

"Spare me."

The commenter has a point. I'm currently writing 70-plus pages that probably five people in the world—six, I guess, if my mom makes it through my whole thesis—will ever read, so I suppose I should understand what it means to have different priorities.

Still, there are some aspects of baby madness I can't abide. One day over break, my older sister is getting ready to meet a good friend from high school, who has just come from his best friend's baby shower. This one had a twist, though. It was a "gender reveal" party—a trend I'd never heard of before—in which the happy couple presents their guests with a cake, the outside covered in white frosting. But when the knife is brought down and the first slice produced for the waiting crowd—like magic!—the icing holding the layers together is pink

or blue. Everyone celebrates the impending arrival of the baby boy or girl.

My sister and I talk about how annoying it is to prescribe gender expectations to your children even before they are born. We discuss it in the kitchen for a couple of minutes, before our mom provides the last word: "That is one of the stupidest things I've ever heard. I was just so happy to be having my children at all!"

I wonder about having a child, whether it means you'll be happy. Especially when you're so, so young. The girls at home—a lot of their Facebook statuses include the same worries and sadnesses. While they're pregnant, the morning sickness—and the apprehension—are unbearable. When they finally have their kids, the vomiting stops but the anxiety doesn't. They write that they never get enough sleep. That the bills are getting higher, that it's tough to figure out how to fill out insurance forms or find the right daycare. That they're sick of people judging them for having kids when they're young.



Mostly, though, what they post is pictures: of their babies, of themselves with their children, of kids with their fathers, of family trips with young grandparents on the weekend. As for the few good friends I've had who are now mothers—who mostly stopped being good friends, because I never knew how to talk to them about it, really—I've been paying attention

teeth, and show up to the party, gender role-subverting baby gift in hand. Eating the cake, I suspect—whether pink or blue—will be hard to avoid. ▽

*Berta Greenwald Ledecy Undergraduate Fellow  
Jessica Salley '14 is likely still procrastinating in writing her thesis. After graduation, she hopes to enter a career in anything but childcare.*

## SPORTS

# Thicker than Water

*Flying down Ivy lanes with the brothers Satterthwaite*

**I**N MID NOVEMBER, at a swim meet among Harvard, Cornell, and Dartmouth at Hanover, spectators witnessed a rarity in college aquatics: three brothers racing in the same compe-

tion. Crimson co-captain Chris Satterthwaite '14 and sibling Sean '17 swam for Harvard, while middle brother Tim, a Cornell junior, raced for the Big Red. To make things even more interesting, all three swim the

same events: the 50-, 100-, and 200-yard freestyle. In the anchor leg of the 4 x 100-yard freestyle relay, Chris and Tim went head-to-head: Harvard took first, Cornell third.

Harvard also won the meet, garnering 13 wins in 16 events. “They blew us out of the water,” says Tim, “but the trash talking was all there, the joking around.” He informed Chris that with another five yards, he probably would have caught him, and told Sean, the slimmest of three, “That Harvard weight room hasn’t put any weight on you.”

The trio’s parents flew in from Minnesota for the meet. “You end up rooting for the kids to do well rather than to beat each other,” says Ann (MacKenzie) Satterthwaite ’84, who managed the women’s swim team in college. A former investment banker, she married Tony Satterthwaite, a Cornell-educated businessman. They started a family in England and in equatorial Singapore, where the kids all hit the pool. (“It was so hot there,” Chris recalls. “From very, very young ages we were in the water a lot.”) The youngest, daughter Katie, now a high-school junior, also swims competitively. “The only one who doesn’t swim is the dog,” Ann says. The family settled in Edina, Minnesota, in 2003.

“Tim is and always was super-competitive. He likes beating the other guy. He loved playing rugby in England—he would like swimming even more if he could hit people,” Ann explains. “Chris likes the grace and solitude, and challenging himself to do better. Sean has good stamina and is also competitive. All three were Eagle Scouts.”

So far, Chris has made the biggest splash in Ivy League pools. His best times for the 50 free (19.67 seconds), 100 free (42.99), 200 free (1:35.00), and even the 100 backstroke (49.92) all rank in the top 10 ever recorded by a Harvard athlete, and the 100-free time is a College record. He also swam on the 200- and 400-freestyle and 400-medley relay teams that hold Harvard records, with the 400-free relay also setting an Ivy record. Years of training and practice underlie his success, but it doesn’t hurt that at six feet, five inches, and 185 pounds, he slices through the water with a long, narrow silhouette. A longer body and arms translate into fewer, but lengthier, strokes to cover a given distance, and extra reach increases both water speed and the ability

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to touch the wall sooner at the finish. Sean and Tim are built on a similar model, though three and six inches shorter, respectively, than their brother. (Male Olympic swimmers typically stand between six feet, two inches, and six feet, four inches, and weigh from 180 to 190 pounds.)

Aerodynamics count. "It is about efficiency, minimizing water resistance," says head swimming coach Kevin Tyrrell. "There aren't many fish designed like a barge." Chris explains, "The wider I am, the more drag, the more water I have to displace to move forward." In freestyle, streamlining means rotating from side to side through an arc of nearly 180 degrees with each stroke, maximizing the time spent

sideways in the water: a body perpendicular to the pool's bottom offers less resistance than one parallel to it. "You want that rotation to look smooth," Chris says. "Graceful and easy."

Freestylers usually breathe every three or four strokes, but in the 50-yard sprint, lasting only about 20 seconds, he swims the whole race on one breath. In addition to sound technique, fitness is the key to winning races; the swimmer in better shape slows down less in the final lap.

**"I used to picture a great white shark chasing me," Sean recalls. "You will go pretty fast."**

There are also intangible talents like having "a feel for the water," says Chris: that means having a good kinesthetic sense of where your body is and how it reacts to water. And there's a huge mental component that includes the ability to stare at a black line on the bottom of the pool for five hours a day, or 20 hours a week, of practice. In addition, "Some people are very, very competitive," Sean notes. "They may do less work in practice, but have a racing mentality: as soon as that guy steps onto the blocks, he's a racer." It helps to reach as far out as possible on every stroke, especially the last one, where "out-touching" an opponent at the wall often decides a race. "As a kid, I used to picture a great



Sean and Chris Satterthwaite

white shark chasing me," Sean recalls. "You will go pretty fast."

Swimmers go even faster in relay races, in which four teammates each swim a leg; relays score more points than individual events. In an individual race, a typical reaction time to the starter's electronic "beep" is 0.7 seconds, but in a relay race that can drop to 0.03 or 0.04 seconds, and such tiny differences can be decisive. Furthermore, the first swimmer in the race dives in from the blocks, but the other

three "can take two steps and almost get a running start," Tyrrell explains. As the previous swimmer finishes his leg, "you judge how fast he is coming in and predict when he will touch the wall," Chris says. (Diving in too soon disqualifies the team, but it's a legal exchange as long as a swimmer's toes are in contact with the block as his teammate hits the touch pad on the wall; electronic sensors flag violations.) The group effort seems to energize the athletes: "No one wants to have the slowest split time," Chris explains.

Technically, the two Harvard brothers are walk-ons; neither received a "likely letter" prior to admission, as recruits generally do. They'd played cricket and rugby in

England. ("Swimmers are very uncoordinated on land," says Chris, who once broke a foot playing beach football on a team trip to Puerto Rico. "You want to keep them away from any activity where they might hurt themselves." Sean adds, "Chris stuck with swimming because he was good at it. I stuck with it because I was awful at everything else.") All three brothers had distinguished, state-championship careers at Edina High School under coach Art Downey, who has just completed his fifty-seventh year there. "Swimming for him," Sean says, "was an experience you wanted to have at all costs."

History suggests that Chris and Sean are more likely than Tim to leave college as Ivy League champions. Since 1994, only Harvard and Princeton have won Ivy titles—nine for the Crimson, 12 for Princeton, including the last five. Cornell's lone championship came in a four-way tie in 1984. This year's winner gets decided at the season-ending Ivy meet, held at Harvard's Blodgett Pool from February 27 through March 1. Regardless of the outcome, it's a foregone conclusion that three of the athletes having the most fun, rooting for each other, and swimming some of the best times, will be named Satterthwaite.



Visit [harvardmag.com/](http://harvardmag.com/) extras to view a video of the Satterthwaites training to increase their speed.

~CRAIG LAMBERT