



SPM NEWSLETTER

St. Petersburg Masters | North Shore Aquatic Complex

A Great Start to 2024

With the start to a new year, we elected some new officers and Board Members at our annual team meeting on January 28th. Nothing beats an hour swim, breakfast, and an election to follow!

Thank you to our outgoing members, Mike Zabel (president) and Tabitha Jacobus-Brandt (board member) and all the work they have done to keep our team running like a well-oiled machine! Kathy Selles was elected as our new president, and Jeff Gould replacing her as our secretary. Thank you both for signing up to lead our team.

Our members swim for so many different reasons. The year kicked off with the Annual Tampa Bay Frogman swim supporting the Navy SEAL Foundation. Proceeds from many of the events go to help causes that are close to our swimmers' hearts. Check out Andrew and Ian's Pinellas Marathon Swim and the Strokes for Hope swim that Stephanie Gibson participates in annually. In the pool, the Valentine's Meet and the longest continuously running Masters meet was held in March. Coach Gary shares some valuable insight from the Valentine's Meet.

The Board has also been busy revamping our website. Many thanks to Kathy Selles and her brother David Kerr for taking on this huge project. Visit www.stpetemasters.org and check it out!

And finally, many thanks again to all who helped with this issue: Gary Bastie, Sherri Bogue, Dawn Clark, Stephanie Gibson, Andrew Leone, Kathy Selles, Gloria Smith, Sarah Swoch, Ian Tarrant, and Mike Zabel. Please send ideas, articles and photos to me at livia.zien@gmail.com. The next issue will cover events from April-June. Happy swimming, everyone!

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Upcoming Pool Events

SPM 5k/10k e-Postal TEAM DAYS! 7am start. Reserve a lane by sending an email to stpetemasters@gmail.com!

- June 23
- August 18
- September 8

May 9-12 / SCY: YMCA Masters Nationals. Ft. Lauderdale FL. [Information & online entry](#) (entrants must be YMCA members by April 9). *Entry deadline: online entry closes Thursday, April 25*

June 8-9 / LCM: Bumpy Jones Classic. Sarasota FL. [Information & online entry](#). *Entry deadline: online entry closes Monday, June 3*

June 20-24 / SCY: USMS Spring Championships. Indianapolis IN. [Information & online entry](#). *Entry deadline: online entry closes Tuesday, May 28*

Sept. 7 / LCM: Dog Days Meet. Clearwater FL.

Sept. 22 / SCY: Gainesville Senior Games. Gainesville FL. [Information & entry](#). *Entry deadline: paper entries received by Friday, August 23; online entry closes Friday, August 30. Senior games for 50+. USMS-recognized*

Oct. 11-13 / SCM: Rowdy Gaines Classic. Orlando FL

Nov. 2-3 / SCM: Shark Tank Meet. Sarasota FL



President's Corner

By Kathy Selles

THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!

I just cannot say this enough!

We started off the new year with the annual meeting and election of officers on January 28, 2024. The new board includes Kathy Selles, President, Lisa Flanagan, Vice President, Brooke Bowman, Treasurer, Jeff Gould, Secretary, Ananda Bergeron, Chris Stickle, Val Valle, Sarah Swoch. Many thanks to this great group of people who plan and organize the various events we all enjoy throughout the year.

I would like to give a hearty THANK YOU to the many volunteers who help at our swim meets each year. There was a great turn out of volunteers for the Bob Beach meet this past March. Having a large number of people means we are better able to give breaks, schedule shifts, and cover duties. Besides, it's more fun to share the timing duties with someone. I personally enjoy visiting with the swimmers and seeing people I don't often get to see. Don't worry – we give training! Brooke organized a gift card drawing for the volunteers; two lucky timers won \$25 gift cards to Amazon. Please think ahead to the LCM meet in July and set aside some time to help at the meet. Bring a friend and enjoy watching the action from poolside.

We have had a busy start to the year, having organized and held the Bob Beach SCY meet, and the annual awards banquet the very next weekend. The meet ran smoothly thanks to the organization of our meet director, Brooke Bowman, with help from Lisa Flanagan and Patty Nardozzi. The banquet was a lot of fun, and we had delicious food from Mazzaro's. Awards were distributed for All American and Top 10 finishers. Afterwards, we awarded the raffle prizes, and we almost ran out of people to give prizes to!

Board activities have also involved researching and evaluating a rack to hold our gear bags. We looked at the same rack currently used by SPA, with a cost of \$2000. A survey regarding this purchase was done through our Facebook site, see the results below:

- Should SPM buy a rack for gear bags at a cost of \$2000? 16 - YES, 11 - NO, 11 – MAYBE.
- Would you use this rack? 16 – YES, 17 – NO, 5 – MAYBE.

Due to the low interest, we decided against this expenditure.

We will be planning for USMS Nationals, YNats, 5K and 10K, and the LCM meet in July. Watch for information on upcoming social events!



Coach's Corner

by Gary Bastie

The Wind-Up!

A few decades ago, I studied lift, how to get a person off the ground and launched into the air either for distance or height. I studied sports like springboard diving, volleyball, high jumping, long jumping, wherever lift and explosive movement are required to launch an athlete higher or further. In doing so, I discovered the "wind-up". So, let's talk wind-ups.

With my own experiences, I used what I learned to perfect my wind-up. Then, I used it to dunk basketballs or tip-ins at greater height, get up higher on layups, to block incoming shots, and to get much higher when I spiked volleyballs. I even used it to measure vertical jumps and you can see videos on places like YouTube, where those measuring vertical leap will also employ this wind-up

motion in order to gain maximum height. I was able to touch the top of the square on the backboard behind the rim using this method (11'). But, it also worked well on long jumping and on relay take-offs in swimming. Then, I began teaching it to other athletes.

Take volleyball. As a player approaches the net in order to spike a ball, they need to convert their momentum from moving forward to moving upward. As a result, there's a hitch-step or hop-step required where a player goes from running toward the net to hopping onto two feet for the final take-off. This movement is quite similar to that used in relay take-offs in swimming, where a short hop step is followed by a two-foot take-off.



For instance, the athlete runs toward the net, takes a hop-step, and takes off on both feet simultaneously. But, what the arms do is of the utmost importance. Here's why.

With a volleyball player's approach towards the net, it's to spike the ball. What they want is to get as far above the net as possible. Why? So they can see the court, opposing players, the ball, and strike the ball at the highest possible point. Why? So they're more in control of the situation and gain greater options with greater height and hang time. To do that, the last thing they do before takeoff is to swing the arms back so they can swing them forward with momentum.

The movement is simple. Starting in a full backward arm swing, arms extended, from back to front and upward. That helps convert the forward momentum to "up". As a result, the player gets "lift" required for the highest vertical jump.

Well, it's the same in swimming, only we aren't trying to go "up" as much as we want to go "out". But, the mechanics are still the same. And, a perfect example is the newest version of a relay start.

Have you watched swimmers at the higher levels, do relay starts lately? Rather than start at the front of the block, they start at the back, with both feet towards the back fin. One foot might actually be on that fin, just for the sake of push-off. And, as the incoming swimmer gets close, the swimmer on the block takes a step forward (like a volleyball player) so they can take off on both feet simultaneously. But, notice the arms.

With the new relay starts, the arms are going to start in a position as far backward as possible. They'll be extended and reaching as high as possible in a backward motion. Why? To gain a sort of "wind-up" motion. Why? So that when they swing forward, and in a straight-armed position, there's momentum that takes the swimmer slightly up but mostly forward and with greater momentum.

The result of a wind-up start is one with greater distance forward (and slightly upward) off the starting block. Why? To gain greater distance off the block, to have greater momentum while entering the water, and to have a more powerful start that launches the swimmer so as to make the swimmer gain an advantage to not using the wind-up.

Pool Competitions

The 'big' meets of the quarter were the Valentine's Meet in Clearwater, and of course, our Bob Beach SCY Classic, but there were plenty of other local meets to be swum. The Senior Games, Ft. Lauderdale Masters Challenge, and the Good Life Games provided additional opportunities to compete and check off events for the Leather Lung award.

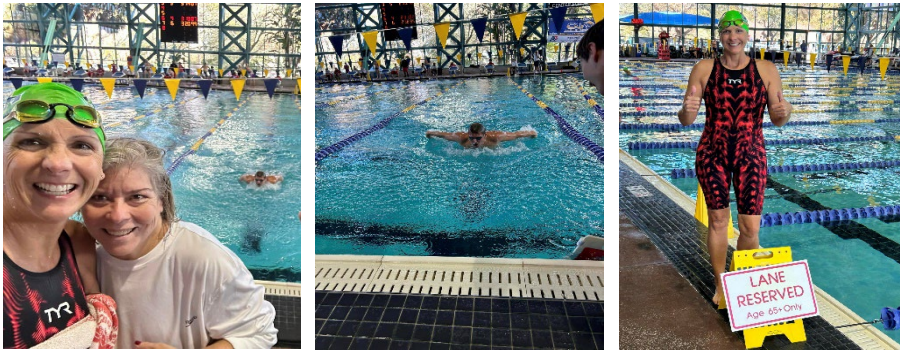
Observations from the Valentines Swim Meet

By Gary Bastie

In case you missed the Clearwater Masters Valentine's Swim Meet, you missed a good one. But, this year was a bit different in that there were several firsts.

For instance, Chris Stickle decided to swim the 500 free as a 500 fly. He took second in his heat with a 6:14. And, that was about a minute faster than he'd done it in practice. Then, Chris continued to swim best times in events like the 50 free, 200 IM, and in relays.

But, Chris wasn't alone. Russell Hawkins swam best times in all his events. In fact, in the 1000, he swam his best 50, 100, and 200 on the way to his best time in the 1000 by over a minute. He continued his streak throughout the day with best times in every event he swam.



(photo: K. Westerman)

Not to be outdone, swimmers Haley Brehm and Kelly Deuser swam new events like the 400 IM and 100 fly. And, Sherri Bogue, like Russell and Chris, swam best times in her distance events, as did Alyson Hayden in her signature events, as well as relays. Her times turned back the clock to a few years ago and scientists are trying to figure out just how she did it. As for Sherri's swims, her first 50 and 100 of her distance events surpassed her old 50 and 100 times.

And, she swam a best in the 50 back twice, in the open 50 and in a relay.

And, speaking of relays, SPM did well. We had great efforts from everyone. Newer swimmer like Marty Acosta and Howard Cheung had great splits so that, as a team, SPM won most relays. Jeff Gould came up with some great fly and free splits and Jerri Jacobson swam fast breast and free splits. First-time meet swimmer Howard Cheung anchored a relay, swam best times in the 50 and 100 free, and 50 breast.

Phyllis Scheidt took time off from her SPA coaching duties to swim some of the tougher events like the 200 breast and IM. Then, we had the usual suspects who swam their usual great races. That list includes some really fast times in events they don't usually swim. SPM'ers Paula Texel and Karen Westerman swam national times. Gerri Jacobson, Claire Piazza, Jeff Gould, Marty Acosta, Cheryl Kupan (a multi event winner), Cam Chambers (who shook off the rust to swim with the best), Celeste Patton, swam great races and made SPM look really, really good. At the end of the day, SPM took home a lot of chocolate boxes.

Special thanks to Mike Zabel, past SPM President, official, and swimmer, was there both days officiating. All in all, it was a great meet, thanks to everyone's great teamwork, cheering for one another, and leaving it all in the pool where it belongs.

Important Lessons from the Valentines Meet

By Gary Bastie

From the Valentines Meet certain lessons were rather obvious. And, they're very special because they were demonstrated by SPM swimmers. For instance, Chris Stickle showed us how to have fun, challenge himself, and have a great meet, while swimming some lifetime bests. I think Chris had a smile on his face all day. And, while many other swimmers looked so serious, Chris' demeanor kept him loose and fluid.



Like Chris, Russell Hawkins and Sherri Bogue showed how to leave nothing in the pool by swimming best times in their 50, 100, and 200 on the way to best times in the 500 and 1000. While most are afraid to do such a thing, they were fearless and welcomed the challenge.

Howard Cheung demonstrated enthusiasm for swimming by participating in his first ever swim meet, enjoying himself, cheering on his new teammates, and surpassing his best practice times. His example went a long way.

We also witnessed Cheryl Kupan, Paula Texel, Karen Westerman, Jeff Gould, Marty Acosta, Phyllis Scheidt, some of our most experienced swimmers, swim with intensity, enthusiasm, and with great technique. They set the bar high for our newer swimmers. And, their times were national caliber times and in multiple events.

More recent members Kelly Deuser and Haley Brehm swam some events for the first time and nailed it. It was obvious that they'd worked on strategy, technique, starts, and turns. That requires a high level of concentration during practice and the ability to follow through. It also shows how they followed in the footsteps of some of our more experienced swimmers. And, that's what makes SPM a great team. It's how the newer swimmers fill voids left by others and keep the quality at a high level. That's what visitors tell me when they visit and swim with us.

Alison Hayden showed how, even after a few years of swimming at one level, that it's possible to reclaim some of what they once had. And, she did it every time she swam. That inspired a lot of SPM'ers to follow what Alison's been doing.

Then, there's Gerri, Claire, Celeste, and Cam. Gerri Jacobson matched times from previous meets and contributed greatly to relays. It's not easy to find a good breaststroker when you need one. Claire Piazza took time out from a busy schedule to swim some of the longer events. We certainly appreciated the points, especially her contribution to relays and being able to swim any event.

Celeste Patton swims with intensity in case you hadn't noticed. And, so does Cam Chambers. Cam, a more recent member who swam for Fred Lewis, was able to swim shorter events for a change. As for Celeste, her swims were among the fastest in her age group and her relay swims kept SPM out in front.

I say all this because there are three keys to being successful and I saw all three alive and well in our swimmers at the meet. And, if we want to succeed in life, we need three things, duration, intensity, and frequency. You can't have one without the others. If you don't have all three, you can't expect the right result. Let me explain.

As for duration, if we practice a full workout, that's one thing. But, if it's just for 3 minutes, we're not going to improve on much of anything. So, we must endure (hence, the word, duration) the entire workout or, as much of it as fits our schedule, our abilities, and our conditioning.

And, it's the same with intensity. If we swim a workout or race (duration) but lack intensity, we're not going to succeed, except perhaps to finish the race. Intensity is the quality we all strive for in sports. Those who are most intense, are usually the winners. Those with the least of it are more recreational but usually not competitive. So, intensity is important.

As for frequency, we can swim a whole workout, do it intensely, but if we only swim once a week, we're not going to succeed. So, we need all three. So, here's what I saw at the Valentines Meet.

When I watch SPM as a team, I saw a team, not a bunch of individuals. While many teams were just that, SPM was a team. We supported one another. But, we also had all three of the key elements at play. And, it showed.

I know how SPM has longer workouts than most other teams do. Whenever we have a visitor, I ask how long they swim and no other team swims the duration we do. And, the results show it, especially in the distance and longer stroke events.

With intensity, again, the results show it. Thus far in my SPM career, whenever SPM has a similar number of swimmers to that of another team, SPM always outscores them. Why? We're far more intense.

With frequency, and I know our work and family schedules come first, SPM does a great job and this most recent meet shows it as well. In fact, when it comes to duration, intensity, and frequency, I seriously doubt there's a better team in America. And I say that because, at the Long Course Nationals in Sarasota, the only teams to beat SPM in points had 2-3 times the entrants. That means what we're doing has paid off. And with the most recent meet, it certainly did.

Bob Beach SCY Championship

by Sherri Bogue and Livia Zien

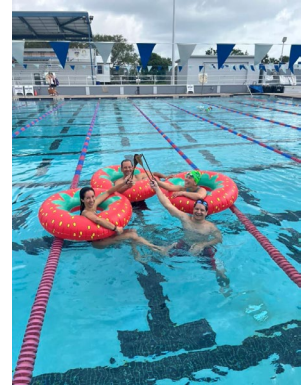


The annual Bob Beach SCY Championship took place the weekend of March 16-17 at North Shore Aquatic Center. 140 swimmers competed in the two-day event.

Again this year, this meet was full of great swims from swimmers that come for the sunshine and friendships. SPM took first place

with a combined score of 1662, which is over 890 points ahead of the second-place team. 17 women and 16 men from 23 to 93 years old – which even gave us a chance to mix up the ages on some of the relays. Almost every one of the SPM swimmers dropped time in at least one of their swims over the weekend, and many earned High Point in their age group.

An inaugural Strawberry Innertube Relay 'event' was added. Mike Zabel's brainchild was intended so that swimmers could cross-over from their teams to join other friends and compete in relays. There were four swimmers per relay (two women, two men) with no age or team restrictions. Starting in the water, participants either got into or on top of the tube, paddled to the end of the pool, transferred in the water to the next swimmer, and repeated until they completed



100yds. Wooden paddles, made by Mike were awarded to the winner – the Fintastic Four dominated using what Sarah Swoch describes as the "dolphin show innertube exchange technique."

A few firsts out of the water took place as well. Leonidha Budo swam his first Masters meet and Jim Burns-Montante returned after a 15-year hiatus. Welcome Leonidha and welcome back, Jim!

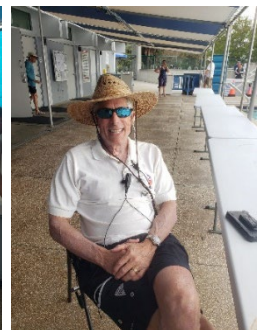
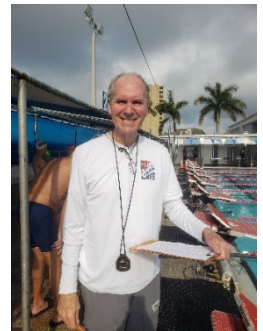
As always, everything went smoothly under meet manager Brooke Bowman, and Patty Nardozi and Lisa Flanagan, and officiating with Joanne Gauzens, Charlotte Petersen, and Steve Freeman. The longest continuously running Masters meet continues!

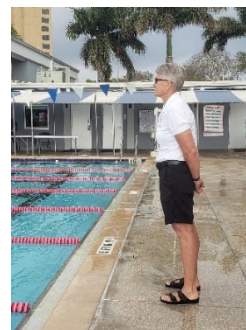
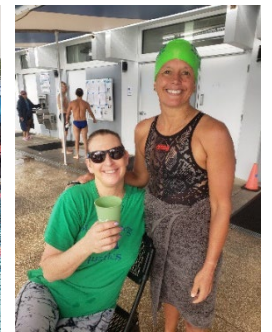
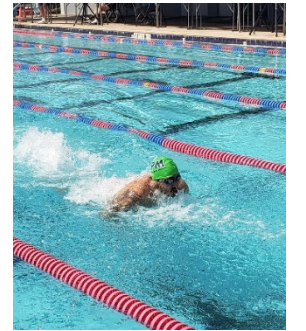
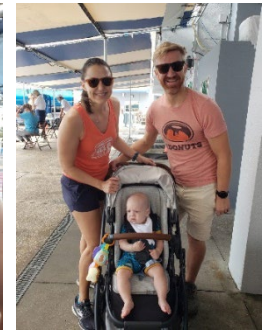
Congratulations to the high point winners: Men 30-34 Christopher Stickle, Women 35-39 Sarah Swoch, Men 35-39 Ken Wazyniak, Women 50-54 Paula Texel, Men 50-54 Eric Herman, Women 55-59 Karen Westerman, Men 55-59 Marty Acosta, Women 65-69 Nancy Kiernan, and Men 90-94 Judge Beach!

As President Kathy mentioned in her opening column, "THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS! I just cannot say this enough!"

Enjoy the photos by Sarah Swoch who was somehow able to snap pictures in between racking up points to earn high point.

Results can be found [here](#).







Meet Round-up

On February 3 in Clearwater, Alison Hayden went solo to the [2024 Gulf Coast Games for Life \(Senior Games\)](#) and placed 1st in the 200yd and 500yd free and the 50yd fly.

It was a busy month for Alison Hayden and Chris Stickle. At the [28th Annual Fort Lauderdale Masters Challenge](#) on February 17-18, in true Alison form, she won all her events: 50yd, 500yd, and 1650yd free, 50yd back, 100yd and 200yd fly, and the 100yd and 400yd IM. Chris won his 200yd, 500yd, and 1650yd free, 100yd back, and 400yd IM.

The [Goodlife Games](#) were held at the Long Center on March 3. Six swimmers represented SPM in the first long course meet of the year. Congratulations to Alison Hayden, Karen Westerman, Sherri Bogue, Cheryl Kupan, Geraldine Jacobson, and Kern Davis! Results can be found [here](#).

Going Virtual ePostals! 1-Hour Virtual Championship

With 22 swimmers participating in the 1-hour Virtual Championship, SPM placed 6th in the Medium Club division. The 14 women placed 1st and the 8 men placed 6th in their respective Small Club Divisions. There were a total of 9 Individual Top Ten Finishes, including All American, Valerie Valle in the 45-49 age group, logging in 4700 yards! Nine out of our ten relays finished in the Top Ten and including two All American relays.



Swimmers and counters on Team Day, January 28 (photo: S. Swoch)

Congratulations to Sarah Swoch, Stephanie Gibson, Kelly McBride, Laura Albee, Cheryl Kupan, Dawn Clark, Michele Mosner, Sherri Bogue, Nancy Kiernan, Geraldine Jacobson, Kathy Selles, Russell Hawkins, Andrew Leone, Jeff Gould, Jim Esposito, Steve Freeman, and Pat Marzulli. Extra kudos to Valerie Valle, Paula Texel, Alison Hayden, Cameron Chambers, and Christopher Stickle for their All-American finishes! Results can be found [here](#).

5k/10k Virtual Championship

Up next is the 5k/10k Virtual championship held from May 15-September 15. There are three scheduled team days, 7am start, email spetemasters@gmail.com to reserve your lane!

- June 23
- August 18
- September 8



According to the USMS website, “all participants will receive a cool latex event cap. Clubs with the most participants can win up to \$300.”

Remember that you will need to register prior to swimming the event and submit your results after your swim by 11:59pm Pacific time on September 17. Register for the event [here](#).

Leather Lung Award

This FL-LMSC award is given to swimmers who completed ALL events in either the SCY (18), SCM (18), or LCM (17) meets that are USMS sanctioned or recognized, or to anyone who completed ALL five USMS Postal Championships. All swims must be completed during a single season. This year, five SPM swimmers received the coveted bobblehead! Congratulations to Cheryl, Sarah, Dawn, and Celeste, and an extra special congratulations to Chris for competing in all events in all 4 categories. That's 58 unique events!

- Cheryl Kupan, St Pete Masters – SCY, LCM, SCM
- Christopher Stickle, St Pete Masters – SCY, LCM, SCM, Postal
- Sarah Swoch, St Pete Masters – SCY, LCM, SCM
- Dawn Clark, St Pete Masters – Postals
- Celeste Patton, St Pete Masters – SCY



Open Water Swimming Tampa Bay Frogman

by Kathy Selles

The good news is obvious immediately as I get in the car at 0530. The temperature is 58, and that is 20 degrees warmer than last year when it was 38 degrees. The bad news is the northeast wind is building to a possible 20 mph. There are small craft advisories posted, maybe they will cancel? Ha! No chance.



Frogman Start (photo: D. Clark)



According to the Frogman Swim March 2024 Newsletter, “2024 threw some tough tide changes and currents at our swimmers, making this year the most arduous swim to date.” I would have to agree. In previous swims, there were always other kayakers and swimmers around us, either them passing us or us passing them. But this year, once we proceeded out from the protection of land along Gandy Boulevard, there were only a

couple of swimmers close by. Most had been blown south by the strong north wind and changing currents. This year was hard work!

Dawn and I met up at Gandy Beach by 6 am, watching the flags whipping in the wind. Chris Quilty and former SPM swimmer, John Doolittle, will also swim today. Thankfully the water is not as cold as last year, giving a slight edge for the swimmers. Dawn is prepared with warm fluids to sip on, even though she rarely stops during her swim.

The swim always starts around 8:30, after the parachutists have dropped into the roped-off area, directly onto the big red X. Even with this wind, they land right on target.

Dawn maintains her pace throughout her swim. The waves and strong currents are coming from the north, pushing us south. Each buoy is hard to reach, requiring strong pulls on the paddle. As we approach the finish area, the water turns very shallow, and finally the sea has emptied out completely, meaning the swimmers have to stand up and walk out. Dawn took about 10 minutes for the hike, making her final time 2 hrs, 10 min. I had to get out of my kayak and pull it over the shallow area.

There is a loud, welcoming crowd at the finish area. The day is windy, cool and cloudy with occasional sprinkles. Swimmers are directed into the warming tent, although Dawn seems to be doing very well. We both take some time and get hot broth to warm up. Another great swim in the books!

The 2024 Frogman Swim fundraising totals topped \$1M, matching last year's total of over \$1,160,000!! Many thanks to the volunteers who participate each year!

Infinityman

by Sarah Swoch

My whole life I've been the last one out of the pool. I remember my mom telling me, "It's time to get out your lips are blue!" I'd carry on swimming every second I could. I suppose it shouldn't surprise me that even after 14 miles and six and a half hours I was still happily swimming along. On February 17th the Infinityman Invitational, dubbed the hardest swim you never heard of, managed to occur between cold fronts. The course creates an infinity loop starting at the South end of Honeymoon Island going through the cut between Honeymoon Island and Three Rooker SandBar, around Three Rooker Islands, and then back South along the West side of Honeymoon Island's Natural Beach.

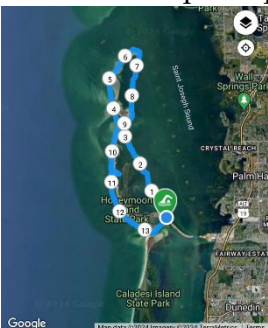
A small but brave field sloshed into 63-degree water sinking our toes into the mucky bottom on the way to the start line. This included Seth Baetzold, this year's Infinityman. Elizabeth Fry, with two Triple Crowns, a self-invented double SCAR, and the much sought after completion of the Oceans 7. I hope to Swim Across the (Long Island) Sound at her race one day. Heather Roka also has a Triple Crown to her name and tremendous experience in marathon open water swimming. Then there were the rest of us locals who decided this was a great place to train for, quite possibly, the only cold-water swim in Florida.

Storms were on the horizon; the air temperature was predicted to drop throughout the day and winds were scheduled to pick up. The tide was incoming until 5 pm, but it was a neap tide, meaning we wouldn't be swimming against much current on both passes between the islands. It also meant we would have a push through Hurricane Pass at the start, but a need to finish before the tide changed or risk not being able to cross back over Hurricane Pass to the finish line. Many swims of this distance plan for a consistent push. The Swim Around Charleston had a significant incoming tide along the river portion that had me seeing one-minute per 100-yard pace. In Portland I had to swim a few miles against a tide, but after that I had a nice push to glide along. Not so in Infinityman.

But all I did was swim. Kathleen Wilson, an accomplished marathon swimmer and race director of the Swim Around Charleston told us in our race briefing that swimmers are idiots in the water. I definitely am! With my cap, goggles, and earplugs I'm pretty much



(photo: S. Gibson)



Sarah Swoch is live
Shared LiveTrack

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blind, deaf, and dumb. It's far too strenuous on my neck to lift my head to sight for that long of a race. The only thing I can see is to my right or left. Not to mention it was foggy and rainy, so the few landmarks to sight off weren't visible from my vantage point. Stephanie Gibson volunteered to be my kayaker. In marathon swimming your kayaker is your teammate. They have the most jobs of anyone. They feed you, track your stroke count, point you in the right direction for every moment of the race and stay upright while trying to paddle at a swimmer's pace. Supporting a swimmer while also doing an athletic event yourself is a huge feat.

Steph and I were able to practice together, and she was tough enough to not be dissuaded by the cold temperatures leading up to the race. That worked out very well on race day. She was prepared to be in the kayak for 7 hours with race day snacks, gear, and emergency supplies along with my feeds and their schedule. She had a race day outfit for the Dover weather; overcast, chilly, windy, and rainy. Thank goodness she prepared for the race as much as I did. There were kayakers who capsized, got too cold, and had to leave the race. The air was colder than the water and with the rainy, windy conditions it was a tough day to kayak. We didn't see anyone on the water other than the race participants. At least one kayaker was stopped by a passing boater who wanted to help them, obviously they would be in distress if they were out in such conditions.

In a cold water swim, the kayaker also gets to monitor the swimmer for hypothermia. Our earlier swims gave Steph time to get a stroke count. A drop in stroke count is one of the indicators that the swimmer is hypothermic. It gave her a baseline for how well I follow directions while swimming too. Not following directions is another indication of hypothermia, though being blind and deaf while swimming I certainly miss a few directions. We worked out some signs that would alert me to the need to change directions to stay on course or for safety. She gave me a countdown to snack time as well as a bottle held high in the air to mean it was time to snack. Knowing marathon swimming herself, she intuitively sighted the course for the best lines to the finish. Unbeknownst to me she was tracking my progress as I gained on swimmers to eventually pass them. While I might not have known she was doing it, when the only thing you see other than water is your kayaker's eyes, you get to intuitively know what they are doing.

All this work led the two of us to finish in 2nd place overall and claim the title of Infinitywoman. We both crawled into Serbo's pre-warmed truck to celebrate and once we were sufficiently warmed up stayed on to cheer the next swimmers to the finish line. Followed by a dinner to celebrate all of our swims. I'm incredibly thankful to have a teammate willing to support me in such a difficult race, but also be a positive spirit in challenging conditions. We had an adventure together that neither of us is soon to forget.



Stephanie (photo: B. Berry)

Strokes for Hope

On March 23, with weather changes, sun, wind, and rain, Stephanie Gibson swam a 10k around Davis Island to support the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay, with Bill Berry kayaking by her side. Proceeds from this annual event go to help the organization provide services to the community so that no one has to face a crisis alone. For more information about his event and organization, please visit

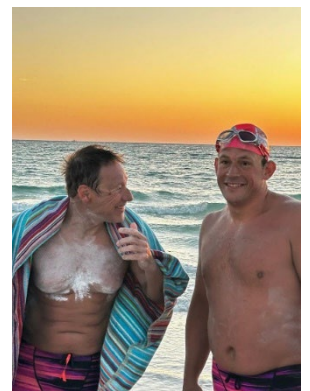
<https://www.crisiscenter.com/strokesforhope/>

Pinellas Swim March 30, 2024

By Andrew Leone and Ian Tarrant

With the tremendous support, love and encouragement of many, both Ian and I completed the longest swim of our lives on March 30, 2024. We started from Caladesi Island in Dunedin and finished at Pass-a-Grille in St Pete, covering a distance of 26.2 miles in 17 hours and 31 minutes (a long day at the office as they say!).

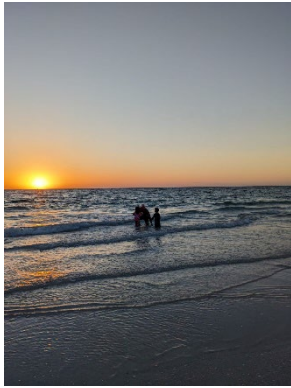
As a result of this challenge, we were all able to raise over \$12,000 for 'Breast Cancer Research Foundation' to honor cancer survivors, raise awareness, support future research initiatives; and in remembrance of parents lost. Andrew swam in loving memory of his "amazing dad"; Robert Leone who passed away in December 2023 aged 72. Robert was



Done! (photo: A. Leone)

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Andrew's biggest cheerleader in life and all his endeavors. Robert was an incredibly intelligent, compassionate radiologist who devoted his career to women's imaging and specifically breast cancer diagnosis. Andrew had recently asked him about retiring and he said that he loved being able to help diagnose breast cancers in women. Ian swam in memory of his mother Joyce Rosina Tarrant who passed away from cancer in December 2000 aged 60. Swimming to support this cause and in remembrance of our parents was important to us both and will hopefully resonate with those reading this who have also lost loved ones and friends to cancer.



(photo: A. Leone)



(photo: A. Leone)

We were supported on our journey down the Pinellas coastline by an 18-foot motorboat crewed by Tom and Louisa and Paul Vallitutto in the pedal kayak (Paul certainly drew the short straw). Nutrition and hydration are incredibly important during these long swims, with us both using combinations of Maruten and GU gels, apple sauce pouches, protein bars and Uncrustables



(photo: A. Leone)

(Andrew's snack of choice), washed down with either Gatorade, coconut or watermelon water. That being said, Tom fired up the barbecue for the crew around lunchtime, so we both got our order in for a pepper jack cheeseburger, which with hindsight was a risky nutritional choice but it tasted so good and hit the spot!

Andrew's Reflections

The most memorable part of the swim for me was being able to watch the sunrise and when we finished at Pass-a-Grille it was right at sunset. After this swim, I have come to realize that the emotional, mental, and spiritual aspect of marathon swimming is so important to me. The motivation for why we undertook this swim definitely gave us the push despite the tide and wind being against us for well over half the swim!

The swim started at 2am as we jumped into the dark 70-degree water with a glow from the moon and stars. We had the planned tidal push at the beginning, however, around six hours into the swim the tidal push stopped, and the protective easterly wind moved southwest and into our faces resulting in a substantially drop in pace (gotta love mother nature). With the emotional impetus to complete the swim in memory of our parents we just had to keep swimming despite the frustratingly slow pace. We were accompanied by dolphins, manatees, and happily the sharks gave us a wide berth.

We would both like to thank our teammates at SPM for their generous charity donations and for helping to push us throughout the training process for this swim. We don't know what swims are next, but Andrew is maybe looking at a long cold water swim this summer...

Donations can be made at <https://give.bcrf.org/fundraiser/5187146>.

Ian's Reflections

If only I was a sprinter and could do a decent 100m time, then I could have done something a bit more relaxing with those remaining 17 hours and 30 minutes. The real truth though is that I kinda enjoy those long hours in the salty water.

Marathon swimming can be tough because it's only by increasing your time in the water that you learn more about what you are capable of and what works for others, perhaps won't work for you. The mental aspect is key in these long swims, so I say make sure you select the journey for the right reasons, so you have something to mentally call upon should the going gets tough.

Try not to hold yourself back though because as they say "never trust your fears, because they don't know your strengths."

Upcoming Open Water Events

May 4: Tampa Bay Swim Across America, North Shore Park, St. Petersburg, FL [Information & registration](#)

May 11: Ocean Mile Swim (1-mile). Delray Beach FL. [Information & registration](#). *USMS sanctioned: NO*

May 18: Lowcountry Splash (2.4-miles, 6-miles). Mt. Pleasant SC. [Information & registration](#). *Entry deadline: registration closes Tuesday, May 14. USMS sanctioned: NO*

June 8: Beaufort River Swim (1-mile, 3.2-miles). Beaufort SC. [Information & registration](#). *Entry deadline: registration closes Monday, June 3. USMS sanctioned: NO*

Sept. 7: Swim for Alligator Lighthouse (8-miles). Islamorada FL. [Information & entry](#). *USMS sanctioned: NO*



2024 SPM Awards Banquet (photo: G. Smith)

SPM Annual Awards Banquet

The best view of St. Petersburg can be found from the top of Bayfront Towers. Another year of St. Pete Masters' accomplishments of 2023 was celebrated on March 24. All American and Top Ten awards were presented for both individual and relay achievements. They were honored with a super absorbent embroidered towel. Fun Georgie awards were also presented to fellow teammates.



(photo: S. Gibson)



Sarah Swoch (photo: S. Gibson)



(photo: K. Westerman)

What better way to spend an evening than dinner from Mazaaro's and a room with a view? Thanks to Judge Beach for providing an amazing venue and to the social committee for organizing another wonderful banquet!

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