



2011 ARENA INVITATIONAL BLOG

NOVEMBER 17TH-19TH
LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

Top Times Posted, Secret Swimmers Make First Appearance

The invitational with many names. In 2008 it was called Nike Cup, 2009 re-named Toshiba Classic, 2010 name changed again to the Marriot Cup, and now, 2012 Arena Cup; it is only our hope that this running joke will continue next year! No matter the name of this meet, it always proves to be one of the fastest invitationals in the country. Men's and women's swim teams including Stanford, Berkley, Arizona State, Air Force, and Oregon come to the Belmont Plaza pool in Long Beach, CA. A facility once providing the home pool for the 1996 Atlanta Olympic games hosted by the United States, creates the perfect environment for fast early-season times.

The USD Women's Swim team had attended this meet for a number of years in a row; it is a prep and practice meet for Conference Championships that will be at the same pool in February. So the week before Thanksgiving break the team loaded up on the Torero bus early Thursday morning with duffels, pillows, parkas, and equipment and the group and pulled out of the Vistas parking lot right at 6:30am. As soon as the bus got rolling, either way you looked up and down the aisle there were feet hanging off the edge of seats as everyone passed out listening to their own music on the bus pretty much immediately only to wake up when they felt the bus slowing down, knowing that egg and bagel sandwiches would be in their hands soon.

On the way to the meet the girls exchanged their first day of secret swimmer gifts, leaving them on each other's seats or having a teammate give it to your person, so as to keep your identity a secret until conference. One excited puppy lover received a new soft stuffed puppy along with a bag full of swim meet goodies for the whole weekend. Most of the girls were excited to get gifts over the three days that were various holiday-themed treats including candles, homemade cookies, and hot chocolate mugs.

Arrive in Long Beach take a walk down the board walk to loosen up from the bus ride, and then everyone, with their headphones in, gathered for a team stretch. The end of the first men's session was ending while the women's teams began to stake out their spots in the bleachers around the pool. USD ladies took their usual place behind the starting blocks, this year next to Arizona State, and got ready to go warm up.

The meet began with the 200 free relay where USD swam two relays in the morning and one swimming in the final heat at night posting a time of 1:36.40. After that the mid-distance swimmers took over in the 500 free. Taylor had a good swim, bravely going out in a fast 200 split at 1:55.18, and after her Francesca swam a solid prelim time at 5:00.23 setting her up for a nighttime swim where she went under five minutes (4:57.49). In the 200IM Melissa had a great swim at (2:05.98), and following that was the 50 free where the sprinters attacked this hit or miss sprint with their ready to go fast twitch muscles. After the morning session the team checked into the Ayers hotel about 20 minutes away from the pool and settled into their rooms to eat a quick lunch and take a nap. The girls returned to the pool for finals where 4 heats each men and women swim the same events from the morning. And at the end our 400 medley relay got after it



Melissa Andruzzi

posting a pretty good time of 3:57.16 for this point in the season.

Day two is always a long day at the pool. The six-event day includes the 200 medley relay, 400IM, 100 fly, 200 free, 100 breaststroke, 100 backstroke, and 800 free relay. Highlights from the day included Kelly Stone's 100 fly nearing a best time and Taylor's 200 free which earned her a swim in the 'bonus' heat at night. The three girls from our national team came up to the meet for finals of day two; Sarah swam in the relay at night and Keenan and Ellie prepared to race on Saturday.



Sandrine Urias

Day three of the meet began with the 200 medley relay where USD swam one relay in the morning and one at night. Following this was the 200 backstroke where Kelly M., Kaelie, Taylor, Keenan, and Ellie all swam tough races, with Keenan having a season best. In the 100 free Jacquie, Sarah, Kelly, Taylor, and Francesca all had great swims, but no one was able to sneak into the top 32 for a night swim. In the 200 breast Melissa and Sandrine both posted good times. The last 200 event of the day was the 200 fly where there were a lot of great swims including Ellie who was able to qualify for a nighttime swim where she bettered her time.

In between sessions the girls had some free time to walk around the main street near Belmont plaza, eat lunch together or with family, sit in a coffee shop and do homework, or nap on the bus. Everyone reconvened at the pool for the night session to watch finals and support cheer for the last USD swims of the meet. It was also Sandrine's 19th birthday! The other sophomore girls made her a poster which was hung next to the team banner where we were all sitting, and everyone enjoyed cupcakes made by her Mom!

While most of the team was out getting lunch the distance group, Katie, Sandrine, and Keenan swam their miles (1650 free). The first swim of the day was a solid, and nicely-paced race by Katie Olsen who swam one of her best in-season times right at 18 minutes. Sandrine was to follow, swimming a good race, and cheered on by Katie who had just finished. Keenan was next up and had the benefit of a number of her teammates cheering for her behind her lane every time she turned at the start end of the pool. She was able to blast her way through the race and touch very close to her best time, and for 8th place!

The very last event of the meet, the 400 free relay, was a solid effort for USD. In the lead off leg Jacquie Kimmel went a personal best time at 52.38 and the three girls to follow each swam great races. Everyone was quick to pack up their stuff and linger just long enough to watch one or two of the men's heats which showcased some of the best sprinters in the country.



Jacquie Kimmel

A quick team meeting on the bus to recap the meet and we were on our way south towards San Diego. The girls enjoyed some homemade chocolate chip cookies from the Kimmel family, and chatted a little before the dinner stop which was one of the fastest our team has ever done. The bus ride home is usually pretty mellow with most people sleeping or watching the flip down TVs! Even though someone forgot the season of Friends that the team typically watches on the way to and from meets, the girls we equally entertained watching "Sweet Home Alabama" laughing, joking, and awwwing at Josh Lucas and Reece Witherspoon.

Pulling into USD right on time; (on-time according to the head coach who has successfully predicted our arrival time back to campus from travel trips with a range of +/- 3 minutes for the past year), the girls sleepily disembarked to enjoy what was left of Saturday night or to get sleep to tackle homework in the law library the next day.