

## Synchro swimmers shine in the water

Thursday, August 13, 2009

Their smiles sparkled almost as much as the cool blue water in Cathedral Catholic High School's Olympic-sized swimming pool.

Groups of girls in San Dieguito Synchro's summer camp performed before a full bleacher of parents on the pool deck last Thursday afternoon.

The girls, all in blue caps and some with plugs pinching their noses, proudly marched to the edge of the pool and on the music's cue leaped in to execute eggbeaters, spins, flips and left lifts to Coach Barb Strenk's delight.

"This went fabulous," said Strenk, who started the synchronized swimming team five years ago. "When these girls started on Monday, some of them could barely make it the three hours."

Strenk herself is a bubbly bundle of energy, not the kind of coach who just stands on the pool deck, she jumps in the water with the groups of girls who gave themselves nicknames such as the Golden Tater Tots.

"The focus is on fun," Strenk said. "If it's not fun, then what's the point?"

In 2004, Strenk relocated to San Diego from Central California, where she founded the Central Coast Synchronauts in San Luis Obispo. Strenk has been a synchronized swimmer since she was six years old and her daughters have plunged into the sport as well.

Upon moving to San Diego they found the closest synchro team was in Chula Vista so Strenk decided to start her own club. She started with nine girls and now has 51. Her teams compete year-round and this year she even sending a group to the US Age Group Nationals in Gainesville, Fla.

The group who competed at nationals includes Amber Michaelis, 15, a great performer whose smile engages the audience while she's in the water. The La Costa Canyon sophomore is a former dancer who has been doing synchro for five years.



San Dieguito Synchro performs for parents at Cathedral Catholic.



The girls line up to receive applause from their parents after their routine.



Savannah Wand, Riley Holcomb and Taraneh Barjesteh on the last day of synchro camp.

She said the most challenging move to learn was upside-down verticals. Michaelis, and the rest of the higher-level girls practice three times a week, mixing in cross training like running and yoga. The rest of the synchro groups practice Tuesdays and Thursdays at Cathedral.

"It's definitely the most fun thing I do," said Coach Amy Funder, a UC San Diego senior.

Mom Jennifer Krasnow can't say enough about what synchronized swimming has done for her twin girls. She said her girls have built confidence, learned about sportsmanship and improved their posture and fitness levels.

Krasnow said the sport has taught the girls about applying themselves and putting in hard work to be successful. "The coaches have a great vision about contributing to the growth of these girls as people, not just as swimmers," Krasnow said.

To learn more about San Dieguito Synchro, visit [www.sdsynchro.org](http://www.sdsynchro.org).