

Editor's Note: Due an increase in the number of letters we are receiving, *SWIMMER* has been forced edit the length of some letters and withhold publication of some completely in the printed magazine. However, we have published this longer version here at usmsswimmer.com.

Butterfrog: The Stroke that Never Dies

I seriously doubt that having a few people who, for various physical reasons, need to use a frog kick while swimming butterfly, will damage the aesthetic beauty of the stroke. Lest we take ourselves too seriously, please remember that this is Masters swimming, not the Olympics. The idea is to get people out to compete, have some fun, and improve your health and attitude. Having been to many Nationals I know I never went to bed fretting that some 80 year old who had used the frog kick was diminishing our sport. Quite the contrary, they were enhancing it.

••• **Mike Sherrill, Olympic Club Masters**

Oh come on guys, if you want to race like you train you only need to add one stroke to meets. As a 20+ years Masters swimmer, I can assure you the second or third most popular stroke in every club I've been associated with is "Lane Line Backstroke." I know a couple of swimmers who could give world-class clinics on the finer points.

••• **Barton Selby, San Mateo Marlins**

The Wetsuit Debate ... Again

I am the person who started the "wetsuits are for wimps" thing.

Hate to beat a dead horse, but this issue has now gotten more interesting due to the fact that the new wetsuits are in fact speed (tech) suits with more flotation enhancements than ever before (tiny bubbles), turning the users into human kayaks (actually rich human kayaks – they now cost \$500 to \$900).

Last weekend I competed in an annual one miler. Originally they had no difference in results (wet suits vs. non). Then, eventually they had separate divisions. For the past several years they went back to one division. The race is now huge, over 300 swimmers from hotshot age groupers on up.

I thought it was my imagination or that the field was getting better as I got older. But I was still doing pretty good times. Before I was losing a minute to these folks, now that has in-

creased substantially. Some of these folks that now beat me, can't even swim in the A workout that I do, with my Masters group.

So, originally wet suits allowed them to increase the participation in the event. So weaker swimmers could compete without dealing with cold and worry about drowning. Now not having a wet suit precludes someone from even competition. So you are pushing out the real swimmers. So as we end another open water season, I hope Masters never allows these human kayak suits in competition. It is not real swimming and the cost is now nuts.

Last time around I actually got hate mail for saying, "Wetsuits are for Wimps" but what the heck.

••• **Bob Webber, Fayetteville, N.Y.**

Swimsuit Issues in History

I enjoyed "Swimsuit Debates" in the September - October Splashback. The article reminded me of Harry Barr, a wonderful swimmer, friend, and member of New York's Empire Masters through the early 1990s. Harry was born in 1910 and worked as a life-guard at Jones Beach as a young man. He had many great stories from those days, and one reminds us that modesty in costume also applied to the guys. One of his duties was to patrol the beach and instruct guys who had rolled the top of their woolen suits down to the waist to pull their suits up so their upper bodies were covered.

••• **Suzanne Rague, Oregon Masters**

Reading about the ongoing debate of what suits Masters swimmers can use, and the Splashback story of early women's suits, I am reminded of a true story that my father loves to tell. John Macionis won a silver medal in the 1936 Olympics and held numerous national and world records. He first gained notice in the swimming world as a postgrad at Mercersburg Academy when he set several national prep school records, and was a highly anticipated freshman at Yale University in 1934.

Competition suits then were wool, with shoulder straps. Dad claims he lost seconds every race trying to keep those straps up. But no suits were allowed in the 55-yard practice pool; naked swimming was the only way to go. One day in the fall of 1934, the legendary Yale coach, Bob Kiphuth, summoned Dad to the pool 30

minutes early. No one was there except the coach and three gentlemen with stopwatches. "Macionis," said Bob, "let's see what you can do for a 220 without a suit on."

Dad stripped naked, stood up on a block, and when he heard the gunshot, dove in and swam the requested 220 yards. The three timers huddled over his lane as he hit the wall, recording an official time over a second faster than the current world record. Dad was sent to start practice in the competition pool. The next day at practice, Kiphuth called Dad aside. "Macionis, I've got good news and bad news. The bad news is your time was rejected for not complying with the rules. "The good news," he said with a smile and a wink, "is you're the fastest bare-assed swimmer in the world." Dad is now 94, and up until last year was swimming every day.

••• **Bob Macionis, Charlottesville, Va.**

Thank you for a great magazine that I enjoy reading and have found most helpful. I really enjoyed the article on Mallory Mead, a very impressive goal that no doubt she will achieve given her skills. One small point of correction, Mallory was not the fastest American in the English Channel in 2008. I also swam the channel that year in 10 hours 30 minutes and I think there were a few other Americans faster than that.

I also read with interest the article on swimsuits. As the title states, the debate has never been dull. To that end, I would like to recommend an outstanding book on the subject of channel swimming, women's swimming, and more specifically - Gertrude Ederle's quest to become the first woman to swim the English Channel. The Great Swim is also a fantastic narrative on the age in which swimsuits, and women's role in society, were undergoing monumental changes. The article in *SWIMMER* states that she became the first American woman to swim the channel, and as your readers probably already know, she became the first woman ever. What they may not know is that she became only the third (or fourth?) person ever. As she and her family were spending time in France, training and waiting on the right day to swim, her sister was busy sewing swimsuits and experimenting with different designs for the swim, basically "inventing" the bikini. They just didn't know it at the time.

••• **Jeffrey Hulett, Golden, Colorado**

Editor: There are two different associations that ratify swims in the English Channel. *Mallory Mead was the fastest American in the English Channel in 2008, as ratified by the Channel Swimming Association. However, there were seven other people, including three Americans, whose English Channel times were faster than Mead's, as ratified by the Channel Swimming & Piloting Federation. We should have clarified this in our piece on Mallory Mead.*

Title IX

I guess I am supposed to be relieved to learn that, while "Title IX has been great for women's sports. It has not been harmful to men's sports overall." I suppose it could just be coincidence that the editor, the author, and the only expert cited in the article are all women. But, since this is a magazine about swimming, let's talk swimming.

There are so many more opportunities for girls, than boys, that male high school swimmers have to be amongst the nation's elite to be considered for a college swimming scholarship. Girls, on the other hand, who don't make the cuts for meets like Junior Nationals, or even Sectionals, can receive a scholarship to a NCAA program. This is not a "misconception" or a "misperception," it is a fact.

The website, A2ZColleges.com lists 472 colleges and universities with women's swim teams and 398 with men's programs. According to Athleticscholarships.net, there are 3,108.4 NCAA swimming scholarships for women and 1,810.8 scholarships for men. The NCAA allows each D1 swimming program to offer 14 scholarships for women and 9.9 for men.

Swimming is growing for every male age group from Novice to Masters, with the exception of the collegiate level. You can't honestly believe that Title IX has not hurt men's swimming.

Almost 40 years ago, after failing to get colleges and universities to change on their own, Title IX was put in place to force the issue. It is cynical to suggest the reverse logic that, rather than focus on amending Title IX, "the beef should be with the individual universities."

The attempt to divert blame from Title IX to the universities is reminiscent of the bumper sticker, "Guns don't kill people, people kill people." Title IX supporters put a law in the hands of universities, but as-

sume no responsibility for how it is used.

Even the Constitution has been amended (27 times). I submit that the supporters of Title IX are being disingenuous, closed minded, and callous to male swimmers (you could insert other sports). The times have changed and it's time for the law to reflect those changes.

Universities do exacerbate the problem through lazy administration. It is possible to comply with Title IX by offering athletic opportunities in proportion to the level of interest of male and female students (the interest is greater amongst males). But, this requires more time and effort, and isn't as easy as just enforcing quotas.

With each year, our sons are losing access to universities and scholarships all across America. They are too important to us, as parents, to let this lay. Perhaps the author forgets that all those boys out there have fathers AND mothers who want the best for their sons. This is no longer a gender issue, this is a fairness issue.

••• **Kevin Weissman, Mission Viejo Masters**

Diversity

Regarding Diversity and U.S. Masters Swimming: Bravo! to *SWIMMER* magazine for embracing the diversity of the human condition; having read about the clearly positive roles of two gay male swimmers (one white, one black) and Native Americans who are successfully participating in the Alcatraz swim, I feel even stronger about my participation with U.S. Masters Swimming.

••• **Norman Macartney, North Carolina Masters**

I would like to offer Masters Swimming as a model for world peace.

There are no territorial boundaries. Teams sit next to each other, share the shade of canopies and fraternize throughout the meet.

There is no effort on the part of one team to hinder the efforts of their competitors.

Mutual respect and appreciation of all is applauded.

Happiness abounds at all times.

Universal acknowledgement of a superior performance is axiomatic.

Differences in age and sex make no difference in USMS.

What more do we need for a better

world?

••• **Ashley Jones, Alameda Aquatic Masters**