

# Water Polo Players Bring Home the Gold

By Kevin D. Shallat

**B**ret Lathrope, 16, was one of three Lamorinda players selected to play on the USA Water Polo National Cadet Team which features the best players, 16 and under, in the nation. Although Lathrope's USA team faced other national teams from the Americas which featured an 18 and under age group, they still managed to finish with a 9-0 record and take home the gold at the 2007 Youth Pan American Games in the Dominican Republic on August 4-12.

Lathrope was selected along with Miramonte teammate James Perry, and Lamorinda teammate Nick Hoversten, after a lengthy selection process that brought the first selection group to 40 water polo players. Fifteen were selected from those 40 to travel to Montenegro for the final selection process, which cut the team down to 13 players. The swimmers were required to participate in a swim-a-thon for donations and raise at least \$500 dollars per player to help pay for their travel expenses.

During the team's quest for the gold medal they had a few close calls against teams that were older and had more experience in the game. The USA team played the best Canadian team twice: Each game was close, but they wound up beating team Canada in the champi-



Team Left to Right: Assistant Coach James Lathrop, Head Coach Jason Lynch, Andrew Lighterink, Griffin White, Danny White, Chris Wendt, Nikola Vavic, James Perry, Clayton McFadden, Nick Hoversten, Spencer Hamby, Bret Lathrope, Max Bricklin, Gavyn Wild, Josh Samuels  
Front Row: USA and Dominican Water Polo organization officials

Photo provided

onship game to win the gold medal. "It was pretty cool holding the ball and counting down as our coach was yelling in celebration," Lathrope said. The Puerto Rican players and fans were also seen cheering the American team on, beating the drums and chanting, "USA, USA."

Playing the attacker position, which is geared toward a more offensive skill set, Lathrope says, "The position is like a shooting guard in basketball." When asked who his hero or mentors are, Lathrope cited Kirk Everist, a former Olympian, and

one of his coaches, James Lathrop (no relation), who is a coach for Miramonte High School and Lamorinda Water Polo, as well as assistant coach of the USA cadet team.

One of the most exciting and helpful things for him right now has been watching a family friend, Peter Varalles, 23, compete on the USA national team. Lathrope said that if young kids want to get serious about water polo they have to swim as much as they can, play water polo as much as they can, and watch as many water polo matches as possible.

Thankful for the experience he received while on the USA cadet team, Lathrope is confident that this experience will help him with his quest of making the junior national team next year, for the 18 and under age group.

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