

LAMORINDA SPORTS

Despite Health Scare, OMPA Meet is a Resounding Success

By Emily Dugdale



Photos Gint Federas



The Orinda Moraga Pools Association (OMPA) held the 59th annual championship meet Aug. 7-9 at Campolindo High School's Soda Aquatic Center in Moraga. The event was a big success, despite an incident early Saturday morning that involved hazardous chemical spraying near team tents. True to its motto, the meet went "Full Speed Ahead."

Each summer, the OMPA conducts a league for swimmers ages 3-18. The summer is a whirlwind of practices and meets that culminate in the annual championship, where close to 2,000 swimmers compete in 84 individual and relay events over three days.

"These kids have worked all summer long building their craft," OMPA president Tom VanderBrink said. "This is the culminating meet - kids can really drastically drop their times."

According to the OMPA website, this year's meet had 5,265 entries and 1,828 swimmers competing. Over 4,000 spectators were expected to attend the three-day event.

"The energy on the pool deck is very high right now with excitement to compete in this year's championship meet," said Miramonte head coach Eddie Lee.

The Individual Medley (IM) events set the tone on Friday and a record was shattered by mid-day. Moraga Country Club's (MCC) Owen Wardy crushed the boys 11-12 100-yard IM record - set in 2007 - recording a blazing 59:08 swim. He knocked nearly four seconds off his seed time.

On Saturday, the meet encountered an early speed bump when several swimmers and spectators who set up tents on the Campolindo

baseball field complained of not feeling well. Lightheadedness and breathing issues were quickly linked to the renovation project at the adjacent track field.

DJ Tierney, an OMPA parent, talked to maintenance workers before the fire department was called. He said complaints of a "paint fume smell" began around 7:30 a.m. "The fumes were starting to settle into the tents," he explained. After finding the source of the smell, the workers told parents that it was a scheduled project and "they couldn't do anything about it."

According to a Facebook post from the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, seven fire engines from MOFD and ConFire responded to the scene. Two meet spectators received "supplemental oxygen" from paramedics and were subsequently released. The area was closed until the meet concluded that afternoon, and the track maintenance project was rescheduled.

After the health scare, the meet proceeded with its usual unbridled energy, with spectators and swimmers cramming the bleachers and cheering the names of swimmers written on whiteboards held by each team's cheer organizer.

"I think it's cool how in this town swimming is such a big deal," Orinda Country Club (OCC) swimmer Katrina Drake said regarding the energy at the meet. Drake came through with a dominating win in the girls 15-18 50-yard freestyle that was just milliseconds away from the meet record.

Before the races began Saturday, VanderBrink predicted, "records from the 1980s could be broken." He was right. One long-standing record from 1989 was broken when Orinda Park Pool's (OPP)

Maya Supran turned in a 31:61 in the girls 11-12 50-yard breaststroke.

Natalie "Talli" Stryker's (OCC) 17:68 in the 7-8 girls 25-yard breaststroke prelim broke the record previously held by Moraga Valley Pool's (MVP) Megan Culpo.

"The kids have worked hard all summer, and they are looking forward to the competition and the excitement of the OMPA," OCC head coach Steve Haufler said. "They are looking forward to having a good time and getting best times."

The 100- and 200-yard medley relays proved to be some of the most exciting events of the meet Saturday. With clusters of cheering teammates gathering poolside, the OCC 13-14 girls went just milliseconds under the record set at last year's competition with a time of 1:53:44. OPP's 15-18 girls bested the event record from 2004, knocking six seconds off their seedtime with a fast 1:52:44.

On Sunday, the final day, backstroke and butterfly took the stage. OPP's Natalie Ung barely eclipsed the age-12 50-yard backstroke record in 29:24. Owen Wardy followed her performance with another record swim in the boys 11-12 50-yard backstroke in 27:37.

In the 200-yard freestyle relays - the meet's final event - the girls 13-14 record was smashed by nearly three seconds by OCC with a time of 1:39:49. The Meadow Swim and Tennis (Meadow) 15-18 girls followed with another record-breaking free relay in 1:38:93.

Sunday's results closed out the meet with OCC taking a dominating win with 4,325.5 points. Sleepy Hollow came in second with 3,315.5 points, and Meadow rounded out third with 3,088 points.



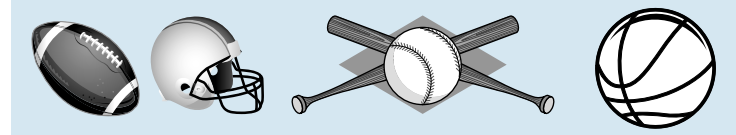
Orinda Park Pool's (PARK) Spencer Tagg won the boys 50-yard fly and placed second in the freestyle and backstroke.



Moraga Country Club's (MCC) Erin Neustrom celebrated her first-place finish in the girls 15-18 100-yard freestyle.

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