



It's a Family Affair

By William Meiners

Purdue swimming alumni
and coaching ties run deep.

There must be something in the water.

How else can you account for the number of Purdue swimmers who marry each other? Both head coaches of the men's and women's swimming and diving teams are former Boilermaker swimmers who married Purdue swimmers. Another former assistant met, and eventually married, a Purdue swimmer after her own All-American days. And her brother and two brothers-in-law saw love blossom in the coeducational training confines of Purdue swimming pools.

Two of the alumni — John Klinge (CE'94), head coach of the women's team, and Darlene Renie (EDU'91), now supervisor of swimming and diving operations — returned to campus as coaches. Dan Ross (LA'84), head coach of the men's team, never left.

Poolside psychology

Not too terribly long ago, Ross walked on to the Purdue swimming team. He planned to follow in the footsteps of his father, a chemical engineer who graduated in 1951, but he switched to human movement and sports science. A good move if you consider his current position. Ross scored one point in the Big Ten Championships at Michigan in 1980.

"I kid that it was a slow year, but that one point means a lot to me," says Ross, whose eventual wife, the former Sally Johnson (A'83), was a two-event Big Ten champion the same year. A vocal leader, he was named team co-captain in 1981.

"My senior year I had a heart arrhythmia and didn't swim the last half of the season," Ross says. "I became kind of a coach for the team. My roommate was a swimmer named Joe Baer (LA'83) who also worked with the trainer Denny Miller. He took care of their bodies and I was like the psychologist listening to everyone and trying to motivate."

After graduation Ross quickly ran the ranks from quarter-time to half-time to full-time assistant. He says he was in the right place at the right time when George King, then athletic director, offered him the head coaching position in 1985. He was only 25 years old.

Now in his 26th season on the job, Ross is associated with longevity. A three-time Big Ten Coach of the Year, he is the longest tenured of all 14 Boilermaker head coaches. He's also tied with Minnesota's Dennis Dale for the most years as a head coach of any Big Ten sport.

"The hardest part was hanging out and swimming with these guys and then all of a sudden you're coaching them,"

Ross says of those early years. "I was young and maturing as a person, so there was a big learning curve for me."

There also wasn't much money for Olympic sports in those days. As head coach, Ross says he was making less than \$20,000 a year. He booked all the travel, did all the recruiting. "We had the worst facility in the conference, maybe the country for that matter."

Things began to change when Morgan Burke (M'73, MS M'75), a former swim team captain himself, arrived as Purdue's athletic director in 1993. Graduate assistants, bumped-up scholarships, and the Boilermaker Aquatics Center, which opened in 2001, helped build both the men's and women's programs.

"Morgan may go down in history as the facility guy," Ross says. "But it's far more reaching than that. He's touched every facet of Purdue athletics. The number one factor was that every student athlete would be successful."

Swimming home

Renie remembers those lean years. Then known as Dar Warta, she trudged through a winter campus to get to swim practice at Lambert Fieldhouse. She says the "hole in the ground" was nevertheless a fast pool because of its overall depth. And she swam the butterfly faster than

John & Chris

KLINGE

Years married: 13

What was your favorite vacation taken together?
Both: Definitely Hawaii.

What did you first notice about John?
Chris: He wore all black: goggles, swim cap, and swim suit.

If you told Chris that tomorrow you would do any one item from her "Honey-Do-List", what would she choose?
John: Paint the bathroom.

What was the last movie you watched together?
Both: *Warrior*.



Jeff & Darlene

RENIE

Years married: 20

What is a typical Sunday morning like at your house?
Darlene: We have music playing while we get everyone up and eating breakfast and then we head to church.

Where did you go on your first date?
Jeff: A barn dance.

What is Jeff's favorite breakfast food?
Darlene: That's easy: biscuits and gravy.

What were your wedding colors?
Darlene: You don't want to know because it was in style then, but not now at all. Just mauve. Mauve was everywhere.





Dan & Sally

ROSS Years married: 25



Who does the cooking at home?

Sally: Dan is a great cook and loves to grill.

If Dan was an exotic animal, what would he be?

Sally: Dan would be a sloth. He ponders everything before making his next move.

What is your favorite restaurant to eat at as a couple?

Dan: We love D.T. Kirby's.

What does Dan like on his hot dog?

Sally: Everything from hot sauce to peppers to onions.

almost anyone in there. Twice named team captain, she won two Big Ten titles in the 200-yard butterfly in 1988 and 1990. She became Purdue's first female individual All-American in 1989 after a fifth-place finish in the event at the 1989 NCAA Championships. She repeated those same All-American honors in 1990 and was part of an honorable mention 400-medley relay team.

Renie, whose husband Jeff (A'91) swam for Ross in 1986–87, believes a dedication to an often-grueling training regime could put swimming athletes on course for matrimony. "Swimming is such a mental sport," she says. "You have to be strong willed to get through some of the challenges you face. No one really likes jumping into the water at 5:30 a.m. Especially when it's cold outside."

Renie jumped at the chance to return to her alma mater in 1997 and assist Cathy Wright-Eger, her former head coach. For the 2011–12 season she transitioned to the supervisor position for both the men's and women's teams. In

that administrative role, she's focused on the business of swimming, running the camps, and keeping coaches in compliance with the NCAA.

She's thrilled with the changes she's witnessed in Purdue swimming since her return, especially with the Boilermaker Aquatics Center. "Not a day goes by where I don't walk out on the deck and think, 'Wow, this is Purdue.' There's so much space to swim and train in. I'm grateful every day that I'm in this pool," she says.

Klinge, according to Ross, his former coach, wanted to do nothing but train in the pool. The civil engineering student qualified for the 1992 US Olympic Trials and placed 15th in the 200 backstroke. A team captain himself, Klinge earned All-American honors in 1991 with a fifth-place finish in the same event. His collegiate career is bookended by All-Big Ten honors in 1990 and 1994.

Klinge met his eventual wife, then swimmer Chris Anderson (LA'94), on their first day on campus, but they didn't

start dating until they reconnected in California a few years later. A former USW Marine, Klinge helped build a successful high school and club program in Bozeman, Montana, before becoming an assistant at Ohio State for the men's program.

It's all been part of a fortuitous path that has seemingly brought him home. Now in his fourth year at the helm of Purdue's women's program, Klinge has already earned one Big Ten Coach of the Year honor for 2009–10, a year that saw historic breakthroughs for the program.

"When I was a student athlete, I would have never guessed that I would be back in this role," Klinge says. "To work alongside Dan, who was my coach, is a dream job. Having a wife who understands the sport, the school, and the area is also huge."

Swimmers grow up competing in coed meets, so proximity could also lead to promise rings. "In swimming, the training is so demanding that it limits your time away from the pool,"

that better and better on both the men's and women's fronts. Klinge believes the recruiting class that's committed to Purdue for 2012–13 is their best ever. And Ross credits men's assistant coach J. Agnew (coincidentally the grandson of a Purdue swim coach) with bringing in recruits from all over the nation and world.

For Ross, the recruiting success has to do with the type of athlete Purdue is looking for. "You hear from a lot of former athletes in all sports that they picked Purdue because it was the right fit for what they needed to grow up at the time," Ross says. "We take student athletes and develop them into young men and women."

That may have been most evident when David Boudia, a 2008 Olympic diver, decided to become a Boilermaker. Perhaps the school's most celebrated and accomplished individual athlete, Boudia won six national championships before turning professional in his senior year to concentrate on training for the 2012 Games. Recruited by diving coach Adam Soldati, Boudia chose Purdue for the college experience, Ross says, and he was the consummate team player in an individual sport.

"When Adam recruited David, he committed on a partial scholarship," Ross says. "We had to show him that not only is Adam a good coach, but he could make him better. And that shows because he's still training with Adam for this summer's Olympics."

Diving has become a big part of the women's team, as well. This year, three Purdue women divers — Michelle Cabassol and Mary Beth Dunnichay, both freshman, and Casey Matthews, a junior — are all taking Olympic redshirt years to train with Soldati and a chance

to compete in the US Olympic Trials.

So in a sport won by the best swimming times and the highest diving scores, the timing could be right for Purdue swimming and diving. In January, the Indiana-Purdue coed swimming and diving dual meet became the first live dual meet televised on the Big Ten Network. Purdue's men and women were each ranked in the top 20, but they faced Indiana squads with a pair of top 10 rankings. The Hoosiers won both sides of the rivalry.

"We're trying to catch up with Minnesota and Indiana," Ross says. "The knock against me is that we haven't won a championship. Everyone has a facility now and it's tough, but the heck with excuses. I'm 52 and might have 10 to 15 years left, but I want to win."

If and when either team wins its first Big Ten Championship, the accomplishment will be all the more sweet because of all the family ties to Purdue swimming.

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