

# Ryan Murphy Reflects on How Bolles Shaped His Swimming Career

By Trinity Thomas

Ryan Murphy, six-time Olympic medalist and four-time gold medalist, reflects on his experience at The Bolles School with ITG Next for an upcoming documentary that will cover the school's legacy of producing outstanding athletes.

Murphy was born in Chicago to two Chicago-native parents and stayed for nearly five months. His father played football in high school, and his mother, now a college math professor, was a cheerleader in high school.

His family moved to Jacksonville, Florida, where they began to frequent the community pool, enjoying the change of climate. Murphy is the youngest of three siblings; his older brother and older sister were swimmers and participated in the summer league swim team. When Murphy turned 4, he got his start in the sport with the summer league as well. He enjoyed his races alongside his friends in the community.

"That was our core group," said Murphy. "We took that summer league swim team, and that was also our soccer team, baseball team, and flag football team. We had a nice core group of young guys there that I did every sport with."

Murphy started swimming at Bolles during his eighth-grade year of school after excelling in his other club teams. He walked on as a 13-year-old and was inspired by all of the talent that was present. Surrounded by consistent coaches and dedicated swimmers, he was able to take his swimming to the next level.

Bolles has a history of producing top-notch swimmers, having 14 alumni who have won a total of 29 Olympic medals, 18 of which were gold. The school still continues to produce excellent swimmers. In 2020, Andres Dupont-Cabrera [broke a 20-year old Bolles record with a 1:35.60 time](#).

"One of the things I love about Bolles is the day-to-day competition everywhere: in the classroom, in the pool," said Murphy. "I try to apply it everywhere I have been since Bolles."

Murphy moved to the highest level senior group at Bolles after his first year. He was first coached by Ryan Arbejo, who was a former student and had already participated in the Olympics.

During his freshman year, Murphy went to the state competition and had his first experience being a part of a dominant team. By junior year, he knew that he could take his skills far with the encouragement of Sergio Lopez, who propelled him forward in preparation for the 2012 Olympic trials. During Murphy's senior year, the team went to state and set multiple national records.

It was inspiring and motivating for Murphy to see guys who had already gone to the Olympics. He was surrounded by fast swimmers like Joseph Schooling and Santo Condorelli, who have both won Olympic medals of their own. This environment allowed him to thrive, noting a huge difference between when he started at Bolles and when he graduated.

"I was far from the best on the team," said Murphy. "I was not even in the top group when I first got to Bolles. We were having people go to the top universities every year."

Coaches Christian Bahr and Peter Verhoef were also notable influences on Murphy. Murphy knew Verhoef, who has coached notable swimmers like Ryan Lochte, before his time at Bolles. They still share a bond to this day.

Murphy had his Olympic debut in 2016, four years after his first Olympic trials, where he had great success. He took home three gold medals in Rio: the 100-meter, 200-meter backstroke, and the 4×100 medley relay. He broke a world record in the 100-meter backstroke by touching in 51.85. One of his teammates that year was Michael Phelps, who [set seven world records](#) during the 2008 Olympics.

"It's everything you dream about as a swimmer," said Murphy. "It is the pinnacle of our sport. It happens so infrequently, you definitely feel the nerves the second you step on the pool deck."

In 2017, Murphy completed his B.S. in business administration at UC Berkeley, where he still trains today.

In 2020, during his most recent Olympic games in Tokyo, he won gold in the 4×100-meter medley relay, silver in the 200-meter backstroke, and bronze in the 100-meter backstroke. He plans to make his third straight Olympic appearance in Paris in 2024.

There is a wall at The Bolles School dedicated to Ryan Murphy's accomplishments.

"I do owe a ton of my success to my experience at Bolles," said Murphy, "They really did set the foundation for my career."