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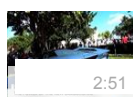
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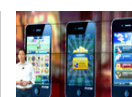
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# Goldman Water Polo's Hudnut Says Back Injury Led to Finance Job

By Kari Lundgren - Aug 6, 2012 12:01 AM GMT+0100

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Q QUEUE

The good thing about having back surgery if you're an Olympic athlete, says U.S. water polo player [Peter Hudnut](#), is it gives you time to be an intern.

One of 11 members of the American squad returning to the Olympics after winning a silver medal in Beijing, Hudnut will join [Goldman Sachs Group Inc. \(GS\)](#)'s private wealth management division following the [London](#) Games, which end Aug. 12.

Enlarge image



U.S. water polo player Peter Hudnut. Photographer: Scott Heavey/Getty Images

The job at Goldman may never have happened if a back injury, multiple fractures in two vertebrae and shoulder problems hadn't sidelined the 32-year-old Stanford University graduate before the 2004 Games in [Athens](#). While surgery and months of rehabilitation hampered his athletic career, they gave him time to get work experience, Hudnut said in an interview at London's Athletes Village.

"I was somewhat lucky in that I had so many injuries and every time I had a surgery it would put me out for a handful of months," the 6-foot-5 central defender said. "I was lucky enough to get some internships -- some through friends, some on my own -- and that helped guide me where I wanted to go."

Positions at [CIM Group](#), [Bank of New York Mellon Corp.](#) and Los Angeles developer [Ratkovich Co.](#), as well as his 2011 Stanford business degree, awakened an interest in finance, he said. Twenty-eight interviews with Goldman left him feeling he'd found a firm where he could both learn and use the skills gleaned from years of strenuous training.

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## Desire, Discipline

"Desire, discipline and all the things I've used in water polo are very applicable to finance," Hudnut said. "The focus and drive, the ability to communicate effectively with many different personality types and many different situations, the ability to adapt and be flexible; these are all traits that team sport, especially at this level, demand."

The U.S. squad water polo team trained in [Thousand Oaks, California](#), for almost a year, giving up professional positions on teams overseas, Hudnut said. The team spent between five and seven hours in meetings, five days a week. They watched video, lifted weights and practiced in the pool. The daily sessions averaged seven to eight hour as the Olympics neared.

"Peter in Beijing was a really important part of the glue that kept the team together," coach [Terry Schroeder](#) said in an interview after the U.S. beat Britain 13-7 on Aug. 2. "As he plays a bit more and feels comfortable with his playing, he's taken on that role more and more again and it's really important to the team."

The preliminary round finishes today with the U.S. playing [Hungary](#), the 2008 champions. The Americans have won three of their four early stage matches.

## Early Dreams

Hudnut was introduced to water polo as a 10-year-old by Richard Corso, the assistant coach of the 1984 U.S. team.

"I was this huge uncoordinated kid and he came and handed me this baby blue bag and on one side it had the Olympic rings and on the other side it said USA," Hudnut said, adding that he could barely swim at the time. "Inside was a water polo ball, a little suit and a water polo hat."

Almost 6 feet tall (1.82 meters) at 12, Hudnut began playing against boys two and three years older than himself. In 1992, Corso became the head coach for the U.S. national team.

"He would drive me down with him to national team practice, so I would watch the guys and talk to some of the heroes of that time about what Olympics meant to them," he said. "That really lit that fire."

## Better Than Beijing

Ranked ninth in the run-up to the Beijing Games, the U.S. beat [Serbia](#) in the semifinals before losing 14-10 in the gold medal match against Hungary. It was America's first medal in water polo in 20 years. The 2012 squad is more tightly knit and tactically and physically equal to the best teams, Hudnut said.

"I truly believe that this is the first time in a number of Olympics that any of the [top seven teams](#) could potentially win," he said, adding that playing in professional leagues in [Europe](#) has boosted the ability of both American and Australian players. The U.S. last won a gold medal in water polo in 1904.

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Winning silvers in men's and women's water polo in Beijing was the first time a country walked away with two medals in the event at a single Olympics, Bill Smith, USA Water Polo secretary and finance committee chairman and the president of Greenwich, Connecticut-based Renaissance Capital LLC, said in a telephone interview.

Whether he wins a second medal, Hudnut is looking forward to the next stage of his life.

"I know it's going to be a tough year and that's one of the things that inspires me," Hudnut said. "From a challenge perspective, my desire to succeed and do well gets me up in the morning. I hope that Goldman is a true career path for me."

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