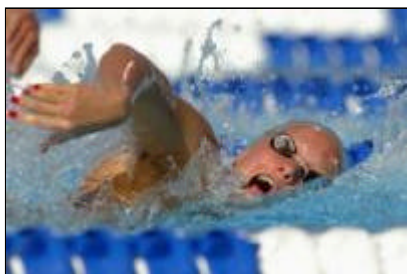


Dana Vollmer



Coming off the 2004 Olympics, **Dana Vollmer** finished off her senior year of high school and then had to pick a college. She talks about that choice and her whirlwind year in this week's **20 Question Tuesday** with special correspondent Bob Schaller.

1 *You selected the University of Florida. What made the Gators your choice?*

Dana: I looked at a lot of different schools for academics and swimming. Florida is known as one of the hardest training teams in country, but they not only do the yardage, they still have great team camaraderie and still have a lot of fun – all while knowing what they need to do in the pool. I'm also interested in forensic anthropology, and they are the second best school in the country for that. I'm also interested in cardiology, so I might study that too.

2 *What's your favorite board game?*

Dana: I always really liked Sorry! It's a lot of fun. (Laughs) I like booting people back – if you land on them, they go back to home. So my goal was not just to win, but to boot everyone else back.

3 *Your parents seem like great folks. What's something they instilled in you?*

Dana: My mom has always instilled in me that if you start something, finish it. Don't just go to be there, make it the best you can. Once you start an assignment, finish it, don't prolong it. My dad is very technical with my swimming and makes me look at minute details – like hand entry into the water. Not the competitive side but the technical side. So it's pretty neat to have that kind of feedback and advice from my parents.

4 *So they understand the proper place of "swim parents"?*

Dana: They are very supportive. Having parents help you...you need that because training is hard and everyone hits low points. You need someone to lift you up and tell you that you can do it, but still love you and be there for you. That takes off a lot of pressure.

5 *Your last year has been incredible. Has it sunk in yet, all that you accomplished?*

Dana: I sometimes wonder how I actually did it. It's still setting in. The last year was the busiest year of my life. Coach Troy took some of the pressure off me when I got back and then started to get back into shape, "No matter what happens, you'll always be an Olympian." I had to take a step back and think about it, that no one can ever take that away from me.

6 *How much did it help you to take a step back after the Olympics?*

Dana: I think I really needed it after the past year – doing two school years in one, getting all the (college) applications. After the Olympics, I had too much to do school-wise that I didn't do much training, so I took a step back and breathed.

7 *You're a big reader, what are your favorite titles?*

Dana: I love Stephen King, or any kind of mystery – that goes along with my forensics interest. I really like "The Stand" (by King).

8 *What do you do to relax?*

Dana: Hmm, relax? I read. I like to lay out with friends – not at pools, but at each

other's houses. I like to listen to music.

9 *Who's an Olympic teammate you've become close to?*

Dana: Dana Kirk has always been a person who has been there for me since I first met her a while ago. She's always been so motivating, and she's a very intelligent person. She also reads all the time. I've always admired her strength. She actually got me breathing to the side (in butterfly) like she does, so we're the "Dana duo" that breathes to the side. She's been there and experienced lows in training, and she's good at pulling you out of those – seeing why you are in a low, what your dream is and how to get focused.

10 *To be so young and make the Olympic team – did all the attention every overwhelm you?*

Dana: I have never thought of it as overwhelming. Still I think it's strange to be asked for my autograph. I don't feel like I'm great in anything. I don't realize that I'm good, so that helps me in my training – that I realize people are better than me. There are things that have happened that I would've have had without going to the Olympics. I went to the Indy 500 (this year), and I wouldn't have without going to the Olympics.

11 *The Indy 500 – how did that happen, and did you meet Danica Patrick?*

Dana: A.J. Foyt, the fourth – I became good friends with him and got to go to a couple of the races. At the Indy 500 I got to sit in a suite. My first race, and I was really spoiled. I didn't meet Danica Patrick, but all the guys there really supported her because she did a lot for the sport.

12 *So will we see you going around the track at 200 miles an hour?*

Dana: Not driving the car myself. I got to ride in one of the cars. I didn't know they made a car with two seats, but they did (for such ride-alongs). We went 175 miles an hour, and the G's are just amazing. You are slammed in your seat as you go around the corners. After five laps, I stood up and was like, "Whoa." So I can only imagine what it feels like after 500 miles!

13 *What's a word that describes you?*

Dana: A lot of people call me crazy. Just with all the training, people know I get up at 4 a.m., and that I have no problem doing that, and come back after practice and still go out with all my friends and stay up during the day. They think that's crazy. (Laughs)

14 *What sports did you play growing up – or did you have a favorite toy?*

Dana: I played a lot of sports – every different kind of sport. I played basketball, soccer and gymnastics. For gymnastics (laughs) I got to be a little bit tall. So it was down to basketball and swimming. I only stopped playing basketball about three years ago when I tore my ACL. As far as toys, my brother had all the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles figures and Ghostbusters, so we'd set up towns with building blocks. That was a lot of fun!

15 *Where are we likely to find you shopping?*

Dana: I buy all my jeans from Hollister, but I like Wet Seal. I like to find stuff that's cheap – good quality but doesn't cost me a fortune. I also like Best Buy.

16 *What's the class you enjoyed most in high school?*

Dana: For most of the years, except my junior and senior years, I always enjoyed math and science the most. But the past year I had a great U.S. History teacher, Mr. Winkelman, who was a lot of fun. He ran his classes like a college class, where he'd lecture us every day and assign reading at night. He was the soccer coach, too. Before that, I had never had a history teacher who made history so interesting and

fun.

17 *What's being a good teammate mean to you?*

Dana: Being a good teammate is not allowing someone to sink into negative attitudes or letting them become too tired with practice. A good teammate can bring the team to new levels and set the standard – help everyone improve and not bring anyone down.

18 *What do you like watching on TV?*

Dana: Unsolved mysteries. It's an old show. I think that's interesting, though, to follow the cases and see how they solved. Either that or the documentaries that have different case studies. I always watch Emergency Vets, where they do surgeries on animals.

19 *What's a place you like to visit?*

Dana: I love going to Australia. It's just beautiful – the beaches and the people. It's nice having a country that knows a lot about swimming. That was always different being there – the people knew who I was down there. I also love their accents. I love the landscape and geography of the country, too.

20 *You seem to do so well around kids. What's it like to be around kids, and how do you stay so well-grounded?*

Dana: The humble side of me takes over in that situation. Hearing that I might be a role model or looked up to...having that described just gives me shivers, and pride. It makes you think about what you do all the time. But I have to say my parents are the ones who brought me up to be like I am.

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