

postal preview



Dennis Sabo

That Pain We Love! Get Ready for the One Hour Postal Championship

Swimming continuously for an hour, as fast as you can in the month of January, may not seem like most people's idea of a good time. So, why does the annual USMS One Hour Postal Championship attract more than 2,000 swimmers of all ages each year? Simple. Swimmers relish the event as much as they dread it.

"If a doctor ever tells me I have only one hour to live, I'm going to enter the One Hour Swim, so that it feels like a week," says Mike Dowd, 47, of the Multnomah Athletic Club in Portland, Ore.

"I call it the hour from hell," says USMS National Office Administrator Tracy Grilli, 49, of Londonderry, N.H.

Think what you want, but since the late 1970s, a growing

number of Masters swimmers have wheedled each other into doing this most-balked-about event in Masters swimming.

The O*H*I*O Masters Swim Club in Cleveland is the host team for the 2006 One Hour Postal Championship. It has designated the event as a fund-raiser to aid victims of Hurricane Katrina, especially members of the USMS family (see sidebar on page 46).

DC Masters swimmer Dale Petranec, who for many years has been involved with international marathon swimming, organized the first One Hour Championship in 1978, modeling it after a track and field event. It became the first "postal" (clubs mail in results) swimming event adopted by USMS as a national championship. The DC Masters directed the event for 15 years, and in 1993

2006 USMS ONE HOUR POSTAL CHAMPIONSHIP

OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM

Jan. 1-31, 2006

A completed split form is required for all entries.

Obtain a split form and enter online at
www.ohiomasters.com/ohprules.htm.
Save time and money!

Join with O*H*I*O Masters (donating \$1 per swimmer)
for this event and also make your own donation
to Hurricane Katrina Relief.

**Entries without a copy of your 2006 USMS card
and a completed split form will:**

- Be treated as "unofficial" and not be eligible for awards
- Not be tabulated in the final results

Staple or tape a copy of your
2006 USMS card into this space.

LEGIBLY PRINT all of the following information ... PLEASE!

Last Name (as on card): _____ First _____ MI: _____

USMS number: _____ - _____ Gender (circle): Male Female

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

E-mail Address (*Neatly!*): _____ Phone: _____ - _____ - _____

Birth date (mm/dd/yy): _____ Age on Day of Swim: _____

Club name: _____ Club abbreviation: _____

Results: _____ I will retrieve the results online when they are posted on the web

_____ Please send results to me via U.S. mail

Awards: _____ I *do not* want my awards (if earned)

Name of my official lap counter: _____ Phone: _____ - _____ - _____

My lap counter's e-mail address: _____

Entry Fee: US\$6.00/\$10.00 (International) \$ _____

Your Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund Donation .. \$ _____ (will be forwarded by USMS)

T-shirts: U.S. orders—US\$15.00 each \$ _____ SIZE: S M L XL XXL

T-shirts: International orders—US\$20.00 each . . \$ _____ SIZE: S M L XL XXL

Total fees enclosed: \$ _____ (US\$)

Make checks payable to: O*H*I*O Masters Swim Club

Mail to: O*H*I*O Masters Swim Club, 5247 Wilson Mills Road #104, Richmond Heights, OH 44143

Questions: Contact Tom Spence at talltom13@msn.com or 216-299-3858

ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2006 — NO EXCEPTIONS!

Entries received AFTER THE DEADLINE will be returned to the sender, unopened.

WAIVER: I, the undersigned participant, intending to be legally bound, hereby certify that I am physically fit and have not been otherwise informed by a physician. I acknowledge that I am aware of all the risks inherent in Masters Swimming (training and competition), including possible permanent disability or death, and agree to assume all of those risks. AS A CONDITION OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THE MASTERS SWIMMING PROGRAM OR ANY ACTIVITIES INCIDENT THERETO, I HEREBY WAIVE ANY AND ALL RIGHTS TO CLAIMS FOR LOSS OR DAMAGES, INCLUDING ALL CLAIMS FOR LOSS OR DAMAGES CAUSED BY THE NEGLIGENCE, ACTIVE OR PASSIVE, OF THE FOLLOWING: UNITED STATES MASTERS SWIMMING, INC., THE LOCAL MASTERS SWIMMING COMMITTEES, THE CLUBS, HOST FACILITIES, MEET SPONSORS, MEET COMMITTEES, OR ANY INDIVIDUALS OFFICIATING AT THE MEETS OR SUPERVISING SUCH ACTIVITIES. In addition, I agree to abide by and be governed by the rules of USMS.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Visit www.ohiomasters.com/ohprules.htm for complete rules, an official split form and relay entry forms.

A postal event is contested locally and tabulated at a central location. Since you can do the swim anywhere and mail in the results, there is little expense and practically no travel involved.

the championship began to rotate to other hosts, starting with the Davis Aquatic Masters in Davis, Calif.

So what's a "postal" event, you ask? In simple terms, it's an event contested locally and tabulated at a central location. Since you can do the swim anywhere and mail in the results, there is little expense and practically no travel involved.

Through the years, swimmers and coaches have used the One Hour Championship as an annual test of aerobic fitness, a motivational tool and a team-building event. One of the most legendary promotional efforts for the One Hour Championship started in 1997, when Fred Schlicher of New England Masters launched a full-scale



Digital Vision

regional marketing campaign.

At the time, Davis Aquatic Masters had been the perennial club champions for seven years running. Schlicher, along with rabble-rousers Bob Seltzer and Tom Lyndon, plotted to challenge the Davis supremacy. Beyond that challenge, Schlicher and

company envisioned using the One Hour Championship as a vehicle to build programs locally, generate local team rivalry and increase LMSC registration and retention.

"Publicity and communication were key," says Schlicher, who posed as "Field Marshal von Schlicher" and adopted a tongue-in-cheek military demeanor when visiting pools to promote the event. "We used humor and targeted coaches because they were the ones who could really promote the event

to the swimmers," he recalls. Schlicher visited many of the 72 Masters programs in seven states throughout New England. He broadcast announcements frequently in the NEM newsletter, created a poster campaign and participation awards, and issued communications directly challenging Davis Aquatics.

"I put on the air of a real military officer," says Schlicher, who also mixed in a little Knute Rockne of football coaching fame. "We called Davis Aquatics the 'evil empire,' and our

POSTAL QUICK FACTS

- **Who:** Any USMS-registered swimmer
- **What:** The USMS One Hour Postal Championship, hosted by O*H*I*O Masters Swim Club
- **When:** Jan. 1-31, 2006
- **Where:** Any pool! Although results correspond to a 25-yard pool course, you can do the swim in a meters pool and convert it.
- **Why:** It's a great annual test of your endurance and fitness. It's challenging and it's fun! Plus, a portion of proceeds from the 2006 event will benefit Hurricane Katrina victims.

HURRICANE KATRINA FUND-RAISER

For each 2006 One Hour Postal Championship entry received, host team O*H*I*O Masters will donate \$1 to Hurricane Katrina victims, especially members of the USMS family. In addition, swim participants have the option of making additional contributions to hurricane-relief efforts by checking a box on the entry form and including the donated amount in their check or credit card total. The USMS Katrina Task Force will direct funds appropriately.

REGISTER ONLINE

- Save time by registering online starting Jan. 1, 2006, for the One Hour Postal Championship. Register at www.ohiomasters.com/ohprules.htm. Participants will find links to the official split form and a relay entry form. For additional information, contact O*H*I*O Masters' Tom Spence at talltom13@msn.com.
- The USMS Long Distance Committee offers an online pace chart for long distance events such as the One Hour Postal Championship. To view the pace chart, go to www.usms.org/longdist/pacechart.pdf.
- Entry forms for the 3000/6000 Yard Postal Championships and the 5K and 10K Postal Championships will be posted on the USMS web site by early 2006. Visit www.usms.org/longdist/ldnats06 and scroll down to "postals."

charge was to rally the troops and annihilate them.” Schlicher also goaded Davis with pointed articles in the *NEM News* to ratchet up the rivalry. Davis responded in kind. All in the name of friendly competition, of course.

The end results were nothing short of astounding. One year before the campaign New England had 51 participants, but by 1998, they had 176. In 1999—the year Davis became the first club to log more than 1 million yards—NEM had increased its participation to 267 swimmers. But it wasn’t until the new millennium that New England finally ended Davis’s nine-year run as One Hour Club Champions. In 2000, New England amassed 1,775,718 yards, with 469 participating swimmers. And they’ve held on to the title ever since, including 2003 when NEM set the all-time club-scoring record of 1,812,540 yards, with 487 swimmers.

An hour is a long time for most

people to swim continuously without stopping. So what do people think about during the swim?

“My initial thought is: *can I really do this?*” says Kari Wilkinson, 33, of Davis Aquatics. “Can I really swim nonstop for an hour? Then I remind myself that I’ve actually done it.”

“It may sound crazy,” says Kristi Lee, 29, of Sawtooth Masters in Boise, Idaho, “but during the swim I only think of my distance. I peek at the clock to see if I’m on pace, and just keep repeating, ‘50, 50, 50, 50, 100, 100, 100, 100,’ etc. I check the clock every 100 to see if I’m on pace for my goal.”

Other participants report having songs stuck in their heads—everything from Beyonce tunes to “Ninety-nine Bottles of Beer on the Wall.”

No matter what you think about during the Hour Swim, one thing’s always certain. Everyone finishes at the same time. <<<

—Bill Volckening