

Aquatic Athletes Keep Low a Profile

On any given day throughout Arkansas sizable numbers of folks troop to a nearby swimming pool and quietly slip into the water to begin a daily workout. Let's face it, swimmers aren't as visible as runners and cyclists, but they're out in force. Try getting an available pool lane and you'll discover even swimmers are faced with traffic jams depending on time of day.

For many, swimming has become a ritual that has been going on a long time and the majority of today's lap swimmers give swimming high marks for its contributions to their over-all physical fitness and general conditioning levels. Swimmers don't often brag about "highs" like some triathletes and runners, but they can confidently tackle workouts without fear of stress fractures or shin splints. Occasionally, though, a lap swimmer may get run over by a six-foot breaststroker whose kick will inflict some immediate physical discomfort and temporary mental anguish.

Continuing research on the effect of swimming for middle-aged persons indicates this sport, more than most, tends to slow the decline of physical capabilities. As a result, swimming has been referred to as an anti-aging pill.

Why does swimming excel as a form of exercise? Since a swimmer is supported by the water, the heart pumps more efficiently and pumps more blood a minute. Second, water temperatures in the mid-80s keep the body cool. Heat is dissipated, allowing for longer workout periods at a higher rate. Function capacity of lungs is increased. An estimated 20 per cent increase in lung volume is developed, since swimmers force air against water, resulting in expanding oxygen intake.

Swimmers, as with most other recreational sport addicts, develop skill and conditioning over a period of time. As in most sports, it's important to set goals if physical conditioning is to be strengthened and improved. Mental satisfaction results as distances are increased, even a two- to four-lap increase on each workout, or an additional workout a week.

Many YMCAs, YWCAs, swim and health clubs, or fitness centers provide sign-in charts where swimmers indicate their workout levels and in turn are recognized for what they have posted during specified time periods. If you are not involved with a program and seek some recognition consider participating for the Presidential Sports Award conducted by the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. This program is offered in 43 qualifying sports for persons 15 years or older. Requirements for swimming consists of a minimum of 25 miles or 44,000 yards within a period exceeding no more than four months. Swimmers are limited to five-eighths of a mile daily, or a total of 1,320 yards. Each participant maintains a personal fitness log that lists dates and distances swum. At the period's conclusion, forms are forwarded and swimmers are recognized with a personalized Presidential Certificate of Achievement, lapel pin and membership card.

Fitness logs are free and available by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Presidential Sports Award, Box 5214, FDR Postoffice, New York, N.Y., 10150.

★ ★ ★

SWIMMING FOR FITNESS benefits all participants, but there are swimmers who have experienced the taste of competitive swimming at one time or another. They found

their way into the ranks of the Arkansas Masters Swim Club, a local affiliate of the United States Masters Swimming Association, a national organization of 11,000 registered swimmers aged 25 or older. Since its organization, the Arkansas club has sponsored about six meets yearly, including a popular one-mile lake swim, 1,500-meter events and regular patterned meets providing a variety of strokes and distances for men and women. With the stopwatch ever present, swimmers compete to improve their own times and with people in their own age category locally. For purposes of comparison, time standards are available in age categories compiled on national levels.

The Arkansas Masters Swim Club membership now totals 90 and includes active lap swimmers residing in Little Rock, Monticello, Texarkana, Mountain Home and Fayetteville, to name a few. Age is never a deterrent. For example, in the second annual Duracraft Mile Lake Swim in August, two very respectable performances were established by two men aged 65 and 68. What did their training practices consist of? We'll ask them and give you answers in a future column, along with swimmers representing other age categories as well.

There are competitive master swimmers and then there are VERY COMPETITIVE master swimmers. An individual who qualifies is Rick Field, a Conway resident who passed that magic 40-year mark about a year ago. In 1981, Rick decided to get serious again about his swimming. The steps involved shaking his smoking habit, shedding excess poundage and participating in every nearby Masters swim competition.

The program paid off. Field has qualified for a Top 10 Ranking in the United States Masters Swimming 1983 Short Course time standards. In his age category, 40-44, a 1:09.04 in the 100-yard breaststroke earned a national ranking of fourth, and he has a seventh-place ranking with 2:33.58 in the 200-yard breaststroke. These times were performed at the National Short Course Championships in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., in May. In that meet, Field finished third in the 100-yard breast and fifth in the 200 breast. Anyone who has ever worked out with Rick knows he is one dedicated swimmer who pushes him