

## Meet NC Swimmer Brian Blalock

Brian Blalock is in the Marine Corps and he currently serves on the staff for Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. The Blalock family is somewhat the atypical military family because Brian has been assigned in or around eastern North Carolina for over fifteen years. "The climate is great, the people are friendly, and we have a fantastic group of friends that would make leaving difficult. My daughter is active in local dance and theater groups, and my son is on a swim team that competes locally. My wife and I share carpooling and other household assignments when I'm home, but she's always made it all look really easy during those numerous times when I've been deployed overseas or away from home. I couldn't do what I do without her," he says.



## **Here is Brian's Story**

I grew up in Fredericksburg, Virginia and started swimming with a year-around team when I was 11. This "first" swimming career carried me through the challenges of high school and ended when I graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy. Lack of consistent pool availability and numerous shipboard deployments kept me out of the water for many years. In fact, I didn't pick up the sport again until about three years ago when I was assigned to a command in Norfolk, VA. I would leave from New Bern on Monday morning and return to the family on Friday and found myself with time available and a fantastic swimming facility to use during the week. I joined a group of people that swam for fitness every day for lunch and slowly got back into swimming shape. Thus began my "second" swimming career. I was shocked when I realized that I'd been away from the sport longer than I had been actively involved with it in my adolescence! I joined USMS and competed with my workout group in a couple of meets in the Norfolk area.

The rapid-fire pace of these meets caught me off-guard, but I was very impressed with the quality of swimming at every age level that I had the chance to see! My outlook on swimming is a bit different now than it was growing up: more of a hobby than a job. I enjoy how a good workout makes me feel about myself as much as socializing with my teammates. And, I'm extremely glad to be a part of the Twin Rivers YMCA Masters team!

I try to swim four to five days a week, but that number depends on my work schedule. Workouts for me are generally whatever I can fit into an hour's time, usually no more than about 3000 yards with just under a third of that as warmup. Repeat freestyle sets make up the bulk of what I do. My hat is off to anyone who jumps in the pool solo day after day to push themselves! I find that I need a workout partner or group to get the biggest benefit from the time I'm putting in.

I am new to Go The Distance but also consider that program a great tool to motivate myself and keep at it! My goal is just a mile a day for 2012. In college I was a butterflyer but now enjoy middle/distance freestyle the most. (I've never had a sprint bone in my body!) I haven't had the chance to compete in any open water swims yet but hope to have that chance this summer.

In my free time I enjoy sailing with my family, brewing beer, and yard work. My only amusing swimming story took place my last year of college. My wife and I got engaged a couple of weeks before the Army-Navy swim meet--the biggest dual meet of the year for obvious reasons! Our team tradition for this meet was for our first year students to shave their heads. A few of us seniors got caught-up in the spirit of our pre-meet pep rally and decided our heads needed to be shaved as well. The meet went very well and we won, but Jen was crushed that our engagement pictures had to be delayed considerably while at least some of my hair grew back! (At that age, the shaved head look didn't work for me!)