

Masters swimmers put regional

By Michael D. Smith
GAZETTE STAFF

Between 100 and 150 masters swimmers are expected to take part Saturday and Sunday in the sixth Region 8 Championships at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock pool.

Swimmers from Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Mississippi and parts of Missouri, Tennessee, Kansas and Texas are expected to swim in the meet, meet director Ron Bank said.

The Arkansas Masters Swim Club is playing host to the meet. This is the first time the meet has been held in Arkansas. The five previous meets have been held at the University of Oklahoma at Norman.

Bank said this would be the largest masters meet ever held in the state. A previous state meet attracted 65 swimmers and the club's annual lake swim usually results in 100 or so entries.

This also is the first two-day meet the club has administered.

Late last week, 25 swimmers al-

ready had registered. All of those were from out of state, Bank said. Deck entries, or entries the day of the meet, will be accepted.

"That's a curse and a blessing," Bank said. "We usually have a lot show up.

"The most I have ever had preregister is 16 and we had 65 show up for the meet. If we use that same formula for this, we could have over 200 swimmers."

At least two former Olympians have said they would enter the meet. Al Vandeweighe, 69, of Tulsa ("He uses his medal for a paperweight in his office," Bank said,) and J. David Gillanders, 48, of Jonesboro, a bronze medalist at Rome in 1960, will be among the entries.

Officials from Memphis and Dallas wanted to play host to this meet, but Arkansas won out.

"We wanted to have the meet in the HPER building in Fayetteville, but we couldn't do it," Bank said. "The people at UALR, coach Richard Turner, have been a real help * * * they are real enthusiastic about it."

Bank expects Arkansas swimmers to do pretty well in the meet, since several state swimmers have nationally ranked times. In addition, two Arkansas swimmers, Del Schmand and Laverne Anderson, hold national records.

Schmand, 70, holds the mark in the 1,500 freestyle while Anderson, 69, has the 200 breaststroke record.

"These older people, they are the ones I have closest to my heart," Bank, 38, said. "I want to be like that some day, old and be able to swim."

The quality of competition will be tough.

"Usually, you have just one person in some age groups," Bank said. "Now, there will be two or three.

"It's something to see a couple of 70-year-old men spying each other out to see who is going to win. That's the beauty of [masters swimming]."

While it may be the largest meet the Arkansas club has administered, Bank isn't apprehensive.

"I'm real excited about it * * * the

hopes on line in two-day meet

only apprehension is how tough the competition will be in my age group," he said.

"Some of our swimmers have been at the Little Rock Racquet Club for the last six months training for this meet. They are really up for it."

Twenty events, including relays, will be contested during the two days of the meet. Eleven events are scheduled Saturday with the meet starting at noon. The pool opens for warmups at 11 a.m.

The remaining nine events will be held Sunday with warmups starting at 9 a.m. and the competition at 10 a.m. Sunday's schedule includes both the 1,000- and 1,650-yard freestyle events.

Both days will include some events usually not swam in masters meets in Arkansas. Among them are the two long events from Sunday plus three 200-yard events — breast, back and fly — and the 400-yard individual medley.

Bank said masters swimming had what he called an "ironman" event, but not like the ironman in triathlon where an athlete swims

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2½ miles in the ocean, rides a bike 112 miles and runs a marathon.

"In this, a swimmer does the 1,650 free, the 200 fly and the 400 [individual medley]," Bank said. "After he does the 400 IM [a Saturday event], he's just about wasted."

The 200 fly and the 1,650 free

will be held Sunday.

The meet is open to all masters and premasters swimmers 20 years and over. The only requirement is that all swimmers have a United States Masters Swimming card. Those will be available at the meet for \$6.

An entry fee of \$12 will be charged through today. Deck entries will be \$15, but a special rate of \$7.50 is available for swimmers 65 and older.

Swimmers may enter a maximum of four events Saturday and three Sunday plus relays. Anyone entering more than the allowed number will be scratched for the final event.

"In 1981, when I came here, there were no registered masters swimmers in Arkansas," Bank said. "Today, there are over 150 * * * I think we are about to get into the mainstream of masters swimming.

"We want to show everyone that Arkansas can put on a first-class meet. I think we can put on a meet as well as they can in Norman, Okla., Memphis or Dallas."