



SPM NEWSLETTER

St. Petersburg Masters | North Shore Aquatic Complex

Rounding Out the Year

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The shortened SCM season did not deter those in pursuit of the Leather Lung award, as several teammates traveled to other states to compete. Alison Hayden and Chris Stickle have mastered the art of combining competition with sightseeing. Read about their travels and adventures in Buenos Aires and Charleston.

SPM continues to dominate in the USMS e-Postal swims. This season, with only 9 swimmers participating in the 3000, we placed 8th overall, and in the 6000, placed 5th with only 5 participants.

The year ended with another fun holiday party, this year, hosted by Ananda Bergeron with fun, games, and food!

And don't forget about two important upcoming events:

- Annual Team Meeting on Sunday, February 16
- Annual Awards Banquet on Saturday, March 29

As always, many thanks to the contributors: Gary Bastie, Alison Hayden, Kathy Selles, Chris Stickle, and Sarah Swoch. Thanks also to those who let me copy some of their photos: Jeff Gould, Karen Westerman, and Mike Zabel. Please send your activities, photos, kudos for a teammate, and anything you want to share, to me at livia.zien@gmail.com. The next issue will cover January through March.

Happy swimming!

Upcoming Pool Events

Mar. 14-16 / SCY: Snag Holmes Masters Invitational. Jupiter FL. [Information & online entry](#). Entry deadline: online entry closes Tuesday, March 11

Mar. 15-16 / SCY: St. Pete Masters/Bob Beach Championships. St. Petersburg FL. [Information & online entry](#). Entry deadline: online entry closes Tuesday, March 11

Apr. 13 / SCY: Swim for Charlie FUNdraising Meet. Hillsborough NC. [Information & online entry](#). Entry deadline: online entry closes Sunday, April 6

Apr. 23-24 / SCY: The Villages Senior Games. The Villages FL. Senior meet for 50+. will be USMS-recognized

Apr. 24-27 / SCY: USMS Spring Nationals. San Antonio TX. [Information & entry](#). Entry deadline: online entry closes Monday, March 31 (early entry fee discount ends Wednesday, February 19)

Apr. 27 / SCY: Show Your SWAG Meet. Gainesville FL. [Information & online entry](#). Entry deadline: online entry closes Sunday, April 20

May 8-11 / SCY: YMCA Masters Nationals. Orlando FL. MUST BE A Y MEMBER BY APRIL 10 TO ENTER. [Information & online entry](#). Entry deadline: online entry closes Thursday, April 24. USMS-recognized

June 7-8 / LCM: Bumpy Jones Classic. Sarasota FL



President's Corner

by Kathy Selles

Drastic changes have occurred in St Petersburg over the last few months. The hurricanes blew through here in September and October leaving mountains of debris to clean up. Few people have escaped some level of damage from these storms. The city is finishing the clean-up process and the huge black "claw" trucks will soon disappear from our streets. You have been checking things off your to-do list one by one, and maybe there is time to take a breath and look around. Maybe there is time and space in your life to get back to the pool. Your friends and lane mates are wondering where you are and how you are doing.

January is a time for renewal and looking forward. That word - goals - keeps coming up. Maybe this year is one to make things easy on yourself. Maybe your goal is just to get to the pool and swim a few laps. It is so invigorating. You know you're going to love that feeling of letting the water flow over you, feeling the pull of breaststroke and the stretch of backstroke. Before you know it, you will be back at your previous times. Make your goals reasonable, help yourself accomplish what you need right now.

Looking forward, we have the hour swim in January, the Bob Beach meet March 15 - 16, and our Long Course meet July 12- 13. Volunteers will be needed for both meets. We have had a great response for volunteers in the past. Please mark your calendar and set aside time to help with our meets. Watch for our emails requesting volunteers. Our goal is to have two timers for each lane. The day goes by quickly and with two timers, we can organize break time easily. Thank you all for your help at previous meets!

Water Temperatures

by Kathy Selles

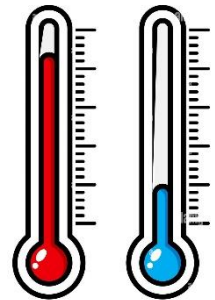
Boiling or freezing? In a swimming pool, a few degrees difference in the water temperature can make a big difference in our comfort level. Some people want it colder and some people want it hotter, some people are feeling overheated at 80 degrees, and others are shivering uncontrollably at the same temperature.

Being a community pool, there are many different people who come to swim. A water aerobics class meets in the morning; they would probably like the water at 90 degrees!

Little kids come after school and Coach Patty has to keep them moving to keep them from shivering. In winter, the pool continues to lose heat throughout the day. In order for the temperature to be reasonable in the afternoon, the water must be warmer in the morning, so the heat lasts all day. The opposite is true for the summer, when the sun is shining down and heating the water.

Because North Shore pool is outdoors and subject to the whims of nature, the staff monitors the water throughout the day to keep the temperature adjusted according to weather conditions. Our pool is generally kept around 80 to 81 degrees in cold weather, and around 79 degrees or less in hot weather. Tarps are put over the pool in cold weather to keep the heat in. They are removed first thing in the morning and the pool will lose about a degree of heat during the Masters workout. The heaters can't keep up. An additional heating system has just been installed and is undergoing calibration and staff training. This should make it easier to maintain the temperature.

As you can see, it is impossible to set the temperature to please everyone. It is also impossible to make rapid changes in the temperature. The staff at NSP works to keep the water comfortable. If you have comments or concerns about this or other issues at the pool, please contact an SPM board member. We may be able to answer your question or research the concern and get back to you. Of course, if you should see a potentially dangerous concern, report it to pool staff immediately.



Coach's Corner

Celebration!

During the holidays, people celebrate. But, it's nothing new because we not only like to celebrate things, we ourselves are also to be celebrated. Take swimmers, each has their own strengths and weaknesses but together, let's say in a practice or in a relay, we put our best foot forward and collectively, we can celebrate and enjoy a good practice, set, relay, etc. All in all, we get to celebrate once it's finished, and we often do.

For instance, I've noticed how, after one of Fred's more difficult practices, folks will stand around at the wall and sort of celebrate "We did it!" We've enjoyed working our hardest at a difficult time, and we did it with friends and colleagues. It was an accomplishment, something to be proud of.

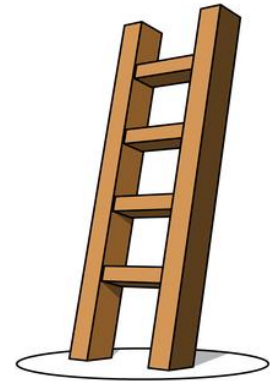
Well, it's the same with any type of relay, be it an hour swim relay, swim meet, open water, etc. We celebrate together, doing what none of us individually could. But it's still the same because we're celebrating something meaningful, at least to us. In doing so, we grow closer as a team of misfits who like to get up at odd hours of the night, swim after work (when everyone else has gone home or to happy hour) and we do it with smiles on our faces when it's finished, sometimes during the most difficult part of what we're accomplishing. Regardless of what it is, we'll find a way to celebrate and that's something the outside world doesn't understand. If it did, everybody would swim!



Hey, Try This!

One of our swimmers had a positive experience with this one so let me share it. It's not something difficult either. It's just a simple visual, a mental exercise that can be done while swimming. Here's what it is.

As you swim down the lane, think of there being a ladder, submerged and held horizontally in your lane. You reach out and grab the ladder's rung furthest from you, then pull yourself past your hand and, with the other hand, you reach the next rung. But, before you let go of the first rung, you know that you must grab the second one so that you don't "slip" backward. As you continue, it's like climbing a ladder. In this instance, it's horizontal so you can't fall but, you can make progress as you grab each rung.



Now, consider two things. First, you want to climb that ladder having to grab as few rungs as possible. If they're spaced at 6" intervals, you'd naturally want to skip as many as possible. Why make the journey "choppy" by trying to grab every one of them? As for the second, with ladders, we don't let go of one before we have a grip on the next one. And, so it is with swimming—we grab forward but finish our strokes, we don't stop pulling at our shoulders because we pull past our shoulders.

At any rate, think about this as a drill the next time you swim freestyle. It also works with backstroke but not with fly or breast for obvious reasons.

Pool Competitions

With the postponement of the Rowdy Gaines Classic, several team members were able to travel to other meets. Cameron Chambers and Chris Stickle flew to Buenos Aires in early November for the IGLA swim competition and had a change of seasons as well (late Spring for the Southern Hemisphere!) Alison Hayden and Chris Stickle went north to attend South Carolina's SCM State Meet. Geraldine Jacobson and Cheryl Kupan supported Sarasota's Shark Tank meet locally. In final charge at the end of the year, Chris Stickle was spotted in Minnesota and Pennsylvania too.

In the Virtual world, the 9 swimmers participated in the 3000 and/or 6000 e-postals, and 12 SPMers quietly participated in the USMS Go the Distance for 2024.

2024 IGLA Buenos Aires

by Chris Stickle

This year's IGLA was the first ever held in South America in Buenos Aires Argentina. We had two athletes participate, Cam Chambers and Chris Stickle. Both swimmers had an amazing experience with great swims. Cam scored 1st place in his 800 FR and Open water 1500. He got 2nd place in his 200 BR / 400 FR and was 3rd in 200 IM and 4th in 200FR. Cameron had his best race in his 800 with a new state record time of 8:55.62! As for Chris, he got 1st place in 1500 FR and had 4 runners-up finishes in the Open water 1500, 200 Fly, 400 IM, and 800 FR, along with a 4th place finish in his 400 FR. Chris' best race came in the 200 Fly with a time of 2:24.45.



Cham and Chris, 1 and 2! (photo: C. Stickle)



(photo: C. Stickle)



This was Cam's first IGLA Championship and Chris' 5th time at IGLA. There is so much to do at IGLA with not just swimming but also taking part in the many social events that are hosted by the IGLA hosts. Cam and Chris took part in a beach side social after the Open Water swim where athletes got a chance to

relax and celebrate a fun day of open water swimming. They also attended a large social gathering hosted by the Water Polo teams at one of the local nightclubs in town along with the city-wide Pride Festival before the start of the competition.



(photo: C. Stickle)



Local cuisine (photo: C. Stickle)



Cam and Chris really enjoyed the local cuisine options as there are many fantastic restaurants that surprisingly featured Italian dishes as the locals favorite along with many empanadas. Many of the foods offered in Buenos Aires are offered at very reasonable prices due to a lower cost of living.

One of the highlights of the trip was a day of touring some of the local museums such as the art museum,

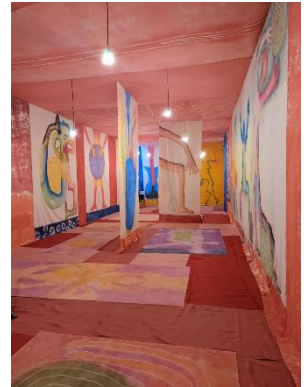
the national train museum, and the museum EL Zanjón Granados where you can explore historic underground tunnels. The city has a long river walk where visitors can walk for miles with glorious views of downtown as well as some of the nature parks on the other side of the river.



The next IGLA Championships will be held in Washington DC May 31-June 5. SPM would love to get more participation so we can have relays and a chance at taking home the small team trophy. Registration for IGLA is now open and can be found on the USMS web page under events or via <https://www.igla.org/>. When registering please make sure to select St Pete Masters Inc as your team. If you have any questions, please contact Chris Stickle.



EL Zanjón Granados Museum (photo: C. Stickle)



A Long Weekend in Charleston Filled with Swimming, History and Fun

by Alison Hayden



High point winners (photo: C. Stickle)

On December 6 – December 8 the city of North Charleston hosted the South Carolina Masters Swimming Championships. I decided it was the perfect time to take a break from the frozen tundra in Maine and enjoy a long weekend swimming and sightseeing in Charleston. A fabulous time and place for a swim meet. The facility was a 50-meter pool which was fairly new and I also had a list of sightseeing options including the South Carolina Aquarium and various historical sites within the city. My sidekick, Chris Stickle agreed it was a good place for a meet, and he decided to attend as well.

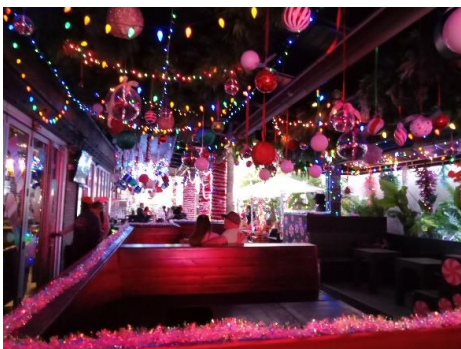
I was a bit off assuming the weather would be better than Maine, when my flight landed

it was a brisk 23 degrees. Just another cold front moving through, that was not going to deter an indoor swim meet or sightseeing.

The meet started Friday evening with the 1500 and 400 IM, I was still traveling so did not partake. Chris easily won the 1500 free for his age group. Saturday events consisted of 100free, 200 back, 200 fly and 200 free for myself taking second place in each event. The very star-studded field of swimmers consisted of former Olympian Jenny Thompson and various high level caliber Masters swimmers from surrounding states. We also ran into friends from Melbourne, Florida. Chris swam 100 free, 200 Back, 50 back and 200 free, placing with a first place, 2 seconds and a third. The meet conveniently ended around noon leaving time for a relaxing afternoon in downtown Charleston. Tried to get to the Aquarium however missed the entry cut off time by a few minutes due to too much time lounging at lunch. No problem, that will be tomorrow's activity since we weren't leaving until Monday. Spent a few hours walking around seeing the historical sights and all the Christmas decorations and



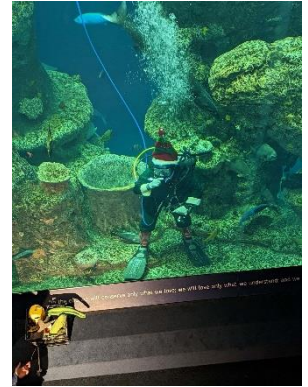
A bit chilly, but undeterred (photo: A. Hayden)



markets. The most unique unusual item we spotted was a 3-foot Elf on the shelf at a booth selling toys at the city market. I consulted with the store clerk about the price and was rudely told it was not for sale; I kept trying to bargain a substantial amount of money and the sale went nowhere. I have since researched everywhere to find this item with no luck. Perhaps the elf will be sitting there next year, a reason to return.

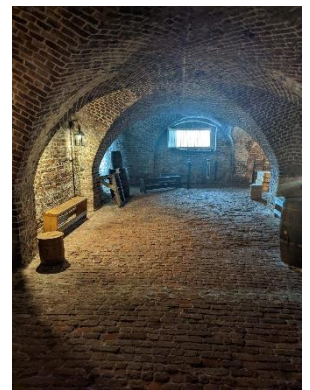
Sunday the attendance was a bit scarce; Jenny Thompson had fallen ill on Saturday and the stars in my age group decided not to show up. I was a bit disappointed but figured now I could grasp the high point award. I swam the 200 IM, 100 Fly, 400 Free and 100 back, winning all in my age category and Chris swam 200 IM, 100 Fly, and 50 free. Placing first in 50 free, 200 IM and 2nd in the 100 fly. We both ended up with the high point award for designated age groups.

Again, the meet finished at a reasonable time. We checked out of the North Charlestown hotel and made our way to a centrally located hotel in downtown Charleston. Another fabulous lunch and we made it to the Aquarium which was phenomenal (coming from a marine biologist). The aquarium holds one of the deepest indoor tanks in North America, it is 42 feet deep, holds 385,000 gallons of water and is home to 700 animals. We spent several minutes awing the sharks and large fish swimming by and they also had an elf diver in the tank entertaining the crowd. Spent the rest of the afternoon and evening checking out local restaurants and various pop-up Christmas drinking establishments.



Monday, one more final quest before we took off for the airport in the afternoon. We went to tour the Old Exchange and Provost Dungeon. We discovered the place the day before when I was seeking out a public toilet, I could not use their rest room without buying a ticket. Hence the search for a toilet continued like this for several minutes until finally I just had to water the bushes in the park down the street and of course afterwards there seemed to be a public bathroom on every street corner. I completely missed the security guard in the park which Chris was nice enough to deter. It always seems to happen that way.

The Old Exchange Provost Dungeon was fascinating. The Old Exchange was one of the sites of the ratification of the US Constitution. The Provost Dungeon was where prisoners were placed during the American Revolution. Between the American revolution and the Civil war this was also the site where public slave auctions took place. It was a fascinating site and filled with history and the dungeon seemed like time had not lapsed. To find out more about this historical site visit <https://www.oldexchange.org>. The historian who led our tour was really knowledgeable and even dressed the part.



To wrap it all up, it was a cold weekend filled with some swimming, good food/drink and interesting sightseeing. I'll definitely be back. I believe having the meet so close to Christmas made it that much more special. Maybe next time a whole group of us can enjoy the festivities.

Meet Round-up

With the storms still fresh in our minds, and the Rowdy Gaines Classic (the traditional start of our local SCM season) cancelled, Sarasota's Shark Tank meet was the first weekend of November. Cheryl Kupan and Geraldine Jacobson represented SPM well, collecting lots of firsts in their respective age groups. Results can be found [here](#).

Chris Stickle logged both miles and meters in December, traveling nearly every weekend to South Carolina, Minnesota, or Pennsylvania. He and Alison Hayden competed in the SCM State Meet in South Carolina on Dec 6-8, followed by the SCM Challenge in Minneapolis the following weekend, and finishing up the year at York's Candy Cane Catch in York, PA – Lots of dedication to get those Leather Lung Awards!

3000/6000 Virtual Championship

Team day was November 10th and nine swimmers came out to either swim the 3000yd or 6000yd event. Mike Zabel captured images of the post event happiness. Top Tens for everyone and quite a few All-Americans as well!



Among the five women who competed in the 3000, there were three All-Americans: Macarena Martin Mayor, Stephanie Gibson, and Alison Hayden, with Sarah Swoch (8th) and Karen Westerman (3rd) in the Top Ten. Alison, Stephanie, and Karen also won an All-American for their 35+ Women's Relay. All four men who competed in the 3000 placed in the Top Ten: Chris Stickle (2nd), Russell Hawkins (3rd), Jeff Gould (5th), and Steve Freeman (6th). Chris, Jeff, and Steve formed a 4th place 25+ Men's Relay. And mixing it all up, we had two Top Ten Mixed Relays.

In the 6000 event, Macarena Martin Mayor and Chris Stickle earned All-American bragging rights. Top Tens went to Sarah Swoch (5th), Russell Hawkins (3rd), and Jeff Gould (4th). Check out Sarah Swoch's summaries on FB and Instagram too!

3000 Women

- 1st 25-29 Macarena Martin Mayor 39:13.81
- 8th 35-39 Sarah Swoch 42:58.83
- 1st 40-44 Stephanie Gibson 40:16.68
- 1st 50-54 Alison Hayden 36:05.06
- 3rd 55-59 Karen Westerman 39:42.74

3000 Men

- 2nd 30-34 Christopher Stickle 35:40.83
- 3rd 35-39 Russell Hawkins 52:34.00
- 5th 60-64 Jeff Gould 43:16.00
- 6th 65-69 Stephan Freeman 43:48.00

3000 Relays

- 1st 35+ Women's 3000 Relay: Stephanie Gibson, Alison Hayden, Karen Westerman 1:56:04.48
- 4th 25+ Men's 3000 Relay: Christopher Stickle, Jeff Gould, Stephan Freeman 2:02:44.83
- 3rd 25+ Mixed 3000 Relay: Macarena Martin Mayor, Christopher Stickle, Russell Hawkins, Stephanie Gibson 2:47:45.32
- 2nd 45+ Mixed 3000 Relay: Alison Hayden, Karen Westerman, Jeff Gould, Steve Freeman 2:42:51.80

6000 Women

- 1st 25-29 Macarena Martin Mayor 1:18:23.00
- 5th 35-39 Sarah Swoch 1:27:55.99



6000 graduates, Russ (3rd) and All-American Jeff
(photo: M. Zabel)



6000 postal graduates, Sarah (5th) and All-American Macarena (photo: M. Zabel)

6000 Men

- 30-34 1 Christopher Stickle 1:14:32.83
- 35-39 3 Russell Hawkins 1:47:28.00
- 60-64 4 Jeff Gould 1:28:06.00

6000 Relays

- 2nd 25+ Men's 6000 Relay: Christopher Stickle, Russell Hawkins, Jeff Gould 4:30:06.83
- 1st 25+ Mixed 6000 Relay: Macarena Martin Mayor, Christopher Stickle, Sarah Swoch, Jeff Gould 5:28:57.82

Go the Distance!

Twelve teammates participated in USMS Go the Distance program (GTD) in 2024.

This event is based on the honor system and is free. Swimmers track their distance swum on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis on the USMS fitness log. It is based solely on distance, not time. When you reach certain milestones, you are eligible to purchase a prize.

Cameron Chambers lead with 799.36 miles, Lisa Flanagan with 704.26, and Bill Specht at 557.38. Sarah Swoch 536.13, and Nathan Dean with 411.79. Also adding to the SPM mileage were Chris Stickle with 409.61 miles, Paula Texel 314.63, and Adrienne Forkois 306.9. Additional miles



Sarah Swoch summed up the results with a perfect post and graphic on Facebook, putting the distance in perspective. She writes, "The results are in, SPM went the distance! We collectively swam 4,137.17 miles which is a distance from Tampa Airport to Anvik Airport in Alaska. It also happens to be the perimeter of Texas and the distance between Honolulu and Baton Rouge. Congrats on consistency, we had the most miles of any team in the Florida LMSC!" For more information, go to <https://www.usms.org/events/fitness-events/go-the-distance>.

Open Water Swimming

Big Shoulders, Big Waves, and Even Bigger Midwest Spirit

by Sarah Swoch

If there's one thing the Midwest knows how to do, it's roll with the punches. Weather doesn't cancel our plans—it just changes them a little. So when my dad and I arrived at Ohio Street Beach for the 2024 Big Shoulders Swim, we expected to face cold water, choppy waves, and whatever else Lake Michigan had in store. What we didn't expect was for there to be a red flag flying on the beach and the race to be officially canceled.



Lake Michigan (photo: S.Swoch)



High winds meant the lifeguards couldn't get their boats into the water without ending up in Indiana. No boats, no race. Or so we thought. But in true Midwest fashion, instead of packing up and heading home, everyone gathered around and waited for the next plan. And sure enough, a new plan arrived. The lifeguards couldn't be on the lake, but they could stand on shore. And if they could stand on shore, we could still swim. The race director said it wouldn't be scored, but we could swim—we'd do laps on a shortened course, and just like that, the event was back on. Cheers erupted.

Somewhere in that moment, between the Midwestern resilience and the sheer stubbornness of open-water swimmers, my dad and I looked at each other and knew—of course we were still going to swim.

The air was cool, but the water? Surprisingly warm. A rare treat for Big Shoulders, where temperatures are usually a gamble between “refreshing” and “hypothermia-adjacent.” We waded in and took off, cutting through the water with Chicago’s skyline towering behind us. The waves slapped us around a bit, but hey, it wouldn’t be Lake Michigan without a little attitude.

My dad opted for one lap on the choppy course, wisely calling it a day while I debated squeezing in just one more. The water was good, I was feeling strong, and why not? But then a far more serious concern struck me—what if they ran out of post-race ribs? That was a risk I wasn’t willing to take. So, with my priorities firmly in order, I jogged through the finish line and found my dad. After bundling up in our wool hats, we made our way to the most important part of any good Midwest event: the food.

Big Shoulders 2024 might not have gone as planned, but in the end, it had everything that makes a Midwest race great—good people (including Ted Soltys), unpredictable weather, some last-minute improvisation, and a finish line celebration that made it all worth it. I’d do it again in a heartbeat—if I can survive the lottery. And next time, I’m securing a backup rack of ribs.

Swim Around Anna Maria Island

Read about Suzanne Dearworth’s 16-mile clockwise circumnavigation around Anna Maria Island. She completed the swim on September 20 in 6:39:44. Congratulations, Suzanne!

https://news.marathonswimmers.org/2024/12/suzanne-dearworth-around-anna-maria-island/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR0c3Xaps9WNa09WDuuzUFXKIF2fvfNzVaJPOZ0qwrXiLb-9jzhTFd2uLm8_aem_ypsc7KOnnw80BpDr9XZHxg

Upcoming Open Water Events

Apr. 4: USMS Sprint-Distance Championships (1-mile). Sarasota FL. [Information & registration](#). *Entry deadline: online entry closes Monday, March 31. USMS sanctioned: YES*

Apr. 5: USMS Long Distance Championships (5K). Sarasota FL. [Information & registration](#). *Entry deadline: online entry closes Monday, March 31. USMS sanctioned: YES*

Apr. 6: Swim Miami (800m, 1-mile, 5K, 10K). Miami FL. [Information & registration](#). *USMS sanctioned: NO*

May 17: Beaufort River Swim (1-mile, 3.2-miles). Beaufort SC. [Information & registration](#). *USMS sanctioned: NO*

May 24: Lowcountry Splash (2.4-mile, 6-mile). Charleston SC. [Information & registration](#). *USMS sanctioned: NO*

May 31: Southeast Zone Open Water Championship/Bussell Island Swim (1-mile, 2.6K, 5.2K). Lenoir City TN. [Information & registration](#). *USMS sanctioned: YES*

Sept. 13: Swim for Alligator Lighthouse (8-miles). Islamorada FL. [Information & registration](#). *USMS sanctioned: NO*

Outside the Lanes

The Westermans were at it again.

From October 24-27, Karen Westerman and her Florida Elite Synchro Swim Team represented Team Florida at the Long Center competing in the USA Artistic Swimming National Masters Championships. At the end of the four day competition, they placed 8th in the free routine, and helped Team Florida to place 2nd overall.



Artistic Swimming Championships (photo: K. Westerman)



On November 2, they completed the Panama City Ironman. Yes, take a bow, Russ! Congratulations on another Ironman finish!

The following week, they drove out to the



Daytona International Speedway where they competed in the The Clash Endurance Half

Aquabike events. Russ also competed with the Kennedy Law Racing team in the The Clash Daytona Redline Relay. This event is a nonstop 3 hours cycling relay. 8 person relay and they ride 2 at a time and swap out after each lap. As part of the Kennedy Law Racing Team completed 21 laps for 52.5 miles in 3 hours.



Panama City Ironman (photo: K. Westerman)



A Story From the Past

by Gary Bastie

Here's one that we can all relate to. Why? Because we naturally have fears. Yet, it's only when we conquer them that they're able to help us. For this story, I'll use one from my past.

During a number of summers, I spent time in the Boundary Waters of northern Minnesota. These are lakes, rivers and streams between the northern part of the state and Canada and it's quite a place.

During one of our canoe trips, we went to Lake Mukooda, a deep lake with a rock ledge overlooking one of the deepest places in the lake. On that ledge, it was easy to take a few steps and leap out, free fall, and hit the water with a little force from maybe 15 ft. up. Since the rocks extended downward, to the lake bottom, and beyond, it was a nice cliff jump, if I do say so myself.



(photo: from recreation.gov)

The first time I visited this area, and as a swimmer, I was looking for (what else?) a place to swim. At the same time, jumping off a cliff seemed like a fun way to spend an afternoon after paddling for a couple of days. So we found this spot. It looked deep because visibility on this day was spectacular. And, with an experimental toe in the water, then a jump from shore's edge, it was obviously more than 20 ft. deep. So, here's what we did.

We jumped off next to the water's edge. Then, we climbed the small cliff, made it to the top, posted a "look-out" so that nobody'd jump on anyone else, and the first of us jumped. That would be me. When I hit the water, I obviously submerged. But, when I did, I noticed (with my handy-dandy-swim-goggles on) that I could not only see my feet. I could also see below my feet, approximately 40 ft. down, a big fish lurking there, then nothing below but more water.

At first, I got that tense feeling in the pit of my stomach. In those days, it was a smaller tense feeling due to a smaller stomach. But, at least I got one. So, why did I get that feeling? I did because of the water's depth (about 80 ft. as I later discovered on maps). Yet, as soon as I did tense up, I began to relax. Here's what I learned from that experience.

We all tense up when we look at things illogically. In this instance, the sheer depth made me tense up. But, as soon as that happened, I relaxed because I could swim, was now treading water, was also submerged, and I was looking well beyond my feet, that big fish, and towards the bottom of the lake. Illogically, I tensed up because there was

nothing under me but more deep water. Logically, I knew I could float, tread water, or swim so I could enjoy. That's when the next wave swept over me (not literally).

As soon as I saw how clear the water was, how nice the temperature, and how much fun I had, I couldn't wait to do it all again. And, that's what me and my friends did for the next half hour or so. We climbed to the top of the cliff, jumped off, noticed how clear the water was, and we enjoyed the experience so that, to this day, I still remember the experience positively. So, here's my point.

It's not the depth of the water, nor the difficulty of the workout. It's the great feeling we get while in the water, doing what we do best---swim. Think about that during the next practice and thereafter and, by all means, just enjoy the experience. Don't think about the negatives. Think about how great swimming feels because, as you've probably figured out by now, the rest of the world thinks we're nuts. We, however, know the real truth about swimming.

Socials!

Holiday Party



Team photo (photo: J. Gould)

Ananda Bergeron graciously hosted SPM's holiday party before moving to Boston in January 2025. Her mid-century birdcage home, one of only 13 built by Architect Glenn Q. Johnson on Pinellas Point, was the perfect venue for a balmy Florida winter evening.

The potluck spread lined the kitchen countertops with scrumptious appetizers, delicious mains, a medley of salads, decadent desserts, and cheese! Courtesy of Chelsea and Rob, a gouda cheese wheel was the centerpiece of the charcuterie board designed by Jeff and Sarah. Not only do swimmers know how to swim, we know how to eat!

Each year, Eric Herman takes on the role of 'Santa' at the White Elephant gift exchange. As usual, he carefully monitors the selection and exchanges of each and every gift. Lots of gifts changed hands, with the orchid being one of the popular ones.

Jeff Gould hosted "Person, Place, and Thing," consisting of three rounds of guessing games. Teams draw a word from a bucket, and one person is chosen to get their team to guess the word in a minute. Each round has different rules: using words and actions, actions only, or only 1 word. Of course, it's a competition, but friendly competition where a great time was had by all!



(photo: K. Selles)



Steve playing the charades round of the game (photo: L. Zien)



Sheila, Susan, Gene, Sarah, and Paula (photo: K. Selles)



Game master Jeff (photo: L. Zien)

Annual Team Meeting

Date: Sunday, February 16, 2025

Time: 11am (normal Sunday practice at 9am)

Location: NSAC Classroom

Agenda:

- Team Updates
- Election of 2 Board Members
 - Current nominations: Cameron Chambers and Stephanie Gibson
 - Floor nominations will be taken

Light refreshments will be served



SPM Officers

President

Kathy Selles

Vice President

Lisa Flanagan

Secretary

Jeff Gould

Treasurer

Brooke Bowman

Board Members

Ananda Bergeron

Chris Stickle

Sarah Swoch

Valerie Valle

Coaches

Head Coach

Fred Lewis

Assistant Coach

Gary Bastie

ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET

DATE: SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 2025

TIME: 5PM-9PM (5PM HAPPY HOUR | 6PM DINNER | 7PM AWARDS)

LOCATION: ST. PETE YACHT CLUB (11 CENTRAL AVE, ST PETERSBURG, FL)

RSVP BY MARCH 21:

[HTTPS://FORMS.GLE/KPHdSES17EAYS9ZB7](https://forms.gle/KPHdSES17EAYS9ZB7)

COST: \$30 TO BROOKE BOWMAN (SPM MAILBOX AT NSAC BY 3/21)

