

At 42, Schwartz just now hitting peak performance

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Marvin Schwartz of Conway has a dream.

"My impossible dream is to keep getting faster each time that I swim," he said. "It's a ridiculous goal, but when you get to be my age ... you need ridiculous goals."

The 42-year-old is the national longcourse champion in the 800-meter freestyle.

In that performance, Schwartz dropped 23 seconds off his personal best. "It was far faster than what I swam in college when I was 19 or 20," he said.

Schwartz, who has been a masters swimmer for seven years, competed for Syracuse University. "I was a good swimmer, but nowhere near the top 10. I had to work hard.

"I was dedicated, but I had no where near the understanding of conditioning and sports training that we do now."

Today, Schwartz said, he is more conscious of his anaerobic base. "In college, if you didn't drag yourself out of the pool exhausted, you didn't get a good workout."

On Aug. 15, he will compete in four events, the 100, 200, 400 and 800 freestyle, during the Master's Longcourse National Championships in Elizabethtown, Ky.

The four-day meet is for swimmers ages 25 and older.

"A lot of masters swimmers



Marvin Schwartz

are faster," he said. "It's just a matter of better conditioning and training, better coaching and better understanding of how to get a full workout."

For better coaching, Schwartz approached Paul Blair, the head coach of the Little Rock Racquet Club Dolphins, about three years ago.

"He is an excellent sprint coach, but I'm a distance swimmer," he said. "His training is a very good balance for me."

At the club, he works with the age group and national team members. "It's fun to be with the kids. Of course, they are faster than me," he said.

Schwartz said his equiva-

lent in the pool is the 12- to 14-year-old female. "It helps motivate me," he said. "These kids have a lot of energy."

Meanwhile, Blair preaches peak performance. "He targets the whole season toward that peak performance ... the training cycle to that last meet, last championships.

"And while you are swimming, you keep that in mind during the summer."

With about six weeks of hard training left, Schwartz is looking forward to the tapering period.

Until then, he will concentrate on maintaining "race pace and beyond."

Blair said Schwartz has been a consistent trainer. "Everyday, up and down the pool," he said. "I think he will swim faster. But the key is that we don't control how fast everybody else swims, just how fast that we swim."

Schwartz also has raced more this year, which is very important. "The body forgets how to race," Blair said. "You constantly have to remind your body how to do it. You just don't get up after 10 or 20 years and do it."

"You can ask Mark Spitz, and he will say that to come back it takes time to teach the body how to (race)...."

Schwartz hopes that all of his hard work pays off. "I'm going back to make sure that it wasn't just a fluke or an accident," he said.