

# Tecumseh Athletic Hall of Fame

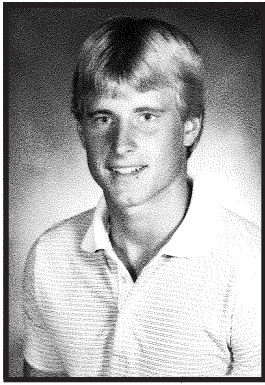
December 5, 2015



2015 Hall of Fame Inductees

Greg Birk

Kara Burkhardt Meineke



# Greg Birk

Greg Birk was born in January, 1960 to Tom and Elaine Birk of Cloverdale Rd in Medway, OH. Greg has one brother, Jeff, who was born in October, 1958. Both boys grew up in a great neighborhood for all 18 yrs. They were surrounded by other boys and thus they had a lot of fun playing sports, going camping, swimming at Crystal Lake with their dad, and even playing a little ice hockey on frozen farm ponds.

Greg, Jeff, and Greg's best friend Rod Greene spent long summer days working at Trick's Farm Market. It was very hard work, but a lot of fun.

When Greg was nine, his dad (Tom) suggested that the boys take some advanced swimming lessons with the Flying Fish of WPAFB. Greg and Jeff both did very well, and the coach suggested they officially join the swim team. That was the start of 13 yrs of year long swim practices and competitions for Greg. From nine to 13, Greg swam for the Flying Fish, and the highlight was being ranked 10 in the nation when Greg was 12.

At age 13, Greg and Jeff decided to join a better swim team the Dayton Dolphins. Greg can still remember the very cold winter mornings leaving the house at 4:45am for 5:30 practice in Dayton. The vinyl seats in the Dodge Dart were very cold which made it hard to go jump into water for an hour long morning practice. Evening practice was from 5:30 to 7:00 pm. Practices were very hard, but the one who sacrificed a lot in those days was Greg's mom Elaine. She was the one who had to drive Greg to practice in Dayton 12 times per week, and figure out how to keep supper warm till 7:45 every night. After all, swimmers love to eat! Greg's dad Tom also made a lot of sacrifices by doing a lot of home and car repairs so that money was available to pay for the private swim team dues and all of the swim meet travel.

While swimming for the Dayton Dolphins, Greg participated in Junior Olympic events in Alabama and New York. Most of the swim competitions were weekend events in Cincinnati, Columbus, and Louisville. The Dolphins were a very successful program with one swimmer participating in the 1976 Olympics and many swimmers moving on each year to Division I universities.

Tecumseh did not have a pool or a swim team. However, it was not unusual for swimmers like Greg to train with a private team like the Dolphins but compete during the month of February as a representative of Tecumseh HS. That is what Greg did during his Junior and Senior years. His brother Jeff also competed for Tecumseh, and a few other class mates swam in a meet or two. During Greg's senior year (1978) he represented Tecumseh (along with "coach" Tom Ansley) during district, regional, and state competitions. The highlight of Greg's high school swimming career was the State Championships in 1978. Ohio was a powerhouse for swimming, and the competition was very strong with some swimmers breaking records set by Mark Spitz (7 time gold medal winner in 1972 Olympics). The state championships were in Canton. Greg won bronze medals in both the 200 yd Individual Medley and the 100 yd Breaststroke while recording career best times.

Greg's performance at State's along with his performance at an AAU Regional competition a few weeks later caught the attention of North Carolina State University. Greg accepted a partial swimming scholarship to North Carolina State. Greg went on to swim all four years at North Carolina State and lettered all four years. Greg helped NCSU win the ACC swimming championships for a 13th consecutive year. Despite a lot of hard work in the pool and dry land training Greg never improved his times from the times recorded while representing Tecumseh at the 1978 State Championships. However, Greg's work ethic and dedication to the NCSU team was recognized by teammates, and he was voted team co captain his junior and senior years.

Greg graduated with dual degrees in Paper Science and Engineering and Wood Science. After his junior year he worked for Weyerhaeuser in Seattle, Washington. That summer he met the love of his life (June), and they were married in 1985 after Greg graduated with a Master's Degree in Paper Science and Engineering. This past

summer Greg celebrated 30 years of employment with Glatfelter Paper Company in Spring Grove, PA. In recent years Greg has been getting back to Ohio to spend time at Glatfelter's paper mill in Chillicothe, OH. For the last 15 years, Greg has been Technical Director and responsible for the team developing specialty papers.

Greg and June have two adult sons: Ben 26 in Tahoe, CA and Matt 24 in graduate school in Rhode Island. Ben is a snowboard photographer. Matt is married, and his passion is Octopus and Squid research. Swimming and college consumed a lot of Greg's time growing up, so Greg was quick to get involved and have fun with the boy's activities which included playing ice hockey, dirt biking, scuba diving, backpacking, and traveling. Greg and June still love to travel especially to Seattle to visit June's family. Greg is still very active by playing tennis year around and ice hockey during the winter. Greg and June recently built a new home on 25 acres, and they love their many projects in the rolling hills of south central PA which they share with June's two horses.

Greg still enjoys the quality of a good swim workout, but prefers skating on ice for exercise. Work and home projects can get to be overwhelming, but nothing compares to the 13 years of swim practice. He says everything has been easy compared to pushing yourself through 3 to 6 miles of swim practice every day. Greg is very grateful for two loving parents who sacrificed a lot for Greg and Jeff and for his current family that cherishes their limited time together.

Greg has fond memories of the years at Tecumseh and appreciates the support of Tom Ansley with being the coordinator and representative for the first swim team in 1977. It is an honor to be recognized with the induction into the hall of fame.





# Kara (Burkhardt) Meineke

Kara (Burkhardt) Meineke graduated with the Tecumseh High School class of 1989. She was a member of the National Honor Society and ranked 13th in her class. Kara was a three sport athlete while at Tecumseh excelling at the three sports she played. Kara grew up on a farm in Medway, Ohio with her parents Margia and Bill Burkhardt and two Sisters, Heather and Dana. Kara came by her athletic ability naturally as her parents were both athletes. Margia, played volleyball, basketball and softball for the Bethel Bees and later for WPAFB where she worked as a civilian administrative assistant. Bill was himself an accomplished athlete for the Arrows who played basketball, football, baseball and track and accepted a scholarship to play football at Dennison University.

As a youngster Kara and her sisters were swimmers as it was the only sport Sister Dana could participate in due to a birth defect that affected the strength of the bones in her legs. In the 7th grade when Kara discovered basketball and then in the 8th grade volleyball her love of those sports happened instantly and she quickly gave up swimming to participate in both, adding softball to her list of favored sports her freshman year at Tecumseh.

During her four years at Tecumseh High School Kara earned eight varsity letters, two each for volleyball and softball and four for basketball. While on the Arrows basketball team she helped lead the Arrows to a conference title her junior year and a 2nd place conference finish her senior year on a team that had lost all the starters except her from the prior year conference championship season and started two freshmen guards. Kara played every position except center at some point in her career and was named the Arrows MVP as well as being named to the first team all-conference, all-county and all-district teams and receiving special mention all-state in her senior season.

In Volleyball Kara was a setter and outside hitter for the Arrows earning 1st team all-conference and all-county honors her junior and senior seasons as well as 1st team all-district honors and team MVP her senior season. Kara was the catcher for the Arrows softball team and was the arrows defensive MVP and received special mention all-conference her senior season.

Kara's first sports love was basketball but after considering a couple of offers from smaller schools with no Engineering programs decided to take a chance at the University of Dayton, as a recruited walk-on, on the Volleyball team where she had been accepted into the School of Engineering. The decision payed off as Kara made the team, found her way into the starting line-up as a freshman and earned a scholarship after her freshman season. Kara enjoyed much team success while a Flyer including a Conference Tournament Championship. Kara played all four years on the University of Dayton Volleyball team while earning her Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering.

Kara continues to be active in athletics and is an avid boater and all things related to water sports and waterskiing, a snow skier, snowboarder and most recently is learning to play tennis, in which she and her teammates were the 2015 USTA State Champions in Ohio at her level.

Kara lives in Kettering, Ohio where she is a consultant for Land Development projects. She is married to Donald Meineke and they have an amazing 5 year old daughter, Jacqueline, who is hands down Kara's proudest accomplishment and "most important thing I've done in my life thus far".

Kara is honored and proud to become a member of the Tecumseh Athletic Hall of Fame. Without the support of her dedicated coaches, amazing teammates and incredibly supportive parents none of the accomplishments above would have been possible. Thanks to all!!!!