she was the best short course meters swimmer in her age group in the 100 breaststroke and 100 IM for the year, making her an All-American in all four of her events. That is a heck of a way to start a Masters Swimming career!

The new Masters swimmer had been swimming since the age of nine when she joined the Dynamo Swim Club team. She then went on to swim for USC during her first two years of college, specializing in the 100 and 200 breaststroke, and 200 IM.

Collegiate swimming competition in the U.S.A. is contested in 25-yard pools, but Jamie was better at the Olympic distance (50-meters). As a result, she did not have fast enough race times to qualify for NCAA championships.

After competing for two years at USC, her collegiate swimming career was cut short. "During USC, I took a 5-year break from competitive swimming and did triathlons, because I burst my ear drum from chronic Swimmer's Ear. So, I thought I couldn't swim anymore—especially in college, you have to [swim] doubles. With a burst ear drum, they're not really that sympathetic if you can't swim more than once a day; so, I had to quit the team, which was unfortunate. Then, 2020 happened, and I was burned out on biking on triathlons. I hated biking, and I decided to go back to swimming full-time. Since I moved back [to Atlanta] in 2020, I have been swimming full-time for two years." When asked if her ear drum had healed, she replied, "I don't have a problem anymore... It might have been

[caused by] the Olympic Training Center pool, because when this happened back in 2015, I had just gone to the Olympic Training Center for a training camp. I started having problems coming back after that; so, I think it was that pool, and it just inflamed my ear so much that my ear drum burst. I was on IV antibiotics and everything, and it did not go away.”

Jamie has never taken a break from swimming, since she began as a child. “I consider that 5-year period I was doing triathlons as my break from swimming. It was a lot of freestyle; not so much stroke stuff... When I started swimming again for real in 2020, it was kind of hard.” It was difficult for Jamie, because she moved back from California in May of that year and was studying for both the California and Georgia bar exams.

Jamie currently works around 50 hours a week, so she has to be time efficient and intentional in how she approaches training. She swims five times a week: Tuesday–Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday. Jamie averages around 4000 each time, with Thursday being a long day of over 5000 meters (she swims short course meters). She swims with Dynamo Masters on Saturday, and swims the Masters practice alone after work on Wednesday, because she cannot wake up at 5 AM and be the best lawyer she can be. The other days she also swims alone, but has a personal coach write her practices. Jamie also lifts three days a week: Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday. Her gym sessions are split with power and strength (i.e., pull ups into medicine ball slams). “I feel better and stronger in the water when I lift heavy. It’s translated to better muscular endurance and strength in breaststroke.”

In the pool following her Sunday gym sessions, Jamie’s private coach has her using a water parachute to create drag. Those sessions last 45–60 minutes, and she swims around 2500–3500 meters, depending on where she is in the season. Her weightlifting and swim workouts are admittedly very intense, and Jamie only recommends this type of training for other young and physically healthy swimmers. “No one should think that my way is the best way to do it. I know from my past that I need more yardage and gym time. I’m more of an anomaly.”

Jamie’s advice for other swimmers who have the physical capability and time to improve their race times is this: “You’ve got to put the time in. You can’t just go three days a week and hope you go faster. If you want to start dropping time, especially if you’re new, you have to go every day, almost—Not six days; that’s a little extreme—not for me, but for most people. But, I think if you are going 4 or 5 times a week, if you are new, that’s going to set you up to get faster easier, because you’re getting more feel of the water every week. You’re getting used to being in

the water. You're getting more yardage in. Each practice is different. It's not like you're going to the same practice every day of the week. So, you get different practices, you get more variety, and you get more time in the water. [This] gives you more endurance, which gives you more ability to finish your races better." Jamie added that you should focus on the stroke that you are good at and add strength training to your workouts for more power in the water.

Considering the intensity and volume of Jamie's workouts, I concluded that she wasn't in Masters Swimming just for the fitness and health benefits. When asked about her goals going forward, Jamie explained that when she was in college, she was very competitive and memorized the time standards for her events. As a new Masters swimmer, however, the intense competitor was unaware of the [USMS Event Results Database](#), (which includes all the race times of every member who has competed in a sanctioned meet). The 2021 St. Nick Short Course Meters Meet was her first Masters meet, and she had never competed in a 25-meter pool; so, she had no idea what time goals to set for her races. "After I did the meet, I was like, let me look on the [US] Masters website and see if there are any more meets. Well, then I discovered they have rankings... Oh, this is so cool! So, I looked, and, of course, 16-year-old Jamie resurfaces. Ok, I need to be here, here, and here; and, I want to be number one. I don't want to be number 2; I've got to be number 1... Britta (O'Leary) told me [FINA, the international federation for Masters Swimming] does world rankings, too... I looked at the world rankings, and I realized that considering my times were not that great for myself, I didn't do that bad. I came in 10th." (Actually, Jamie is ranked 5th in the world in the 200 breaststroke and 9th in the 100 breaststroke!). Jamie explained that now that she is aware of FINA World Masters Top 10 rankings, she has set time goals for herself for both short course meters and long course meters (50-meter pool). At the end of the 2022 long course season, she was ranked 1st in the 50, 100, and 200 breaststroke.

The All-American was surprised her times at the St. Nick's meet landed her in the top spot, and then even more surprised at her 100-yard breaststroke time (1:05.51) and 200-yard breaststroke time (2:25.00) at the Auburn meet in February of 2022. This is because of a groin injury that prevented Jamie from kicking breaststroke during training for the month prior to the meet. "I pulled my groin riding a [mechanical] bull at a bar, and I was sober! If I was drunk, I would have been loose and relaxed, and I wouldn't have pulled my groin," she laughed.

As a Masters swimmer who has invested so much time and effort in her training to achieve those amazing race results, I concluded she was passionate about the sport.

But, why? Jamie replied, “I’m good at it. Seriously, I like doing things that I am good at. I don’t like doing things that I’m not good at.” Cycling was one example—the reason Jamie no longer competes in triathlons. She continued, “I also like it because I’m always not glued to my phone, but I obsessively check it like every 30 seconds to see if anybody has texted me... It gives me a way to not deal with life. If somebody texts me, I don’t know until I’m done swimming.” She explained that checking her phone is an impulsive habit.

“What do you enjoy about Masters Swimming, specifically?” I asked. “The freedom to do basically whatever I want. The reason why I didn’t really like college swimming and why I feel like I didn’t really perform well in the Pac-12 is because you had to do what the team wanted to do.” Jamie replied, explaining that everything was always done with the team, and her individual needs weren’t taken into account. Now, she has a set schedule that works for her. That flexibility and freedom makes Jamie a happy swimmer!

Note: Since my interview with Jamie, she broke a Georgia state long course meter record in the 50 fly.