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Our Interview with Alex Meyer Former Gator and 2012 Olympic Athlete

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GFYMCA: *What do you love most about open water swimming?*

ALEX MEYER: There's a lot of things I love about it, I mean, I grew up being a distance swimmer, and when I left Glens Falls when I was a young teenager, I kind of came into my own as a distance swimmer. I really liked the length of the events that you can do, plus, I've always been kind of an outdoorsy, nature boy and it's that element of just being outside and just feeling more free. You know, the one thing that I think is really cool is that it's just a race. It's like, they don't keep records, the time doesn't really matter, it doesn't matter if it's exactly 10k, there's a finish line somewhere down there and the first one to get there wins. That's it. So, you know, it's purely a race which I think is really cool.

GFYMCA: *Do you have a favorite sports memory?*

AM: Yeah actually, watching the men's 4x100 freestyle relay when they won the gold medal in Beijing, definitely my favorite sports memory. I remember I was watching it with a couple friends in an apartment and across the yard was another friend of ours who had gone to bed already. We were really excited to watch this race and once they flipped at the 50 and Jason Lezak was so far behind, we were like oh my god no, not again, don't let this happen please, and then when they beat the French team we were so excited and we were so loud that our friend from across the way called because we woke him up because we were so loud. It was great for swimming, having a memory like that is so emotional and people remember it.

GFYMCA: *What is your average training day like?*

AM: My average training day is I wake up a little before 6 in the morning, I eat breakfast and make a cup of coffee, go to practice, I swim for like 2 ½ hours, come home, I make a huge breakfast, take a nap, wake up, eat a little bit, go to afternoon practice for another 2-3 hours, then I come home and I eat dinner and I hang out and I go to sleep.

GFYMCA: *Do you find that swimming makes you tired?*

AM: Haha. I mean yeah, but it also gives me energy. Days where I don't swim, I feel kind of groggy all day and it's like I haven't done anything. It definitely energizes you, but doing long training days is definitely very tiring and by the end of training days I'm pretty ready for bed.



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GFYMCA: *Do you have a mentor, or a guru, or someone you really admire?*

AM: Yeah, obviously, you know, Fran Crippen, he is one of my very good friends and he's an inspiration, and he is still a very positive influence on my life and my training, still very inspirational and he's in my thoughts all the time. Also, my coach Tim (Murphy, Harvard Men's Swimming Coach), he I guess would be more of the guru; he's kind of the brains behind this whole thing and he tells me what to do and I do it, and I made the Olympic team, and so did he actually because he's on staff.

GFYMCA: *Do you have any advice or guidance for kids who are involved in sports?*

AM: Yea, I think that sports are a great way for kids to learn a lot about them selves and to make new friends and to have fun and it also just promotes a healthy lifestyle as well, so I think it's great thing to get into. You know, I've realized as I've been doing this, that the most important things that I've gotten from swimming, are not medals, it's not money, it's the people I've met, the places I've had the privilege to go to, I've been privileged to represent my country internationally which is an amazing feeling; all those intangible things that don't have anything to do with actual swimming success, that's the best part of it anyway.

GFYMCA: *Any advice for people who want to make a difference in their community on any level? As a teammate, friend, fan?*

AM: Yeah I think that just knowing that if you're an older kid on the team, there are going to be a lot of people who look up to you and do your best to try to inspire younger kids and be a positive role model.

GFYMCA: *Has the Y had an impact on your life?*

AM: Yeah I mean, obviously this is my first swim team, I got my start here. When I first moved to Ithaca I really wanted be part of the Y, but there was no Y team in Ithaca; the closest one was in Cortland, 35 minutes away, so I insisted that I join a Y team because I still wanted to do YMCA swimming and see my old friends, but it ended up being too far to drive so I only did it for a year. I still have a lot of memories from this place and I still keep in touch with some of my buddies that I swam with here.

Alex will be competing in the Open Water 10K at the London Olympics in 2012.
Thank you, Alex! Best of luck to you and Team USA in London!