

Challenge Yourself

By Heather Hagadorn

It's a new year and your friends are beginning to put together their race strategies, travel plans and they are working out the precious workout time with their families.

But you are not a competitor. You are not in a situation to travel. You are not going to an Ironman and you have never swum the 200 fly - and you never plan to do it. Who cares? Maybe, though, you do need a little challenge. One that is not timed, just one that says, "yeah, I really did finish the 200 fly". No one was present with a stopwatch to know how long it took, so they can't prove how fast or slow you were for 8 lengths, and no officials were on top of you to tell you that you forgot to touch the wall with 2 hands. You did it all by yourself, one 25 at a time, until you got to 8. Resting on the wall for 2 seconds or 1:45 is allowed. Just do 8. 200 fly, DONE.

What's next?

The USMS Check-off Challenge is just for that – it is the time to say you swam something for the first time and want more, or a time to set a stretch goal for swimming events you may never have done otherwise...all on your time.

You can swim the 18 pool events in one workout, or one per workout, or as races during meets. You can take a full year to complete the events. There is 1 open water swim though...how about hitting the ocean on your next vacation?

This year the USMS Check-off Challenge is being run by Maryland Masters. If you've ever been to a YMCA Nationals meet, you'd know that they are one of the most spirited teams and have some of the coolest outfits. Everything matches. Somehow they even get the men to wear black and red nail polish on their toes. The Check-off Challenge t-shirts are sure to be a hit.

COACHES: Sign up your entire team and use the event as a team challenge. Spread out the during practice sessions, progressively building up to the tougher events. The entire team can work together, cheering each other on.

Watch your USMS Streamlines emails and look for details at <http://www.usms.org/fitness/content/checkoff>

