

## Q&A with Asthmatic Athlete Brett Favaro

**What's the hardest part for you about having asthma?** Due to the excellent support I received, I was able to cope with the difficulties a lot better than some other people might. However, there were times when I was very sensitive to environmental factors at different competition pools. For example, certain pools with poor ventilation would affect my breathing more than that of non-asthmatics, and it sometimes took a toll on my performance.

**How do your friends and team mates handle your asthma?** To be honest, most couldn't relate, and therefore didn't understand it. I kept it to myself and my immediate support network, as only I could really tell when I needed to do something about it.

**You play multiple sports where success often depends on how hard you push yourself. How do you do this and still manage your asthma?** The trick is not getting discouraged. There were times when I would push myself to the limit and trigger an asthma attack. However, that didn't happen very often, and it was almost always due to some environmental factor such as extreme cold or extremely poor ventilation. The trick is to push yourself, and when attacks happen learn from your mistakes. Ask yourself and your doctor how you can change your treatment regimen to prevent future attacks. Figure out if you can do something to improve the air quality in your training environment. In the case of swimming, it was sometimes as easy as opening a door to improve ventilation at the pool.

**What does it feel like when you have an asthma flare-up? Some people describe it as "like breathing through a straw" or "drowning above water."** It feels like your lungs can't do their job with the air that you take in. Your neck begins to close in on itself, and every breath becomes a struggle. You begin to feel light headed, and at times delirious.

**Did you have a lot of tests, and what were they like?** The most common test is the use of my peak flow meter. I would have to blow as hard as possible into the meter to measure the capacity of my lungs to move air out. If the measurement was low, that would indicate my treatment would have to be adjusted.

**What do you do to prevent yourself from getting an asthma flare-up?** Take the medicine religiously. Think of it as part of training. Taking your inhaler is as important as working hard in your practices.

**What tips or encouragement would you give to other kids who have asthma and want to play sports?** Do your best, and don't get discouraged if it takes you longer than other kids to build up your stamina. Think of it this way; if you have to work twice as hard to accomplish something, then you will build twice the confidence, twice the pride, and twice the toughness as the other person to whom it came easy.