



History of the Masters Icon

>The new U.S. Masters Swimming logo, introduced in January, is just the latest in a long history of USMS visual icons that date back almost to the organization's inception in 1970.

During the first year of U.S. Masters Swimming, the visual identity was virtually undefined. There was "a logo of sorts" developed for the 2nd Annual National Masters Swimming Championships, says Barbara Dunbar, USMS History and Archives Committee chair. This logo incorporated classical elements: an image of the Roman god of the sea, Neptune; and a laurel wreath, the Greek symbol of athletic victory.

This classic version was short-lived, however. Masters swimming became part of the Amateur Athletic Union in October 1971, and the new swimming organization adopted the AAU logo as its own. This is the same red-white-and-blue shield AAU uses today. For the next eight years, through 1979, the AAU logo appeared on the cover

of the AAU Masters Swimming's *SWIM-MASTER* publication.

In 1980, AAU Masters Swimming officially became United States Masters Swimming, and in an effort to promote the new brand identity, USMS put a circle around the AAU logo.

This version of the logo suggested the old USMS connection to AAU by keeping the red-white-and-blue shield, but dropped the letters "AAU" for good. The circle around the logo contained the words, "United States Masters Swimming," and USMS stuck loosely to this design from 1980 through 1983. Publications from that era display the logo with subtle variations – the letters "USA" and "USMS" were used in different forms.

In 1984, USMS adopted a bold new logo that depicted a swimmer with arms spread in a sort of stylized butterfly stroke, with waves or ripples in front of the swimmer and an overhead arch displaying the text, "United States Masters Swimming." This logo was used until 1988 with one variation.

From 1986 to 1988, the word "Masters" was inserted across the front of the ripples, which have become known affectionately as "spider arms."

The most widely used and best-known logo to date has been what members often refer to as the "lane-line logo" – two blue swimmers separated by a series of elongated red dots designed to resemble lane floats. Designed by Rich Burns of Tamalpais Aquatic Masters and first used in February 1989, this logo has been around for 21 years. It is recognized as the symbol of an organization dedicated to the benefits of swimming as a sport.

The new U.S. Masters Swimming logo is designed to carry on this illustrious tradition, but also to reflect the changing interests of the organization's members, who participate in more open water events, triathlons and fitness swims than ever before. For more information about how the new logo was researched and developed, see pages 6 and 42. <<<

LOGOS THROUGHOUT THE YEARS



Early 1971



1971-1979



1980-1983



1984-1988



1988-2009