

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.

Reader Response to the Welsford Letter

I think SWIMMER is excellent and always engaging with a fine combination of news about the sport and practice and technique information. But I nearly gagged when I read the letter in the current issue attacking Tyler Duckworth based on religious hatred of same sex orientation. In my opinion it crossed the line between provocative commentary on a matter some people view as controversial and an abusive, bigoted personal attack.

••• **Rich Bernstein, Asphalt Green Masters, New York**

My skin crawled when I read the letter Glenn Welsford wrote in response to the article about Tyler Duckworth. Not only did the content of his letter disturb me, that it had been printed in SWIMMER bothered me as well. It was a poor choice editorially to print such a bigoted and divisive letter. It would have been a much better choice to have printed the letter by Ashley Jones in which she offers Masters swimming as a model for world peace, instead of just publishing it online.

••• **Kirsten Berger, Metro Masters, N.Y.**

I think it was unnecessary, hurtful and a little ridiculous that you thought it was a good idea to publish Glenn Welsford's letter in the pages of SWIMMER in response to Tyler Duckworth's article. I have always thought, maybe wrongly, that USMS was an organization proud of the diversity of people who share a love of and passion for swimming. I understand that your readers may differ in their social, cultural, and political views, but why use your pages to remind people of the hate and intolerance that exists all around?

••• **Carmen Menocal, Red Tide NYC**

I was appalled to read Glenn Welsford's letter in the latest issue of SWIMMER. I have been a member of USMS for

nearly 20 years, and have always valued the spirit of friendliness, inclusion, and camaraderie that Masters swimming promotes. I was therefore shocked and deeply disappointed that the official magazine of U.S. Masters Swimming would publish such a hateful response to the Tyler Duckworth article.

••• **Janet Harris, Asphalt Green Masters, N.Y.**

I was upset to open the January – February issue of SWIMMER and receive Mr. Welsford's little blast of hatred. It is one thing to say that you don't approve of homosexuality. It is quite another to suggest that being gay, like being a thief, should be criminalized and that gays are destroying society. This is bigotry and hate-speech, pure and simple, and it should be condemned as such. I encourage Mr. Welsford to go meet some actual, hard-working, tax-paying, child-rearing, PTA-attending, church-rummage-sale-volunteering gay people and to re-examine his views.

••• **Matthew Hess, New Mexico Masters**

Mr. Welsford's letter—likening homosexuality to “thievery, adultery, and other sins,” shocked me, not just for its blatantly fundamentalist views (there are Christians, believe it or not, who not only support their homosexual brethren but are homosexual themselves), but for its bizarre claim that homosexuality “destroys lives.” Excuse me? Does he have someone specific in mind? All of the gay and lesbian people I know are as happy and healthy as the heterosexual people I know—and to claim otherwise is to reveal a dearth of contact with living, breathing GLBT people. I just hope Mr. Welsford is as fastidious about jumping in the water (wearing nothing but a thin piece of Lycra, I might add) with divorcees, shrimp-eaters, and women with uncovered heads.

••• **Vicki Bolf, Illinois Masters**

After reading the letter in this month's SWIMMER entitled “Shaken and Stirred,” I was inspired to write in myself. Not in rebuttal of anyone's opinions, but actually to say thank you. I am heterosexual and just joined a mostly gay and lesbian Masters team. Not having been on a

swim team for over ten years, I was nervous and hesitant about starting up again. In the last month I've had the pleasure of meeting and becoming friends with a truly great group of people who have made me feel welcomed and confident while competing in a sport and activity that I love.

I congratulate SWIMMER for publishing a variety of opinions and viewpoints. Although I try to value individuals based on their character and believe that the truly destructive force in society is not that there are people who are different than I am, but the categorizing, labeling and judging of people based on anything other than their integrity, I certainly believe in the right for others to express otherwise.

••• **Daniel P Kennedy, Illinois Masters**

While some of your readers may commend you for printing a wide range of opinions in your Letters column, I am incensed that Glenn Welsford's letter was even considered for inclusion in the magazine. SWIMMER is a sports publication for swimming enthusiasts. Religious hate-speech has no place in this publication; yet, of the hundreds of letters you receive you chose to print this one. Mr. Welsford should be ashamed of himself and so should you.

••• **Steve Gilberg, Chicago Smelts Swim Team**

This unfortunate letter to the editor that outlines homosexuality as something that destroys lives is in response to two articles printed in the September – October issue of SWIMMER. These articles embrace the diversity of two gay swimmers (one white, and one black) who where recently profiled.

The International Gay and Lesbian Aquatics members should be proud that together we continue to uphold the values and mission of our organization. The outpouring of strong support for who we are as gay aquatic athletes and our intolerance for bigotry is being heard loud and clear. Thanks to the number of well-crafted letters and phone calls to USMS in response to one man's homophobia.

It is also important to note that there has also been significant support for di-

versity in swimming. This is noted in a positive letter to the editor that was printed just below the hate mail. Having said this, it is important to distinguish between what is the power of free speech, opposing opinions and that of plain hate.

It seems that SWIMMER, the “Official Magazine of U.S. Masters Swimming,” which IGLA is a part of in the United States, may want to rethink letters that offer no further discussion about the topic at hand. What makes swimming strong is its diversity. Bringing in ones beliefs or distaste for any member of U.S. Masters Swimming is just plain wrong and destructive.

There are countless stories of IGLA Members who have been “saved” by our organization. We should know that IGLA may be more important than ever, leading the charge for diversity, inclusion, and excellence in aquatics. Hatred-exclusion is not part of our values. It is important to remember that IGLA and friends of IGLA still have an important mission that continues to be rock solid. We will continue to be proud of who we are and how we are an important part of the USMS family.

We may be “Stirred” by this unfortunate letter in our swimming magazine but IGLA is not “Shaken.” Swim proud.

••• **Fred Dever, District of Columbia Aquatics Club and Co-President, International Gay and Lesbian Aquatics**

I was very disappointed to see your apology notice on the USMS website. Although I disagree with Mr. Duckworth's lifestyle, I did appreciate your article on him. You did not hide the fact that homosexual swimmers have endured a lot of prejudice.

In choosing the letters to publish in reaction to the article on Mr. Duckworth, I thought you were trying to show the fact that there were strong pro and con reactions to the article. In other words, show the truth of the issue just as you did with the Duckworth article.

I wonder who was more prejudiced? Mr. Welsford in his letter, or those who reacted with strong disapproval of his letter? I don't feel that you have to apologize for showing the ugly truth of the matter.

We need to get off this “political correctness” posture. We all lose over this. I think your action in destroying the remaining issues was too strong a measure

and was an act that compromises your editorial and organizational integrity.

••• **Doug Kopp, Southern Masters Swimmers, Baton Rouge**

Swimmer is a first-rate publication, and I often read it from cover to cover. The inclusion of Glenn Welsford's hate letter in your January-February 2011 issue, however, is deplorable. Yes, we are all entitled to our opinions, no matter how ill-informed, but giving Welsford an audience of 50,000 readers does absolutely nothing to move the world toward tolerance and understanding. It breaks our hearts and reminds us of how far we have yet to evolve.

••• **Carolyn Dash Mailler, New England Masters**

Thank you for including such a positive article about Tyler Duckworth in a recent issue of your magazine. I was sorry to see Glenn Welsford's comments published in the most-recent issue. While I recognize your right to include comments from both sides, I just wanted to let you know that I appreciate your objectivity and support for gay athletes.

Your actions help chip away at some of the hatred and homophobia that destroys so many lives. If homosexuality were truly a choice, as Mr. Welsford claims, then all teens that commit suicide each year because they are gay would simply “switch” to being straight and eliminate the issue.

••• **John Spencer, San Diego Swim Masters**

Dara

Having just reviewed the December Dara Torres article and accompanying photograph (YIKES!!!) I inexplicably purchased a 55-gallon barrel of Fitness Nutrition Gold Medal Aminos. I have no idea what came over me.

••• **Carlton Arnold, Swim Kentucky Masters**

Time Out!

I was particularly intrigued about Mr. Edwards's article about the evolution of the timing of swimming races as I helped CTS in the early 1970's develop their timing equipment while I was a swimming coach for our local high school. He mentions that the closest Olympic margin of victory in swimming was in 2008, when Michael Phelps of the USA beat Milorad Cavic of Serbia in the 100-meter butterfly by 1/100 of a second. The closest race actually occurred in 1972 when Gunnar Larsson of Sweden beat Tim McKee of the USA in the 400 IM by 2/1000 of a second. The official time was 4:31.984 to 4:31.986 if memory serves. Larsson was awarded the gold and McKee the silver. Yet both were given the Olympic record at that time of 4:31.98. Subsequently, official timing went back to timing races to the 100th of a second and has remained this way ever since.

••• **Kevin Polansky, Colorado Masters**

Thanks for a great magazine and a thoroughly interesting article on timing. I must, however, comment on the statement that Michael Phelps's 1/100th of a second margin was the closest ever for the sport. In fact, Swedish swimmer Gunnar Larsson's 2/1000th of a second margin in the 400 IM (four times the distance!) to second place finisher Tim McKee of the United States is certainly closer.

••• **Tony Svensson, Stanford Masters Swimming**

Edwards Responds:

Sometimes one of the benefits of admitting you are wrong is that it offers a chance for further discussion of an interesting subject. While researching the November – December “Splashback” article on event timing, I was puzzled by the fact that the International Olympic Federation uses equipment to measure 1/1000th of a second of difference in swimming perfor-

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mances, but won't record an official Olympic time in increments smaller than 100th of a second. If they trust their timing equipment enough to award medals based on differences of a 1/3000th of a second, then why aren't they willing to put those numbers on the books?

In an interview with National Public Radio Christophe Berthaud, director of Olympic timekeeping for Omega, says that the accuracy of an Olympic timing device actually must be greater than the official time it records. Thus, to record a margin of victory of 1/100th of a second, the device must be accurate to 1/1000th of a second. Says Berthaud, "And that's why when it comes to the rounding based on the rules of the regulations of the International Federation, there's no doubt about the hundredth of a second we are giving." Berthaud explains that although the Omega device measures to 1/1000th of a second, it actually encrypts those results, and instead, reports in hundredths. Thus, Michael Phelps victory over Milorad Cavic in 2008 was 100th of a second – more or less.

SWIMMER readers Polansky and Svenson are absolutely right about Gunnar Larsson's 2/1000th of a second victory over American Tim McKee in the 1972 400 IM. Although the record book today is confusing, because it lists both swimmers with a time of 4:31.98, the Swede's narrow margin was officially displayed on the Omega machine at that time. However, the International Federation apparently got antsy about another margin – the margin of error – and decided after the 1972 games to go back its 1/100th of a second level of accuracy. If the Olympic federation had been using its current rounding off policy in 1972, then Larsson's margin would have been encrypted and rounded off, and it would have shown up as 1/100th. Frankly, I like giving Larsson his pair of milliseconds.

To read the transcript or listen to Andrea Seabrook's interview with Berthaud, go to npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93666253. Also online at the UrbanTick blog is an interview with Hand Gubler, Omega's engineer in charge of timekeeping for the 2012 London Games: urbantick.blogspot.com/2010/06/mytime-interview-hans-gubler-timekeeper.html.

Sprint or Distance?

I got a real charge out of the "Both Sides of the Lane Line" in the November – December issue. I am an ageing sprinter starting to find a less frenetic race (anything over 100 yards) more to my liking, although I do not intend to make it part of my routine.

I once, as a Florida high school swimmer, and not knowing any better, was volunteered by my coach to swim a 1650 against a Cuban team. Need I mention that as I usually did not count above the number eight in any event, someone was counting for me! I believe I used open turns to get that extra breath while hanging on the wall and each time I asked the same question, "Am I there yet?" They reply was always the same ... "Not yet."

After an eternity, I started to notice a mermaid swimming beside me in the lane. (Yes, I was hallucinating, but honestly, I believed that mermaid was there!) When finally I spotted the orange bull's eye and was dragged out of the pool, I prayed the EMS personnel were standing by with oxygen and maybe a shot of adrenaline to restart my heart.

So some 53 years later I am still hoping to try a 400-yard freestyle to see if I can find that mermaid again. As the article says, "When the going gets tough," I get out!

♦♦♦ **Jerry Katz, Garden State Masters, N.J.**

The main reason that I choose to swim the longer events in a swim meet is so that I can score points for my team. In my first ever swim meet, 2008, I swam the 50 and 100 free and backstrokes and finished well out of point range. When I swam the longer freestyle distances I noticed that I contributed points to the team. So last year I swam eight individual events, all longer distances, including a slothful 200 breast which awarded me state champion in that event for my age group, thanks to the other person in my age group scratching. I scored points in each event and didn't beat one person in my age group, except for the 500 free (he swam a 500 butterfly to my 500 free). My point is: Did I enjoy the 200 and 100 back and breast? No. Did I contribute to a 2010 State Champion Men's Division in Indiana? Yes. 'Nuf said.

♦♦♦ **Byron Haflich, Noblesville Adult Swim Team, Ind.**

Freestyle Makeover

Never before have I learned so much from words and pictures in print as I have from this issue's feature [SWIMMER, November – December 2010]. I've been experimenting for years with hand and arm placement in the first half of the freestyle, as recommendations shift over the decades. This approach is already improving my stroke. Many thanks.

♦♦♦ **Rich Alther, Palm Springs, Southern Pacific LMSC**

To Air is Human

I am in agreement with the inappropriate use of hypoxic training. However, I do have swimmers that require it. I call them "panthers." These folks, normally coming to swimming as adults with no formal training in younger years, simply don't exhale during the stroke. Instead they attempt to inhale and exhale while breathing on every second arm stroke. There is no control in their breathing process and they are completely spent after a 50. With these swimmers, it is necessary to bring attention to that exhale and to the feeling of needing air as opposed to reaching for it by habit. We do lots of slower repeats feeling the exhale and sometimes we put a little effort on it. It works.

♦♦♦ **Sue Mangan, Head Coach, Columbia Masters Swimming, Maryland**

Congratulations, SWIMMER is getting better and better. I noticed a lot of teammates talking about the Swimming Without Air article (November – December 2010).

I am 64 and swim with the Reston [Va.] Masters Swim Team coached by Frank Koval. Our chief breathing workout is the fifth one on your bulleted list on p. 31, increasing the number of strokes per breath, requiring alternate side breathing.

As a young man, I never had much lung capacity as I smoked a fair amount, quitting in 1975. I have to say my lungs are in the best condition I have ever had them, and feel hypoxic training has a lot to do with it.

In summer, when we are in the outdoor long-course pool, we often do decreasing breaths-per-lap, which seems to train one that breathing is rather unnecessary. We arrive at this conclusion naturally, on the last 50 meters with only one breath.

(BTW, I can blow out a kerosene lantern across the room).

♦♦♦ **Dean Rogers, Reston Masters Swim Team, Va.**

I take exception to your political jab in "Swimming Without Air" on page 32 of Swimmer magazine, Vol. 6 No. 6. In the first place, you reference no proof of "improved math skills." But then you leap from that unsubstantiated conjecture to assert further that this myth proves the ineffectiveness of both American education and the government of the country.

Shame on you, sir. I would have to say that virtually every swimming pool I have swum in was a "government" financed facility and a good number of those were part of a public school. Many of the coaches or swim leaders I have known were either public school teachers or public employees.

♦♦♦ **David Leonard, Alaska Masters Swim Club**

Whitten Responds:

If you've ever been around swimmers doing complicated sets with varying distances, combinations of stroke/kick/pull/underwater laps and rest intervals, you can't help but be impressed by their ability to manipulate the numbers and do what is asked of them. While I know of no research that compares their ability to apply this skill to other mathematical problems with that of non-swimmers, I am certain the swimmers would perform significantly better. So, too, would any group that had daily practice with a particular type of math skill when compared with a group that did not.

And regarding the academic performance of college swimmers, each semester, schools report the academic performance of their athletes (by sport) as well as non-athletes. Swimmers, both women and men, consistently score at or very near the top. Nationally, every year swimmers rank first, second or third among all athletes, and even higher when compared with non-athletes. Stats are available from the NCAA.

A Voice for the Dogs

The article on swimmer Angie Taggart and the Iditarod ("A Journey of a Thousand Miles," November – December

2010) glossed over the very real cruelties associated with this event. The article states, "Running the Iditarod ... has a hefty price tag attached." Indeed it does, much more than the monetary costs described. Dogs have paid with their lives after running hundreds of miles in frigid temperatures and horrendous conditions. According to the Sled Dog Action Coalition (helpsleddogs.org), least 142 dogs have died during the Iditarod since 1973, and that does not include dogs that died after the race.

On average, dogs are forced to run over one hundred miles per day, with few, brief intervals of rest. They are subjected to biting winds, blinding snowstorms, sub-zero temperatures, and falls through treacherous ice into frigid water. Their feet become bruised, bloodied, cut, and just plain worn out because of the vast distances they cover. Many dogs pull muscles, incur stress fractures, or become sick with diarrhea, dehydration, intestinal viruses, or bleeding stomach ulcers. Dogs have been strangled by towlines, trampled by moose, and hit by snowmobiles and sleds.

Dogs suffer behind the scenes, too. Thousands of dogs are bred to run in sled races, but not every puppy is born a fast runner. Those who do not make the grade are "culled." Some are sold or given away, but many are euthanized, abandoned, shot, bludgeoned, or drowned.

♦♦♦ **Becky Fenson, Virginia LMSC**