

Matthew Accarrino

Chef at SPQR, biking machine

"The first time I got on a bike it was like the whole world opened up to me," says Michelin-starred chef Accarrino. He was born with a benign bone tumor in his right leg. The birth defect went unnoticed but continued to grow until he was in high school, when his leg broke. He lost seven inches of his right leg in the accident and couldn't walk for two years. He gave up on his childhood dream of becoming a professional bike racer. "I tried to go back to training and racing, and I got to the point where I was in so much pain I literally threw my bike off the second story of my house," Accarrino recalls. "I didn't touch a bike for 15 years." Instead he focused on cooking, but as time went by, he felt something had been lost. "There was this piece of me that was dormant or half-dead. I think my girlfriend at the time knew that something was missing, and she actually got me a racing bike." Although it took him a few years to "work through the residual negativity," he was able to overcome his fears and has spent the last four years racing—and winning—competitively. His return to cycling has made him a better chef and brought clarity to his life. "In a sense, you're going pretty fast, but you feel like you slow down a little bit. It gives you a lot of time. It's very meditative and clears your mind. It's a great place to think. It's a great stress relief and I'm probably in the best shape of my life."



Wunder Dover and Inlettes

Thanks to its plethora of hills, San Francisco is a uniquely athletic city. Simply walking from Neiman Marcus to Hero Shop can be a workout, and thus locals are generally in good shape. There's also a huge interest in fitness: Many people partake in yoga, barre or high-intensity interval training on a regular basis. But are there true athletes in SF—people who excel at a single sport and compete at an almost-professional level? Turns out, yes! Allow us to introduce you to six people who are at the top of their game.

BY KATIE SWEENEY
PHOTOS BY SPENCER BROWN



Bill Olds

Director of corporate foundation relations at St. Mary's College, hoops junkie

Olds has been playing basketball his whole life. As a tall kid, the sport came naturally to him and he played at Lewis and Clark College before being drafted by the Portland Trail Blazers. However, a fractured kneecap kept him off the court. When he recovered, Olds headed to Germany to play professionally at an international level. The guard led the team in scoring, but he struggled with the language barrier. "You're getting yelled at in the grocery store in German for not putting pricing on your produce at the produce section. And you didn't know what they were saying," Olds reminisces. A buddy convinced him to move to Australia, where he was an all-star player. While visiting the States for a friend's wedding, Olds decided to apply for a job. Thus, his career as a professional basketball player officially ended. "I was 25. I'd had my fun. You know, it was time to grow up, but it was a really good run." A career highlight was in 1997, when Olds was inducted into the Lewis and Clark basketball hall of fame. Today, when he's not cheering on the St. Mary's team, Olds plays in a weekly league at the Olympic Club. He's a part of a traveling squad that's filled with a bunch of ex-pros. What does he love most about the game? "The team aspect, the fact that I was really good at it, and my lifelong friendships."



Navid Armstrong

Proud mother of twins, advanced red belt in taekwondo

When you see Armstrong, a gorgeous blonde in a glittering gold dress, on the red carpet at the San Francisco Opera Ball, you would never guess that she's capable of breaking boards with a hand chop. Yet, the energetic and adventurous native of Iran is an avid student of taekwondo and has an advanced red belt in the ancient Korean martial art. "It makes you so strong physically, but it's also very mental," Armstrong says. "When you study taekwondo, you have to recite the student oath: I shall observe the tenets of taekwondo and its ethical ways. I shall respect my instructors and peers. I shall build a more peaceful world. I shall never misuse taekwondo. I shall be a champion for justice and freedom for all." It is this oath and the five principles of taekwondo—courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control and indomitable spirit—that drive Armstrong to pursue a black belt. She understands that the practice is more about the journey than the end game and that to succeed one must have a passion and respect for life. "Speed, power, agility, tenacity and attitude, these are the physical and mental attributes of a well-rounded martial artist," she says. Smiling, she adds, "It's really about enjoying life and understanding what's more important in life: respecting others and earning their respect."



Diane Adams

Director of merchandising and operations at Shreve & Co., tennis ace

When Adams moved to Danville 18 years ago, one of the first things she did to her new house was remove the tennis court. It's an interesting move for a lifelong lover of the sport, but it made sense to her. "I tore out the tennis court because I felt like I didn't want to isolate myself by having people coming over to play tennis," Adams explains. "I wanted to force myself to go out and play tennis." For Adams, it has always been more than just a game—it's a way for her to connect with people and build her community. So getting out of her house for tournaments was essential. "That's pretty much how I came to meet a ton of people in the East Bay. I'd play five times a week while I wasn't working." When she started working at Shreve & Co. in 2010, she joined the Bay Club at the Gateway, "which brought me a whole new group of people." Adams thrives on competition, especially matches where the players are stronger than she is. "If you're playing someone better, and you can play up to their level and stay in the game, it is really exciting. Some of the best matches are against better players—when you play your very best and you realize, I could do it. I really hung in there."



Geoff Callan

Filmmaker, producer, actor and golf guru

Callan, a fifth-generation San Franciscan, was practically born with a putter in his hand. His father, **Robert**, is one of the top golfers in Northern California. When Callan was seven, his older brother was given a set of clubs and "it was my life's goal to take those from him. To win. To beat him," he remembers. "When my dad would practice, we would hit balls and hang out. We did it all the time. So it became a part of my whole personality." Callan played on the golf team at St. Ignatius High School and St. Mary's College. Today, he plays as much as he can, at the Olympic Club (where he and his dad have won the father-son tournament six times), the Silverado Country Club and the famed Pine Valley Golf Club in New Jersey. A naturally athletic charmer, Callan has dabbled in other sports like soccer and football—at 46, he played on a semiprofessional, Marin-based football team where he beat out a bunch of twentysomethings to become starting quarterback—but golf is where he feels most at home. "Golf is like my church. Golf is where everything slows down for me except my swing. It's where I can just relax. I love it and I hate it." He pauses before getting philosophical. "Golf is kind of a metaphor for life in a lot of ways, where you want to go in the right direction, you don't want to get too far off the rails. Just as in life, you have your morals and your integrity; in golf, you have out-of-bounds and the water hazards. If you can control your misses and your mistakes, you'll do all right."



Jarrold Baumann

Owner of Zetterre Landscape Architecture, polo player

Two years ago, Baumann's gal pal told him that she was going to Argentina solo to play polo. "You can't go to Argentina by yourself, you're crazy," Baumann recalls telling her. "I'll go with you, I'll protect you, but I am not playing polo. That's too dangerous." Baumann resisted the urge for three days. As a lifelong horse lover and dressage student, he couldn't pass up trying polo; it was an instant love connection. "It was like all of my favorite things about horses and clothing and choreography all came into one beautiful sport," he explains. "So that was the beginning of it and it's just incredibly addictive." He plays on a polo field in Petaluma—conveniently located next to the property where he's building his dream house—and participates in the Palm Springs season. "I can travel anywhere in the world and play on my friends' horses" in countries like the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Spain and France, says Baumann, who marvels at the animals' athleticism. "It's amazing to me how there are times when your horse will actually kick your ball for you when you miss, and how in tune they are with your body as you are making quick turns. I just love being around horses, and I realized that they are the one thing in my life that has brought me consistent pleasure."