

## 2013 Pan-American Masters Championship, Sarasota FL, June 5-13

**Andrea Crashes the Meet; Masters Swimmers Persevere; Español heard everywhere**

**By Steve Peterson**

Ten Puget Sound Masters (PSM) swimmers attended the fifth biennial running of this first-ever-on-U.S.-soil event. Charlotte Davis, Janet Getzendaner, Mary Lippold, Mike McColly, Susie Wetstone and Tonya Berg shared a rental house; Jeanne Ensign, Ryan Packer, Frank Warner and I stayed at various motels.

Union Americana de Natacion (UANA), which oversees amateur aquatic sports competition in the Western Hemisphere, responded to USMS's bid to host the synchronized swimming and pool competition at Sarasota YMCA's Selby Aquatic Center and the final-day open water events at "America's #1 Beach" (and I believe the sign), Siesta Key Beach.



North Americans accounted for 53% of the 1,552 contestants; 44% came from Central and South America; just over 50 swimmers came from the Czech Republic, Kazakhstan, Russia, Rwanda, Switzerland and the Ukraine.

The Y facility is the home pool for the Sarasota Sharks, whose 280 members include our national office personnel<sup>1</sup> as USMS headquarters is about 20 miles north. The 8-lane 50m with 6-lane 25yd tank, installed by Myrtha Pools 13 years ago, is in pristine condition – it doesn't hurt that Myrtha's U.S. headquarters is here and its USA CEO likes to see it spotless! Just a month

before the meet, the Sharks raised some \$50K to replace the aging starting blocks with state-of-the-art units like those at KCAC. Though the main course is 5 feet deep at one end and I heard several complain that it isn't a fast pool (at least for them), nine world records (8 individual and 1 relay) and 16 national records (13 individual and 3 relay) were set during the eight-day run. Interestingly, this was my first long course championship that did not have the high flat walls – I do like those gutters to grab!

The locker room (men's anyway) initially appeared too small, save for lots of toilets (yay!). Just one bench served one semicircle of lockers. But the meet schedule, no more than three events per day, assured uncrowded access to stow my stuff, usually in a full-height unit. I'm not sure if it's a South American trait, but those guys took forever using those huge shower stalls for shampooing, drying off and getting dressed.

Andrea – that would be **Tropical Storm Andrea** – dropped in for an unwelcome but brief visit on the second day. Several tornado warnings were issued, torrential rain poured and lightning flashed. She even halted the Men's 400 IM halfway through its 12 heats. I think at least one of the guys stopped at the breast turn – I wonder if I'd take the DQ or request a do-over (!).

---

<sup>1</sup> I enjoy meeting fellow Masters swimmers and was pleased to find threads in common with **Laura Hamel**, Editor-in-Chief of *USMS Swimmer*: finding Masters swimming as we turned 40; writing swim-related articles; having a law-enforcement background (well, my younger son's a police officer); playing in rock bands (she wants to resume singing lead and playing bass in an *Eagles* cover band and I do keyboards and harmonies in classic rock cover band *N<sub>2</sub>O*).

I adjourned with the house group for lunch and to wait the three-hour delay. While there, we heard a *braak braak* like those "this is a test of the Emergency Warning System" alerts. Charlotte called the homeowner to find out what the source of the house alarm might be; when it happened again I discovered that it was the *emergency weather app* on my new smartphone, warning us to take immediate cover! At that point the rain was going by sideways and water was flowing off the awnings as though a fire main had ruptured on the roof. A day later you wouldn't have known the weather had been any different than typically mostly sunny with occasional overcast and a short afternoon area thunderstorm. (Sarasota gets 65% more sunny days but 40% more rain than Seattle – and Seattle's "comfort index" of 72 beats Sarasota's 28.)

The meet conduct and officiating were superb. The timeline was spot on (save for Andrea's day). I initially thought the meet announcer was computer-generated (think HAL in *2001 – A Space Odyssey*: "I'm sorry, Dave. I'm afraid I can't do that..."). But William G. is their regular MC, recruited for his reassuring, calm tone for both age-group and Masters meets. Also was the DJ for the banquet at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Sunday night. What was non-human was the repeat of every announcement in Spanish – William simply typed it on his laptop and fed the Google Translate<sup>2</sup> text-to-speech female voice to the PA system. "Where is she?" booth onlookers continually asked.

At the pool and my motel, Spanish was the dominant language heard. Now if those guys could just tune in to our "no diving" rule in the warm-up pool!

PSM had sufficient swimmers to have mounted two teams in each of the relay events that were all held on Sunday. We'd have placed in the top ten in all eight (including a potential gold in the Women's 200-239 Medley!), but I wasn't able to convince enough to give up a whole day to sightsee or just rest up. Since I had the entire weekend swim-free, I took off for Tarpon Springs to stay overnight with a college buddy (he's done *very well*), see how St. Pete had changed in the 40 years since college days (crowded!) and to visit my mother-in-law in the rest home (turning 90).

I could hardly believe I was seeded first in the 200 Breast – obviously, the hemisphere's fast guys opted to be elsewhere! I knew better than to be overly optimistic, reminding myself of that during the last 10 meters as hope and strength evaporated. But who'd've thought I'd be bumped to silver, not by a Brazilian or Ecuadorian or American, but a guy from the Czech Republic?! Petr Buble duplicated the feat in the 100 Breast as well, dang it! But I was happy to get close enough to my seed times to bring home a nice metallic souvenir from each of my six races (photo on last page).

In fact, all ten PSM swimmers placed in the top ten for all 40 splashes we swam – half were in the top *three* (see table below)! **Charlotte** fared best, securing five golds in five events. **Mary** won her 50 Free. **Mike** was top-3 in four of five races, beating all his seed times after last year's shoulder surgery. **Tonya** and I, doing the three Breaststrokes, were middle finishers as were **Jeanne** (three Free) and **Janet** (three Backstroke). **Susie** was off to a great start with her 200 and 100 Back, but hit hard in the latter and opted to scratch her 50 Back, 200 IM and 200 Fly. **Ryan** earned 3 – 4 – 5 in his 100 and 50 Free and 50 Fly. Curiously, **Frank** and I, teammates of 20+ years, finished 9<sup>th</sup> in our respective 100 Frees – more long course training needed!

---

<sup>2</sup>However, volunteer Maria Tomé, the Spanish-born bilingual airline flight attendant who translated for the meet's dual-language printed materials, noted that Google Translate returns 'heat sheets' as 'warming blankets'...

<b>Place</b>	<b>Splashes</b>	<b>Swimmers</b>
Gold	6	Charlotte (5), Mary (1)
Silver	6	Mary (2), Mike (1), Steve (2), Susie
Bronze	8	Mike (3), Ryan, Steve (3), Susie
4	5	Tonya, Janet, Mary, Mike, Ryan
5	8	Tonya, Jeanne (2), Janet (2), Mary, Ryan, Frank
6	1	Jeanne
7	3	Tonya, Frank (2)
8	1	Frank
9	2	Steve, Frank
	<b>40</b>	

Charlotte commented: "Two Pan-Am Masters thoughts that come to my mind are "wet" and "wild." I was going to Florida for a little sun, relaxation, great competition and fun with friends. I seemed to get two out of four, not bad! The competition was great and very inspirational, seeing 97-year-old Anne Dunivin [Georgia Masters] swim. I had a great time with my friends. The sun and relaxation part didn't seem to pan out, though. I have never been wetter in my life! Between the torrential downpours, sweating in the heat and swimming in the beautiful 50 m pool, I think I was wet the whole time. The "wild" part was not from partying but the tropical storm and tornado threats starting out the meet. While it did not seem like a "threat," the real thing was blowing through. The entire time was very exciting and something I will forever remember!"

Susie offered: "While I didn't get to swim my 50 back, I got to watch the heat instead, which was a thrill because Maria Rivera from Venezuela set a world record. Afterward, in the midst of the Venezuelan team cheering and celebration, she graciously made time to greet me and to trade caps, giving me a special one printed with her nickname "La Cuco" and the Venezuelan flag. Witnessing her beautiful swim and sharing in her excitement was unforgettable."

*Meet Mobile* is a great free smartphone app that will satisfy any competitor's desire for instant gratification. I first encountered it in Omaha last year on other swimmers' phones; now, having joined the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I can follow results near real time. I was hardly dry from any of my races before my placing and splits were posted – amazing! And it allows you to set Favorite teams and swimmers, so I could quickly find how my PSM mates were doing among the 1500 swimmers there. (I recall writing an article for *The WetSet* maybe thirty years ago about how to find stuff on this new Internet thing...)

No seed times were solicited for the 1k or 3k open water swims so I couldn't tell my potential placing in the latter among the 16 in my age group. I studied *Meet Mobile* the night before, evaluating results any of them might have had in the 100, 200, 400 or 800 Free. Conclusion: a likely fourth place. I arose at 5 am, checked out (leaving that afternoon), had oatmeal at Burger King, picked up a travel-size mouthwash at Walgreens (having heard that a rinse before and after would allay tongue swelling and pain from the salt water) and made my way to the broad white sands of Siesta Beach Park.

(continued next page)



David Badgley (73), Graham Johnston (82) and Bob Beach (83) talk with USMS Executive Director Rob Butcher (41) before their 3k swims. Graham, a 1952 Olympian (representing South Africa in Helsinki), is an ISHOF Honor Masters Swimmer (1998) and was David's high school coach. Bob played key roles in the formation and development of both USMS and St. Pete Masters, hosting the second national meet in 1971.

David placed 3<sup>rd</sup> (70-74), Graham and Bob finished 1-2 (80-84).

Four hundred swimmers from 18 to 83, sent out in two waves for the 1k triangle and four waves for the 3k (thrice around), finished. Three times as many did the 3k as the 1k. I'd never done a dry start before, but running into the shallow, 83-degree Gulf of Mexico surf was certainly less chilling – if not perhaps too hot – than our in-water starts at home. I briefly thought about quitting at the first loop (for a FINA-dictated DQ) but persevered, happily experiencing my typical 'second half went by quicker than the first' feeling.

As I ran up the chute I sensed someone coming up quickly from behind. I made a wobbly dash for it but that age-26 Argentinean female slipped on by! Soon, though, having spotted one age-mate I'd talked with beforehand coming out of the water, I started to think *maybe I won the 65-69...* After the catered lunch at the entertaining but seemingly endless awards ceremony, however, they draped my third bronze medal around my neck.

Beautiful day, beautiful beach, beautiful pool, beautiful people, wonderful week – despite my pre-meet trepidation, I, too, enjoyed an unforgettable experience in Florida.

See the U.S. Masters Swimming video synopsis of the Pan-Am Championship on YouTube at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j55I41yW7Wg&feature=c4-overview&list=UUieORPCvi3T59wtqHLvbeww>

(continued next page)



My two silvers (though they appear to be gold), three bronze and one ninth place.



Gaard Arneson (1<sup>st</sup>, Michigan) and Fernando Canepa (2<sup>nd</sup>, Peru) picked up their 3k medals and split!