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## North River FEATURE

# Celebrating 20 years

*Twenty years still not too long for Red Bank swim coach Ken Buchanan*

By KATY MENA  
COMMUNITY NEWS WRITER

With his smooth deep-brown skin and bright blue-green eyes, Ken Buchanan looks like any young athlete that spends his days pool side. One would never suspect that this seasoned swimmer is now celebrating his 20th year as the head coach of the Red Bank Swim Team, leading the team to victory with their undefeated 2006 season.

Growing up swimming in Athens, Mr. Buchanan was always the aquatic type. Coaching through college and then lending his services to the YMCA in downtown Chattanooga, it was only a matter of time before this UTC graduate made his way to the shores of the Red Bank Swimming Pool.

His summer home for the past 20 consecutive Junes and Julys, the Red Bank pool provides the Ooltewah High School P.E. teacher with an entertaining endeavor when school's not in session. A coach of the nurturing variety,

Mr. Buchanan's focus is not on winning and winning only, but rather on the personal success of each of his swimmers.

"You get to influence 150 individuals," he said of his work with the team, emphasizing the importance of building self-confidence and presenting individual challenges. "I want to make sure they're doing something but also to remember that they're kids," he said with the wisdom of an exemplary father-figure.

His father-figure role seems to have bred a family setting amongst the Red Bank swimmers. "It's not just swimming here," said assistant coach Megan Blazek. "We like to think of it as a family atmosphere." Having started as a swimmer on the team when Mr. Buchanan was in his first year coaching, Ms. Blazek seems to share a familial sort of closeness with the head coach.

"We have a lot of fun together," said Mr. Buchanan, explaining that he first met Megan when she was only



Ken Buchanan and Megan Blazek enjoy sharing coaching duties for the Red Bank Swim Team.

three years old. Now an adult herself, Ms. Blazek is a school teacher and coach as well, sealing the kindred bond she seems to have with Mr. Buchanan. "We finish each other's sentences," she said. "We are that close."

Mr. Buchanan appears quite comfortable to now be sharing coaching duties with one of his former charges. "It's an easy transition when you know someone that well," he said of Ms. Blazek's move to the as-

sistant coach position. "We do this together," he added, happy to be sharing responsibilities with Ms. Blazek. "I'm only the head coach when there's a problem."

With their undefeated team and twice-daily practices, a problem is nowhere in sight for this summer. Mr. Buchanan looks forward to summer number 21.

E-mail Katy Mena at [kmjena@tfccommunitynews.com](mailto:kmjena@tfccommunitynews.com)



The Red Bank swimmers take their marks.

