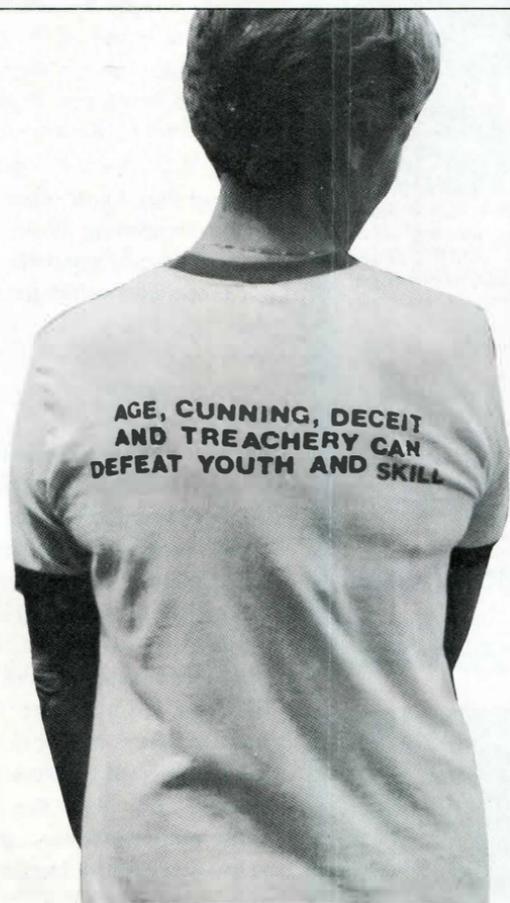


THE ARKANSAS ATHLETE

Making Waves For Good Medicine



The Masters' code says a lot about the group.

Sportsmania takes many forms, particularly as we mature. Passive sports nuts appear content to watch televised events like "Monday Night NFL Football" in the company of a cold six-pack, while their more active colleagues often find contentment in various attempts to defy age and Mother Nature with rugby league battles, foot races up steep mountain roads, or wheelsucking bicycle marathons that span the Grand Prairie and beyond. Lately, a new group of these Arkansas athletes — mid-life veterans who find that they are too old for collegiate athletics yet too young for Medicaid wrinkle races — have been making waves for themselves in lakes, swimming pools and other waters across the state. They are members of the Arkansas Masters Swim Club (you've got to be over 25 to be considered a "Masters" swimmer), and their club's code of ethics, as published each month in the club news-

letter, says a lot about the group: "Age, cunning, deceit and treachery can defeat youth and fitness."

Arkansas Masters Swim Club members are an eclectic group, with swimmers varying in abilities from the very good to the very slow. Last September, club President Ron Bank and member Barry Lawrence talked me into joining them at North Little Rock's Lakewood Lake No. 1 for their "first annual" one-mile swim. Soon, I found myself alone in the middle of a long lake following, at considerable distance, such Masters swimmers as Charles Matthews, Becky Smith (who won the event in 26:16), Brent Peterson and Mary Oudegeest. Originally from the Netherlands, Oudegeest, 42, as a teenager broke ten world swimming records and at age 20 became the fastest Dutch swimmer to conquer the English Channel. She is one of the "serious" swimmers who form the nu-