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## KRIKORIAN: Madam Butterfly set to fly

By Doug Krikorian Sports Columnist  
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Elaine Breeden admits she's nervous about the Pac-10 championships.

(Stanford)

They're staging the Pac-10 Conference's women's swimming championships this week at the Belmont Shore Plaza Olympic pool, and one of world's top practitioners of the butterfly, Stanford's Elaine Breeden, is, believe it or not, wondering how she will perform in it.

You would think that Breeden, a congenial, 21-year-old, 5-foot-11 senior who earned a silver medal in the 2008 Olympics in the 400-meter medley relay, would be brimming with self-assurance for a competition that commences Wednesday and climaxes Saturday evening.

After all, she also was a participant in the Beijing Games in both the 100 and 200 butterfly, holds all the Stanford records in those events, has two NCAA titles on her glittering resume in the latter, has been three-time All-American and has been such a dominant presence in her specialty that she has earned the nickname Madam Butterfly.

Well, it turns Elaine Breeden has been slowed during her farewell season in Palo Alto by illness - first the flu and then mononucleosis afflicted her in the fall - that caused her to miss several dual meets and impaired her training regimen.

"I'm curious how I'm going to do in the Pac-10 meet," says Breeden, a straight-A Classics major and art history minor who can hold insightful conversations on Monet, Renoir and Pissarro, as well as on Homer, Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. "It's not an ideal position to be in since I've taken so much time off.

"Still, I do feel like I

finally have all my strength back. And I do feel like I'm coming up to my best swimming form. But you never know for sure when you're coming back from a lengthy sickness.

"No matter what, I'm really looking forward to coming to Long Beach for the event. The atmosphere will be great, and there will be a lot less pressure than the NCAA championships in mid March. It'll just be a lot of fun being there all week with my teammates."

Of course, it won't exactly be pleasurable for Elaine Breeden when she's in the pool

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engaging in her discipline that is considered the most strenuous, if not most difficult one in swimming.

Indeed, one idly wonders why one ever would decide on such a demanding pursuit, since a swimmer's arms, head, shoulders and part of the chest have to be lifted out of the water in a synchronous motion tied to proper breathing and demanding constant precision.

"I often have asked myself the same question," says Breeden with a laugh. "Was I out of my mind? I guess I was, but I got into it because it was something I was good at when I was young. I was

good at both the butterfly and backstroke, but it just seemed like I did better in the butterfly.

"Why? I'm not sure. I know it takes a lot of upper body strength, and also core strength. I know it also takes a lot of training. And I've done an awful lot of that over the years."

A native of Lexington, Ky., where she graduated from high school in three years at 16 and enrolled at Stanford in 2006 at 17, Breeden has no idea what she will do after she graduates from Stanford this spring.

"My goal is to make the London Olympics in 2012 and maybe swim a year after that," she says. "I'd like to compete on the World Cup circuit next fall, and see how that goes for me."

At the moment, Elaine Breeden is only concerned about how things will unfold for her this week in Long Beach.

Her coach, Lea Maurer, doesn't seem too worried.

"We are looking forward to seeing Elaine smiling as she swims in her final Pac-10 and NCAA championship events for us," she says. "Elaine has rewritten the butterfly records and she has worked hard to carry the Stanford tradition established by Jenny Thompson and Misty Hymen (both Olympic butterfly gold medal winners) before her."

Wilson High graduate/college basketball promoter, one-time Times sportswriter/lifetime bachelor Jeff Fellenzer will have Phil Jackson's squeeze, Jeanie (Daughter of Jerry) Buss and Jamaal Wilkes as his guests Wednesday night at his Sports Business Media class he teaches at USC. "It's the first time Jeanie will make an appearance at the class," says Mr. Fellenzer, who's been teaching it since 1999 and who himself will make an appearance at one of his alma maters, Naples Elementary School, on Career Day in late March for the great principal Diane Prince.

The notorious baseball agent, Scott Boras, who routinely gets his clients the most money for which he's deservedly earned Public Enemy No. 1 status among major league baseball owners, is scheduled to be at Big Ben Goldberg's Beach Club Grill Friday at 1. His presence is tied to a fundraiser for Wilson baseball.

Against all medical odds, against all unders/overs predictions - with everyone betting on the unders - against the laws of excessive alcoholic consumption, Long Beach's zaniest character, 5-foot-2, 255-pound Dickie (2Fast2Furious/Count Dracula) Babian recently celebrated his 76th birthday in, incredibly, good health.

Incidentally, what involuntary evening educational seminar has Mr. Babian, beloved owner of Crow's, been attending quite soberly in recent weeks?

After listening to without a doubt the most intolerably insincere, the most painfully contrived, most insufferably scripted, most unctuously mendacious mea culpa speech I've ever heard, I'd like to find that 9-iron golf club wielded by Elin and use it to knock sense into those toadying journalists like ESPN's Rick Reilly who actually bought into Tiger Woods' shameless drivel calculated to resurrect his diminished reputation and save his commercial empire.

[doug.krikorian@presstelegram.com](mailto:doug.krikorian@presstelegram.com)

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