

A Bi-Monthly Publication of your Arizona Local Masters Swim Committee

Rediscovering The Joys of Competitive Swimming Through Masters

More and more post-college age swimmers are finding their way into USMS to fulfill their continuing desires for challenging work outs, coaching, competition, camaraderie and fitness. Here's the inspiring story of one such member's entrée to Arizona Masters and her exciting sprint into the Masters swimming history books.

By Robyn Kondrad

I have been swimming for as long as I can remember. I think I still hold the record for my summer league swim team for being in the 6/Under age group for the longest period of time--4 years! So it was no wonder that it didn't take long after my career at the College of William and Mary ended to find my way back to the pool as a coach for Sun Devil Aquatics.

It just so happened, that the Sun Devil Masters team began their practices right after I finished coaching. As I walked out the door, I always watched the Masters team getting warmed up. I already missed swimming myself, but wasn't quite ready to commit to practicing on a regular basis. I started swimming on my own, but found it was difficult to keep myself motivated long enough to get in a decent workout.

One afternoon I went to swim, and the Masters team was practicing. Their coach, Simon Percy, came over and said, "Robyn, why don't you just get in and swim with us?! It will make the time you spend in the pool much more worthwhile." And thus started my new Masters swimming career!

I quickly realized how much I missed having other swimmers around to keep me going through a challenging, or even long and boring set, and to talk with throughout workouts! I soon worked up from 2 days a week, to a fairly consistent 5 practices a week. I've met some great new friends, many my own age, and truly enjoy going to practices. It wasn't long before some of the people I worked out with began mentioning swim meets. It was an exciting thought; I wondered how fast I would go after not competing for 2 years, and not having such a strenuous workout regimen as I had during my college career.

I decided to try out a meet, and my first meet was Long Course Nationals in the Woodlands, TX! I wasn't quite sure what my times would be, and since I hadn't competed in a meet prior to nationals, I would only be allowed to enter 3 races. So, I decided to enter the 100 breaststroke, 100 butterfly, and 200IM. Although I am 24, I would be racing in the 25-29 year age category because my birthday falls in November.

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Submission are welcome. Please send submissions to junehussey@msn.com in one of the following electronic formats: Text (*.txt), Microsoft Word™ (*.doc), or Microsoft Excel™ (*.xls) and Photos as .jpg files. Articles are due on the 15th of the month before the publication date. *Swim Arizona* reserves the right to edit or not publish submissions for publication. We welcome your widespread use and sharing of our materials, and ask that you give credit to AZ LMSC. Printed in the United States of America.

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New Member Sprints into the History Books continued from page one

The timing of this meet wasn't perfect for me, as I was helping my boyfriend drive across the country, visiting my family in North Carolina, and then visiting my sister in Houston 2 weeks prior to the competition. I was only able to get into a pool twice in that time frame before the meet--talk about a taper!!

My first event was the 100 breaststroke. I was so excited, because breaststroke is my favorite stroke to swim. I hadn't raced in long course since I was 18 years old, in peak physical form. I guessed I might be able to swim about 8 seconds off my best time. I dove into the water, and my stroke felt great! Very smooth, high on the water. I definitely felt tired, but the adrenaline from the excitement kept me going. When I touched the wall, I couldn't believe my time--only 2 seconds off my best! It wasn't until later that I realized I had placed 3rd in the event. It's still fun to earn medals no matter what age you are!

The 200 IM was next, and I was pretty nervous for that race. 100 meters was one thing, but 200 meters when you haven't been training for 2 weeks is a little daunting! I swam fairly well, and landed up 4th in the event.

My last event was the 100 fly. I didn't have high expectations for this race either, as I have never been much of a 100 butterfly. Butterfly has always been my 3rd event, after breaststroke and IM. There weren't many people swimming this race in my age group--just one heat. After feeling so fatigued on the 200 IM, I thought I had better conserve some energy for that last 25 meters of fly for this race! I went out feeling strong and relaxed. At the 75 meter mark, I could hear the announcer and I could see splashing just behind me on either side. I wondered how close I was to the leaders in the middle of the pool. I kept building speed into the wall, touched, and heard my name! I looked at the scoreboard and would you believe it!? What a great surprise, I had won! I was a Long Course Nationals Champion!

I'll share one last memory from LCN that was truly motivating. Susan Walsh, an amazing swimmer from UNC, was at this meet also. I was able to watch her, at age 45, swim the 200 backstroke and set a new Masters World record. What an incredible swim! Swimming for the Masters program has been such a fantastic experience for me so far, and I look forward to keeping in shape and many more competitions for years to come! In my opinion, once a swimmer--always a swimmer! It just gets into your blood!

Editor's Note: Robyn regrets she will be leaving Arizona to pursue her career, but says she will continue swimming Masters wherever she lands.

ARE YOU A BRUTE?

Not to be confused with Arizona's only, the original Brute Squad Meet, which has been put on every Summer for as long as I can remember by Judy Gillies, the Washington State University Masters are now offering USMS Members a Postal Version of 'the Brute.' Not for the meek at heart, completing the Brute requires one to swim a 1650, a 400 IM and a 200 Fly (ouch) all in one day. You can do it fast, or just get it done. You have from now until the end of the year to complete the feat. Talk your coach into adding it to your next work out!

Dates: November 1-December 31, 2007.

Event: Swim the 1650 yard Freestyle, the 400 yard Individual Medley, and the 200 yard Butterfly at one workout.

Sponsor: Washington State University Masters Swimming. Sanctioned by Inland Northwest Masters Swimming (IWMSC) for United States Masters Swimming Inc. (USMS) Sanction number 3571231P.

Location: Fitness/participation division, any pool (Meter swimmers should swim the 1500 Freestyle). Competitive division, your local short course yards pool. Conversion from meters will not be allowed.

Results: Will be sent as a pdf to all swimmers as well as posted at www.WSUMastersSwimming.org/BruteSquad by January 25. Results will be available by mail if indicated on entry form.

WHO: Any 2007 or 2008 USMS registered swimmer. Swimmers can select from a fitness/participation division or a competitive division.

Entries must be postmarked by: January 5, 2007 to be received no later than January 11

Mail to: Doug Garcia
1505 NW Kenny Dr
Pullman, WA 99163

Entry Fees: \$10.00 Competitive entry
\$35.00 Competitive entry and sweatshirt
\$5.00 Fitness entry
\$30.00 Fitness entry and sweatshirt
\$27.00 Shirt only

Checks payable to: WSU Masters Swimming

Questions: Contact Doug Garcia
509-332-1621 (before 9 pm PST)
douggarcia@usms.org

WSUMastersSwimming/BruteSquad

Always Looking for reporters: Do you go to competitions and take photos? Care to share? We can't cover all the swimming news without your help. We welcome all submissions. Please contact *Swim Arizona* editor at junehussey@msn.com.

Upcoming Sanctioned Events

The SPMA SCM Championship meet will be held at Belmont Plaza in Long Beach Friday, November 30 - Sunday, December 2, 2007. For more information, visit www.spma.net.

Brute Postal: Before this year is over, swim the 1650 yard Freestyle, the 400 yard Individual Medley, and the 200 yard Butterfly all in one day. Events can be swum in any order with as much rest between as desired, all three events must be swum in the same 24 hour day. Sponsored by WSU. For Entry Form, visit www.azlmsc.org

Polar Bear Meet has been scheduled for Sunday, February 3rd in Tucson. Check the website soon for the meet flyer. www.azlmsc.org

Out in the Open...Water, that is!



Where's Waldo? In September, 527 swimmers including 68 Arizonans set out for a 3-mile tour during the 77th Annual La Jolla Rough Water Swim, the largest U.S. open water event.

Of some 2,000 participants at the 77th Annual La Jolla Rough Water Swim, a strong percentage hailed from Arizona. In addition to our state's 68 Gatorman contestants, 66 Arizonans competed in the Women's One Mile and 59 competed in the Men's One Mile. Kurt Dickson won the 40-44 Men's One Mile in a time of 21:43; Patty Gray won the 55-59 Women's Gatorman in a time of 1:25.46; and Celestene Duke won the 30-34 Women's One Mile in a time of 25:12.

A Novice Swimmer Takes the Plunge

My First La Jolla Rough Water Swim

By Ruthann Coyote

I have started swimming in my late 40's because strenuous, physical activity challenges my fears of physical decline in old age. Swimming challenges my limits on a physical, mental, and emotional level and it feels SO GOOD! My first swim competition ever, participating in the La Jolla Rough Water Swim, was an incredibly exciting and life-changing event!

Although I always technically knew how to swim, it was more a matter of being able to avoid drowning; I didn't begin to swim well until last year. In summer of 2006, I took a lap swimming & stroke class through Tucson Parks and Rec. Since I knew nothing about swimming and my stamina was nil; initially I grew exhausted before finishing half of one 25 meter length, but I stayed through the

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fall, winter and spring, improving slowly but steadily. My body responded beautifully: my legs, back and biceps grew thicker, harder and my muscles grew visibly sinewy. Neither yoga nor aerobics made me look like this!

I first thought of entering the La Jolla Rough Water Swim (LJRWS) as a way to motivate me to keep swimming and to help me take the swim training more seriously. I mailed my LJRWS entry in February, months before I even attempted an ocean swim and seven months before the actual event! The Masters swim team, Ford Aquatics, trains on the college campus where I work, so I joined in early summer, after a shoulder injury healed.

What can I say about Masters swimming? I told myself (and my friends) that I knew it was going to kick my ass, but it was so much harder than I had expected! For a non-athlete who has never participated in group sports or training, who has never been a competitive swimmer, it was challenging to a degree I could never have anticipated. For almost the entire first month, it felt like one hour of aquatic boot camp every day I swam! I didn't understand the directions, the numbers, the math, the repeats, the intervals. Swimming, I was slow and clumsy. I felt constantly inadequate; everyone seemed more knowledgeable, more capable, and more confident. My fellow team members were extremely friendly and patient, which I greatly appreciated, but my swimming skills (compared to theirs) advanced slowly and I frequently left in tears!

I combed the Ford website and tried to memorize the unfamiliar swimming jargon, but was often unsuccessful at utilizing this new information in the stressful, fast-paced, pool environment. I would be trying to count repeats and intervals and do the required math in my head, while gasping in enough air to avoid drowning! The good thing: I had no where to go but up! I called myself the "most improved swimmer" at Ford Aquatics: my tongue-in-cheek euphemism for the slowest swimmer on the team! Despite the difficulty, I enjoyed the adrenaline rush when I finally understood a complicated workout instruction set and could actually complete it. I remember my intimidation when I first had to swim Hillenbrand pool long-course. It seemed like the wall would never arrive; it had only been relatively recently that 25 meters seemed a long way! But as with everything, with practice I improved and it became easier.

Despite the warning that the Ford Aquatics coach, Jim Stites rarely helped the slower swimmers, focusing instead on the stars in the faster lanes, on several occasions he gave me valuable stroke advice. Whenever he gave me pointers during practice, I wrote it down as soon as I could, so I would remember and put it into practice. Keeping this written log of what I learned was a successful lap-swimming strategy, but I needed to practice swimming outside of the predictable environment of the pool. I planned to do practice swims in the ocean once a month throughout the summer.

My very first practice ocean swim, I had a frightening and unexpected reaction to the cold, deep water. My girlfriend, Lesa, swam with me, and we were aiming for the quarter mile buoy. After we swam out past the seaweed in La Jolla Cove, inexplicably, I began to feel apprehensive and afraid that the ocean would suck

me down. The water felt oppressive, constricting my body and pulling on my legs. I felt like I could not expand my lungs; I couldn't get enough air! I surfaced and tore off my goggles so I could see the sun and I started to gasp with loud, shallow breaths. Lesa and I were far away from other swimmers and probably an eighth of a mile out to sea! I wanted to return to shore immediately. Lesa, a registered nurse with intensive care and emergency room experience, minimized my panic by deflecting my request and calmly suggested we roll over to float on our backs and enjoy the sun on our faces. After I calmed down a little, Lesa suggested we swim perpendicular to the shore, thereby giving me a chance to stay in the ocean without growing more afraid by going out in ever deeper water. Later that day, I was able to attempt a short swim by myself, but the overwhelming fear persisted.

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During my next monthly visit, my dear friend Eloise, a Reiki healer and intuitive counselor, slipped into counselor mode as we drove on the San Diego freeway in her truck; we had an impromptu session around the fear and anxiety I felt about swimming in the ocean. Later in the day during a lengthy visualization and guided imagery session, she helped me understand why I experienced the debilitating fear and how to overcome it. She also helped me devise a plan to seek out someone to swim with so I would not have to swim alone (my biggest fear was dying alone in the ocean!). Later that day on the beach at La Jolla Cove, I met a friendly stranger, Laura. She lives near the Cove and (weather permitting) swims the mile in La Jolla Cove almost daily, just for fun. That afternoon, we swam the mile together and afterwards, she invited me to her home for a celebratory dinner for completing my first ocean mile swim! We became fast friends and after I finished the LJRWS, she hosted a lunch in my honor at her house!

The Saturday before the LJRWS, Coach Jim Stites organized a practice swim out to the quarter mile buoy to strategize the return swim during the event. The water was warm, but the surf was very choppy--the roughest surf I'd ever experienced. Every time I put my head in the water to swim, within seconds I'd start to feel dizzy, disoriented and, after a short time, nauseous and panicky. It took me forever to even make it out to the buoy. By this time, the group was swimming back; I had missed the talk about the strategic return swim. A stranger who introduced herself as Patty insisted on swimming back to shore with me; I'm sure it was painfully obvious that I needed some help! I explained, almost in tears, that I actually knew how to swim; I just wasn't demonstrating it right then! I couldn't understand why I was so dizzy. Patty, a veteran of many ocean swims, explained that it is possible to get motion sickness from rough water swimming! That explained a lot; I have been prone to severe motion sickness for many years. I cannot go on amusement park rides or playground swings; I frequently get dizzy riding elevators! During the swim back in from the buoy, Patty was patient and encouraging. At one point, Patty said, "Don't fight the water or the waves. Go with it. Pretend you're part of the ocean." When we reached the shore, she gave me a warm hug and wished me luck on the swim. I was excited, but now more nervous than ever about the swim the following day!

The Sunday of the LJRWS, ocean water conditions were more favorable: the water temperature was warm and the waves were much smaller than the previous afternoon, but just in case, I took motion sickness prevention medication. Scores of women were on the beach as my gender/age (women over 40) left in three different "waves" (large groups) to reduce the number of churning bodies leaving the shore at the same time! Knowing I was slow, I stayed to the back of the pack and aimed for the outer edge of the buoys. I wasn't swimming for time; I just wanted to finish!

I had memorized the map and knew the LJRWS course well; the first lap was 800 meters from the shore to the first buoy, the second was 460 meters from the first buoy to the second, and the final 500 meter lap was the second buoy returning to the shore. For whatever reason, the first lap of 800 meters felt the easiest; it felt like the water bolstered and urged me forward. My friends, watching with binoculars, said I swam in a straight line from the shore to the first buoy, and I completed that first lap with ease! Rounding the first buoy and changing direction, the water felt choppier and the surf pushed against me; the swimmers ahead of me drew further away but I felt strong and good. The hardest swimming was the final lap returning to shore, but it didn't matter, because I knew by then I would finish the swim. I counted my strokes to occupy my thoughts so I wouldn't psyche myself out or get discouraged. I am pleased to report that I completed the swim in 49 minutes, 47 seconds.

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I could hear my cheering section of friends, Lesa, Kenny and Laura, as I stumbled from the water's edge to the timing gate. I wanted to run, but my limbs felt like jelly and I was afraid I'd fall and break an ankle! Exhausted but satisfied, I was thrilled as the event staff congratulated me and handed me the heavy 2007 LJRWS Survivor medal.

Who said that famous quote: "That which doesn't kill you makes you stronger?" I must admit, Masters swimming often made me wish I was dead, but once practice was over, I was satisfied with my accomplishment. I am so proud that with no athletic background and at my age, I trained for and completed a challenging swim like the La Jolla Rough Water Swim. There is much more that I have not told; this story barely scratches the surface describing the personal growth I experienced. I made wonderful new friends, strengthened existing relationships and pushed my body, mind and spirit to limits I did not know I could achieve and I feel younger than ever. What an amazing journey of self-discovery...from swimming! I am now coordinating a small group of friends to participate in the LJRWS with me next year. We'll see you at the Cove in September 2008!

San Felipe Socks it To 'Em

The inaugural San Felipe (Mexico) open water swim last September "was a special 3 day weekend," reports race organizer Don Baker. "We had a big barbecue Sat. afternoon at our home there in San Felipe. The weather did not cooperate though, and we had waves up to 3 feet."



Ten brave swimmers from California took on those warm 3-foot waves, earning themselves a good siesta and some cute awards to boot. Don hopes he can attract some Zonies to the event next year. "It really would be a good event for any Arizona swimmer, as it is almost as close to San Felipe as San Diego is. We had a great time." Contact Don at 858-869-7466.

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