

## The “Underdog” from the Caribbean dreams about his 5<sup>th</sup> Olympic Games!



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He is the “one-off” in the international swim scene.

George Bovell, from the paradise islands, Trinidad & Tobago is not only the fastest Caribbean swimmer but also has reached a fixed place in the worldwide elite swimming list.

George talked with swimspportnews about his eventful career and his goals for the next years. George Richard Lycott Bovell III took part in his first Olympic Games at the age of 17 in Sydney 2000. There he participated in the 100, 200 freestyle and 200, 400 individual medley. Four years later George celebrated his

biggest sporting success with a bronze medal in the 200 IM at the 2004 Athen's Olympics – right behind Michael Phelps and Ryan Lochte. Rio 2016 can be his fifth Olympic Games – only 12 swimmers have reached this so far.

Meanwhile, George prefers the sprint distances. He belongs to the elite circle of 50 m freestyle swimmers who have a personal best time in a full body and textile suit under 22 seconds: 21,20 in a hightech suit and 21,51 in a jammer.

George has been able to achieve his outstanding performances because of hard work and passion for the sport

of swimming. He trained several years in the USA, started as a teenager at the Bolles High School in Florida – well known for their excellent swimming program. Afterwards, he trained at his alma mater, the University of Auburn with David Marsh and in Berkeley with Mike Bottom.

Nowadays he trains in his homeland or sometimes in Italy for example with the ADN Swim Project in Caserta – because he likes being challenged from other elite athletes and the team spirit and camaraderie.

During his long career, George was challenged from serious setbacks.

In the preparation for the 2012 London Olympic Games, he had a heavy car accident – but with his strong will he fought himself back into the 50 m freestyle Olympic final and finished with a respectable 7<sup>th</sup> place.

At the moment, George is preparing for the 2016 Games in Rio – and he sets his goal precisely: An Olympic medal.

# „My goal is an Olympic medal in the 50 m freestyle.“

**After a really successful season 2014, you didn't participate in SC Worlds in Doha because of a knee injury. We really hope you recovered. How do you handle such a setback and how are you now?**

Actually the reason I didn't go to Doha because at the same time I went up to assist my father get set up and organized with everything as he rushed to begin treatment for cancer. I asked myself what would be the bigger medal, and I have no regrets.

**In 2011 you suffered a real serious injury caused by a car crash including a bruise on your brain. Fortunately your brain healed up and you made finals in London. What gave you the will and strength during this difficult time? Has this experience changed you and your view on life?**

After being faced with losing everything I felt free to do and become anything. It

helped to put things in perspective and really appreciate my health and vitality. Once you have your health you can

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»You must create the ideal place within yourself.«

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do anything. I no longer saw competing as a chance for failure but as an opportunity for greatness. It was an uphill struggle the whole time as I had to restart from zero after 7 weeks of recovery.

**Your first Olympic Games were 2000 in Sydney, Rio would be your 5<sup>th</sup> Olympic games. Only 12 swimmers have reached this so far. Perhaps you are in good company in Rio with Michael Phelps as five time Olympic swimmers. How are you staying focused**

**for such a long time on this high performance level?**

Everyone has to do something, this is what I do; the 24/7 job and I feel blessed to enjoy the travel and excitement. I never really set out to attend 5 Olympiads, but I go with the flow and this seems to be the direction that the flow is taking me.

**What is your goal for Rio 2016? On which distances will you concentrate?**

I intend to compete again for a medal in the 50 m freestyle. I will probably do another race such as the 100 m freestyle or backstroke as a warm up event beforehand.

**What is your focus for the 2015 season?**

Taking things back to basics and refocussing on technique, mobility strength and addressing weaknesses. This year is about building a proper foundation for next year.

Results this summer are unimportant to me, I am thinking bigger.

**Where do you train at the moment? Could you describe your daily practice plan and routine? Who is your coach?**

German swimmers would be horrified and would appreciate what they have if they

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»I swim in an old 6 lane 25 m pool once a day without competition starting blocks and lane lines.«

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knew. I swim alone here in Trinidad. Things are not ideal, which forces me to get creative. I swim in an old 6 lane





25 m pool once a day and am currently building back up into things after 5 weeks off. I am taking advantage of the many cross training opportunities that this island offers to build a proper base of general fitness such as deep freediving (just back from a diving trip) and bodysurfing for speedwork. I am also doing a lot of dryland, kettlebells and olympic lifting. I am my own coach, but I have experience behind me. Training all alone in a vacuum is unsustainable however, so as the season progresses I will look to head abroad like I usually do to join a group and get some proper coaching feedback and camaraderie as the season progresses.

**Swimmers like Phelps have a long time coach, psychologists, medicines, nutritionists, managers around them. Do you have a such a team?**

I have nothing of the sort. I do the best I can with the very limited resources that I have available to me. It's part of why

»Being faced with losing everything helped to put things in perspective.«

I always feel like the underdog and why my success is so satisfying personally.

**How important is variety in your training? It seems that you are doing a lot of running and weightlifting lately.**

Early in the season there is a lot of cross training work outside the pool and in the ocean, especially since my swimming



facilities are third world lacking even proper starting blocks and lane ropes, but as the season progresses I will just be focusing on the gym and the pool.

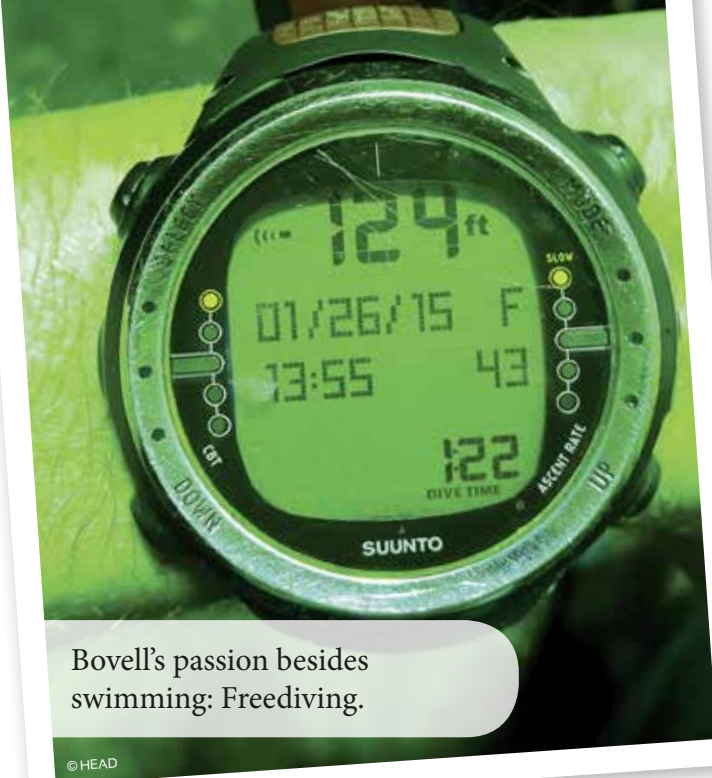
**You are a columnist for the Trinidad Guardian, the "Reflections off the water". Do you see it also as a future job after retiring from swimming (what we hope is in a far away future maybe a sixth Olympics?).**

It's something that I have just fallen into, not really sure where I want to go with it yet, but I am starting to enjoy the writing, taking some time out to just sit down and think. My goal with the column is to hopefully help someone somewhere, it it helps one person then the effort would have been worth it.

**One of your columns was about a social programme called Esperanza that mobilizes and integrates gangs into society once**

**These swimmers participated in at least five Olympic Summer Games:**

Name	Country
Derya Büyükuncu	Turkey
Lars Frölander	Sweden
Mark Foster	Great Britain
João Gonçalves Filho	Brazil
Mette Jacobsen	Denmark
Martina Moravcová	Slovakia
María Peláez	Spain
Carl Probert	Fiji
Rogério Romero	Brazil
Alison Sheppard	Great Britain
Dara Torres	USA
Nina Zhivanevskaya	Russia/Spain



Bovell's passion besides swimming: Freediving.

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**at a time in Panama. How do you see the situation of kids in Trinidad and Tobago?**

In Trinidad there is an area that is in terrible need of an initiative like Esperaza. I hope that writing about Panama's

solution would affect change here.

**In January you will host some free swim clinics with Roland Schoeman, Arkady Vyatchanin. How would you describe the influence such events could have on children?**

**(it would be absolutely great if you could send us some photos from these clinics!!!)**

Moss Burmester also joined us. - I tweeted an album of photos. The free swim clinics were a huge success and something I hope will continue to grow year after year, not just to help grow the sport of swimming locally but to inspire the youth and to get them to believe and understand that through hard work anything is possible.

**There are a lot of world class swimmers around the age of 30 and they are very successful. Next to physical fitness how important are experience and mental strength in elite swimming?**

They all go together hand in hand. A holistic approach is absolutely necessary to sustain long years of all out effort.

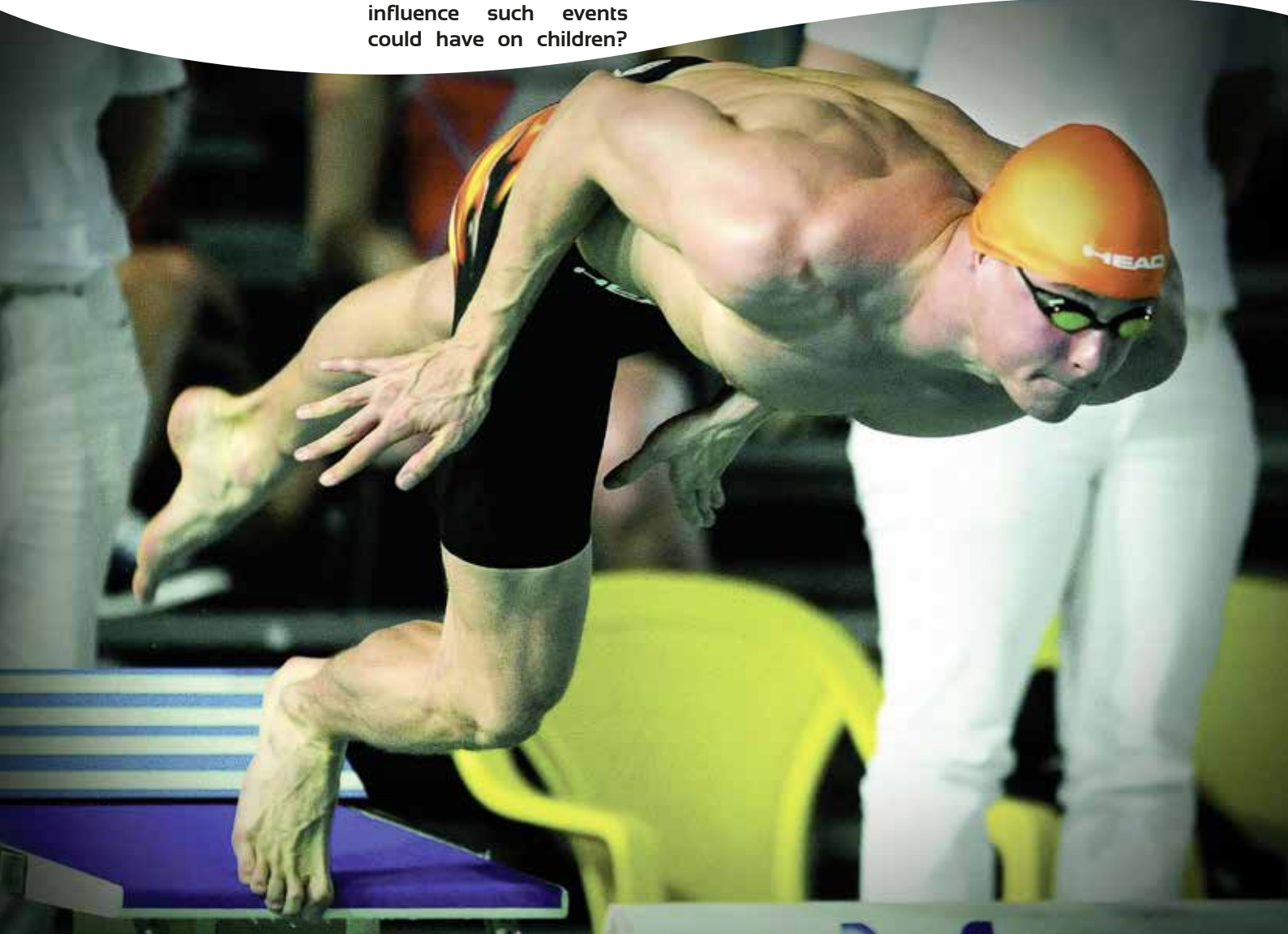
**What challenges you besides water sports? You posted a photo with Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay on twitter. Could you imagine to ascend perhaps the Mount Everest?**

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»A holistic approach is necessary to be successful in the long run.«

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I think too many people have done it. Sadly it has been cheapened, these days if you have enough money Sherpas will carry you to the top and place you on the summit. I also see that as a bit of selfish challenge. How does that contribute to the greater good? One thing is for sure is that after swimming there will be







**Name:** George Bovell  
**Date of birth:** 7/18/83 (Guelph – Canada)  
**Swim club:** ADN Swim Project  
**Coach:** Andrea di Nino  
**Body height:** 6'6"  
**Strokes:** Freestyle/Individual Medley  
**Career highlights:**  
Olympic Games 2004:  
Bronze 200 m Individual Medley  
WC\* 2013: Bronze 50 m Freestyle  
WC\* 2012 (SC): Bronze 100 m Individual Medley  
**Personal best times:**  
50 m Freestyle: 0:21,20  
100 m Freestyle: 0:48,82  
200 m Individual Medley : 1:58,80

\* World Championships

another challenge. As for a continuation of athletic stimulation I am thinking maybe freediving and ju-jitsu. I am cursed with too many passions for just one lifetime.

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»This year is about building a proper foundation for 2016.«

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**Does the freediving have a positive effect on your swimming concerning to tidal volume, lactate and hemoglobin? What is your motivation for apnoe diving?**  
Absolutely it does, especially in a race like the 50 where I don't breathe. I guess my motivation for it stems from my love affair

with the ocean that started as baby.

**During your career you've visited all parts of the world. Is there a place that you like most?**

I used to always wonder where the most ideal place to live in this big beautiful world was. I had been searching for it. After visiting almost everywhere I can say that I have found the truth. You must create the ideal place within yourself, and then wherever you go you find it since you bring it with you. If not then the grass will always be greener elsewhere and will remain restless.

**You sometimes use the phrase "pura vida". What does this mean to you?**

It's an expression of natural vitality I learned in Costa Rica that comes from the simple enjoyment of nature.