

# *SKWIM – a Gateway to Lifesaving and Olympic Water Sports*



***Skwim, a water-disk sports game, brings community gameplay to pools and beaches, while restoring excitement and fervor with coaches and lifeguards that prioritize teamwork, safety and fun!***

Hi there, this is Kevin McCarthy. I'm a plastics industrial designer, sports specialist, youth coach, former lifeguard and founder of Skwim. So, let me tell you about this growing international game. Skwim is peaking the interest of aquatic patrons and professionals worldwide because it blends water-fun and water safety with dynamics from surfing and lifesaving. Teammates in Skwim play strategically, while playing with a fast hydroplaning disk, their teammates, opponents, and ever-changing conditions. The game creates fast-paced fun and blends well with junior lifeguard programs, school PE classes and summer camp programs

Skwim is engineered to be easier to play, faster, and more fun than any other water sport; three reasons why the game attracts people from all walk of life. Unlike sport that require exceptional speed or power, Skwim emphasizes team strategy and communication, (key prerequisites for water safety). The sport is building a new foundation of water-skilled, water-smart, water-strong players and helps qualify more youth for both lifesaving and "Olympic level" water sports participation.

*Skwim plays much like hockey, soccer or basketball. But instead of a puck or bouncing ball, a soft foam disk is used, that can glide far on the water. As seen below, teammates score into a circular slot on a circular goal suspended at the water's surface, therefore players can score from any side. Likewise, defenders must defend the 78" diameter (20 ft. perimeter) goal, but only the goalie may back up to the goal. Other defenders must stay closer to an offensive player, than to the goal. As seen below, though 3 defenders are near, offensive players willing to swim, can find opportunity.*

*Skwim is a new opportunity in the water for kids and adults. Plastics materials and technology have advanced greatly since the advent of 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> century sports games. Aside from cricket (circa-1550) soccer (circa-1848), water polo is the oldest team sports game ever played, and until Skwim™, the only sports game played in the water.*



***A school P.E. game of Skwim, at Corona Del Mar Middle and High School in Newport Beach CA USA***

Historically, the growth of land-based sports games has far outpaced aquatic sports games. McCarthy, a 40-year veteran youth coach for both land and water sports, hopes to narrow this gap with Skwim's new hydrodynamic equipment and game stratagem. Though not yet an Olympic discipline, Skwim is already equipping youth with water-skills, water-smarts, and water-strength at an accelerated pace.

Children traditionally learn popular sports games like soccer and basketball in the primary grades when they are still developing motor skills for running. Only later is competitive foot racing (track) introduced, in middle or high school, as an adjunct to team games. High numbers of students run school track as a way to refine running skills, stay in shape for sports games, and for some, to satisfy a passion for racing.



***Where ancient disk sports began; Skwim Hellas players in Greece play Skwim in the summer.***

In stark contrast, aquatic coaches traditionally introduce swim-racing first, as the primary gateway to all other Olympic water sports. But few children reach the level of proficiency needed for racing, even by age 15. Subsequently, even fewer consider water polo, diving or synchro. This also narrows the field of inspirational aquatic coaches and lifeguards.

Skwim flips aquatic convention by initiating family gameplay and child play, while incorporating the use of Skwim fins (the official game shoes of Skwim). Skwim teaches children vital teamwork and swimming skills earlier, and in less time, because Skwim fins provide added mobility, performance, and safety in both shallow and overhead water. This enhanced aquatic experience accelerates what I call 'Primary Aquatic IQ'. This childhood deep-water experience develops advanced aquatic comfort and competence, while jumpstarting early lifesaving capabilities and a deeper sense of public safety among middle-schoolers.





***Skwim in Southern California. This is where the game was first inspired by the local bodysurfing scene.***

Such skills readily transfer to all aquatic sports and especially to open-water safety. Consequently, the path to water sports participation becomes easier and safer for the youth player and the whole family. I believe Skwim is preparing more youth for participation in all water related activities as well as for positions in coaching and lifesaving. Advancing the Aquatic IQ of our children earlier in life enriches aquatic sports and public safety.

Mark Rauterkus, our Skwim Executive Director and Pittsburgh Aquatic Summer Camp organizer states, *“For us, Skwim is a fantastic team game that introduces rules, terms and concepts that are unique, yet simple to follow for kids new to the water.” Lessons in sportsmanship, teamwork, fair play and swim stamina are central to our Skwim play.”*

Mark continues, *“Skwim is friendly to the kids and to the others at the pool too. Kids naturally like to compete, yet boys and girls, fast and slow, can all find roles on their team and in this game. We see the kids developing new friendships and then being rewarded through their success with Skwim.”*



***“Kids like to compete, yet boys and girls, fast and slow, all find roles on their team and in this game.”***

Skwim uses a tried and true recipe. The top-10 sports in the world today are all interactive games; easy to learn and entertaining for both participant and spectator. Sports-games are a microcosm of life and tell a compelling interpersonal story. They’re the original reality show, revealing talents and temperaments in real life characters. Players, and parents are more engaged and committed. The most popular games are lifetime games, learned in childhood, played as a family, and building community tradition. They culminate in widely popular professional play, i.e. - MSL, MLB, NBA, NFL, & NHL. Skwim brings this ‘family-sports-game’ recipe to aquatics, with fresh wet ingredients. 😊



**Skwim Fins are performance athletic footwear, just like ice skates or soccer shoes.**

To find out more about Skwim play and programming today, like us on **Instagram** and **Facebook @skwiminternational!**

*This is the first of a 5-part series on SKWIM™ the global water-disk sport. Future articles will discuss the game origin, fundamentals and philosophy, International SKWIM Certification, and the SKWIM 2020 “Swim Together-Stay Together” Campaign.*



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