

North Jersey Male Athlete of the Week epitomizes versatility in the water and out



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Aaron Baltaytis is fluent in multiple languages and every swimming stroke.

The Tenafly senior star, who is committed to Northwestern, added to his incredible high school career last week with three more gold medals at the Bergen Meet of Champions. And yet, Baltaytis doesn't feel like he's finished.

"I still feel like I have a lot of time to drop," Baltaytis said. "My coaches have put in a lot of time to work with me and I want to swim in college and qualify for NCAAs and place there, and I want to qualify for big international meets. My motivation is to be the best swimmer I can be."

Swimming has been Baltaytis' sport since he was young. His older brother Jacob swam at Tenafly and Aaron got interested watching him. He played a little baseball and basketball, but swimming hooked him for good.

"It's just such a unique sport, because it's individual and team at the same time," Baltaytis said. "It's great for your aerobic health, but it's also a sport about power, so you have an excuse to go to the gym. I really love the team aspect."



Aaron Baltaytis
Sport: Swimming
School: Tenafly
Class: Senior. **Age:** 17

The life of a premier high school and club swimmer can be monotonous. There are long club practices with grueling yardage work to refine stroke and technique. The winter is cold. The water is sometimes cold, and all of that work can sometimes only trim off a second or two.

Baltaytis said he usually takes a week off after the short-course season, then a month off after the long-course season.

He's part of all three school-record-holding relay teams, and owns five individual school records: the 200 IM, 50 free, 100 free, 100 fly and 100 back. He has not one, but two medal stands in his room. With all his success, Baltaytis has remained grounded. He speaks fondly of his Tenafly teammates and how important the Tigers team success is to him. He's a superstar, but just wants to be treated like one of the guys. It's just that most of them can't break 50 seconds in the 100 fly.

Baltaytis grew up in Tenafly. His mother is from Latvia and his father (who can't swim) is from Ukraine. Baltaytis has his Latvian citizenship and could compete for the country internationally if he chooses. He likes sports photography and learning new languages. He knows Russian, is fluent in Spanish and is trying to learn Korean to better understand some of his friends.

After a brief recruiting odyssey, he settled on Northwestern, where he wants to study economics. On his visit there, he went to football game, played video games with his future teammates and carved a pumpkin since it was Halloween.

"We didn't do anything special, it just felt normal and I didn't feel overwhelmed," Baltaytis said. "It felt super chill and I really got along with the kids on the team. I felt at home."

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