

Sam Iida Named To 2017-18 USA Swimming National Junior Team

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Glenview native Sam Iida was named to the 2017-18 USA Swimming National Junior Team on Sept. 6. Iida is one of 67 members to make the USA team that displays the incredible young talent within the ranks of USA Swimming.

Iida, who currently attends the University of Arizona, started his competitive swimming career with the Glenview Titan Aquatic Club, where he swam at Glenbrook South High School and Splash Landings Aquatic Center at the Glenview Park District. Iida has been swimming since he was 8 years old and has won numerous medals and recognitions along the way.

Iida was also a 3-time state champion at Glenbrook South with state titles in the 500-yard free (2015, 2017) and 200-yard IM (2017). Iida won 13 medals (top 12 state finish) in his four years at GBS. He also holds the IHSA record for 200-yard IM (1:46.02) surpassing the late Jake Miller's record of 1:48.08.

When GTAC head coach Steve Iida received word that his son made the U.S. team, he was thrilled. Steve has been head coach of GTAC since 2003 and also coached his son. During the 2017 NCSA Summer Champs, Sam came in with a time of 2:01.8 for the 200-meter IM while swimming for GTAC. This swim made Sam the second fastest 18U in the U.S. and as a result Sam was chosen to be part of the Junior National team.

When asked about his son's best skills as a swimmer, Steve proudly stated, "Sam's mental approach to swimming is greater than any physical attribute or skill he might possess. Inside the pool, he has a great feel for the water. This is something that is not easy to teach. People say his stroke looks effortless and it does because of how he's able to feel, hold and pull the water." He looks at his son's success as another step forward in the growth of GTAC.

In prior years, GTAC had also witnessed the rise of Olivia Smoliga, another swimming star who continues to shatter records. Smoliga had qualified for various championships, including the 2012 and 2016 U.S. Olympic Trials, the 2016 Rio Olympics where she received a gold medal in the 4x100-meter medley relay. Most recently she was with the 2017 U.S. World Championship team. Smoliga is still an active member of the U.S. National team with a focus on the 50 free, 100 free and 100 backstroke events.

Steve insists, however, that success on its own is not enough and that GTAC is committed to consistent progress of its swimmers.

"Our coaching and athletic philosophy is built on progression [and] for the past few years, we've seen the fruits of this," Steve Iida said.