

# The Wet Gazette

The LMSC for Virginia – Serving Swimmers in Virginia And West Virginia  
August 15, 2016

## *It's Never Too Late To Be Great!*

*Reflections on how a beginner learned to be  
a competitive breaststroker and more.*

*By Coach Don Easterling and Suzi Burns*

*At the 2016 U.S. Masters Swimming Spring National Championship in Greensboro, one of Coach Don Easterling's masters swimmers, 69 year old Suzi Burns, scored two fourth place finishes and one sixth place finish in three breaststroke events. It was her first national competition and she had only been swimming for 3 ½ years. In this article Coach "E" and Suzi, talk about becoming a masters competitor and how you too can do so despite obstacles and lack of swimming experience. Finally, Coach E shares breaststroke technique tips and ways he helped Suzi get it right.*

**Suzi:** The decision to become a masters swimmer is intimidating for many. And for those that have never competed in any swimming event at any age, doing so may be an absolutely overwhelming thought. I was no different and when Coach Don Easterling (Coach E) asked if I wanted to start taking masters classes, I was excited but doubted I was ready. Like others who are intimidated by the word "masters," I told Coach E, "I can't swim to the end of the pool without being short of breath!" Sound familiar?

Coach E is a seasoned and talented swimming icon. Known for his attention to technique and ability to get the best from every swimmer, he has done that with me and every stroke has improved. That is not to say we didn't encounter a few obstacles along the way. I am sighted in only one eye and initially this made it hard to gauge distance and was a bit of a problem for nailing flip turns. I often missed the wall entirely or ended up in the wrong lane! I also have a condition that makes me very prone to Pneumonia – talk about short of breath! And last, I share the *See Great on page 3.*

## *Three national records fall at the John Shrum Memorial Cable Swim at Chris Greene Lake*

*By Dave Holland*

Charlottesville, VA -- July 10, 2016–

Local resident Rob Jones was the overall winner in both the 2-mile and 1-mile races this past Saturday, July 9 at Chris Greene Lake, setting a new national record in the latter. Jones, 51, set a new course record for his age group in the 2-mile swim (42:49.71), then returned a short while later to grab his first-ever USMS national record in the 1-mile swim (men 50-54). His winning time of 20:46.29 sliced 46 seconds from the previous standard set in 2012. John Rogers, 54, finished as the 2-mile runner-up among the men, recording a 48:02.88. In the 1-mile event, Mark Loftis, 56, finished just behind Jones in 20:49.93, which was a new USMS national record for men 55-59 (old record 21:24.38). In the men's competition, another course record was established by Adam Barley, 35, who recorded a 21:23.22 in the 1-mile race to win the 35-39 age group.



In the women's 2-mile event, Shirley Loftus-Charley of Afton, 64, prevailed in 47:52:53. Loftus-Charley, competing in her 35th consecutive year at this event, won the women's race for the

second time in her career (her first came 25 years ago, when she recorded a 45:53.00 in July, 1991). Lisa Bennett, 60, finished as the women's runner-up (50:45.53), while Marcia Barry, 67, of Roanoke, set a national record of 56:51.59, breaking Andrea Hunt's former record by 21 seconds to win the 65-69 age bracket. In the 1-mile cable swim, Maggie Daly, 21, took the

*See Lake on page 5.*



**If you need an entry and do not have access to email, call me and I will sent you an entry. Betsy**

**Aug 6: Lake Moomaw.** Full entry was in last newsletter

**Aug 6-7: Dixie Zone LC, Goldsboro, NC**

**August 12-13: One Mile and 5K OW Championship, Lake Lure, NC**

**August 18-21: Mt Hood, Oregon, USMS LC Nationals**

**November 5: VMST Fall Meet, Virginia Beach**  
Online entry will be posted by Sept 1. Paper entry will be in the September newsletter.

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### Trivia Questions about our LMSC

*Throughout this newsletter you will see Trivia Question (TQ). Answers are on page .*

**TQ1: What does LMSC stand for?**

**TQ2: How many swimmers are registered in this LMSC for 2016? 100-300, 301-600. 601-900, 901-1200, 1201-1500, 1501-1800**

*More TQ on page 5.*



**LMSC for Virginia Website:**  
[www.vaswim.org](http://www.vaswim.org)

**USMS Website:** [www.usms.org](http://www.usms.org)

**Nearby LMSCs**

North Carolina: [www.ncmasters.org](http://www.ncmasters.org)

Maryland: [www.maryland@usms.org](mailto:www.maryland@usms.org)

Potomac Valley: [www.PVMasters.org](http://www.PVMasters.org)

**Colonies Zone:** [www.ColoniesZone.org](http://www.ColoniesZone.org)

**Dixie Zone:** [www.DixieZone.org](http://www.DixieZone.org)

**ONLINE Meet Registrations:**

[www.clubassistant.com](http://www.clubassistant.com)

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### LMSC Officers

**Chair: Dave Holland**  
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**Records and Top Ten: Chris Stevenson**  
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*Graphics from [www.swimgraphics.com](http://www.swimgraphics.com)*

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*Great continued from page 1.*

shoulder and back issues that are common in many athletes but especially older athletes like me. This means we have had to adapt my workouts to prevent further injury or pain without losing ground. While coach won't tolerate the word "can't", his ingenious and creative ability to craft just the right workouts for me has meant I have rarely had to stop swimming and have continued to improve.

Initially our goals focused on increasing my endurance, technique, and fitness level. I gradually increased my time in the pool and subsequently my total yardage (i.e., from 2500 to 4000 yds) three times per week. I did not increase my swimming days as I found doing so was often counterproductive; I needed recovery time! After 1½ years of swimming with Coach I entered my first competition. My times were slow and I DQ'd in my very first event because I stopped in the middle of the pool when I heard someone shouting (I thought at me). I quickly learned to ignore shouting and just keep swimming!

Soon time trials became more regular in our workouts. Being an inexperienced swimming competitor, terms like "descending times" were a mystery. Initially I thought it meant going slower with each length. But I soon "got it," and learned more with each competition. After competing in 7 regional meets and almost every stroke, even if they weren't my favorites or my best, Coach suggested we aim for nationals. While I didn't meet any qualifying times, but was close in the breaststroke, with his encouragement I signed up on the very last day possible, and for the next three weeks Coach got to work on my breaststroke.

Then, off to nationals and more to learn! I followed Coach's guidance and strategies for each of the races. Despite nerves, little sleep, being a bit sick on my first race day, and trying to feel comfortable in my "tech-suit," which is like a sausage casing, I beat my own personal records plus attained a top ten ranking in each of my three breaststroke events! There is no doubt in my mind that Coach's focus on technique was what made me competitive. While I plan to do more competitions, I also know that they may be fraught with obstacles to overcome. But I say, bring 'em on! I've got Coach E in my corner!

**Coach E:** After coaching competitive swimming for over 60 years, 34 of those years at a university

division 1 level, I decided to retire. But I flunked retirement at least 26 times! I was offered a chance to coach masters and I had no idea I would enjoy it as much as I have. A good coach is first a good teacher. One cannot be in this honored profession without a philosophy. Mine focuses on technique, which is where the teaching element takes place. It never stops, there are always small and large adjustments to the stroke and each of the four strokes has its own peculiarities. But, it all comes down to distance per stroke. Liken this to miles per gallon in your automobile. A poorly tuned car will always get inferior results.

Suzi began swimming with me about 3 years ago and works out several hours each week with me except for the summer months. It was obvious to me early on that Suzi could be an elite breaststroker. But because Suzi was new to competition, it was essential that we focused on a strategy to get her ready to compete at a national level. In the rest of this article, I share tips on the breaststroke techniques that got her ready.

#### *The Breaststroke:*

Breaststroke is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, strokes. Tarzan used it in the movies while looking for Jane! Actually he had pretty poor form, he swam with his head up, and he was probably more worried about the crocodiles than Jane!

I get tired of hearing people say they "hope they get it right." Hope is never a good strategy. You get faster by working to make your weakness become your strength. In breaststroke you must have a strong kick. It is the most leg driven of the 4 strokes, that is you can kick breaststroke faster than you can pull it. This entire stroke is under water, meaning your arms recover underwater, so technique and timing are essential.

The biggest problem with most swimmers, especially masters swimmers, is a lack of flexibility. In breaststroke it is mostly lacking in the ankles, so stretching is important. While not the purpose of this article, suffice it to say you just can't do too much stretching!

#### *The Breaststroke Kick:*

The proper kick begins with lifting the feet over the hips with feet and knees together. As the feet lift, the toes turn out and up toward the knees, and the legs gradually open. The knees must always stay  
*See Easterling on page 4.*

### *Easterling continued from page 3.*

inside the feet. Water wants to push the knees apart, and water does not get tired. At the apex of the foot lift, the knees are 8-15 inches apart and the feet and ankles are turned out. The toes then are pointed towards the knees. The legs are now in the “set” position as you have finished the recovery stage. This is the only stage that has zero propulsion, as it does not move the body forward. All other leg recovery stroke stages move the body forward.

In breaststroke you kick to pull, you do not pull to kick. Suzi has small feet with very little bottom foot surface area to propel with. The use of breaststroke fins helped her find the “sweet spot” in the kick. These are one of the greatest training inventions in that the fins guide the path for the foot. Both breast and IM may especially benefit from using these fins.

As you kick you must squeeze the knees and thighs together to generate more foot speed at the end of the kick. Squeeze hard from the butt muscles to the ankles. Toes should be pointed, tight, and feet touching. When the foot speed is there, the feet will rise at the end of the kick and make a small circle of water on the surface.

Learn to kick with and without a board both above and under water, plus do some vertical kicking. These should be done with breaststroke fins during regular and hypoxic breathing drills.

#### *The Arms:*

From the stretched position press the hands down, out past the shoulders and increase the hand speed by snapping the elbows toward each other as they come under the rib cage. There is no pause here, and the hands shoot forward no more than 2 inches below the surface. Do not dive the hands and head down in front of the stroke. Keep thumb next to thumb, always reach, stretch, and lock your elbows. Never turn the palms up. This arm cycle takes place as the kick is pushing back. When the kick is finished, as described above, the body is completely streamlined. Stay paused just for a moment at the end of the cycle. Do not rush the next cycle!

#### *Breaststroke Breathing:*

This part of the stroke is likely different than what you've been doing or have been taught. Keep the head neutral; do not lift the head to breath. Pretend a broomstick runs through your head straight down

your back. As you squeeze your elbows under your ribs, your body will rise and you breathe with your face pointing straight down towards the bottom of the pool. Breathe with your mouth just above the surface. If you lift your head to breathe, you drop your hips and reduce the force of the next kick. Timing is everything, but if you do not have a powerful kick, do not write home for brownies! When Suzi's stroke is timed right, it is so smooth you don't hear it. And, to get it right she works a lot on each phase separately.

#### *The Breaststroke Stretch:*

Start and end each cycle in a totally stretched body position; arms, legs, feet, toes, fingers. Have thumb next to thumb, not hand on hand as in a streamlined position. Done correctly, this creates a “ski” like surface to receive the kick force. As noted earlier, remember that as you kick you must squeeze the knees and thighs together to generate more foot speed.

Of all the strokes, breaststroke has changed the most over time. The strokes of elite swimmers often vary to fit the athlete and may be quite different between swimmers. We adjusted Suzi's stroke to fit her unique talents and her feel for the water. Videotaping Suzi's stroke regularly with critique from me helped her better understand how to improve. Also, perfecting drills helped create muscle memory for all parts of her stroke.

We hope this article helps masters swimmers to believe that lack of experience, and even obstacles, need not keep you from competing and doing well! And last, technique is essential as are stroke techniques that highlight the athlete's unique abilities. As stated in the title, it's never too late to be great!

*Thanks to Chris Stevenson for sending this article for the newsletter.*



*Check out Trivia Questions starting on page 2.*

Lake continued from page 1.

women’s crown in 23:36.63, while Loftus-Charley had to settle for runner-up in 24:13.98. The record-breaking swims took place at the annual event hosted by Virginia Masters Swim Team. Athletes of all ages have been competing in the 2-mile cable swim on the second Saturday in July every year since 1977. Participants swim beside a “cable” rope provided by staff from Albemarle County Parks and Recreation. The ¼ mile distance runs in a straight line between two permanent wooden pylons and was found to be within an inch of 440 yards when surveyed a few years ago, allowing the races to be eligible for national records.

Race directors Elizabeth Cohen and Dave Holland wish to express their thanks to the staff and volunteers from the Albemarle County Parks and Recreation, Charlottesville-Albemarle Rescue, Lake Monticello Rescue, and Western Albemarle Rescue squads for making this event safe and organized. In addition, they recognize the following volunteers who gave up their weekends to make this event possible: Robin and Lily Claiborne, Alice and Brian Phillips, Heather and Tara Mackey, Michelle Kitt, Jim and Patty Miller, Ralph Jones, Abby Holland, Elizabeth Holland, Craig Charley, and Shirley Loftus-Charley.

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## Lake Swim Age Group Winners

### Women

One Mile	Age Group	Two Mile
Maggie Daly	18-24	---
Kristin Courtney	25-29	Kristin Courtney
Jackie Jamison	35-39	Katherine Hawley
Melanie Brede	40-44	Victoria Likowski
Laurelyn Pratt	45-49	Rebecca Franklin
Laura Jones	50-54	Alice Phillips
Margaret Conner	55-59	---
S. Loftus-Charley	60-64	S. Loftus-Charley
Kathleen Doswell	65-69	Marcia Barry

### Men

Jonathan Littles	18-24	---
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John Bishop	25-29	Bradley Waters
Austin Frazer	30-34	Austin Frazer
Adam Barley	35-39	Matthew Williams
David Roberts	40-44	Brian Koziol
Colin Martin	45-49	Richard Ptakowski
Rob Jones	50-54	Rob Jones
Mark Loftus	55-59	John Haugh
Frans De Jong	60-64	---
John Post	65-69	William James
Willis Braswell	70-74	Willis Braswell



*Elizabeth Cohen – race director with Dave Holland*

## More Trivia Questions

(Continued from page 2)

TQ3: How many clubs (commonly called teams) are registered for 2016?

TQ4: How many swimmers are registered unattached? Unattached means no team affiliation as is listed as UC12.

**More TQ on back page.**

# ***Dodging Drill Dangers***

## ***Tips and tools for teaching technique***

*Terry Heggy | July 13, 2016*

*Editor: This article came from the USMS website, [www.usms.org](http://www.usms.org). It is addressing coaches, but I think it is helpful for swimmers, especially those who swim alone.*

Stroke drills are a fundamental part of a coach's toolkit. Proper drill execution fine tunes the senses, skills, and strengths that swimmers need to maximize our aquatic performance. A well-designed drill will:

- **Isolate** a portion of the stroke, allowing (or perhaps forcing) the swimmer to focus on an individual technique component
- **Teach** the swimmer how to perform the movement properly
- **Make sense** to the swimmer, and
- **Be possible** for the swimmer to accomplish.

Even the most supercalifragilistic drill in the world will fail completely, though, without your coaching expertise conscientiously applied to ensure its success. Here are suggestions for preventing the common pitfalls that occur during drills.

### **Understand the Drill's Purpose**

*"I saw a lap swimmer doing it and it looked cool,"* is NOT sufficient motivation for incorporating a drill into your workout.

You *must* understand exactly how the drill promotes improved technique—or you risk having your swimmers learn bad habits.

The drill may focus on feel for the water, posture and streamline, propulsion, or even core strength, but you need to know exactly how its attributes fit into your overall training program.

Swimming technology is in constant flux. The drills you did as an age-grouper have most likely been superseded. Stay up to date with the latest USMS technique videos and the articles in SWIMMER Magazine.

### **Explain the Drill's Purpose**

Simply giving the drill's name is insufficient; you'd be amazed at how many ways people can interpret vague descriptions. I have seen people contorting themselves into a pretzel because they heard a "high elbow" was a good thing, and figured that meant that they had to touch their scapula during each arm recovery. And even though the purpose of the "fingertip drag" drill is to teach how to enter the water cleanly, I have seen swimmers who have only learned to constantly drag their fingers. These are not examples of productive drill results. I've also heard coaches say to "drill down, swim back" or other such ambiguous instructions to people who have never learned any proper drills. Avoid such vagueness; make sure every swimmer understands what you mean. Be very specific about how to perform the drill, and what it is designed to accomplish.

### **Give Immediate and Continual Feedback**

Drills only teach proper technique if they are done correctly, and it's really hard for some Masters swimmers to accurately perceive whether they've succeeded. Watch every drill carefully, and stop swimmers to provide feedback and corrective advice as soon as you notice a problem. (Be particularly vigilant for body-position distortions that disrupt alignment and stability, especially during breathing motions.)

If you aren't able to physically observe your athletes doing their drills, you might be able to exchange videos to ensure they understand and perform the drill correctly. If you can't do that, then just make sure that your swimmers are aware of the risks in swimming without a coach's feedback. Despite the popular opinion that "any drill is a good drill," the fact is that practicing poor form builds a habit of swimming with rotten technique.

### **Provide Individual Adaptations**

Each Masters swimmer is unique. We don't all have the same flexibility, balance, or strength. Drills that elite college swimmers perform with ease may be completely impossible for our more seasoned

*See Drills on page 7.*

*Drills continued from page 6.*

athletes. When you see people struggling with drills, offer them some help. For example, you may allow fins to help maintain body position in one-arm drills, or offer a “no kickboards” solution to folks whose shoulders hurt when grasping a really buoyant board.

It’s perfectly OK for a drill to be difficult and challenging, but if it’s so hard that the swimmer is struggling to stay afloat, it’s a pretty good bet that the drill is *not* achieving its intended outcome. Come up with an alternative that they can perform.

### **The Zen of Drills**

Make “drill thinking” a part of your coaching mindset. There is no rule that says a drill must be some one-armed or kick-centric mutation of regular swimming; a drill orientation can be a part of any swim, including warmup and cooldown. For example, remind swimmers to focus on their early vertical forearm during an easy 100 between hard work sets, or swim an easy 500 concentrating on perfect breathing motion with every third arm stroke. What makes anything an effective drill is that you have explained the purpose and given feedback until everyone is swimming perfectly.

#### ***About the Author—Terry Heggy***

*Speed Heggy has been swimming for more than 50 years. He won his age group in the 10K Open Water Championships in 2006, and competed in the National Championship Olympic Distance Triathlon in 2014, and qualified again for USAT Nationals in 2015. He has coached the Foothills Masters Swim Team in Littleton, Colorado since 1986, and is a USMS Level 3 Certified Masters Swim Coach and a NASM Certified Personal Trainer.*



***Betsy Goode (center) with her daughter Mary Ann and husband Dave after the Jack King Swim at Virginia Beach.***

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### ***Answers to Trivia Questions.***

***See back page before you check Answers.***

TQ1: Local Masters Swim Committee. USMS is divided into 52 LMSCs for administrative purposes.

TQ2: 1154 members for the current year. Memberships after Nov 1 are for 2017.

TQ3: 41

TQ4: 317

TQ5: 3

TQ 6: 4

- Green Bank Turtles, Green Bank, WV
- Parkersburg Masters Swimming, Parkersburg, WV
- Shepherd University Wellness Center, Shepherstown, WV
- West Virginia Masters Swimming, Charleston, WV

TQ7: Peluso Open Water Masters (193)



**Answers**



*Local Masters Swim Committee Newsletter*  
*Betsy Durrant, Editor*  
*211 66<sup>th</sup> Street*  
*Virginia Beach, VA 23451-2040*

*Prstd Std*  
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***Trivia Questions about our LMSC.***

***Questions start on page 2, continue on page 5.***

***Answers are on page 7.***

***Don't look at answers until you read all 7 questions.***

TQ5: There are some clubs registered with no swimmers registered. Guess how many (1-10).

TQ6: Our LMSC covers most of Virginia (except counties of Arlington and Fairfax and cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church) and part of West Virginia. How many clubs from West Virginia are registered?

TQ7: VMST is the largest club (286). Which club is next?

