

Across the Lanes
LMSC for North Carolina's Newsletter

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Masters Compete In "Swim Around Key West"

by Mary Craddock Hoffman

Jim Green and Mark Tommerdahl, both NCAM (North Carolina Aquatic Masters) members, conquered the 20th annual Swim Around Key West, 12.5 miles of open water. Green was the first ever in the 50-55 age group to finish this race. His time was 5 hours and 34 minutes to place 33rd overall. Mark finished second in the 35-39 age group and ninth overall with a time of 4 hours and 29 minutes. Of the 70 individual swimmers who started the race, only 32 men and 17 women completed the race. The others who dropped out were suffering from exhaustion and other related symptoms. Coach Barrett Hahn (NCAM) served as Jim's paddler and Dave Smullen, a UNC medical student, paddled for Mark. One can imagine the confusion that must occur at the start with all these boats, but Hahn used a whistle to help Jim find his boat while Mark and Dave could see each other. Others just called out to each other or made visual contact before the race began.

While the paddlers for the individual competitors used sea kayaks, the relay support people use motor boats to carry the team and provisions. The mission of the paddlers was to keep the swimmer on course, provide quick energy nourishment and transport the swimmer to shore if he/she was unable to complete the race. A swimmer could stop to eat at any time during the race as long as he/she did not hang on to the side of the boat. In an endurance event that lasts longer than three hours, an athlete typically needs to replenish the body with fluids and high energy foods. Both Hahn and Smullen had their kayaks stocked with water, bananas, cookies...anything that would provide quick energy. However, a stomach full of sea water early on in the race kept Green seasick the entire time. Barrett said he remembers Jim drinking water but he did not touch any of the food.

The first portion of the race determined whether a swimmer had enough speed to get to Fleming Way before the tide washed out. It was not a problem for Green and Tommerdahl, but Green mentioned his relief in completing this obstacle. As he yelled "yes" in celebration he looked at his paddler to share the moment, but Hahn was wearing an expression of concern. His eyes were focused on the dark clouds and the choppy water ahead. Tommerdahl and Smullen had already passed the area of water exposed to the open Atlantic, called Sigsbee Park, but the Green-Hahn team were just starting this leg of the journey. The storm with 30-mph winds brought 6 foot swells and pelting rain during the full three miles around Sigsbee Park.

Once Green reached the Cow Key Channels the water was calm and the storm had passed. He found House Boat Row infested with biting flies and thick saw grass. The shallow water at 2 feet in depth was not only lipid but it

was difficult to maneuver in. Two miles remained after clearing the Row. At this point Jim was beginning to experience the symptoms of dehydration and exhaustion. He was quickly losing body heat and this greatly concerned him, as he knew he should be too warm in 89° water. He told Barrett he was ready to give up. Hahn, in true coaching form, convinced him to hang in there. Those who know Green and Tommerdahl can attest that neither of these guys would entertain the thought of not finishing the race no matter how awful they felt. So it is safe to assume that Barrett knew just what to say to get Jim charged up again.

At Mark's finish an unexpected visitor showed up to greet the swimmers. A bleary Tommerdahl was unfazed when he spotted a nurse shark skulking near the shore. Under normal circumstances he might have been a little apprehensive, but he was so drained he could not find the energy to care.

Both Tommerdahl and Green are looking forward to returning next year. Jim has his sights on breaking five hours and his boat is already reserved. Although Mark did not suffer some of the extreme discomfort that Jim experienced, both agree this race is one of the toughest they have ever competed in. Jim ranked the effort as tougher than the Iron Man Triathlon, which he has completed three times. To train for this event, Barrett designed some tough pool workouts including doubles, reaching 7000 - 8000 yards on some days. But Mark hopes next year they will structure more of their training around open water swims. This strategy should prepare them better for the conditions they found in Key West. Jim Green and Mark Tommerdahl demonstrated a gutsy determination and will that not only enhanced their performance, but also drove them to overcome the capricious temperament of nature.



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Dixie Zone 1996 Long Course Championships

The Greenville Masters were hosts for the 1996 Dixie Zone Championships the weekend of July 6 and 7 in Greenville, SC. The meet attracted over 110 swimmers from North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama and Louisiana. Our North Carolina team captured the third place trophy. The NC team consisted of Ceil Blackwell, Rick Bober, Buz Catlin, Jerry Clark, Dudley Dean, Milton Gee, Judy Kelly, John Kortheuer, Sandra Kremer, Bill Linton, Mary Mead, John Murphy, Dan Read, Paul Rom, Gerry Speaker, and Dick Webber. Thanks to all these swimmers for representing our state so well at this meet.



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Judy Kelly Carries The Olympic Torch

One of our Masters swimmers, Judy Kelly, was one of the torch bearers when the Olympic torch came through Hendersonville, NC. Judy competes for Raleigh Area Masters but trains in Hendersonville.



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John Kortheuer Sets Two World Records

In July at the Dixie Zone Long Course Championships in Greenville, SC, John Kortheuer set a new world record for 65-69 men in the 50m breaststroke with a time of 38.21 and the 100m breaststroke with a time of 1:27.18. He also set new national records for the 65-69 age group in the 100yd breast (1:14.44) and the 200yd breast (2:50.91). John placed first in the nation in a total of 6 events!



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My Experiences At The Olympic Games

by Linda Enders

This summer I was lucky enough to work at the Georgia Tech Aquatics Center at the Atlanta Olympic Games. To me the games were fun...hot...frustrating...exciting...breathtaking...exhausting. The best time of my life! I could have never had enough money to pay for all that I got to see. I worked in the Event Services staff which is a fancy name for ushering and ticket taking. For the first four days, I worked at the water polo pool (which was behind the main swimming pool) during the preliminary polo rounds. After these beginning rounds were completed, I moved inside the main stadium for the last two days of swimming, all of the diving, and the synchronized swimming finals.

I think my favorite moment/event was during the syncro finals when the American women performed an awesome routine and got all 10s. The crowd let loose and it made us all choke up. At that moment I knew exactly what the Olympics were for. This moment is followed closely by the night another volunteer and I sneaked into the good diplomat seats after our shift and got to see Janet Evans swim her swan song and see the American women win the 4x200 free relay. I had never seen an awards ceremony and it was special because the National Anthem of the US was played frequently and President Clinton was there as well. Other special moments include being chatted up by Rosalyn Carter in the ladies bathroom line ("Hi, I'm Rosalyn Carter" -- no kidding!!), ushering NBC stars such as Helen Hunt to their seats, and especially meeting the athletes and exchanging pins with them.

Dealing with the crowds also had some downsides as well. I found the American water polo crowd to be some of the rudest people I have ever encountered. Family of the American water polo team would sneak into the "good seats" and refuse to move even after the ticket holders for these seats showed up. We had to eject one parent because he was so rude about what seat he had been given to watch his son play. Because of that, he didn't even get to see his son play. The temperature at the water polo pool was also almost unbearable during the first week. We usually were on deck from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and were about to melt in the afternoon. The water polo pool was a completely temporary facility and so it had no cover. Even the rude fans, rain, heat, and Centennial Park bombing could not squash my Olympic Spirit -- I had a marvelous time!

I was also lucky enough to be given and to buy tickets to other events such as baseball, women's volleyball, gymnastics, field hockey, and kayaking. All of the volunteers were also invited to attend the dress rehearsal of the opening ceremonies the night before the Olympics officially began. The show was much better in person -- there was so much going on down on the field that the small tv screen couldn't capture.

All of us were so enthusiastic after volunteering (even after having to show up at 5 a.m. for most shifts) that we looked into volunteering at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Unfortunately, they are not taking applications but the 2002 winter Olympics in Salt Lake City are! Check out <http://www.SLC2002.org/> for more information!



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Jeannie Mitchell Wins Gold Medal in England

At the VI World Masters Meet in Sheffield, England, Jeannie Mitchell brought home a gold in the 100m back and a bronze in the 50m back for the 50-54 age group. Participants were only allowed to compete in one event per day because of the large field. Approximately 3800 swimmers representing 46 different countries raced at the meet. The first day Jeannie Mitchell placed fourth in the 200m back with a time of 3:08.27. She improved with her second event coming in third with a 38.75 for the 50m backstroke. On the final day she won the gold in the 100m back with a time of 1:24.63, almost a full second ahead of the second place finisher. Mitchell trains at Watauga County Swim Complex and is a member of the Mountain Mako Masters (MMM).



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1997 Pan Pacific Masters Championships

The Pan Pacific Masters Championship will be held on the island of Maui June 24-29, 1997. The meet will be hosted by United States Masters Swimming in conjunction with the county of Maui. You should make your plans early. For information:

Hawaii Sports, Inc.
1155 Olowalu Way
Honolulu, Hawaii 96825
Phone/ Fax 1-800-690-8055
email <http://www.lava.net/hawaiisports/>

*Please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope with any request for meet information.



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Richard Bober Breaks World Record For Backstroke

With a time of 30.03, Richard Bober broke the 50m Back world record for the 45-49 age group at Nationals in Michigan this summer. Bober has been swimming Masters in North Carolina for 23 years, the longest of anyone in the state. He remembers competing at the first NC Masters meet ever on Oct. 23, 1973 in Greensboro. At that time he was competing for the Tar Heel Masters club. Bober is a member of the MAC chapter in Charlotte.



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<http://www.NCmasters.org/atloct96.html>