



SPM NEWSLETTER

St. Petersburg Masters | North Shore Aquatic Complex

Rounding out 2022 ...

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"He knows when you skip practice. He knows when you are late. He knows when you swim fast or slow. So sprint for goodness sake." Sarah Swoch continued to keep morning practices lively through the holiday season!

With so many activities to close out 2022, it is difficult to summarize in just a few paragraphs. As LCM season ended and SCM season began, SPM made a statement at the Rowdy Gaines Masters Classic in Orlando. Mike Smith shares a most thoughtful account of the World Senior Games, mixing serious swimming with the wonders of exploration in the Southwest. Gloria provides

incredible photos of the meet and their post-meet hikes in Zion. Fortunate to have the weather in Florida, open water swimming season continued, and Stephanie Gibson gives us a glimpse into the mind of a distance open water swimmer in her Alligator Lighthouse race report. Regina helps us look inward and define success for ourselves.

Serious swimming aside, lots of smiles, happy tummies, and fun and games were also had at the beautiful holiday party hosted by Mike and Jane Zabel, and a pre-Lightning game party hosted by Chelsea Nauta.

We're not just about swimming. I had a wonderful time learning more about Alyssa Harmon and her newly published poetry book.

And with heavy hearts, Kathy Selles and Colleen O'Reilly write about the passing of our dear friend and teammate, Ann Albert.

More ways to connect. Megan Howson has created an Instagram account ([stpetemastersswim](#)) and Stephanie Gibson is posting team meet information and activities on the team [Facebook page](#).

Thanks to everyone who helped with this issue: Gary Bastie, Stephanie Gibson, Alyssa Harmon, Megan Howson, Regina Novak, Colleen O'Reilly, Kathy Selles, Chris Stickle,

Mike Smith, Gloria Smith, Sarah Swoch, Karen Westerman, and Mike Zabel for their articles, photos, and content suggestions. Please send content ideas to me (livia.zien@gmail.com). Here's to 2023!



(photo S. Swoch)

Upcoming Events

Jan. 15: Tampa Bay Frogman Swim (3.4-miles). Tampa FL.

Jan. 29: SPM Hour Swim Team Date and annual meeting.

Feb. 4 / SCY: Gulf Coast Senior Games for Life. Sarasota FL. [Information & entry](#). Entry deadline: received by Monday, January 9. Senior games for 50+. USMS-recognized

Feb. 11-12 / SCY: Valentine's Meet. Clearwater FL. [Information & entry](#). Entry deadline: online entry closes Wednesday, February 8

Feb. 18-19 / SCY: Masters Challenge. Ft. Lauderdale FL. [Information & online entry](#) | [paper entry](#). Entry deadline: online entry closes Tuesday, February 14; paper entry received by Sunday, February 12

Mar. 11-12 / Save the dates – Bob Beach SCY Championship Meet

Mar. 18 / LCM: Goodlife Games. Clearwater FL. Senior games for 50+. will be USMS-recognized

From Coach Gary: How We Do It Around Here

By Gary Bastie

I remember reading a couple of stories that made me think about this article. In fact, they inspired it. One was a story of how a certain jurisdiction had handled legal matters for quite some time. Eventually, it was said by some in local law enforcement, “Well, that’s how we do things around here...” The problem was, what they were doing was illegal. And, they got caught.

What they’d begun doing was small at first. The jurisdiction (not in Florida) had kept folks in jail, even for minor infractions, for at least two weeks. By then, a person’s ready to admit to anything, just to get out of jail. So, the prosecution rate was near 100% and everyone arrested was found guilty, paid their fines, and was able to get back to work, if they still had a job. But, it didn’t work out as planned.

A friend of mine had a daughter. Like her pappy, she was really good at law and was able to see things quickly. It didn’t take her long to realize that what this jurisdiction was doing was illegal. You can’t keep folks in prison for minor offenses until they’re willing to admit to being at fault (if they even were in the first place). So, she reported the abuse and things quickly changed. But, not without fallout.

Almost immediately, a judge who’d allowed this abuse to knowingly take place, had to step down. He resigned in disgrace and lost his retirement. Others were similarly punished. It was all needless because they all knew the law. Yet, it had been easy to just let things degenerate until they became illegal. But their cavalier motto stuck with me, “Well, that’s how we do things around here...”

The other article hit closer to home. It involved three coaches getting together to decide which other sports they wanted to exist at their university and which they didn’t. Not only was their meeting illegal because it wasn’t advertised, open to scrutiny, and it was held off campus, it also caused irreparable damage to college sports. Here’s why.

What these three coaches decided was that their teams were the most important. So, whichever other sports were in conflict (potentially siphoned away athletes) would be dropped. So, three coaches decided the future of a university’s athletic program and its athletes. Why? Because they’d established “Well, that’s how we do things around here” approach. After all, they’d gotten away with it up until now so, why not carry it through to exclude the competition.

Soon, these men began making the lives of other coaches, staff, and athletes miserable. They “sold” their plans to the athletic department and began to make them public. Think about that. Here you are and someone’s telling you that your program is going to be dropped. Why? Because that’s the way these men wanted things to be done around there.

One of the coaches they persecuted most was a friend of mine. He’d been a football player at the university and helped with football in the fall. But, once he’d started up the university’s wrestling program, he had to leave before the end of the semester at the start of wrestling’s season.

Wrestling was his life’s passion. It was the sport he helped add to the university’s program and, he was good at it. He’d taken good wrestlers and made them into national conference and national champions. He taught wrestling as a course and when I took his course, I realized how good he was.

As a result of the illegal meeting of three coaches, they began to make my friend’s life miserable. At first, his “boss” forbade him to leave helping with the football program until it was finished. But, like other fall sports like swimming, wrestling began official practices and meets were scheduled so how could he not fulfill his responsibilities? So, he was asked to resign as one of the assistant football coaches. He’d only done it to be helpful and, as head wrestling coach, his team came first. But, he wasn’t allowed to quit without losing his job as a P.E. instructor and his wrestling program. Then, it got worse.

By now, my friend’s hours had been cut and his wrestlers’ work-study jobs were reassigned to others. Long story short, the university listened to three coaches and dumped many good coaches, as well as nationally recognized wrestling and other sports programs. But, decisions have consequences.

Later, it was discovered that funds donated to certain “minor” sports at that university (like wrestling and swimming), had been used for, you guessed it, the three sports the three coaches coached. But the damage was done and the other programs no longer existed. Were the results worth it? Today, hundreds of alumni refuse to give to the institution. What could have been, never was. Many nationally ranked athletes lost opportunities to continue at the university. And it’s all



because of the old adage, “Well, that’s how we do things around here.” So that’s what got me to thinking.

I’ve been guilty of that same attitude. When it came to learning and actually doing new training techniques, I wasn’t always sold. But then, I remembered the stories above and began to change how I viewed my sport and how I was going to train. So, let me add some thoughts so you can muse on them as I did. Musing is good and there are certain things we must do each day where musing is allowed.

Just the other day, I read an article on Swimming World Magazine’s site related to “The Fifth Stroke”. The fifth stroke is underwater dolphin kicks off the wall. And, on the website was a video of a heat in the men’s 50 meter backstroke. Just to prove a point, one swimmer purposely got DQ’d by kicking the whole thing underwater on his back. But he did prove his point. Here’s how.

This backstroker, seeded in an outside lane, obviously qualified a bit slower than the middle lanes. He must have thought this up in advance because it wasn’t by accident that he kicked the whole thing underwater and came in first. Although DQ’d, he won by over 2 body lengths! It was obvious just how much of an advantage underwater dolphin kicking was.

After watching that video, I realized that streamlining, with hand’s clasped, one over the top of the other, also adds an advantage. So does the newer “fast hands” breaststroke. So do a lot of innovations. But, unless you use these newer methods, you remain where you were, “Well, that’s how we do things around here...” if you get my drift. But, if you’re willing to change with the times, you’re going to get faster, use less effort, but be a better swimmer.

If you look at Fred Lewis or any of the other coaches in the afternoons, one thing stands out. They take full advantage of the newer ways of doing things and their results are worth it. If you look at the big scoreboard screen, you’ll notice one panel that reads “#1 in Florida” and another that says SPA is in the top 100 teams in America. Obviously “Well, that’s the way we do things around here...” isn’t the motto for SPA and neither should it be for us. Instead, their motto is “How can we make the kids faster and better.” Ours ought to be the same.

Details, Schmetails

While we often feel detailed to death, it’s those details that help us in our work, play, and in becoming the professional whatever we want to be. So, let’s relate that to swimming.

If we made a check list of details that help us train and swim better, at the top of that list, we’d find technique. For instance, the better the technique, the faster we are, the better we swim in practice, and we have fewer potential injuries from bad technique.

Then, there are things like streamlining, underwater dolphin kicks, starts, turns, finishes, and breakouts. The better we become at each, the closer we get to our goals. A perfect example is a triathlete. If you want to swim faster but be less winded when you’re finished with your swim, then all of the above ought to become part of your training regimen.

Then, there are things like pushing your pace to the end of each set or for an entire practice. That helps your mindset with regard to how you’re going to race or swim in a practice.

Another one is learning to actually sprint. I think Bobby Finke was a great example of that. He didn’t just swim faster at the end of a grueling race, he sprinted. In fact, his sprint time was faster than those who swam Olympic events much shorter. And how did he do it? Practice.

So, here’s what you might consider doing as a New Year’s Resolution. Make up your own checklist. Then, work on one thing at a time. Before you know it, you’ll be better than ever before and it’s all because you took the time to work on, you guessed it, details.

Lane Space

As I watch the pool use each day, I’ve learned how certain groups would utilize say, a 50-meter pool. Here’s what I’ve come up with.

If a pool was 10 lanes, Masters swimmers, the lonesome, and the mathematicians would probably allow at least 10 per lane for a total of 1000, while lap swimmers would have but 10 swimmers in the entire pool. Politicians, socialites, and money grubbers would want at least 1000. Yet, hermits and the ultra-wealthy would want just one swimmer...period! But those who fear Covid would have 1 swimmer, in every other lane, but starting at opposite ends. The lonesome would have as many as they could, while the obnoxious would probably leave enough space between them so as not to threaten one another or socialize. As for me, I’ll just take what I can get.



President's Corner

By Mike Zabel

Happy Holidays from the Presidents Tiki Grotto-Pizza Taking some time off from swimming to do a cruise and wham, I got the flu, non-covid type. So, spending the time recovering and writing.

We have had great activities including the Lightning Hockey game and pre-party at Chelsea Nauta's house. Beautiful home by the way!

The Annual Holiday party, now Luau was a success. As you can see above, we had a lot of fun, including making pizzas in the outdoor pizza oven. We are going

to try other flavored focaccias next year as well, maybe garlic herb marinated chicken thighs in the oven as a warmup. Jane, Michaela, Nick and I would be honored to host it annually here in Belleair Beach!



Mickey in front of the party

St. Pete Masters Board Meeting

7 pm, December 6th, 2022

1. 2023 Banquet – March 25th is tentative date.
2. Annual Meeting will be on January 29th to follow the team day for the Hour Swim. Lisa will check with Gary to get the room reserved.
3. The team date for the Hour Swim is Sunday, January 29th. This event can be accomplished any time during the month of January. Swimmers must enter their times at USMS.
4. Fred has agreed to coach a start/turn clinic. Mike needs to verify a date.
5. Treasurer's Report: Brooke is working on the year-end report for the Annual Meeting.
6. Social Events: Mike Zabel is suggesting a Sunday open water beach swim at his house followed by breakfast there. What month is best? March? Megan was thinking of shuffleboard for the January social. She will see if Allison can reserve courts, otherwise, we can just show up and claim open courts. January 13th may work.
7. Megan notes that SPM has 3 Facebook sites. She will reach out to Stephanie to select a name and make one the primary Facebook, creating a link to Instagram. The Instagram account will show off all the things our team does and will help us recruit new swimmers and help current ones to stay up to date and involved. The Facebook site is closed so that the public can view some items, but new members must be cleared to join and can then view everything posted. The St. Pete Masters Racing team has 114 members. Stephanie is an admin with Sharon.
8. Additional discussion items:
 - Mike would like to consider adding a fun event to our SCM meet. He has seen a relay race with inner tubes that looked like a lot of fun. He will bring an inner tube to the pool to give swimmers an idea of what this might be like.
 - Lisa is working on the 2023 SPM members list to ensure that info goes only to members. There are about 96 on this list so far. Many members do not have an email on file.
9. Website: Mike will contact Phil to continue moving forward to find a resolution to an easy-to-use program. A website needs to be user friendly for visitors, showing contact information as well as workout times instead of putting this in the newsletter. With the holidays upon us, a disruptive

schedule for the next month and many out-of-town people using the pool, please ensure that we are welcoming for all SPM swimmers and visitors at our workouts. Lanes will be in short supply, and groups may need to rearrange and be flexible to fit everyone in. Please use patience and share your lane.

10. Next regular meeting: Tuesday, January 3rd at 7 PM.

11. Adjournment.

Please let me know your thoughts about the upcoming 2023 LCM Nationals in Sarasota are welcome now, which gives us time to plan. Please email me your thoughts, grab me on the pool deck or email/call me at captainzabel@gmail.com (301) 943-3443

Later, Z

Pool Competitions

October was a busy month! Mike and Gloria Smith are our Senior Games regulars, and Mike did SPM proud again in St. George, Utah. A large SPM contingent made their way to Orland for the 14th Rowdy Gaines Masters Classic and brought home a 2nd place local team finish. And at the end of the month, six SPMers participated in the inaugural SWAGtoberfest SCY Masters Meet in Gainesville. In November, Sarasota held their annual Shark Tank meet. December saw the Florida Senior Games. Allison Retotar and Chris Stickles finished off 2022 with two additional meets. Not a moment's rest for SPM swimmers!

Huntsman World Senior Games

By Mike Smith



(photo: G. Smith)

Since 1987, the WSG have been held annually in St. George, Utah. Competition for some 30 sports always begins on the first Monday following the first Saturday of October. The three-day swimming events were held at the Utah Tech University Human Performance Center (HPC). It's a 50-meter pool with two floating bulkheads. While the regional, state, and National Senior Games are all SCY, surprisingly, the WSG is SCM.

The HPC 50-meter Olympic-sized swimming pool was renovated within the last couple of years and is a very nice facility. A diving tank, 20-person heated spa, 750-seat spectator balcony, and floor to ceiling glass are central features visible from the exterior as well as a 65-foot high, indoor climbing wall and a free bouldering wall. The HPC takes advantage of the Southern Utah climate by utilizing the building rooftop which includes a running track, outdoor athletic

courts, inclined sprint hill, fitness balconies, and gathering spaces.

When I competed in my first USMS meet in July of 2017 at St. Pete, Gloria and I began looking at the upcoming calendar of events. We noticed the Florida Senior Games (FSG) had about 24 regional competitions throughout the year. All of our visits to FL prior to, had either been to Pinellas County beaches and cities or Siesta Key. The FSG offered an opportunity to choose one or two locations per year giving us a chance to explore new areas of FL, meet some new folks and tack on an extra day to explore the surrounding area. We've met a number of competitors we see around the SG and USMS scene on a regular basis.

True to our original intent, we added extra days to hike nearby Zion National Park. Little did we know, that just one day in the park would be like a day at Disneyland. Position your car outside the park, take a bus into the park,



(photo: G. Smith)



(photo: G. Smith)

pay your entry fee, get in line with several hundred other hikers, choose one of nine destinations and board your bus. Each of the destinations are unique, one even requires wading through water to get to the site and many of them are not connected. We chose Scouts Lookout, a four-mile challenge to the top, a steep grade with lots of switchbacks, about a two hour climb but less than 20 seconds down (wink-wink, nudge-nudge). The last eighth of a mile or so is a heavy chain spiked into the face of the wall for one to cling to, not for the faint of heart, as there is no safety net or anything to stop you should you slip, but what a grand view of Zion Canyon. From that point it's another half mile of similar challenges to Angels Landing. At the beginning of the hike was a posted landmark that numbers nearly 100 fatalities of hikers on this particular excursion! We had a great time and look forward to spending more time at Zion and Bryce Canyon, about an hour and 45 minutes northeast of Zion.

In conclusion, the weather was perfect, perks and food were good, and competition solid. The men's 50-54 competitions were a treat as those guys were tearing it up posting times that are leading SCM in USMS. That's the thing, you never know who is going to show up or has been there in the past until you see the records. As a USMS swimmer, anytime I compete in Senior Games, I'm experimenting with things I'm working on or going for records or both, bling is secondary. Although I did not break any records this time out, we have now completed all levels of the Senior Game experience.

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(photo: G. Smith)



Rowdy Gaines Masters Classic 14

Congratulations to the SPMers who brought home a 2nd place Local Team finish, with the women placing 1st and men 2nd! Twenty-one members participated in the Rowdy Gaines meet at the Rosen Aquatic Center for the 3 day meet on Oct 14 -16, walking away with three coveted globes among the tons of hardware that the team brought home with them.



Steve Freeman (photo: S. Swoch)

Special congratulations to Sarah Swoch, Chris Stickle, and Cheryl Kupan on their high point accomplishments. According to Sarah, "If you swim all the relays, you win all the medals. Especially when you swim in the 20-year old relay! SPM showed up as a team and made as many memories as there were team points." The group participated in 33 relays, with Paula Texel, Alison Hayden, Tabitha Brandt, Karen Westerman setting a new



Celeste, Sophia, Sarah, Stephanie (photo: S. Swoch)

Florida LMSC record in the Women 200-239 800 Meter Freestyle Relay with a time of 10:02.90.

Awesome team work by all participants: Sophia Bickerton (her first USMS meet), Olivia Barkley (18-24), Alyssa Harmon (25-29), Sarah Swoch, Celeste Patton, Stephanie Gibson (35-39), Alison Hayden, Paula Texel, Tabitha Brandt (50-54), Karen Westerman, Sherri Bogue, Cheryl Kupan (55-59), Phyllis Scheidt (60-64), Noah Manera (18-24), Chris Stickle (30-34), Adam Jerger, Sean Gerrard (45-49), Eric Herman (50-54), Jim Esposito (55-59), Michael Zabel (60-64), and Stephan Freeman (65-69)! Full results can be found [here](#).



Tabitha, Stephanie, Karen (photo: K. Westerman)



Noah, Olivia, Sophia, Alyssa (photo: A. Harmon)



Sean, Chris, Noah, Adam (photo: S. Swoch)



(photo: A. Harmon)



(photo: C. Stickle)



(photo: S. Swoch)



Chris, Noah, Gary, Eric, and Adam (photo: SPM)



Olivia, Sophia, Alyssa (photo: A. Harmon)



Tabitha, Stephanie, Paula, Alison (photo: S. Swoch)



(photo: SPM)



(photo: C. Stickle)

1st Annual SWAGtoberfest

The following week, on 10/23, Olivia Barkley, Sophia Bickerton, Jim Esposito, Cheryl Kupan, Noah Manera, and John Nixon participated at the inaugural SWAGtoberfest hosted by the Swamp Water Aquatics in Gainesville. At this one-day meet, half of the team was represented by the 18-24 age group where Olivia, Sophia, and Noah dominated with mostly 1st place finishes for all. With Not to be outdone, the more senior team members also dominated with mostly 1st places finishes as well. Noah, Cheryl, and Jim all swam the maximum 5 events. Congratulations to all participants! Full results can be found at this [link](#).

Shark Tank LCM Meet

By Chris Stickle



Sarah, Sophia, Russell, Paula, Cheryl, Megan, David
(photo: S. Swoch)

The annual Sarasota Masters Shark Tank meet once again provided many fast swims and lots of great memories. St. Pete had 16 swimmers compete over the course of this two day meet Nov 5-6th.

On the Women's side Paula Texel swam a very impressive 400 Free with a best time of 5:07.83 dropping 7 seconds off her entry time. Allison Retotar, who has had limited pool time in the wake of hurricane Ian, was able to take 1st place in her age group and drop time in all the events she competed in. The women's 400 Medley relay which included Sarah Swoch, Allison Retotar, Macarena Martin Mayor, and Sophia Bickerton broke the state record with a time of 5:12.81. Lastly, the women's 800 Free relay (Sophia Bickerton, Kelly Deuser, Allison Retotar, Sarah Swoch) broke the state record with a time of 10:25.89.



Sarah, Megan, Paula, Cheryl, Allison
(photo: S. Swoch)



Record breaking 800m Relay: Sophia, Sarah, Kelly, Allison (photo: S. Swoch).

On the Men's side Steve Freeman had some impressive swims in his breaststroke races by going faster than his seed time in both the 50 BR and 100 BR as well as time drops in his 50 Free, 100 Free, 50 Fly and 50 back.

Noah Manera continues to impress with a fast 57.78 in his 100 Free and 2:17.01 in his 200 Fly. Chris Stickle scored lifetime bests in his 200 fly with 2:21.19 and in 200 Free with a 2:05.79. Russell Hawkins had lifetime best in all his swims including a 3:12.80 in his 200 Free and 1:27.96 in his 100 Free. Last, but not least, David Gelfand set several Paralympic records with amazing swims in the 400 IM, 100 IM, 50 BR, 200 BR, and 1500 Free.

Outside the pool, our swimmers enjoyed going out to eat both days after the competition with Joey D's Chicago Style Eatery and Pizzeria quickly becoming one of our favorite restaurants to visit in the Sarasota area.

Congrats to all swimmers that competed: Peter Betzer, Sophia Bickerton, Kelly Deuser, Steve Freeman, David Gelfand, Russell Hawkins, Megan Howson, Cheryl Kupan, Noah Manera, Macarena Martin Mayor, John Nixon, Allison Retotar, Christopher Stickle, Sarah Swoch, Paula Texel, Mike Zabel. Full results can be found [here](#).

We look forward to seeing even more SPMers next year when Sarasota hosts Long Course Nationals Aug 2-6th.



Another record breaking 400m Medley Relay: Sophia, Sarah, Macarena, Allison
(photo: S. Swoch)



Summer LCM Nationals will be held from August 2-6 in Sarasota, FL this year - Mark your calendars and save the date! More information can be found [here](#).

Florida Senior Games

Alison Hayden, Karen Westerman, Cheryl Kupan, Mike Smith, and John Nixon participated in the Florida Senior Games up in Temple Terrace the weekend of December 3-4. Alison broke records in all her events! Mike missed the Men's 65-69 50 yard free record by two hundredths of a second, but got the record in the 50 yard butterfly. Karen Westerman and Cheryl Kupan finished out the games by running in the 5k the next day! Thanks to Gloria Smith, behind the lens, for capturing the excitement of the meet. Results can be found [here](#).



Karen Westerman (photo: G. Smith)



Great start, Mike! (photo: G. Smith)



Mike, Karen, John, Cheryl (photo: G. Smith)



Alison Hayden (photo: G. Smith)



John Nixon (photo: G. Smith)



Getting into the holiday spirit (photo: K. Westerman)



Cheryl Kupan (photo: G. Smith)



John Nixon (photo: G. Smith)



Thumbs up! (photo: G. Smith)



Next day, 5k for Karen and Cheryl (photo: K. Westerman)



100m Free Reindeer Relay (photo: C. Stickle)

More Meets!

Allison Retotar and Chris Stickle each competed for SPM at additional meets! During the weekend of Dec. 3-4 at the Chris Jackson Memorial SCM Meet in Coral Springs, Allison won all her events: 100m Freestyle, 100m and 200m backstroke, 200m breaststroke, and the 100m IM. The following weekend, Chris Stickle was in Atlanta, GA winning all his events at the 2022 ART St Nicholas SCM Invitational hosted by the Atlanta Rainbow Trout Masters. He swam the 400m IM, 50 and 200m breaststroke, 100m backstroke, and the 400m freestyle. His 100m free Reindeer Relay team also placed first, wearing antlers, and swimming with a light as a baton. The prize? A cool shirt and bragging rights.

ePostals

Virtual 3000/6000 yd National Championships

By Sarah Swoch

SPM pulled together to get in the water for the 2022 - 3000- and 6000-yard Virtual Championship. Between a running race, a water polo match, swim meets, a downpour, and the pool being set up meters we had a very small and last-minute window to get some swims in. Counters and swimmers found their parking spots and made it happen. Allison Retotar drove up from Naples to join the team 3000, Jim Esposito swam his longest sprint, Benjamin Monto and Olivia Barkley swam their first Virtual Championship event, and Pat Marzulli continues to be our team's most dependable distance swimmer. Megan Howson and Celeste Patton teamed up at practice to get their swim in. Mike Zabel even swam it when I suggested it as he wandered in one Sunday morning. With 17 swimmers we were able to beat Palm Beach Masters in the 3000, though we need a few more to take the 1st and 2nd place titles from Oregon Masters and Illinois Masters.



Chris Stickle, Allison Retotar, and Paula Texel won 2nd place in their age groups in the 3000-yard event. Alison Hayden and Sarah Swoch finished 1st in the 6000-yard event with Benjamin Monto and Stephanie Gibson winning 2nd place medals. SPM had 19 Top Ten finishes between the two events! This made for some unbelievable relays; 7 All American Relays, 1- 2nd place, and 1 – 3rd place. Every swimmer was able to be a part of a relay team. Our box of medals might be so heavy they will have to ship it as freight.

The success of all the swimmers was made possible by our teammates, friends, and family who volunteered to count, early, last minute, in the rain, and on the weekend. Thank you, Lisa Flanagan, Dawn Clark, Chelsea Nauta, Ken Brandt, Eric Herman, Tim Deboy, and Bill Berry. We couldn't have done it without your precise timing, counting, and of course the cheering as we pushed through the laps.

The next Virtual Swim is the Hour Swim. You can swim it any time in the month of January. The team day will be January 29th, which also happens to be Stephanie Gibson's birthday! There will be cake, so come out, swim an hour for the team, and eat some cake. The Hour Swim is the original virtual championship and the most competitive. In the past SPM has finished in the top three with incredible participation from everyone on the team. We need you! The Facebook group St. Petersburg Swimming Masters Team is a great place to connect with other swimmers so you can find a partner to swap swimming and counting duties with. If you aren't on Facebook, your lane mates will also be happy to help or point you in the direction of someone who can. We can all swim for an hour, so come out and see how far you can go.



National Champion (photo: J. Esposito)

Open Water Swimming

Fresh Start Swim Series

Way to go open water distance swimmers! On November 19, the first in the Fresh Start Swim Series was held at St. Pete Beach. The event consisted of several distances (500m, 2.5k, 5k,



(photo: S. Gibson)



and 10k), and the profits go directly to two charities: Forgotten Coast K9 and Open Water Arms. Congratulations to Valerie Valle, Stephanie Gibson, Alison Hayden in the 5k who placed 6th, 7th, and 8th overall, respectively. And for the *distance* distance swimmers, congratulations to Macarena Martin Mayor who placed 2nd overall and 1st woman, and Andrew Leone 5th overall in the 10k.

Live Wildly Team Challenge Swim Event

By Stephanie Gibson



(photo: S. Gibson)

Team "Sassy Sharknadoes" took 2nd place at the Inaugural Live Wildly Team Challenge Swim Event on October 22, 2022 in . The all-female team consisted of Chelsea Nauta, Marina Falcone, Alison Hayden, Stephanie Gibson, Macarena Martin Mayor and Jamie Lillo. This new, exciting, open water event in Madeira Beach was a 5 mile relay, consisting of 1/4 mile loops. Each team could have between 5-10 members, and the only rule was the same person couldn't swim back-to-back legs. The Sassy Sharknadoes completed the 5 miles in just over 2 hours, with an official time of 2:00:51. Stay tuned because this event will be back in 2023!

Alligator Lighthouse – Race Report

By Stephanie Gibson

My husband, Bill and I came back to Alligator Lighthouse in September hoping to redeem ourselves after last year's DNF. I did way more open water swim-specific training this year, with this race as my goal. And, we purchased a pedal-kayak for Bill after we learned last year that the rentals can be hit or miss. We also did way more training together than last year. I was confident in our prep this year. The only thing that was still a question mark was how Bill's stomach would hold if the conditions were less than ideal (last year, he got terribly sea-sick, as did half the field).

I had kinda been tracking the weather leading up to the race and was a little leery when I saw that winds would be 10-15 mph coming from southeast on race morning with 1.2 foot swells. The wind would make some chop that would not be fun for the kayak or the swim...I tried to not think too much about it, because it was out of my control. No need to stress about things I can't change.

I woke up race morning at 6, ready to go. Bill told me he had woken in the middle of the night with really bad back pain. He's made huge strides in recovery since his surgery a few years ago, but some days are worse than others. When I heard this, my heart sunk. I was sad he was hurting and disappointed about the thought of another DNF. But, he sucked it up, took a big dose of vitamin I as we've come to call it (ibuprofen) and we headed to the start.

We got there a little after 7, and I honestly felt a little rushed. We weren't scheduled to start til 7:45, but it seemed like race prep was moving along quickly. They made an announcement at about 7:15 that went something like this: "To be clear, we are not cancelling the race. However, because of conditions we are offering an alternate option. Any team that wishes to turn around at the 2 mile barge is welcome to. That team will be timed for a 4-mile loop, instead of the 8 mile. We recommend that you check in with yourselves to see how you are feeling at that point and decide if you can continue for the full 8 miles or not."

Gulp. The race organizers recognized that the on-shore conditions were going to be a challenge for many, so they offered us all an out. On the one hand, I appreciated that they had prepared for that. On the other, I didn't want to even have that as an option- I'd rather get pulled out at the lighthouse than finish a 4 mile swim.

But I didn't have much time to think about it because they were starting to launch the kayaks for wave 1. We quickly loaded up the kayak with all our gear, covered ourselves in zinc, found our friend Jessie and her dad, and then headed to the start.

When we got in, I was pleasantly surprised. The water felt slightly cooler than I expected. It was certainly not "cool" by any stretch of the imagination- but it was no warmer than any of my training swims and maybe a degree or two cooler than my recent swims at St Pete Beach. If I had to guess, it was probably 86? (I wish my watch read temperature!)

Solo swimmers started first. They told us we would go off in groups of 10, in numerical order. I was #53, so I was supposed to be in the 6th group, but the starter switched how he was calling numbers and ended up sending off a group of 20

swimmers, leaving what was supposed to be the heat before mine completely empty. So, Jessie and I decided to just go for it, and we were off!



(photo: S. Gibson)

Swimmers and yakers had to marry up before the first numbered buoy, so I was on the lookout for Bill as I was approaching that buoy. But, I couldn't find him at all. I had no idea if he was ahead of me or behind me, so I stopped swimming completely and yelled "number 53!?!?" "Bill Berry!!" I didn't want race support to think I was in trouble so I stopped yelling for a bit and looked at the numbers on the kayakers around me- I saw #28 and #36, so I realized Bill must not have gotten out this far yet, as they were sending kayakers in groups of ten just like the swimmers (which was very different than the mass kayak start from last year). Eventually, I spotted his bright white rash guard, straw hat, and zined face. I yelled "Bill Berry" one more time and I could tell he heard me. As soon as I saw him getting close, I started swimming.

I started out feeling good but reminded myself the race only begins once you hit the lighthouse. I was cruising right along, but I knew I was moving slower than I had hoped, thanks to those onshore conditions. The conditions also had me very worried about Bill. When we stopped to feed, he was chipper enough, but I could tell he was a little uncomfortable. I started to accept that we might not finish, and that perhaps

this race just wasn't in the cards for us.

I stopped for a feed shortly before the 2 mile barge, and I asked Bill, "Are we turning here or continuing on?" Bill said, "We didn't come here to do 4 miles!" That was exactly the boost I needed. I'm not sure if Bill saw the huge smile cross my face, but I was very happy to hear those words. We can do this!

Despite that morale boost, the swimming was still hard. A few times I looked over at Bill's kayak to see the bow completely out of the water. It was choppy indeed! Mile 3-4 was a mix of emotions- by this time last year, Bill was feeling terrible, so I was happy he wasn't showing that kind of sickness today, but I felt like I was going so slow. The light house was getting bigger, but it was still so far away! That was a very long mile! What takes away a little of the tedium from that mile is that the water is crystal clear and you see a mix of sandy bottom and grass flats. Oh, and jellies- there were lots of jellies this year. I don't remember seeing them last year, but I definitely saw many dinner plate sized jellyfish. When you round the lighthouse, that's where you see the most fish- blues and yellows and all different sizes. It's so pretty out there! But, I needed to keep moving- I didn't want us to be out there any longer than we needed to.

The first half of the swim you have the lighthouse to spot; it's big and gets bigger with every stroke. And when you get there, you feel so accomplished, you've made it! But when you round the bend, morale plummets. Now there's nothing to sight off of, just a long string of buoys and the realization that you're only halfway there. You have no illusions of what it will take to get back to where you started. Plus, this is roughly where things had started to unravel last year, so I had to keep pushing that possibility out of my mind. Getting hit by the waves from behind had the predictable effect on Bill's stomach - something about not being able to spot them coming makes everything feel less stable and more stomach churning. This is where the pedal kayak really saved the day. While I was swimming, Bill started doing big sweeping loops and zigzags around me. He later told me that taking a progressive line made the chop feel far less nauseating. So even though he was having to work harder, at least he was able to keep his stomach settled and stay with me.

At this point we started to see other teams having breakdowns. Bill checked in with me to see if I was good, before pedaling over to help another team: One kayaker had suddenly fallen out of the boat when a swell came up from behind. Several pieces of unsecured gear started flooding away in all directions. He helped them retrieve some of their stuff and get back on their way. We also saw a swimmer heading radically off course while their kayaker tried purposely to call them back into alignment.

Miles five and six have got to be the toughest on the whole course. You're not quite 3/4 of the way there - you gotta just dig deep to get to that midway barge. I noticed that my 500-yard splits were about a minute faster than they had been on the way out. Seeing that we were moving faster gave me a big morale boost.

When we got to the halfway barge, I was feeling confident that we would finish. We still had an hour or so to go, but I knew we could do 2 more miles. My right shoulder was starting to nag me a little, but not enough to stop. There was a girl who I started playing leapfrog with- she passed me while I was feeding and then I caught up and passed her. I was able to get ahead even more while she fed, but she caught me when I fed. After the second time of this happening, I was not going to let it happen again. No more lollygagging around to feed! I didn't see that girl again. Around marker 5, there was another girl who I swam up on. She seemed to be closer to my speed, so I told Bill we were not going to let her get in front of us. I felt myself get a second wind and swam strong. We kept up with short feeds, and we switched to Skratch Chews rather than gels. I

would keep one in my cheek while I swam, and it was a great way to break up the salty mouth. I got passed by a two-person relay or two, but I believe I kept the other solo swimmers behind me. I kept counting down the buoys- 4...3...2...I was 100% confident now that we were going to finish. I could see the blue archway over the steps, and I could feel that joy building up inside of me. We were going to do this thing!! I swam over to the finish line and heard them announce “Stephanie Gibson, from Bowie Maryland!” I laughed in my head because when I checked in, I asked 3 different people to confirm that my race number/profile was set up properly because earlier in the week I had noticed that my info had been mixed up with the other Gibson racing, Kandis. I met Kandis last year, and she too was back for redemption. She finished this year, and I’m sure she heard “Kandis Gibson from St. Petersburg, FL!” Lol. Alas, I’m still listed as Stephanie Gibson from Bowie, but the results are all mine!

I am so unbelievably proud of this finish because we did this as a team. Even though this is listed as a solo swim, it really is a team event. We did this together, and that’s what makes it so sweet.

Bonus: I later found out that I received an award. I was the 5th place female! I realized I was only a minute behind the woman in front of me- next time, we will have efficient feedings from the beginning 😊.



Pre-game party at Chelsea’s (photo: S. Swoch)

Socials!

By Megan Howson

SPM has had a fun filled fall with lots of team socials. In November we crossed the bay into Tampa for a Lightning game. Chelsea hosted a wonderful pre-game prior, where we all enjoyed a wonderful spread before heading over to the arena. After a strong start, and despite some swimmers rooting for the opposing team .., the Bolts pulled out a victory! There were some very tired swimmers the next morning at practice, and some hoarse voices from cheering, but it was a fun evening, and always nice to go home with a win.

St. Pete Masters kicked off December in the most festive of ways, a wonderful holiday luau hosted by our esteemed President Mike! He generously opened his home to the team and went above and beyond with making 32 pizzas in his woodfired pizza oven. The line congregating around his Navy emblazoned oven, and the mad dash to grab a slice when a pie came out, shows how tasty they were! Everyone contributed wonderful desserts, the table was buckling under delicious holiday treats, and we concluded with a white elephant



All decked out! (photo: SPM)

exchange, policed by Eric. All participants were very creative with unique gifts, leading to several rounds of stealing! All in all, it was a perfect way to wrap up the year and set up for a fun 2023!



Eric polices the white elephant gift exchange (photo: M. Howson)



(photo: M. Howson)



Mike tending to his 'Navy emblazoned oven' (photo: M. Howson)



Generous hosts, Jane and Mike (photo: M. Zabel)



Beautiful setting for a holiday party (photo: M. Howson)

Kathy Selles captured more photos of the evening's fun. She writes, "The SPM team holiday party was held this year at Disneyland! Oops, it only seemed like Disneyland, it was actually at the home of our president, Mike Zabel. Mike fired up his pizza oven and everyone enjoyed his homemade creations. What a great venue - Thank you Mike!"



Chris, Eric, and Dave F.



Eric and Sharon



Kathy, Dawn, and Carl



Sarah and Alison



Regina and Hank

Defining Success

by Regina Novak

What does it mean to be successful?

I would argue that the answer to that question is extremely personal. To sweep success as a broad brush would be irresponsible and actually judgmental.

Am I successful because of the amount of money I have in the bank?

Am I successful because I hold a certain amount of top ten finishes in my age group?

Am I successful because I have the enduring love of someone else?

In reality, the answers to those questions are based on how each of us would define success.

As we embrace this New Year and look at the goals we have set in front of us, we need to be very clear about how we define success.

Success can be the outcome. If the outcome we desire is the win, the amount of weight we seek to lose or the amount of money we want to add to our savings account, then we seek an outcome.

Yet not all of us define success by the outcome. Consider some alternatives to this:

Personal performance: What I love most about swimming is that theoretically a swimmer could come in last place in a heat, and yet still win because they swam a personal best. Every race we have the opportunity to be

a little bit better than we were before. Personal bests will not happen all the time, but what a beautiful challenge to have in front of us.

Where else in our life can we focus on personal performance success?

What about being a more attentive parent? Or showing up to practice and working to the best of your ability, with no worry over how you measure up against anyone but yourself? How about being a better teammate at home or at work?

Process: I am reminded constantly that the journey to our sought-after destination is often more important than reaching the finish line. The journey is where we grow. It's where our character forms and our resilience builds. It's where we understand the person we are and the person we can become. Every person that has stood on a podium walked a journey to get there, and when we admire that person, I hope we consider all that came before the actual win.

My hope is that all of us find success in the terms we decide as ourselves and quiet the noise of anyone else that seeks to define what success should be for us.

[ANY QUESTION](#) is an awesome app that allows users to ask experts, in a variety of fields, questions about their area of expertise.

It has 17 different channels, with swimming being the most popular with 110 Experts and 4880 followers! Users go on and ask the experts ANY question! Usually, a handful of experts will answer that question in a video. You can also go and search a topic and see what answers have already been posted about it. The app is growing rapidly because it is SO COOL to use.

Kim Brackin has a free referral code so our team members can join for FREE!!! <https://link.anyquestion.com/CoachBrackin>

Outside Lanes

Alyssa Harmon, Poet.

By Livia Zien

Alyssa Harmon joined SPM in August 2021 after participating in the Swim to Stay Fit program for a few years and some nudging by Gary, to join our team. She took swimming lessons as a kid, but she never swam competitively. "I really wanted a chance to compete, so then I joined, and I'm so glad I did," she explains. She likes the all the freestyle events, with the 50 her favorite and the mile for its challenge. But she is not a fan of the 200!



Book release photos (photo: A. Harmon)

After having grown up in several parts of the country, she moved to St. Pete from Tampa to get her Bachelor's degree at USFSP, and she is currently working on her MA in English, with a focus on creative writing at the University of West Florida.

When she was as young as seven, Alyssa used to write short stories. At thirteen, she started writing novels, and then added poetry to her repertoire as a teenager and has been writing ever since. Poetry is her favorite form of writing incorporating observations or experiences, with "a little bit of imagination thrown in as well." Even though poetry was a natural form of writing for her, she is rather critical of her first poems. She explains, "But I kept writing, and eventually, they got better." She gained experience in her undergraduate studies and is thankful to her friends who helped edit them. "Eventually, I had enough poems to make a book, but they were just collecting dust."

Since she has always wanted to publish a book, in February 2022, she told her boyfriend that she was determined to publish that year. True to her word, Alyssa achieved her goal, and her first book, *seven years*, was released on October 11, 2022. The path forward took a few different turns, as new endeavors often do. After talking with traditional publishers

and learning that they still required authors to market their own books, she knew she would have to have to establish a strong social media presence. She recognized that self-publishing was an option since she would already be doing the marketing work herself. Her hard work paid off, and she has sold 100 copies in the first three months! Now with the experience under her belt, she has plans to publish two more books. She hopes to graduate this summer and says, "I will either continue to work my way up in the marketing industry, or I will make a business out of editing poetry books and writing and publishing my own. Maybe both!"

Congratulations, Alyssa! We look forward to reading more of your work!

Her book can be found on either her [website](#) or on [Amazon](#). "They say that each cell in your body replaces itself after seven years. Some will find comfort in the fact that they are mentally and physically a new person. "*seven years*" is Alyssa Harmon's debut collection of poems on heartbreak and healing. Each chapter represents a new stage in the relationship and healing process, and these poems tell the story of a failed relationship and the healing journey that resulted. If your heart was broken in a way that you're not sure can be healed, this book is for you."

Ann Albert 1960 - 2022

By Kathy Selles and Colleen O'Reilly

It is with great sadness that we must report the passing of our friend and fellow swimmer Ann Albert on October 17, 2022. Ann was diagnosed with glioblastoma in August of 2021. She and her husband, Jim, traveled to specialists in both Europe and the United States to receive treatment and fight back against this cancer. At times, there was hope that the treatments were successful, but ultimately, she succumbed and passed peacefully with her family at her side.



Ann was born in Midland Texas in 1960 to Waldo and Emily Jackson, and then lived in Norman Oklahoma and Dallas Texas while growing up. She attended Vanderbilt University, attaining a computer science degree. After graduation, she and Jim married, started and raised a family, and moved 12 times in the US and UK. In 2012 they settled in St Petersburg.

For many years Ann swam with the early morning Fine Wine group. She volunteered at our swim meets as a timer and helped with the concessions. Ann was a delightful and fun addition to the team, as well as the Panera coffee group. In recent years, she joined the Dinghy Dames in Tampa where she sailed her Sunfish with this women's sailing group, which gave her less time for swimming. She continued to stop by the pool to join the post-swim coffee group in Northshore Park, sometimes bringing along her daughter and grandson. Ann was a volunteer with the Children's Home Society and Therapy Dogs International, having trained two of her dogs as therapy dogs. She loved music, dancing, international travel, and early morning paddles in Coffee Pot Bayou around Bird Island. Ann's friendship and comradery will be dearly missed by those of us that had the pleasure of knowing her.

Ann's obituary can be found [here](#).

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