

LAMORINDA SPORTS

A Summer Tradition: OMPA Championships

By Rebecca Eckland



Eloise Engs won Outstanding Swimmer.

Photos Kevin Nguyen



Cole Stevens was the high point winner for 13-14 year old boys.



Maren McDonald shows off her high point trophy.

Joy Braitberg waited for a finishing shot of her daughter, Addison, who competed in the 6 & under backstroke at the Orinda Moraga Pool Association Championships. Addison, who swims for Meadow Swim & Tennis Club, "popped" her time finishing in 37.61 seconds, an improvement from her last race performance.

"It's really amazing how fast these kids swim," Braitberg said, "because in order to compete in the OMPA, you can't swim year-round. These athletes do other activities-- they play soccer or baseball and only swim part of the year."

For 55 years, recreational swimmers aged four to 18 have competed at the OMPA-- one of the largest recreational swim meets in the U.S. This year, 1,845 athletes competed in over 5,000 events August 3-5 at the Soda Aquatic Center in Moraga.

While Orinda Country Club swimmers claimed first place followed by the Sleepy Hollow Legends in second and Meadow Swim and Tennis took bronze, most of the action was found poolside.

Orinda resident Shanna Brennan's two children competed for the winning OCC team in the OMPA Championship: an 11-year old daughter and 8-year old son. Brennan's children both "popped" their times at this year's OMPA Championship.

More important than the broken records, Brennan explained that the meet is about the experience. "[Rec] Teams make it so fun... there's barbecues and it's more about summer activities-- a summer culture-- than it is about swimming."

Eli Goldsmith, age 9, who competes for Meadow in the 50 meter backstroke, echoed the sentiment. His favorite part of swimming is hanging out with his friends.

His mom, OMPA Meet President Michelle Goldsmith, who once swam for Meadow, said recreational swimming is a one-of-a-kind environment.

"There is nothing like this in the rest of the country," Goldsmith said. "Swimming is unique among sports because there are kids here aged 4 to 18 playing cards together between their events. And teams don't just cheer for their own team members-- they cheer for everybody."

She also noted that the swim culture offered by the OMPA has motivated her son to work hard, to come up with goals and to achieve them-- while having fun.

In fact, 90 percent of swimmers across all teams and age groups showed improved times during the Championship meet.

Michael Dakis of Meadow finished first in the 50 yard backstroke, the 50 yard and the 100 yard Individual Medley, winning the High Point award for Boys 11-12 with 72 points.

"I'm excited for County," he said, "but my goal is to be able to beat the friends [from OCC] I used to swim with."

But Sleepy Hollow's Coach Kevin Honey-- who has been coaching for 12 years-- captured the meet experience best. "I can't pick out one swimmer. They're all improving," he said, "We're really proud of them."

Combined Team Scores:

- 1 Orinda Country Club
- 2 Sleepy Hollow Legends
- 3 Meadow Swim & Tennis Club
- 4 Orinda Park Pool Swim Team
- 5 Moraga Ranch Swim Club
- 6 Moraga Country Club
- 7 Moraga Valley Pool Swim Team
- 8 Campolindo Cabana Club Marlins
- 9 Miramonte Swim Club

Individual High Point Scores:

Girls:

- 6 & Under: Maren McDonald 48-- SH
- 7-8: Ginny Vazquez-Azpiri 69-- OCC
- 9-10: Eloise Engs (Outstanding Swimmer) 72--OCC
- 11-12: Sophia Kosturos 72--OCC
- 13-14: Madison Tagg 72, PARK
- 15-18: Marie Claire Schillinger 68, MEAD

Boys:

- 6 & Under: Evan Velek 45 MRSC
- 7-8: Brody Crouch 68, MRSC
- 9-10: Grayson Meckfessel 72, SH
- 11-12: Michael Dakis, 72, MEAD
- 13-14: Cole Stevens, 72, MCC
- 15-18: Tennyson May, (Outstanding Swimmer) 72, MEAD

Most Improved Team with Relay:

Orinda Park Pool Swim Team

Most Improved Team without Relay:

Moraga Ranch Swim Club

Team Sportsmanship:

Miramonte Swim Club

Girls Take Silver

Submitted by Myra Ozaeta



The 12 and under (12U) girls team of the Lamorinda Bears Water Polo Club won the silver medal in the Gold Division of the 43rd Annual USA Water Polo Junior Olympics.

"It was a great experience for the girls," said Lisa Holbrook, whose daughter, Haley, plays on the team. "This was their first Junior Olympic experience, and for many, their first water polo playing season. For them to succeed at this level their first time out was an enormous achievement."

Front row, from left: Jayne Latimer, Morgan Lewis, Makenna Ferguson, Rachel Rosen; Back row: Kelly Peyovich, Haley Holbrook, Zoe Zakow, Grace Tehaney, Carson Broad, Skylar Savar, Nicole Lyckfors, head coach Joseph Born Photo provided

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