

## Swimming in Asheville in the Mountains of Western North Carolina

*By Jim Green*

I've had several requests from the flatlanders to our East to talk about what it is like to swim Masters up here in Western North Carolina. So I'm going to share my observations and invite anyone who comes to Asheville to swim with us.



### **Asheville Masters Swimming:** (<http://ashevillেমasters.com/>)

This team, of which I am a humble member, is the oldest Masters swim team in the area and one of the oldest in North Carolina. Andrew Pulsifer, who is the Head Coach at Warren Wilson College, coaches us. Andrew is the real deal. He was an All American backstroker who swam for Virginia Tech. He can still rip off some very impressive times. He is assisted By Clara Maust who won the NCAA Division I, 200 freestyle while she was at the University of Georgia. Clara is the Assistant Coach for UNCA women's team. Clara is better looking than Andrew.

We have a regular group of about 14 swimmers who come to most practices. For some reason we are oriented toward open water swimming. We have had several All Americans and National Champions in open water races from the mile to the 10k. Two of our swimmers completed the Tampa Bay swim. It is strange we have that emphasis because the pools in the area are not suited to training for long open water swims. It may be that several of us (I definitely include myself) have no brains.

We primarily swim at 5:45 to 7:15 MWF at Asheville School and Tuesday, Thursday at Warren Wilson College. Saturday we have a longer workout at Warren Wilson that goes from 7 – 9:15 or longer, if no one is whining about getting breakfast. Sometimes the whining wins and we go to breakfast together.

The pools in Western North Carolina are not the best. Most of the pools are over 30 years old and are in desperate need of facelifts. We have one 50 meter pool that is run by the City of Asheville. The 50 meter pool is very hard to utilize and we do rent it one morning in the summer for long course training. We also use the Asheville Country Club every morning in the summer so we get to swim outside all summer.

There is a consistent group that swims each morning. I tell new comers that they should bring a sense of humor because once this group gets to know you there is nothing they won't kid you about. In that way they are like every Masters team I've swum with around the country. There have been many times at practice I have been laughing so hard I literally could not swim. Believe me swimming with that group is the high point of my day.

One thing that is really different up here is the weather. From late November to the middle of April, snow and ice storms can definitely change workout frequency. Since we swim so early in the morning, waking up and looking outside is the first part of the workout. Some of us own Vasa trainers for those days. If you cannot stand up in your driveway it is probably not a good idea to go to the pool.

We get a lot of visitors in the summer. Asheville is a tourist destination and swimmers from all over the nation show up on our doorstep. It is a lot of fun getting to know these swimmers before they disappear after vacation.

We have a swim meet every fall in honor of Steve Barden, one of our swimmers who died way too young some time ago. We also have some open water swims and even hosted the National one mile championship at Lake Logan. We do overlap with the triathlete community and have some triathletes train with us periodically.

So come on and join us if you're up this way. We'd love to have you.