

The Wet Gazette

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Serving Masters Swimmers in Virginia and West Virginia

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10 Takeaways from the 2021 USMS Short Course Nationals

By Kelly Parker Palace, VMST Swimmer Since 1997

As the host of the award-winning [Champion's Mojo](#) podcast, my co-host and I always do "Takeaways" about what we thought the main points of each show were. I've just returned from participating in the 2021 U.S. Masters Swimming Short Course Nationals held in Greensboro, NC. Here are my "Takeaways" (in no particular order):

1. **The Greensboro Aquatic Center (GAC) is a stunning facility, truly one of the best in the country.** Besides the nicely deep, fast 8 lane, 50 meter long course pool, which for this meet was formed into two SCY competition courses, there is a giant diving well for warm-up and cool downs. There is tons of seating and deck space and it is light and bright with lots of windows and natural light. The multiple scoreboards are big, bright and show names, lanes, splits and final results. There's also a recently built "training" pool in a separate building, just a short walk from the main pool, which boasts another 20 lanes and more locker rooms that were available for the entire meet.

2. **The meet was incredibly well run by USMS, with ample volunteers and officials who were friendly and efficient.** Though the meet wasn't as large as many SCY championships from the past, it still had around 900 entries. Everything from check-in to flow of the meet went smoothly. The vendors were set up outside, as were the check-in and awards pick up. Masks were optional if you were fully vaccinated. When opening the entry door to the GAC, there was a sign posted that said, "Vacc Up or Mask Up". The majority of swimmers and coaches were not wearing masks.

3. **Inquiring minds wanted to know...** Were the Olympic Swimmers in Tokyo as excited about USMS Nationals as we were about Olympic swimming? After all, the USMS live stream of our races was available for all the world to see. Maybe

they were having "Watch Parties" of USMS swimming? No doubt the Olympic excitement was the topic of many discussions. Go Team USA!

4. **The meet felt like a joyous reunion as much as a swim meet.** Since the last USMS nationals was almost two years ago, and often the only time we see faraway swim friends, there were extra smiles, hugs, connections and deeper conversations. Meeting new friends was fun too. It was something to celebrate outside of swimming.

5. **The locker rooms were uncrowded.** Though the locker rooms were made available for use, meet participants were urged to come dressed to swim. My hotel was 15 minutes away and I was not keen on driving that distance in my tech suit. The only negative of putting on a tight tech suit in a relatively empty locker room (see attached photo) is that no one is there to help you pull your suit up over your shoulder. Ouch! I think I just threw my back out.



Kelly Parker Palace at Short Course Nationals!

Current and Upcoming Events

Lake Moomaw 1-Mile Swim

August 7, 2021; Hot Springs, VA

Maryland Swim for Life

September 11, 2021; Chestertown, MD

Jim McDonnell Lake Swims

September 26, 2021; Reston, VA

USMS Long Course Nationals

October 7-10; Geneva, OH

2021 Go The Distance

December 31, 2021

General Information

LMSC for Virginia Website: www.vaswim.org

USMS Website: www.usms.org

Nearby LMSCs

North Carolina: www.ncmasters.org

Maryland: www.teamunify.com

Potomac Valley: www.PVMasters.org

Nearby Zones

Colonies Zone: www.ColoniesZone.org

Dixie Zone: www.DixieZone.org

Online Meet Registrations:

www.clubassistant.com

LMSC Officers

Chair: Caycee Buscaglia

Vice-Chair: Ken Gardner

Secretary: Alice Phillips

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Membership Coordinator: Jeff Bush

Coaches: Rich Williams

Fitness: Dane Schwartz

Long Distance: Dave Holland

Newsletter: Heather and Chris Stevenson

Officials: Charlie Cockrell

Records & Top Ten: Chris Stevenson

Review: Heather Stevenson

Safety: Jim Miller

Sanctions: Kyle Ahlgren

Webmaster/Social Media: George Sushkoff

10 Takeaways (from page 1)

6. **Warm-up before attempting to put on a tech suit.** I'm not kidding. I truly strained a small muscle in my back with the struggle of squeezing my post-quarantine body into my pre-quarantine tech suit. I felt it during all 40 lengths of my 1,000 free.

7. **Inspiration abounds.** Ninety-eight-year-old (yes, 98) Charlotte Sanddal, from Big Sky Montana Masters Team, (BSMT) swam the 500 free and dropped 1 minute and 9 seconds off her best time! There are too many amazing swims to list as inspiring, but this one really caught my eye (and touched my heart)...and the next one too...

8. **Some people can do an entire 1650 butterfly.** Who knew?! Bill Durell, a 70-year-old from the Minnesota Masters, swam his entire 1650 yard event BUTTERFLY!

9. **It's not *always* about performance and times.** Many swimmers were unable to train for months during the thick of the pandemic. *I know I was unable to train. We got out of shape, maybe gained the "quarantine 10 lbs." I know I did.* Some swimmers were way off their times. *I know I was.* But most swimmers expressed just how great it was to be back at a meet and have a sense of this being the first step back to normal life, fitness and the pure love of swimming, fast or slow. *I know I feel that way.*

10. **One would be wise to attend a USMS Masters Nationals.** These events are filled with joy, friendship and inspiration. It is the opportunity to do what we all love--to swim, to watch our friends swim and to make new friends! If you like to stay close to home, mark your calendar for August 3-7, 2022 when our own Richmond, VA, will host the USMS Long Course Nationals.

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Stroke Count Swimming

By Andrew Sheaff, Assistant Swim Coach, UVA

If you're serious about your swimming, you're probably keeping track of your progress. For most swimmers, this means keeping track of your times. Doing so will definitely improve your training and your competitive performances. However, there's another number you should be keeping track of- your stroke count. While your times indicate how effective you are, your stroke counts indicate how efficient you are. Fewer strokes means less work for you!

Stroke length has been consistently shown to be related to faster swimming. While there are exceptions, faster swimmers tend to take fewer strokes. At your next competition, watch the fastest swimmers in a given event and count their strokes. You'll find that they almost always take fewer strokes than swimmers that swim significantly slower. It matters. Just like if you want to improve your times, if you want to improve your stroke counts, you'd better start measuring!

(cont'd on page 3)

Start Small and Aim to Improve

The first step is to simply become aware of how many strokes you're taking during a practice. How many are you taking when you're swimming slow? How many are you taking when you're swimming fast? Does the number change over the course of a practice? Does it change when you get tired? You don't need to worry about what the specific numbers are, just begin to get a sense of what's 'normal' for you. The cool part is that simply being aware of what you're doing tends to improve your stroke counts. Once you've established normal stroke counts, simply try to bring those stroke counts down over time.

Putting it into Practice

While all of the sets below are designed with freestyle in mind, they can be adapted to any of the strokes. These sets are just examples. If they're too easy for you, increase the volume, increase the speed, or reduce the rest. If they're too difficult, reduce the distances, slow it down, and take more rest. Focus on the concept as opposed to the specific sets, and scale the challenge to your abilities.

Endurance. Most races have a significant endurance component, and certainly most swim practices do as well. Stroke counts play into endurance in two critical ways. The fewer strokes you have to take for a given distance, the easier it's going to be and the longer you'll be able to last. As importantly, as we get tired from longer efforts, our technique tends to deteriorate and this can be seen in climbing stroke counts.

Option #1

50+100+150+200+250+300+250+200+150+100+50 with 20-30 seconds rest between each effort

Pick a stroke count and do everything you can to sustain that stroke count as the distance increases. Let's say you choose 15 strokes. While it probably won't be too difficult to hold 15 strokes for the 50, it will be much more difficult for a 300. For an extra challenge, see if you can swim faster during the second half of the set while holding the same stroke count.

Option #2

5x200 with 30 seconds rest between; take 1 less stroke per 25 during the second 100 of each swim

The goal here is to be extra efficient the 2nd half of each swim. You're trying to instill the habit of efficiency by exaggerating it. If you take 15 strokes per 25 during the 1st 100, take 14 strokes per 25 during the 2nd 25. This will help build your ability to sustain your technique as you get tired.

Go Golfing. While improving your efficiency is great, most swimmers are ultimately interested in swimming faster. However, the key to swimming faster is often swimming more efficiently. The solution?

Work on both! When you 'golf', you're trying to lower your score, which is the addition of your time and your stroke count. You get rewarded by swimming faster and swimming more efficiently, exactly what matters for long-term progress.

Option #1

8x50 with 45 seconds rest between; descend your golf score 1-4 and then 5-8; be better on number 8 than number 4

This is simple, add the number of strokes you take and your time for each 50. Try to bring that number down. The only way to do that is to swim faster, swim more efficiently, or both. All three combinations lead to better swimming.

(cont'd on page 4)

Stroke Counting (cont'd from page 3)

Option #2

2 rounds through

4x50 with 45 seconds rest; 200 pace speed, try to take as few strokes as possible while still hitting 200 speed

50 easy

4x50 with 45 seconds rest; take one less stroke than best 50 from above and see how close you can get to 200 speed

50 easy

The goal here is to learn how to swim fast AND stay efficient while doing it. You're trying to maintain one of the variables while improving the other. In the first group of 50s, you're trying to hold your speed while lowering your stroke count. In the second group of 50s, you're trying to hold your stroke count while improving your speed.

Control Your Counts. When you're first working with stroke counts, you may find that you're not able to control your stroke counts very well. The goal with these sets is to learn to control your stroke count and be able to predict it. If you want to swim a 50 at 16 strokes, you're able to do that because you know what it feels like and you can control your stroke. These sets force you to swim at pre-determined stroke counts that are constantly changing.

Option #1

8*75 with 30 seconds rest between

ODD 75s- take one less stroke per 25 (i.e. 16/15/14 within each 75)

EVEN 75s- take one more stroke per 25 (i.e. 14/15/16 within each 75)

Within each 75, you're going to have to change how you swim so that you take fewer strokes on the odd 75s and more strokes on the even 75s. With practice, you'll find that you have more control over what you're doing and you'll know what it feels like.

Option #2

8x100 with 30 seconds rest between

ODD alternate 25 at choice stroke count/25 at choice stroke count -2 (i.e. 15/13/15/13 within each 100)

EVEN alternate 25 at choice stroke count/25 at choice stroke count +2 (i.e. 15/17/15/17 within each 100)

As with the first option, you're going to need to shift back and forth between different stroke counts. This set is a little more extreme in that you're going to need to make a larger shift with each 25, which will require a little more skill.

Choose Your Own Adventure

The possibilities for integrating stroke counts into your training are essentially endless. Just as you should always keep track of your training times if you hope to improve them, you should always be keeping track of your stroke counts. Similarly, just as you change your speed in practice to create different types of improvements, you can change your stroke counts to impact your technique and performance in different ways. You can focus on being efficient while swimming fast, you can focus on holding your efficiency while swimming over longer distances, and you can focus on learning how to control your stroke count much like shifting gear in a car. It's up to you. Improved stroke counts are an indicator improved technique, and improved technique is a necessary component of long-term improvements in speed. Rather than leaving it to chance, start counting!

* * *

Nationals: George's Journal

by George Sushkoff

[Ed. Note: George went to the first couple of days of the recent USMS Short Course Nationals in Greensboro to swim a number of distance events - the 1650, the 1000, and the 500! The following is his short journal for those first two days of the meet. Imagine you were there and enjoy!]

USMS Nationals were held at the Greensboro Aquatic Center in Greensboro, NC (how appropo). The facility opened in 2011, and has hosted YMCA Nationals, Toyota U.S. Open Championships, and NCAA Division 1 Men's and Women's Championships.

Day 0: Tuesday, July 20th

The competition pool was being prepped for the meet. An adjacent pool was open for warmup.

Day 1: Wednesday, July 21st

1650 & 1000 Free

Due to COVID, no spectators were allowed in the facility - only those swimming or working the meet as officials, timers, counters, and other volunteers. Absent were the throngs of adoring fans chanting V-M-S-T, 1-6-9-3, or whatever team member happened to have a swimmer in the water at the time. Some missed the roar of the crowd, while others preferred to suffer in silence in their first meet in 2 or more years.

The 1650 session began at 8 AM. Two courses were configured with bulkheads separating the two. Odd heats were in one pool, and even in the other. Of note was a swimmer who swam the entire race fly <https://swimswam.com/usms-nationals-minnesota-masters-bill-durell-swims-kind-of-nutty-1650-fly/>

Two National records were set in the 1650:

*Heidi George, Unattached within Pacific LMSC:
women's 45-49 1650 freestyle (17:05.13)

*Nancy Steadman Martin, Garden State Masters:
women's 65-59 1650 freestyle (20:33.09)

The morning session was not without controversy.

A loose lane line nearly triggered a 911 call from someone on deck. A first time counter had to correct the timing system operator after he tried to convince the counter that she was off by 4 lengths. In the end, the counter was right. Beginner's luck, or skill? The latter, I say.

The 1000 was swum as a separate session beginning at noon. Another record fell in the 1000:

*Heidi George, Unattached within Pacific LMSC:
women's 45-49 1000 freestyle (10:18.44)

Day 2: Thursday, July 22nd

500 Free & 400 IM

The 500 session began at 9 AM. There was one swimmer in the women's 95-99 age group. She got a standing ovation when she finished her race. Quite inspiring, indeed. Another national record was broken in the 500 (Heidi George's third!).

*Heidi George, Unattached within Pacific LMSC:
women's 45-49 500 freestyle (5:03.45).

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Announcements

LMSC Bylaws:

Don't forget . . . please provide any comments on the existing LMSC Bylaws to Caycee Buscaglia by no later than **August 1st**. The Bylaws are available at www.vaswim.org.

Lake Moomaw:

The Lake Moomaw swim is coming up on August 7th (it is currently full with 85 participants). Dave Holland, the race director, is looking for a couple of volunteers to help him with the race. In particular, he needs a kayaker (preferably with his or her own kayak) and someone to help with timing/ tabulating results. Volunteers get a T-shirt and a day on the beach at beautiful Lake Moomaw. If interested, please get in touch with Dave at davehollandrva@gmail.com.

Convention Delegates:

The USMS annual Convention will be held virtually again this year on September 23-27, 2021. LMSC representatives this year will be Caycee Buscaglia, Kirk Clear, and Heather Stevenson.

The Stripers' Margarita

The Stripers Swim Team - July 2021

'Twas the morning of swim practice back in twenty-something,
When bubbles were seen coming up from some sweet thing.
With a dash and a dive a Striper found the poor soul,
And lifted her out of ye old swimming hole.

It's time to meet Margarita, dear Coach Dr. Miller,
You're about to learn why she's really a thriller!
She's jaunted to Florida to learn how to swim,
As pictured with Gary Hall Sr. who's looking quite slim!



She's been to the beaches and yes, a few bars
Where she sometimes performs without going too far.



Her dream is to travel with you, our sometimes coach Jim
Margarita has flown and promises to fit in.
Her talents are huge as she fishes and bikes
She can keep you company on those long Tokyo hikes!
Just might make the headlines of the Sunday NY Times.

(cont'd on page 7)



As you can see, she won't take up very much space
And doesn't she really put a smile on your face?



To be able to cheer for USA divers and swimmers alike
Would be such an honor filled with tons of delight!
And just think, a picture with Ledesky, the Fink(e)s, Hinds, or Grimes
Just might make the headlines of the Sunday NY Times.
So please consider adding Margarita to your luggage,
And we'll promise to not write any more of this rubbish!

BTW, Jim said, "Yes"!!! Margarita is at the Olympics!!
(see photos below)

