

SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS



Deep Water Aerobics Class Forms Friendship Pool

By Cathy Dausman



Deep Water Aerobics at Soda Aquatics Center

Photo Cathy Dausman

It's only natural to think about swimming when the sky turns denim blue and temperatures climb into the 80's. But outdoor pool exercise when it's foggy, windy, cold or snowing? Some Lamorindans say "bring it on!" as they work out in their Deep Water Aerobics class at Campolindo High School's Soda Aquatics Center (SAC).

The class, taught by Peg Shasky, meets for an hour Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 8:30. Participants range in age from 40 to mid 60's and include a nurse, a geologist, a pastry chef, a cosmetic company executive,

an occupational therapist and retired military officer. Teachers swell the class ranks during summer months.

The class aims for a brisk low-impact exercise, alternating workouts with Hydro-Tone barbells and boots (specially designed for water aerobics) and water polo balls. Neck deep in water, most still manage enough breath to socialize. Members say the group has talked their way through dating, weddings, divorces, jobs, school graduations, moves, puppies and grandchildren. And surgeries. Plenty of surgeries. Many of the "mermaids" (Shasky's tongue-in-

cheek moniker for the largely female group) have undergone hip, knee and back surgeries and found the class offers a way to re-build strength gently.

John Sims, the group's current lone male, sometimes joins his cousins Lucy Talbot and Dana Farkas in the aerobics class. He enrolled originally to continue a workout regimen while recovering from an injury. "The days I swim laps and take Peg's class turn me into Jello afterward," he says.

Deep Water Aerobics started at SAC in September, 2006. Shasky, facing retirement from a 30-plus year teaching career, was looking to rede-

fine herself. Pool manager Andrew Morris suggested she teach a swim class. A swimmer since she was five, with years in the pool as an athlete and on the pool deck as a swim parent, Shasky agreed. Half a dozen students showed up for her first classes, but Shasky says attendance was "pretty skinny" during winter months. To begin with, she taught standing on the deck. On days when only one or two showed up, she'd get in, and "swim laps with a kick board, and talk."

Swimmers wore flotation belts for the first couple years. Then one swimmer decided to abandon the belt for a

more rigorous cardio workout, and others followed suit. Average daily attendance now is 10-15 swimmers.

Regulars rise to the challenge of inclement weather. They know the pool water is heated to 80 degrees, and only once have they endured a weather-related cancellation (lightning threat). But Wendy Jacobs says when air temperature dips below freezing "you may have to really force yourself to jump into the steamy pool."

"My first day in class, in January this year, the air temperature on my car gauge was 28 degrees. I could not believe that I was going swimming in subfreezing weather!" says Patti Witalice. Dana Farkas adds, "The best feeling is when it is the middle of winter, in the 20's or low 30's outside, maybe even rain and wind...getting through the workout and then going for a hot shower and off to Starbucks."

Benefits seem to outweigh the challenges, climate-wise or otherwise. In addition to weight loss, muscle tone and post-surgical recovery, regulars cite the friendship and camaraderie they've felt inside and outside the pool. Robin Bradley sums it up: "Rain or shine, being outside in the Soda pool beats being in a gym any day."

SMC Baseball Storms into WCC Play

By Bryant West



Patrick Wisdom was named WCC Player of the Month

Photos Tod Fierner

The Saint Mary's Gaels entered conference play last week on a win streak and kept it up with a series win over the USF Dons in San Francisco. The Gaels, winners of nine of their past 11 contests, bested the Dons 9-4 on Friday, April 8th, lost the second game 0-1 on Saturday, April 9th, and recovered with a 6-5 win on Sunday, April 10th.

Saint Mary's sits at 14-13 on the year after a tough pre-conference schedule, but head coach Jedd Soto's expectations for the Gaels are as high as ever. "Our expectations every year are to win the West Coast Conference," he said. "We know that conference is a battle every inning, every pitch, every series."

Soto's confidence in his team may not be shared amongst the rest of the WCC - the Gaels were picked to finish last in a conference coaching

poll. Saint Mary's was just 19-32-1 overall last season and went 8-13 in the WCC, finishing sixth overall. But this season, the Gaels got off to a great start in their matchups against San Francisco, getting the series win against the Dons for the first time since 2004.

In the WCC opener last Friday at USF, Saint Mary's trailed 4-0 in the top of the eighth, but saw six players belt out RBIs and scored all nine of their runs in the eighth. Junior starting pitcher Mark Anderson won his sixth game of the season, giving up all four earned runs while striking out five.

The Dons won the second contest in a 1-0 pitchers duel. Sophomore pitcher Martin Agosta continued his strong pitching, giving up seven hits and striking out nine with just the one earned run, but Saint Mary's got just five hits of their own against San

Francisco's Patrick Keane.

Saint Mary's recovered in the final game and won 6-5 in another comeback effort. Down 5-2 in the seventh, the Gaels scored four straight runs capped off by a three-run homer by sophomore third baseman Patrick Wisdom that captured the lead and eventually gave the Gaels the win.

Soto said that he thinks the series win will help propel the Gaels forward as conference play continues. "USF is not an easy place to play," he said. "...we had two comeback victories and the kids expect to win."

In addition to their recent victories, the Gaels also swept through the conference awards. Wisdom won WCC Player of the Month, after he went 26-for-60 (.433) in March with 11 runs scored and six doubles, two home runs and 17 RBIs. Anderson won Pitcher of the Month after a

strong March, which included a complete game shutout against then #25 UC Irvine. He currently sits at 6-1 on the season.

Junior first baseman Troy Channing won WCC Player of the Week after going 7-14 against New Orleans the last weekend in March, with three runs, two homers and six RBIs, and Agosta was named WCC Pitcher of the Week after a complete game shutout of Southern Utah on Friday, April 1st.

Despite the recent hot-streak, it's been a turbulent year for Saint Mary's so far, who started the season cold before catching fire in mid-March. The Gaels lost six of their first nine games, and then were swept in the Dodger-town Classic in Los Angeles, losing to USC, UCLA and Georgia on the weekend of March 11th.

"We saw some of the best

pitching the NCAA had to offer the first 12 games," Soto said before the Gaels traveled to take on the Dons. "We had a few of our offensive guys pressing and trying to do too much. They have done a nice job adjusting these past 12 games hitting what the pitchers give us."

As the Gaels offense recovered, so did their record. The Gaels entered conference play with a 12-12 record, having won seven of their past eight games.

The Gaels swept New Orleans March 25th and 27th in a three game series at Laney College in Oakland. Saint Mary's blasted past the Privateers with scores of 14-0, 7-3 and 7-0.

On Tuesday, March 29th, Saint Mary's took on #11 Stanford in Palo Alto and fell 16-14 - a considerable feat in itself, it is even more impressive considering Saint Mary's had trailed 10-2 in the top of the seventh.

The Gaels carried their comeback momentum into a three game sweep over Southern Utah March 31st-April 2nd in which they scored a total of 23 runs.

To the Gaels credit, they've only played three home games so far this year. Nineteen of the Gaels next twenty seven contests will be played in Moraga.

Saint Mary's traveled to Davis yesterday, Tuesday, April 12th for a one game matchup against the Aggies, and return home this week for a three game home stand against Santa Clara this weekend.

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