

Swim Siblings Always Working for More Success

By Jay Cook

A run-of-the-mill summer day for a Jersey Shore teenager consists of waking up much later than they normally would, goofing off at the beach or catching a movie during the day and then staying awake long past that dreaded evening curfew.

But for Connor and Katie Wright, that usual summer day is no different than the other 364 on the calendar.

Their two alarms ring in unison at 5 a.m., followed by a quick early-morning protein bar and a jug of water. The half-hour or so car ride from their Monmouth Beach home to the Hazlet Pool Club is the only real downtime these two club swimmers have to themselves.

“I like having a regiment, having to be here, there and everywhere,” said 16-year-old Connor Wright. “At the same time, it’s a little hectic, but I love it.”

Connor, along with his 14-year-old sister Katie, are competitive swimmers who race on local, state and national circuits. Throughout the year, they train for their club team, the Red Bank YMCA Aquarockets, as well as for their respective high school swim teams. In the summertime, they compete with Surfrider Beach Club in the North Shore Club League.

Both are also successful in their own respect, though a tad too modest to say so outright.

These swim siblings are both part of New Jersey’s most successful YMCA club team in 2016. This past March, the Aquarockets took home the New Jersey YMCA State Championships for the first time ever. The Wright’s will also be travelling out to Indianapolis later this summer as members of the YMCA National Team for the National Long Course Championships.

Connor, who is going into his junior year at Christian Brothers Academy, has a larger than life personality. During meets, he can be seen around the pool ushering younger swimmers to their positions, also while calming them down before the starting horn blows.

Katie, on the other hand, is all-business when it comes to swimming competitively. “I kind of just discuss in my head how I’m going to swim the race, I feel like music kind of distracts me,” said the Trinity Hall freshman-to-be, of how she prepares for her events.

Though their personalities may differ slightly, one aspect of their lives does not; their true appreciation of the sport of swimming.

Connor and Katie share many things together: their love for their favorite pool in the country, the Greensboro Aquatic Center (GAC) in North Carolina; aiming for summer jobs as lifeguards, (Katie has to wait a few more years, while Connor now works at Little Monmouth); and their

collective ambition to both swim collegiately, and even in the Olympics, when their high school careers come to an end.

This love of swimming equally cherished came around by chance, when Connor was just a young boy.

“For me, when I was a kid, I was really hyper,” he said. “They threw me into swimming and I would calm down after swimming started.”

Katie soon followed along, but not after learning to swim as early as possible.

Their parents, Alex and Sue, ironically enough both worked as lifeguards growing up, which helped them see the importance of knowing how to swim at an early age.

“Their instructor had them underwater going to the ladder at 18 months,” said Alex, their father.

Soon after, the siblings began swimming at Surfrider, and each joined the swim team at five years old.

Connor’s swimming career was nearly compromised later on when he was in sixth grade, after a meniscus tear while exiting a pool at the Raritan Valley YMCA. The freak injury shut him down for that year’s entire winter season, which spanned almost six months.

“I didn’t really see the full aspect of it at that age” he said. “I wanted to get it over with, get the crutches off and out of the way.”

Swimming has morphed from a necessity, to a hobby and ultimately into a way of life for the Wright children, who originate from the Chapel Hill section of Middletown.

“I usually just hang out with swimming people; swim and school friends,” said Connor. “When I have a project that’s really the max social life I get.”

“I’m usually so busy with swimming that I’ll have to say no to some parties, say no to hanging out because I’m swimming, but I don’t have a problem with that because I’m committed,” Katie said.

She added by saying, “I just feel that everything that I’m doing is worth it, eventually something will count and something will pay for this.”