



WETNOTES

International LGBTQ+ Aquatics

September 2017

Meet the Board

We would like to introduce you all to the new IGLA Board for 2017-2018:



Co-President WonKee Moon

Team: DC Aquatics Club

Aquatics Background: I swim as a kid through college, and have been a part of DCAC for the last 12 years.

First IGLA/Gay Games: IGLA Atlanta 2005



Co-President Nicolas Davidson

Team: San Francisco Tsunami Water Polo & Swimming

Aquatics Background: Nick played water polo and swam in high school and college, took ten years off, and then joined DCAC & the Wetskins

First IGLA/Gay Games: IGLA Hawaii 2011



Co-Chair Liz Carlin

Team: Long Beach Grunions

Aquatics Background: I joined the Long Beach Grunions to train for Open Water swimming I SoCal where I have lived for twenty years. As a kid growing up in Ohio I was on the swim team at the local YMCA and was a lifeguard and Water Safety Instructor at the City of Columbus. I had not swam for many years and started again as a masters swimmer. I am empowered to participate

on an IGLA team and appreciate the camaraderie and support from the Long Beach Grunions!

First IGLA/Gay Games: IGLA Edmonton 2016.



Co-Chair Diego Suarez

Team: Nadadores Swim Team of South Florida & Miami Vice Water Polo

Aquatics Background: Diego swam in high school and joined the Nadadores in 2005 in an effort to get active with the GLBT community in South Florida.

First IGLA/Gay Games: IGLA Hawaii 2011

Contact Liz & Diego at cochairs@igla.org



FGG Rep Mike Stansberry

Team: Making Waves

Aquatics Background: Mike is the founder of the LGBT swim club Making Waves in Edmonton and co-chair of the 2016 IGLA Championships. He brings a wealth of experience as a FINA level 3 swim referee, as a swimmer and as a new water polo player with club development and hosting championships. He has competed at several IGLA Championships, Gay Games and has a passion for organizing his gays!

First IGLA/Gay Games: IGLA Toronto 2001

Contact Mike at igla.delegate2@gaygames.net



FGG Rep Sagi Krispin

Team: TLV Nemos

Aquatics Background: I started swimming during my time in University. I founded TLV Nemos after my first Gay Games as part of the TLV LGBT sports club.

First IGLA/Gay Games: Gay Games Cleveland 2014

Contact Sagi at igla.delegate1@gaygames.net



Secretary Evan Cobb

Team: Team New York Aquatics

Aquatics Background: has been swimming with Team New York Aquatics since 2010. Following a long, long taper after swimming in high school and college (D3, Oberlin College), he remains deeply committed to the competitive side of the sport.

First IGLA/Gay Games: IGLA Reykjavik 2012

Contact Evan at secretary@igla.org



Treasurer Amanda Eckler

Team: Team New York Aquatics

Aquatics Background: Although I grew up swimming, I didn't compete until I was an adult. I went to my first Master's swim practice in 2003 and joined Team New York Aquatics in 2005. Even during a (too-long) hiatus from NYC, which took me to Mexico for grad school and then Connecticut for a job, I never let my TNYA membership lapse. I embraced completed the One Hour Swim almost every year and practiced and competed with the team as much as I could. I dabbled in triathlon for a time and was a marathon runner until an injury sidelined me last spring, but I look forward to swimming for a lifetime.

First IGLA/Gay Games: Gay Games Chicago 2006.

Contact Amanda at Treasurer@igla.org

(Meet the Board continued)



Webmaster Andrew Peppercorn

Team: Ohio Splash & Columbus Sharks Masters Swim Team

Aquatics Background: I swam competitively in middle & high school. Took a 17 year hiatus before the chlorine addiction took hold again. I am a distance swimmer by preference (1500/1650, 800/1000, 400/500 - albeit not a good one!), followed these days by butterfly (200 & 100), and IM (400 & 200).

First IGLA/Gay Games: Gay Games Cleveland 2014

Contact Andrew at webmaster@igla.org

The Board is excited to serve you in the coming year. We are excited to see you all at Gay Games Paris in August!

UKAT IN MIAMI

Our Trip to Miami in May 2017 was not the first one that the Uganda Kuchus Aquatic Team (UKAT) has taken together. In 2016, a few months after being formed, we were hosted by IGLA in Edmonton, Canada for our first ever-international swimming competition. An event in which we emerged as Champions in the small team category.

The trip this year, also made possible by the generosity of our friends at IGLA was not as volatile as the 1st trip we made to Edmonton. A few days before we made the journey to Canada, two of our members were languishing in a Ugandan jail after being arrested during a raid on our annual Gay Pride event.

Our trip to the World Out Games however wasn't without incident. The visa acquisition process was a nightmare, owing to the strict nature of the restriction of entry into the USA during the Trump era. This restriction meant that a small team of five was reduced to three, much to the disappointment of individuals who were looking forward to their first international travel, and participation in an international event.

While as a team we felt incomplete, we were still determined to make the most of our time in Miami, particularly representing the Ugandan LGBT community, who have become accustom and are inspired by UKAT's new form of activism- "promoting human rights for LGBT people through sports".

This was our message throughout our time in Miami, that we are overcoming a lot by participating in these international competitions. It is fact after all, that none of us, despite our athletic abilities and our commitment to aquatic sports would ever be allowed to join a Ugandan team simply because we openly identify as LGBTI, or 'Kuchus' as we self identify. As a team, we have never allowed our situation to dissuade our enthusiasm at the opportunity to be openly gay and safe at a sporting event.

(UKAT in Miami continued)

As always, the anticipation was high on the plane ride to Miami. We had only one reference point to the state of Florida; this was the song "Miami", a 1998 single by Will Smith. We sang it with glee, and excitement, even though none of us could master the words or even complete the chorus to the song. It brought a smile to our faces during the long journey to the coastal city.

In true VIP style, on arrival, two members of the host teams Nadadores of South Florida and the Miami Vice Water Polo Club welcomed us. We were then whisked off into the warm, Miami night, very grateful that we were safe and finally on US soil, considering our misgivings that had been triggered by our LGBT colleagues' harrowing experiences of discrimination and racial profiling at various US border points.

This feeling of gratitude remained even with the disappointment followed the unfortunate the cancellation of some of the sports programming at the World Out Games. We had been looking forward to witnessing how international sporting competitions were organized and always imagined that the opening events would be like the Olympics- just gayer and more fabulous. We were thankfully able to continue with the aquatics sports programs, thanks to the efficiency of IGLA's planning.

The anticipation was high on the first day of competition and as always, we felt nervous as a team, not just because of our small size, but because we knew that we were not as prepared as the rest of the teams. See in Uganda, we have no aquatics facilities that meet the training and quality standards of international competitions. This makes it harder for us to adequately train and prepare ourselves to compete favorably against the better-established teams that have access to more professional and excellent sporting facilities.

We were after all the only team from Africa, and while this comes with a level of clout and significance for the competition, it means that we are disadvantaged by systems and structures that don't fully function, even for sports and talent development. That being said, we gave the competition all we got, giving our best in the different heats we were placed in. All throughout the competition, friends and supporters back home kept on expressing their anticipation for the medals we would bring back home, owing to the abundance of medals we came back with in 2016. As it turned out, there were to be no medals this time around, owing again to the poor planning and management of the World Out Games.

Despite the many hitches during our time in Miami, most of which were of no fault of our own, we had a great time in Miami. We were able to catch up with the other participating teams, most of whose members have become our 'penpals'- checking in on us even when we are back home and not competing.

Miami, being a world-renowned party city, we had high expectations of engaging in some fun activities outside the competitions. Our hosts fortunately did not disappoint, we were casually introduced to quite a number of cultural shock experiences, where we were in awe of our surroundings, attendance of a speedo party where everyone was beautiful, and a closing party to celebrate 30 years of IGLA at a "Scottish Rite temple."

UKAT in Miami continued)

We soaked in and reveled in all of these experiences, knowing we would be going back home to our lived reality, a reality that does not allow for the existence of such social spaces.

At the end of the trip, we were reminded about the value of having openly gay athletes competing in an environment that allows for openness, honesty and authenticity of one self, and while it might have felt like a normal period for most of the athletes, to us it felt like one big gay pride party, despite the demands of the competitions.

As a team, we hope that we can bring this level of normalcy and pride back home, through our activism work and our efforts to claim safe spaces for LGBT Aquatic Sport Athletes, UKAT is breaking new ground. We feel fortunate that through our participation in IGLA sponsored events, we have developed so many valuable relationships with different IGLA Teams, because it exposes us to a wealth of best practices that we can emulate to fit our current political and legal environment.

Its safe to say that our participation in these IGLA events have been inspirational to many and has helped to raise awareness about the situation for LGBT people in Africa.

The overall message UKAT brings to these events is that our friends in the West should care about what is happening outside their borders, and find meaningful ways to support LGBT communities that are striving for basic human rights.

After all, who knows! In a few years, the Uganda Kuchus Aquatic Team might be able to host an IGLA event. The first of its kind in Africa.

By Clare Byarugaba, cofounder UKAT.

PARIS GAY GAMES IS COMING!!

- ♦ **[Register for Gay Games Now:](#)** registration fees increase after 30 September. We are excited that we are ahead of schedule with nearly 4,000 registrations! Learn more at Paris2018.com.
- ♦ **[Gay Games Scholarships:](#)** the Gay Games Scholarship Program was established to encourage financially-challenged participants from underrepresented populations from around the world to take part in the Gay Games, with support from the Roy M. Coe Scholarship Fund. The scholarship deadline is 31 October. [APPLY HERE](#).
- ♦ **[Registrations numbers to date:](#)** 415 swimmers, 291 water polo players, 13 divers, 12 synchro, 79 open water/

For more info:

<https://www.paris2018.com/sports/swimming/>

<https://www.paris2018.com/sports/water-polo/>

<https://www.paris2018.com/sports/diving/>

<https://www.paris2018.com/sports/synchronized-swimming/>

<https://www.paris2018.com/sports/open-water/>