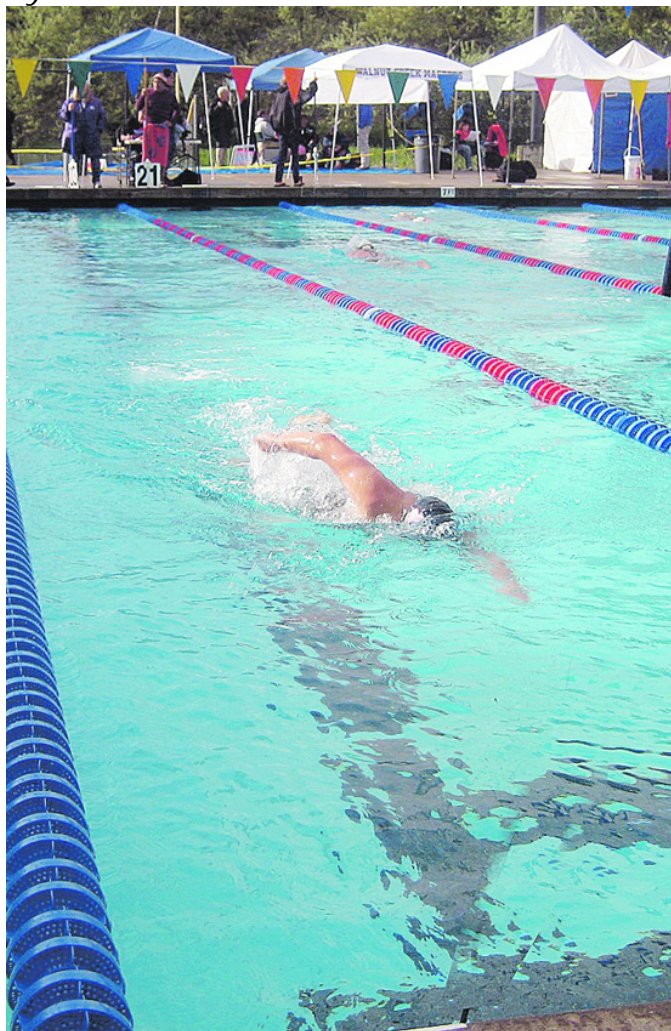


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Masters Swim Meet Celebrates Community

By Rebecca Eckland



Swimming has taught me about beginnings. I didn't learn to swim properly until I joined the Walnut Creek Masters Swim team, a swim team for adults of all skill levels, almost two years ago after I'd injured myself training for the 2012 Olympic Trials in the marathon. I thought my time with starting lines had ended.

But on April 5, I competed in the 2013 Pacific Masters Short Course Championships held at the Soda Aquatic Center at in the 1650 Freestyle and 400 Individual Medley. It was my first time racing in either event. After 66 laps, I took second place in my age group in the 1650 free with a time of 21:41.

In the 400 IM, I made a "rookie mistake," in an incorrect turn between back stroke and breast, which disqualified me. My coach Kerry O'Brien noted that it was all part of the learning curve. "You won't ever make that mistake again," he said. And I won't. Not at the next "beginning."

Meet Director Chris Stewart explained that the unique part of Masters swim meets is the diversity of the athletes who enter. Ex-Olympians and novice swimmers of all ages, some well into their 70s and 80s, all participate together.

"The largest age group this year," he said, "is the 55-59 age group." There were 615 registered to swim April 5-7 from 69 masters teams, bringing swimmers from all over the state to the Lamorinda area.

Donald Potter (47) competed in the 1650 free and the 500-mixed relay. Potter joined the Walnut Creek Masters four years ago and has been "hooked" ever since. "It's great to have a core focus like this outside work," he said. He swam Friday and, like many of his teammates, volunteered as a lane and head timer on Saturday.

Potter was joined by teammate Nay Anderson (58), who also swam the 500 Free, the 50 Back and 100 IM.

She hopes to be able to keep swimming without injury in the future. "I'm not much of a goal-setter, but I do plan on swimming for as long as I'm physically able to," said

Anderson.

Brant Allen (49) of the Sierra Nevada Masters from Reno used the meet to gauge his fitness in preparation for the National Meet which will be held next month in Indianapolis.

"I want to swim until I'm old enough that people clap simply because I'm in the pool," he joked. Allen won the 50 Back and the 100 Free and took second in the 100 IM, the 50 Breast, 50 Free and 100 Breast.

Swimming can be a solitary pursuit: but events like this one bring everyone together to celebrate all our athletic beginnings. For results visit: http://www.pacificmasters.org/swmeets/2013_04_05_PMS_SCY/

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