



SPM NEWSLETTER

St. Petersburg Masters | North Shore Aquatic Complex

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More New Beginnings

As the world continues to reopen cautiously, SPMers spend more time in the water and in competitions. Good sized groups made their way south to Sarasota twice this quarter, participating in both an SCY and an LCM meet. We also have a dozen swimmers headed to the USMS SCY Nationals at the end of the month! And don't forget, we are also hosting our own meet in August 14-15 ...

While we've been getting back into our swimming routines the much anticipated Tokyo Olympics are just around the corner. During the trials in Omaha, many of us were glued to our TVs while others were actually in Omaha watching Team USA form and witnessing stellar swims by SPA including Melanie Margalis and Bobby Finke's 1st place finishes. Read Gary's take-aways and Regina's experience with her two swim fans.

I had the opportunity to chat (Zoom) with Kim Brackin and learn more about BEST and her experiences at the Olympics and coaching NCAA Division I Championship teams. Several of our teammates had sessions with her and share what they learned.

And, you can always count on SPMers to keep things interesting. Karen Westerman is always trying different activities in the water. Check out the photos from some of her latest endeavors. And what's an Olympics without an SPM Olympic Trials Challenge? Brooke Bowman explains and announces the winners.

Many, many thanks to Gary Bastie, Brooke Bowman, Kim Brackin, Phil Harasz, Jeff Johnson, Regina Novak, Sharon Steinmann, Sarah Swoch, and Karen Westerman, for their contributions and photos. As always, if you have any suggestions, articles, or photos please send them to livia.zien@gmail.com. Thanks.



Summer is here (photo: S. Swoch)

Upcoming Pool Meets

July 21-25 / SCY: USMS Spring Nationals. Greensboro NC. [Information & entry](#).

July 31 / LCM: Goodlife Games. Clearwater FL. [Information & entry](#) (limited to first 70 entrants). *Senior games for ages 50+.*
Entry deadline: received by Sunday, July 25 or when 70 swimmers entered. USMS-recognized

Aug. 8 5k/10k: *TENTATIVE DATE!* SPM team postal swim

Aug. 14-15 / LCM: St. Pete Masters LCM Meet. St. Petersburg FL. [Information & entry](#). Entry deadline: online entry closes Wednesday, August 11

Aug. 21-22 / LCM: Coral Springs LCM Meet. Coral Springs FL. [Information & entry](#). Entry deadline: online entry closes Tuesday, August 17

Sept. 11 / LCM: Dog Days Meet. Clearwater FL

Oct. 6-10 / LCM: USMS Long Course Nationals. Geneva OH. [Information](#)

Oct. 15-17 / SCM: Rowdy Gaines Classic. Orlando FL. [Information & entry](#). Entry deadline: online entry closes Monday, October 11

From Coach Gary: Hat's Off!

By Gary Bastie

Hat's off to those who've been able to get back in shape and swim either in one of our intrasquad meets or in competition somewhere besides St. Pete. And, I know that includes those planning to go to Nationals. The reason I say "Hat's off" is that you've kept your head in the game. It wasn't easy either because for a while, we had no pools that were open.

As for the venue that many of our swimmers have taken to get to today, it's included open water swimming, back yard pool mega laps (Mike Smith comes to mind), running, walking, biking, weights, and probably a few other activities are included. That just shows how resourceful our team has been. And, we're not alone. The same hurdles were faced by those who will be representing America in the upcoming Olympic Games. So, "Hat's off", you deserve it.



President's Corner: The Great Recovery

by Phil Harasz

Your St Pete Masters Board has been working hard to organize our first real swim meet in since 2019. It is our (once again) annual Long Course Meters (LCM) Summer meet, to be held Saturday and Sunday, August 14th and 15th, 2021. If you love to compete, be sure to register. Registration closes at Midnight August 11th. You can find the link [here](#), or visit our website at www.stpetemasters.org and click on the 2021 SCHEDULE button.

If you're not into competing, consider coming out and timing! You'll have a front row seat to watch your teammates compete. Timing also keeps you engaged in what is happening from moment to moment during the meet and provides lots of opportunities to socialize — opportunities

which everyone has sorely missed over the last fifteen months. It's time to get out of your house and reconnect with your teammates outside the protection of the chlorinated water in the pool! We've been told there is a team coming all the way from Costa Rica to swim. Come on out and brush up on your Spanish (actually, they would probably prefer we help them work on their English).

As for me, I'm fully vaccinated and, although I feel well protected after reading all the articles on the effectiveness of the vaccine, I find that I'm still struggling to relax and walk into a store without a mask on. The other day I walked into the barbershop for a haircut and had reflexively donned my mask as I walked in. I sat in the waiting area for a good 15 minutes before I looked around and realized I was the only one in the shop wearing a mask! I immediately peeled it off and stuck it in my pocket. But what really struck me was not that everyone was maskless, it was the fact that even though I was the only one of a dozen people in that store wearing a mask, nobody thought anything of it. A dude walks in wearing a mask, and was it no big deal, nothing out of the ordinary.

Think about that. Just 15 months ago if I had walked into any place wearing a mask, I would have drawn stares at the very least, and perhaps gotten security called on me at worst. Imagine walking into a bank 15 months ago wearing a mask! Recent articles I've read have talked about the fact there was no "flu season" this past Winter. It said doctors' offices have had no employees calling in sick because they've all been wearing masks at work all day every day, and therefore haven't contracted any common colds or flu. Take that as just one more small bit of evidence that masks do work. And one reason why wearing a mask even after the pandemic is "over" (whatever "over" means) is not necessarily a bad idea.

So, if you don't feel comfortable going maskless ... it's OK, show up in August for our meet and be a timer and wear a mask! Nobody will care! As for me personally, I'm retired from competing (for now) and will be a timer. I hope to see you all there, mask on or mask off — whatever makes you comfortable.

Pool Competitions



Coach Gary (photo: T. Brandt)

Take A Bite Out of COVID Invitational

by Livia Zien

Twenty-one SPM swimmers *took a bite out of COVID* in Sarasota the weekend of April 17-18. With 20 teams and 171 swimmers, SPM was well-represented in this SCY meet. Chelsea Nauta, Allison Retotar, and Carolina Ticeira placed in the top 3 in every event they swam, making the 30-34 age group proud! When she's not taking photos of NSAC sunrises, Sarah Swoch is crushing it in the pool winning all 8 of her events in the 35-39 age group and logging 3800 yards. That's a full workout! Heni Szeredi made us proud in the 40-44 age group showing her multi-stroke talent swimming all strokes and winning her backstroke events. Alison Hayden (45-49) had great swims and won her backstroke and butterfly events (including the 200 fly!) Paula Texel, Karen Westerman, and Tabitha Brandt jockeyed for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places in the very competitive 50-54 age group. Similarly, great competitors Cheryl Kupan and Dawn Clark in the 55-59 age group placed, first and second in all their events, occasionally swimming against each other. Cheryl won her 100yd and 200yd free events as well as the dreaded 200yd fly and 400yd IM. Dawn placed first in her 200, 500, 1000, and 1650yd free events and topped it off with winning her 200yd back and 100yd IM events and also logged 3800 yards in her individual events. Sprinter Susan Tokayer and distance swimmer Sharon Steinmann (60-64) rounded out the Women's team. Susan won her 50yd and 100yd butterfly and 50yd free, and Sharon won her 500yd and 1000yd free events.



Cheryl, Tabitha, Aliso, and Karen (photo: K. Westerman)

For the men, Chris Stickle (30-34) won all 12 of his events (that's right 1 full dozen!) and logged individual 4100yds. Was there some distance wagger going on among Sarah, Chris, and Dawn?

Sean Gerrard and Eric Herman in the 45-49 age group had great swims. Sean won his 50, 100, and 200yd free and 100yd breaststroke. Eric won his 50yd breaststroke and 100yd fly events.

In the 55-59 age group, just five one-hundredths of a second separated Jim Esposito and Robert Tullman in the 50yd free. 2nd place went to Jim in his 100yd free and to Rob in his 50yd fly. Ted Soltys and Mike Smith represented the 60-64 age group well. Ted placed first in his 50 and 100yd fly events and Mike in his 100yd IM and second in 100yd free and breaststroke and 50yd fly. John Nixon in the 65-69 age group won his 50 and 200yd breaststroke and 50 and 100yd backstroke events, and 2nd in his 100yd breaststroke.

Also of note, SPM place 1st in every relay entered! Congratulations to all participants!

Detailed results can be found [here](#).

Bumpy Jones LCM Classic

Hosted by the Sarasota Sharks, the Annual Bumpy Jones Classic on June 5-6 was held in memory of the 1952 Olympian, Dr. Burwell Jones, who passed away at the age of 87 in February of this year. Thirteen of our swimmers headed back to Sarasota for this two-day long course meet.

Going for the bobblehead award, Sarah Swoch (35-39) focused on the 'shorter' events and won 7 events including the 800m free and placed 2nd in the 50m fly. Alison Hayden (45-49) won all 4 of her events including the 200m and 800m free, 100m fly, and 400m IM, which she modestly said she 'survived.' Dawn Clark continued logging



Tabitha Brandt (photo: S. Steinmann)



L-R Back: Susah, Eric, Chris, Dawn, Jim, Ted;
L-R Front: John, Alison, Sarah, Sherri (photo: S. Swoch)

in yardage (or meterage) with 1800m and some great swims. Sherri Bogue also in the 55-59 recorded some long swims placing 2nd in the 50m fly and 4th in the 100m free. Susan Tokayer on her 50m free, and 50m and 100m fly events in the 60-64 age group. Phyllis Scheidt in the same age group placed third in her 50m fly and 100m breaststroke. Jo Ann Harrelson (65-69) won her 100m breaststroke and placed 3rd in the 50m fly. Chris Stickle (30-34) repeated his performances from April winning all his events and as Sarah described, "crushed his competition in the 400m IM". Eric Herman (45-49) swimming the maximum of 8 events, won his 50m free and 100m fly, and had strong second and third place finishes in his other events. Jim Esposito (55-59) won his 100m backstroke, 2nd in the 100m free and 3rd in the 50m free and back. Ted Soltys (60-64) won all his events, the 50m and 100m fly and free. And John Nixon (65-69) won his 50m and 100m back, and placed 2nd in his 50m and 100m breaststroke events.

One of the highlights of the meet were the two 'superhero' relays, lead by Chris Stickle, aka Superman, in the 200m Mixed Medley who swam under 30 seconds in his 50m fly, with Eric leading in back, Alison in breaststroke, and Sarah in free. And the second superhero relay (this time Chris sporting his Batman cap), the 400m mixed free won, with great swims by Eric, Dawn, Alison, and Chris.



Superhero Medley Relay (photo: S. Swoch)



Superhero Free Relay (photo: S. Swoch)

Congratulations on a great meet to all who participated!

Full results can be found [here](#).



SPM Shows Up Big for the USMS 2021 Hour Swim

by Sharon Steinmann

Congratulations to all the SPM swimmers who took part in this year's USMS 2021 Hour Swim National Postal Championship. We had some fantastic individual, relay and team results! A big shout out to all of you who counted and took splits for our participants!

SPM took first place overall in the nation for Combined (Men & Women) Small Teams with 14 swimmers logging 57,345 total yards. The women placed 4th in medium clubs with 10 swimmers, and the men took 5th in small clubs with only 4 swimmers. C'mon boys - where are you??? Christopher Stickle (men's 30-34) and Valerie Valle (women's 40-44) won their respective age groups placing first in the nation. And three relays took first place honors! The men's team of Brayden Amendola, Christopher Stickle & Chris Burke won the 25+ age group. And in the women's 35+ age group consisting of Sarah Swoch, Valerie Valle and Paula Texel took top honors as well. The combined mixed relay of Brayden Amendola, Christopher Stickle, Valerie Valle and Paula Texel also took 1st in the 25+ age group.

Congratulations to all the swimmers taking part. The team results are listed below.

Women:

Valerie Valle - 1st - Women's 40-44
 Paula Texel - 2nd - Women's 50-54
 Sarah Swoch - 3rd - Women's 35-39
 Dawn Clark - 10th - Women's 55-59
 Cheryl Kupan - 12th - Women's 55-59
 Sharon Steinmann - 12th - Women's 60-64
 Ananda Bergeron - 20th - Women's 40-44
 Nancy Kiernan - 26th - Women's 65-69
 Kathy Selles - 41st - Women's 65-69
 Phyllis Scheidt - 56th - Women's 60-64



Men:

Christopher Stickle - 1st - Men's 30-34
 Brayden Amendola - 2nd - Men's 25-29
 Chris Burke - 5th - Men's 55-59
 Ken Gersbach - 49th - Men's 60-64

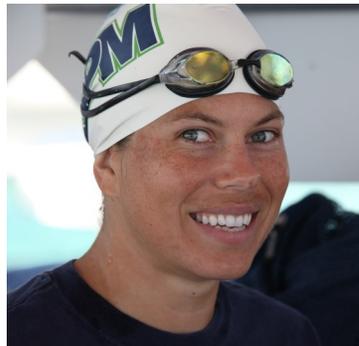
Relays:

Brayden Amendola, Christopher Stickle & Chris Burke - 1st - Men's 25+
 Sarah Swoch, Valerie Valle, & Paula Texel - 1st - Women's 35+
 Valerie Valle, Paula Texel, Christopher Stickle & Brayden Amendola - 1st - Mixed 25+
 Sharon Steinmann, Cheryl Kupan & Dawn Clark - 3rd - Women's 55+
 Cheryl Kupan, Kathy Selles, Ken Gersbach & Chris Burke - 5th - Combined 55+
 Phyllis Scheidt, Ananda Bergeron & Nancy Kiernan - 6th - Women's 35+

Headed to Greensboro!

Twelve team members, 7 women and 5 men, are headed up to Greensboro for the 2021 SCY Nationals from July 21-25. Best of luck to Carolina Ticeira (30-34), Sarah Swoch (35-39), Alison Hayden (45-49), Tabitha Brandt (50-54), Susan Tokayer (60-64), Linda Felton and Anne Page (70-74), Chris Stickle (30-34), Ken Wazyniak (35-39), Jim Esposito and Greg Salomon (55-59), and Ted Soltys (60-64)! If you happen to see them at practice or on the pool deck, wish them well. Go get 'em Team SPM!

You can visit the [website](#) to get the latest updates.





Regina Novak

Trials 2021- Perspective from a Swim Mom with Swim Kids

By Regina Novak

A year later, we are really doing this.

Last year the delay of the Olympics affected a lot of us emotionally. Understanding the why behind the delay didn't change the emotions of loss that came with the announcement. Experiencing the Olympic games this year brings so much amazing emotion. We are slowly returning to normal. We are able to celebrate perseverance, talent, class, and patriotism in these games. The athletes participating have put their lives into their sports, and they are getting the chance to compete and represent their country. We love our sport and are joyful to see these games happen. This celebration is truly good worldwide. In the end, no matter our differences, we can unite as human beings, as one world, to celebrate life and achievement.

Every four years, our great sport gets recognized by the world, and as a swimmer, that's pretty darn cool! These trials were different for me. For the first time, I had two other people that were glued to the TV with me, watching with exhilaration to see who would get the coveted spots on the team. Needless to say, it was a new and really fun experience!

According to the younger, sassier and more attractive version of me, Caeleb Dressel is really cute. Yes, this is something my 8 year old observed and stated numerous times. Please pray for fortitude in my parenting efforts when the teen years hit! Miss Gabby is a fan of tattoos and muscles. Thankfully she also drew some inspiration from the female swimmers, particularly Regan Smith, and asked to see the FLAG cuts for the 10 and under girls. I am actually quite hopeful that she might be inspired to work harder at the pool and make some goals for this next year. I saw the competitive side of her amp up, and since I strongly believe that participation in sports is critical for young girls, I am praying that she is inspired and will stick with the sport. All of you please feel free to encourage her. I warn you that swimming is competing with gymnastics for her attention and you can guess which sport her mother is praying she chooses!

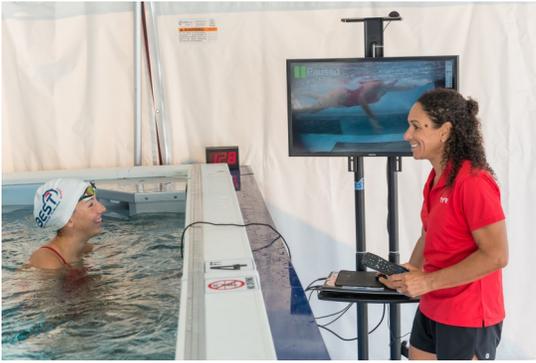
My son, who is much more serious and committed to swimming at 10 years of age, has become a research hungry machine on anything to do with swimming. His admiration for Caeleb centers around his strength, underwater kicks, breathing techniques, and everything else that Mr. Eugene is now dissecting about swimming techniques. The true highlight for him though was watching Bobby Finke make the Olympic team. Being in the 4:30 group now, Eugene gets to swim under Coach Finke. Seeing Bobby make the team was a moment of pure and utter joy. He is so proud that a SPA swimmer, his coach's son, is getting to swim at that level. While he loves swim practice, I think the added benefit now is talking to his buddies about the upcoming games. There is palpable excitement 24/7 at our house right now!

For mom, I thoroughly enjoyed walking down memory lane and seeing old clips and hearing commentary from past Olympians, and seeing some of them in the crowd or in the announcer's booth. But really and truly, the highlight is being able to share the love of this sport with my kids. Their talent will, and already has in my son's case, surpassed mine, and that makes me happy. We always want our kids to be better than we are. But I love this sport, and seeing them love something like that, is truly what makes my heart soar. My prayer is for their love to continue, and if their talent amounts to something great one day, then I pray for their health to continue and allow them to achieve those dreams. And if their love of the sport leaves them with no accolades but a desire to show up and swim a Master's practice as often as possible, I look forward to sharing a lane near by them one day. The family that swims together stays together right?!

Godspeed to our athletes and may all of us celebrate in the amazing traditions these games represent.



Gabby and Eugene - first year of swimming 3 years ago.



Purposeful: Kim Brackin at her *BEST*

By Livia Zien

You have all probably noticed the Endless Pool on the North Shore Pool deck, replete with high tech recording equipment and Kim Brackin, poolside, focused on a bobbing swimmer in the water. She jokingly likens her pool to Vegas. “Mirrors, video, headset. It can be information overload, so I try to keep them fairly chill.”

She is referring to *Brackin Elite Swim Training*, fittingly abbreviated as *BEST*, focusing on individualized swim coaching and technique. What began in an Endless Pool in her Austin backyard, drawing clients from beginner to elite, children to adults, triathletes, and everyone in between, *BEST* has now found a new home at NSAC.

Kim is about *purpose*. She wants her clients to define a purpose for every drill, every aspect of their training and know that “working smart and using your talents is as important as your work ethic.” She aims to make her coaching ‘value-worthy’ and identifies what her clients do well and then chooses a few things they can improve. She is analytical. “I think I have a good eye, but because I was not a great swimmer, things didn’t always come naturally to me,” she says. “But I can tell you how something should *feel*. I can explain it.” So, her goal for each session is to give her clients tools they can take with them. For instance, if you’re a butterflyer she might give you three drills: one focusing on a strength and two to work on some weaknesses. And with each, she’ll ask, “What are you thinking about? What are you trying to accomplish?”

Using sensory techniques, Kim believes it is important for a swimmer to be able to see themselves swim which is why she installed a mirror on the bottom of the pool as well as an angled mirror for backstroke. Headsets are available so she can talk to them as they swim. She built an extensive video library of good techniques from her clients and will often share them with their peers. “You don’t need to look like Michael Phelps,” she says.



Rio 2016 with Kirsty (photo: K. Brackin)

Kim has had the opportunity to be around the highest level of swimmers. “I have spent so much time watching them, listening to their coaches on deck. I’ve learned a lot.” The swimmers she has coached run the gamut from beginner to Olympic gold medalist. She understands the highs and lows accompanying the sport at any level, whether trying to pass a swim test, winning an NCAA Division I Swimming Championship, or competing to win at the Olympics.

She herself had a late start to swimming. Growing up, she swam for fun but did not compete until high school. As part of her graduate fellowship in psychology, she worked at a Stanford University swim camp, an experience with “elite swimmers,” that piqued her interest in coaching. She remembers, “It was 1992, and everyone was getting ready for the Olympics. I was able to observe very intense, high-level athletes.”

She started coaching at Division III schools to gain more experience and eventually landed a coaching position at Auburn University. During her eight years there, she led the Tigers to their first NCAA Championship title in 2002 and subsequent titles in 2003 and 2004. In 2002, she was awarded NCAA Swimming Coach of the Year. While at Auburn, also recruited Kirsty Coventry, future Olympian of the Zimbabwe National Team.

Coventry won gold in the 200m backstroke, silver in the 100m backstroke, and bronze in the 200m individual medley at the 2004 Athens Olympics and became a national hero in her home country. Along with that new-found fame came the pressures to repeat her accomplishment. “It was sort of unexpected,” Kim admits. “It’s so much easier when you don’t have big expectations like that on your shoulders.” Her success continued at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, where Coventry won three silver medals, and defended her 200m backstroke Olympic title with a gold and a new World Record. She continued to coach Coventry through the 2012 London and 2016 Rio summer games, and even through the bittersweet moment as Missy Franklin broke Coventry’s 200m backstroke world record.

After Auburn, Kim took a year off to have Elly and was then approached by the University of Texas to coach the women’s team. During the next six years, she added several Big 12 Championships and Top Ten NCAA finishes to her resume. The cut-throat life of a collegiate coach gave way to an opportunity to start her own business.

Now Kim brings her experience and expertise to St. Pete. Her husband Steve, took an opportunity at MacDill in the Special Operations Central Command that was too good to pass up. Initially reluctant to move to Florida, she embraced the change and now loves their new home. Before moving, she contacted Fred Lewis. Both he and Rebecca Hansen, St. Petersburg Parks and Recreation Manager, thought *BEST* would be a wonderful asset at the North Shore Aquatics Complex. Kim is very appreciative of the opportunity and adds, “I was ecstatic. I love being on the pool deck, being around other people and not just in my backyard. Now I had Fred to be able to bounce ideas off of, and I got to know the community.”

Any favorite strokes? Not really. With Coventry, she focused on backstroke, but likes them all. When she mentions breaststroke,



London 2012 (photo: K. Brackin)

however, the ears of this writer perk up. “I think it’s the stroke where there are so many different styles. It’s really about your body type: flexible knees, flexible hips. With all the different body types, I know there are different training programs for each one.” Comparing 100m breaststrokers Michael Andrew and Andrew Wilson at the Olympic Trials, she notes, “They have completely different training styles, yet they finished just 1/100th of a second apart! There is no one secret to success, and it’s so fun to see!” So what is Brackin’s own secret to success? Perhaps it is her experience or her contagious energy. Perhaps it is knowing, as she said, “There is no *one* secret to success.”

She met Patty Nardozi on the pool deck while Patty coached Shorecrest and Kim coached Canterbury. While Kim never imagined getting up for 5:30am practices Patty used her recruiting skills to encourage her to join SPM. Kim remembers, “SPM has a reputation of having good swimmers. Patty convinced me to join, and I haven’t left her lane since. I feel so fortunate to have found such a great group.”

The Brackins are enjoying their new home. Their son Travis is learning to sail. Elly swims with SPA. Kim and Steve joined the St. Petersburg Shuffleboard Club, so beware of the Brackins at our next shuffleboard social!

As Kim reflects on her path, she says, “Sometimes I don’t even know how I got here with the swimming coaching career.” Regardless, she will continue to help swimmers in her Endless Pool reach their individual purposeful goals here in St. Pete. “There’s no one formula for success and everybody is so different. That’s part of why I love doing what I do.”

For more information about BEST, visit <https://www.brackineliteswimtraining.com/>.

Read about some of your teammates experiences below:

I’ve been a part of St. Pete Masters for a little more than 10 years, but over the last few years, I’ve been dealing with a shoulder that’s sore enough to keep me from swimming on a daily basis. After a couple of rounds of physical therapy didn’t really change anything, a PT suggested that maybe what I really needed to do was focus on my stroke mechanics. Fortunately, I had just met Kim at practice.

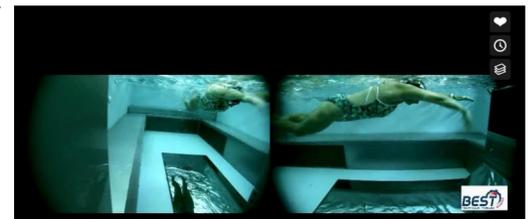
While Kim’s primary focus is on developing world-class swimmers, she was able to give me exactly the help I needed. As someone who hadn’t really paid attention to my mechanics since returning to swimming as an adult, I needed a lot of reworking. More than that, I had been away from the sport for so long that I didn’t really have the “body sense” to understand what I was and wasn’t doing in the pool, so even though Kim and others were able to tell me verbally what I needed to do differently, it was really just a string of words to me. Being able to see real-time video of what I was doing, with specific pointers from Kim on what I should focus on changing, gave me simple keys that I could focus on each time I was at practice.

The COVID shutdown threw some wrenches into the reworking of my stroke, but even when I returned to the pool months later, I was able to hold on to the focus points Kim gave me and use them to keep from reverting to my former bad form. I still have plenty to improve upon, but it’s felt great to be able to return to daily swimming (when my schedule allows) without shoulder pain! ~Jeff Johnson



I had a private session with Kim Brackin in January 2021 and enjoyed the experience. It was nice having a 1-on-1 session where she helped me with whatever strokes I chose. She videotaped me swimming from many different angles, then played it back and critiqued each part of my stroke in order to make the necessary changes to improve performance. I’ve been to swim camps in the past and have liked them as well, but I think sessions with

BEST take it to a higher level by providing video footage where you can see what you are doing in your stroke, catch, kick, breathing, body position and make the changes she is suggesting. I was so satisfied by my first session that I am planning on booking another one so that I can work on other strokes. ~Karen Westerman



One of the first things you learn when you are shown an underwater video of yourself swimming is, what you see on the video looks vastly different from what you think is happening inside your head. It is nearly impossible to correct your form when you can’t see what is wrong with it, but even worse when what you “see” in your mind is not what is actually happening.

There were two things I learned from my session with Kim. The first was what not to worry about, which then helps you to focus on the second thing, which is what you should be worried about. First, my kick was not as bad as I thought. I have often complained about my lack of ability to kick, and as a result of my complaints I receive lot’s of criticism from my fellow swimmers. But Kim reassured me there was nothing wrong with my kick. However, she did show me on the video where my kick was out of sync. As I’m turning to breathe I end up kicking out sideways. As you can imagine, kicking a leg out to the side while swimming does nothing but slow you down. So, the issue wasn’t with ankle flexibility or kicking form, it was TIMING. Now, every time I roll to breathe, I am very aware of that leg. In my head I keep it perfectly straight and pause my kick for second while I turn to breathe, then resume kicking once I feel my knee is once again facing the bottom of the pool. But that’s only what I see in my head... I suppose another session with Kim’s video camera would tell me if that is actually happening. ~Phil Harasz



Passing of the torch Kirsty w/Missy Franklin (photo: K. Brackin)



Coach Gary's Tips:

The Path of Least Resistance

As experienced swimmers know, the path of least resistance and the path of greatest resistance, is often the same path. Here's what I mean when I say that.

If you're pulling, then you want to take the path of greatest resistance on your palm and forearm. That way, you know you're catching water. But, if you've taken the path of least resistance, when it comes to pulling, that means your arm and hand are slipping through the water.



For example, we've all seen the inexperienced swimmer who learned to swim on their own. They might take 50 strokes per length, thinking they're really moving. Yet, if you put a more efficient swimmer next to them, that swimmer might take 15 strokes or about 1 to every 3 the other person's taking AND, they're moving much faster.

When it comes to streamlining, that's when you want the path of least resistance. For instance, if you push off with your head up, you might feel the water pressure but, that's exactly what you DON'T want to do. You don't want to feel anything on your forehead. Instead, you want to be streamlined enough so that your head is in line with your body and you're actually squeezing on your ears as you push off or enter the water. So, let's rehearse that one more time.

If you're pulling, you want to feel pressure on your palm and forearm throughout the stroke. In other words, you want the path of greatest resistance. But, if you're entering the water or pushing off, you don't want to feel any pressure. Instead, you want the path of least resistance.

New Sitting Breaststroke Drill

One of the drills I like to use, especially with the fast hands breaststroke, is a pulling drill. But, it works best if you're by yourself. Here's why.

This drill puts you into a sitting position where your head is out of the water but your body is sitting forward, feet first. From there, you pull only as you move across the pool. I've been able to do it under a minute and boy does it isolate my pull. And, why is that important?

It's important because with the fast hands breaststroke, many swimmers slip their pull in order to have the fast hands recover quickly. So, their stroke is mostly kick. But, the goal is to have at least a 50/50 kick/pull movement. As a result, the pull should have hands sweeping outside the elbows just before a quick recovery and glide/streamline forward. And, how can you improve your pull? By isolating it and using my new sitting breaststroke drill.

The reason I said that it works best if you are by yourself is simple. It takes so much time that it's not conducive to circle swimming. At least, not unless everyone's doing 25's that way. So, the next time you're in the pool, give it a try and see just how good (or not) your breaststroke pull really is. You might be surprised and want to use the drill more often.

Open Water Calendar of Events

USMS Open Water National Championships. [Information](#)

July 31: Georgia State Games Open Water (3K, 2K, 1K, 500m). Acworth GA. [Information](#) *USMS sanctioned: NO*

Sept. 11: Swim for Alligator Lighthouse (8-miles). Islamorada FL. [Information & registration](#). **Solo swimmer, 2-person relay sold out; 3- & 4-person relay entries still available.** *Entry deadline: registration closes Wednesday, August 11. USMS sanctioned: NO*

Sept. 12: Swim Hobbs Island (1-mile, 2-miles, 5-miles). Huntsville AL [Information & registration](#). *Entry deadline: entry closes Friday, September 10. USMS sanctioned: YES*

Sept. 18: Upstate Splash Charity Open Water Swim (1.2-miles, 2.4-miles). Lake Jocassee, Salem SC. [Information & entry](#). *USMS sanctioned: NO*

Sept. 26: Bridges to Bluffs (10K). Knoxville TN. [Information & registration](#) (limited to first 100 swimmers). *Entry deadline: entry closes Friday, August 27 or when maximum swimmers entered. USMS sanctioned: YES*

Oct. 9: Swim the Suck (10-miles). Chattanooga TN. [Information](#). **Swimmer entry closed -- maximum number of entrants reached.** *USMS sanctioned: YES*

Lessons Learned From The Olympic Trials

By Gary Bastie

As with most of you, I enjoy watching events like the Olympic Trials. And, as many people do, I like to learn various lessons at other people's expense. Well, the Trials are just that. They not only are great for the participants, they also hold many lessons for the rest of us.

For instance, we've all seen swimmers who've had previous success, not qualify for the Olympics. It wasn't that they weren't good, didn't train hard enough, or didn't have certain opportunities. It's just that there's only room for a couple of individuals per event (more for relays), and that's the opportunity. With that in mind, let me share with you what I saw and learned.

1. First, any kind of competition is a gift. In fact, most people on earth never get to compete, except for work, food, and to carve out a living. But, being able to train and compete is a wonderful experience, at any level. At the Olympic level, it's even more special so we viewers and those who participate need to approach the Trials in that fashion. It's a gift but it's just not for everybody.



2. There is no tomorrow. Those who didn't qualify, know exactly what that means and so do you and I. Why? Because some things come along only once in life (if ever) and you need to realize just how special they are. With the Olympic Trials, even repeat qualifiers will tell you just how special each one was. And, each is unique with its own set of circumstances.

3. There's no shame in not winning. I watched how some demonstrated just how much of a class act they were when they encouraged other swimmers, even though they didn't make the cut. Names like Melanie Margalis and Ryan Lochte come to mind and yes, I think we all noticed just how big they were in their own moments of disappointment. Great lesson for the rest of us.

4. From the younger swimmers, I learned how, if you aren't intimidated, you can do special and great things. And, from those who'd experienced international competition in the past, I watched as they gave their all, either placed or didn't, and then went about their next challenge. Again, great lesson for us all and that proves you're never too young to set a good example.

5. We all watched as America put its best foot forward. I mean, look at how many world class swimmers we have who DIDN'T make it! It always leaves me wondering why we don't just set standards for Olympic competition and then allow as many athletes as possible to qualify, regardless of how many a particular country might have.

6. I enjoyed watching swimmers like Katie Ledecky and Caeleb Dressel do what they do best. You can see the talent, the hard work, and the winning mindset. My hope is that they'll carry that mindset with them for the remainder of their lives. Michael Phelps seems to have done just that.

7. We all got to see how the best swimmers have mastered things like underwater kicking, streamlining, and arm stroke technique. They've also done a great job with managing their nerves. Although we all get excited, it's relating our exciting to our training in life that makes for a good outcome. And, win or lose, I saw that in each of the participants.

8. The family atmosphere is something else that caught my eye. I watched as friends, teammates, and family, in a real team effort, had helped the participants attain the success they had. With those of us who are past our primes in physical skill, we might keep that in mind by encouraging, supporting, and helping one another. And, I speak in a general sense just as I do for swimming in particular. Everyone needs the love and support we saw on our TV sets (or cell phones).

9. One thing that stood out to me is how the older swimmers were so encouraging to the younger swimmers. Rather than try to psych them out, they were giving them a leg up by encouraging them. To me, that makes the more experienced athlete even more valuable and a real credit to the sport.

10. Since most numbered things have at least 10 points, I'll end with this one. I think that the year we've just passed, helped most of the swimmers. While some had to maintain their high level of excellence a year longer than expected, it was the younger swimmers who needed that year in order to come into their own. What I saw is just how many up and coming younger swimmers we have. Not only will they someday replace each of the older swimmers, but they're ready now and that's how great a feeder system U. S. Swimming has. It's a credit to a system that evolved over decades of trial and error and it's a system that produced a number of local swimmers who were able to represent St. Pete Aquatics at the Trials and, for a few of them, America on the world stage.

When She's Not Flyin' ...

By Livia Zien

When she's not winning the 200 butterfly at a swim meet, Karen Westerman is out finding other fun water activities to try. Over the past year, she started two new endeavors, in addition to keeping up with her swim meets and triathlons. When she had swim practice at the Land O'Lakes pool, she noticed that a few women frequently gathered to practice synchronized swimming. She says, "It looked fun. So one day I asked the synchro coach if any experience was required. She answered no and offered for me to join their practice that day, and I was hooked." It's not entirely surprising because if you've ever been to a meet with Karen and The Electric Slide is playing, you will without a doubt see her on the deck boogieing with the group. Karen adds, "I'm always looking for different ways to stay active, so this seemed like a good fit since it's in the water. I think my having a good feel for the water enabled me to catch on quickly, but it is pretty difficult." They currently practice one day a week, but will be ramping up to twice a week soon. Back in May, just a little over 2 months after joining the synchronized swimming team, she participated in her first show *The Wild Side of Synchro!* and her SPM teammates Sarah Swoch, Alison Hayden, and Tabitha Brandt all drove out to cheer her on. "I feel like a mermaid at heart and this is a great way for me to exhibit my artistic side."



Karen and teammates (photo: K. Westerman)



Karen in center (photo: K. Westerman)



Fan club members Sarah, Alison, and Tabitha (photo: K. Westerman)



With husband Russ at the Sirens and Merman Triathlon



Karen and her new gear (photo: K. Westerman)

She has also taken up SUPing (stand up paddle boarding). On April 30, she participated in her first competition, the SUP and RUN, consisting of a 3.1k SUP followed by a 5k run. She says, "I am trying is doing races with stand up paddle boards. It is so hard so I am not that fast but at least I'm trying something new and it is fun." Not fast, she says. She placed first overall for the SUP and Run in the Sirens and Merman Triathlon on June 27 in Siesta Key! Hubby Russ won his age group in the Duathlon. Congratulations, Karen! Keep on Synchro-ing and SUPing!

SPM Olympic Trials Challenge—Charlotte Takes the Gold!

By Brooke Bowman

The love of swimming!

That is what brings together the nurses, doctors, CEOs, computer engineers, educators, superintendents, lawyers, retirees, swim coaches, professors, salespeople, restaurant managers, realtors, attorneys, members of the military, financial analysts, to the North Shore Aquatic Center at 5:30 p.m. five days a week.

The love of swimming!

That is what prompted Pat Dwyer to create the SPM Olympic Trials Challenge. (Okay, maybe Pat also thought he could win it all!) The Challenge? A fun activity for anyone swimming at 5:30 a.m. — submit your selections for the top two swimmers in each event at the Olympic Trials, plus the entry fee of \$20, for a chance to win a percentage of the bank (gold medalist 60%; silver medalist 30%; bronze medalist 10%). The rules/scoring policies were written by and administered by Brooke Bowman, though it was said that the rules/policies were written in Swahili and gave Pat a migraine.

Seven swimmers — *Kim Brackin, Pat Dwyer, Marina Falcone, Eric Herman, Chelsea Nauta, Charlotte Petersen, and Sarah Swoch* — participated. And oh, the confidence was overwhelming! The trash talking began, and then the Olympic Trials started

Sure, everyone picked Katie Ledecky, Regan Smith, Lilly King, Hali Flickinger, Caleb Dressel, Bobby Finke, Ryan Murphy, and Michael Andrew to win their events, BUT there were SO many surprises! The scoreboard changed each day. On Day 5, there was a three-way tie for the gold between Pat, Charlotte, and Kim. There were so many times, the participants tied, because they selected the same winners, or all their selections were wrong.

So, the results? *Charlotte* took the gold by a fingernail (a half a point); *Sarah* won the silver, and *Kim* won the bronze (just 3.5 points behind Charlotte).

Yes, prizes were won, but in the end — it was all for the love of swimming! And stay tuned; another challenge is being developed!



Afternoon Swimming

by Gary Bastie

As most of you know, we have workout times in the afternoons (4-6:30, M-F). Recently, we've been awarded more lane space. That allows us to have more than one lane per group (Sharks, Stroke, Tri, or Fine Wine). So, if you need to swim and didn't make it early, come on down.

With that said, there's one thing I want to mention. In the afternoon, we have swimmers who've recently joined our team. Since we had very limited space in the fall (4 lanes) and during the winter break (just 3), I had to make the decision to combine some groups. Here's what happened.

A number of our newer swimmers were brought along much faster by the more experienced swimmers. We now have swim meet ready swimmers who just started swimming workouts only within the past few months. That's a tribute both to their tenacity, as well as to their teammates who've helped them get better and better. Now, we have a much larger group that can do the same workouts. And, if you'd like to see what I mean, come on down in the afternoon.

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