

Inside USMS National Championship Committee

By Don Gilchrist

USMS continues to offer national events in which a registered Masters swimmer can enter and compete in three events without making qualifying times. This provides the opportunity for those who have never competed in a national championship to experience the thrill of being in the same pool as Olympians and legends. There has been some discussion about requiring qualifying times for all events due to the growing popularity and participant size of the national events, however, this will be a long time coming. Newcomers to the sport and those just getting back into the pool should take advantage of the inclusive entry policy. The social aspect and friendships are just as important as the competition, so please consider attending the coming national events.

The USMS 2014 Spring Championships will be held May 1-4 in Santa Clara, California at the George F. Haines International Swim Center. This is the pool where the legends competed and trained. There are only two pools in the United States that are considered the epicenter of competitive swimming over the last 75 years. They are George F Haines International Swim Center in Santa Clara and the Hall of Fame Complex in Fort Lauderdale.

There was a small contingency of North Carolina Masters who competed in the 2001 Spring Championships at Santa Clara. This was my first time at the Haines Center and it was very memorable event. This was where Winston-Salem Masters swimmer and NCSU standout Joe Rhyne made his first comeback meet where he sealed three national golds and managed to rip the seams out of his first very expensive full length technical suit. He said it was the suit's problem and not the over stuffing!

It is a beautiful setting amongst manicured grass, palm trees and in a temperate climate, south of San Francisco and near Palo Alto. During our 2001 visit, my wife and I accompanied by my 18 month old Amelia managed to fit in a week of Central Valley site seeing that included the Monterey Bay Aquarium, multiple wineries and the Santa Cruz National Forest. There is already much talk amongst NC masters about attending. I highly recommend attending for competition, interesting sites and pleasure, the plane flights should be very reasonable.

The 2014 Summer Long Course National Championships will be held August 13-17 at the University of Maryland College Park Eppley Recreational Center Natatorium. This will be the first time the University of Maryland, College Park hosts a USMS national championship meet. The Eppley Natatorium, however, is no stranger to national events, including the USA Swimming Nationals, the IGLA Championships, and the ACC Swimming & Diving Conference Championships. The venue was recently constructed and includes an indoor 50 meter deep water competition pool, separate dive well and adjacent outdoor pools. Participation is expected to be high and maybe a record. At only 5 ½ hours of driving and a little over 300 miles this should be a must for all NC master swimmers.

The discussion within the USMS National Championship Committee at the recent National Aquatic Convention consisted of new and old business. 2016 and 2017 national championship bids will be solicited by mid 2014 and locations awarded by early September.

There is interest for 2016 Spring National returning to North Carolina and the Greensboro Aquatic Center. Raleigh Area Masters and Greensboro Swim Association Masters are in early collaboration to possibly be the joint hosts for this event. Other venues likely to bid include Mesa Arizona, site of the 2011 Spring Nationals, University of Texas at Austin and a South Florida venue, nonetheless if not 2016 for NC then 2017 given the regional rotation going to the east coast during one of these two years and the excellent reputation from the 2012 event in Greensboro.

Regarding the nuts and bolts of championship events, we are pursuing online relay entry process, possible deck seeding for more events so to shorten the timeline, use of automatic relay exchange judging equipment, setting new championship host performance standards, entry change flexibility up to deadline, review of revenue sharing between host and USMS given more national sponsors committing, and multiple other details that all part of the behind the scene activities of our championship committee.

We welcome any comments you may have, but encourage all to enjoy these events and consider attending Santa Clara and College Park national championships. Lastly, there were 499 NC masters participating in the 2012 Spring National Championships in Greensboro. This was an incredible turnout and it attests to the interest of master swimming in North Carolina. So bring friends to practice, get excited, register for USMS and prepare for 2016 Nationals in Greensboro.