

POOL SIDE: TCSO JCC Swim Workouts

By Michelle Panik

NEW MEMBERS, *cont.*

Randy Soriano
Karen Spinks
Claudia Stein
Beth Stens
Patti Stewart-Garbrecht
Amie Thomas
Matt Thomas
Mike Thomas
Emmett Thomason
Tim Jacobsen
Kevin Valles
Heather Vecchia
Michael Vecchia Jr.
Lolita Veloso
Nicole Ventrone
Tomas Viskanta
Dave Wade
Monica Walters
Christopher Wells
Heather Wyckoff
Susan Zody

During a recent swim at my local city pool, I split a lane with a nice old man who swam with a snorkel. While resting at the wall, he removed his snorkel and asked, "Are you a triathlete?"

Slightly startled, I said that I was and asked, "How did you know?" I thought maybe he recognized my B&L swim cap.

"Because," he said, "you're a really good swimmer."

At this point I had to laugh and tell him, "But triathletes aren't good swimmers. We just survive it and move onto the bike."

If you're a triathlete who merely survives the swim, you should check out the Monday and



A typical group at the masters swim.

Wednesday evening pool swims at the Jewish Community Center (JCC).

When I show up one Wednesday evening to observe, the early arrivers have gathered on the



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Laura Sasaki, an attorney for the Gomez Law Firm, is a member of the TCSO. Laura has participated in numerous triathlons, including 3 Ironmans, duathlons, marathons, ultra-marathons and road and criterium races. She represented the USA at the World Championship Long Course Duathlon Championship in Barcis, Italy, and qualified for the World Championship Short Course Duathlon.



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pool deck's far end, away from a water polo team that's working out in the pool's other half.

Soon, coaches Sergio Borges and Erin Hunter arrive. While they answer questions from new swimmers, take money, and punch swim passes, I chat up the swimmers.

With the number "132" still written on his left forearm, Brian Fleming came to the JCC directly from the first Fiesta Island time trial of the season. Asked how he did, he says, "I have no idea. Hopefully better than last year."

Brian's never been to any other masters swim workout, but he likes this one. "You have everyone from people who're afraid to put their face in the water to people training for Ironman."

This early-season workout has attracted about 60 swimmers, with the number expected to increase as the year progresses and the weather warms up. As it is now, each lane is filled with six to eight swimmers.

"That's a good problem to have," Sergio tells me. The coaches are hoping to soon be able to use more of the pool.

Swimmers are divided into two groups—a regular masters group that swims between 2,000 and 2,500 yards, and a technique group that focuses on stroke fundamentals; they do about 800 yards.

Erin Hunter is leading tonight's technique group, and she asks them to warm-up with five minutes of gentle laps.

Then they move onto a kicking drill, where swimmers kick for 10 seconds with one arm outstretched and the other at their side. After 10 seconds, they take one stroke and switch to their other side. Before beginning the set, Erin reminds swimmers to, "work on using your ankles when you kick," and demonstrates with a floppy flutter of her Vans slip-on.

Sending the swimmers off, Erin walks back and forth along the pool deck, studying strokes and shouting out pointers.

Erin's well qualified to be giving such advice. A swimmer since age three, she swam in college at UC Santa Cruz. Erin finished her collegiate

swimming career as a seven-time All-American whose specialties include the 200IM, 400IM, and 200 breaststroke.

Volunteering one or two evenings a week to coach other swimmers is no small commitment. But when asked why she does it, Erin simply says, "When the opportunity came up (to coach), I thought, 'Why not give back to something that I know about?'"

Then she quickly turns back to her swimmers and explains their next drill, a fingertip drag to emphasize a high elbow.

Christopher Teague is a technique group success story.

"I learned how to swim here," he tells me. "I showed up on the pool deck not having swam for 20 years." Gradually he progressed, spurred on by the workout's beginner-friendly atmosphere. Christopher says

it's hard to do something new, but "the coaches make it easy."

In the five lanes next to the technique group are the masters swimmers. They're coached this evening by Sergio

Borges, owner of X

Training and a TCSD member since 1995.

Sergio acknowledges that a masters swim for triathletes is different than one geared to pure swimmers. Because, as mentioned in this article's beginning, triathletes usually aren't natural swimmers.

"The goal is to get the best of what they have," Sergio says. "Fix two or three things, and everything else is developed with strength."

According to Sergio, the most common problem is a too-high head position that reduces aerodynamics. Second is an inefficient stroke that has too much arm cross. The third issue is hand position when entering the water; if the wrist bends up, a swimmer won't be able to pull as much water.

Mickey Murad, head coach and co-owner of First Wave Swim, says, "The JCC swims offer

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Masters swim coaches (l to r) Sergio Borges, Erin Hunter, and Chad Homcheon.

TCSD JCC Swim Workout, continued

both a structured workout for the seasoned triathlete looking to build or maintain a base as well as technical guidance for the triathlete looking to be more efficient in that first leg.”

After the workout, a swimmer from the technique group tells Sergio that he’s thinking about moving to the masters group. Sergio asks him to swim a lap. After observing his stroke, Sergio remarks, “Swimming’s hard.”

But he encourages the swimmer, telling him what he’s doing right and what he should work on. Sergio tells him to try the masters group next time.

The swimmer seems pleased, and pulls himself out of the pool. Maybe soon he’ll be one of the first swimmers out of the ocean, looking not to survive the swim, but to dominate.

Fast Facts

What: Masters Swim Workouts

Where: Jewish Community Center

<http://www.lfjcc.org>

Address: 4126 Executive Drive La Jolla, CA

When: Monday and Wednesday nights,
7:30-8:45PM

Cost: \$5 drop-in, 5 swims for \$15,
10 swims for \$25

Who: Anyone looking to improve their swimming, or just get in a good pool workout.

Coaches: Mickey Murad (head coach), Sergio Borges, Chad Homcheon, Rachel Gordon, Erin Hunter, and Nikee Pomper

Race Report, St. George continued

being focused and maintaining an efficient stroke. The chilly water lasted for about 20 minutes, next thing I knew I was exiting the water. The wetsuit strippers were great and I was up the carpet and in the changing tent in no time. My hands didn’t function at all (from the cold), so a volunteer had to buckle my helmet. In not time, I was on out of T1 and on my bike, still cold but at least it wasn’t raining. Great day for a long bike ride. The first short section was all about getting the blood flowing to the extremities and working parts which had rested during the swim. My right quad hurt from the start but I kept telling myself, “you can’t miss experiencing this ride you’ve been hearing so much about”. There were steady climbs with nice descends and rolling terrain. Eventually the road surface turned to chip seal fortunately not rough enough to break one’s rhythm. The killer stuff was on the loop section; a long fairly steep hill and “The Wall” which was very steep. I was riding 3-4 mph for what felt like an eternity, a few minutes in reality. I felt the sun on my back, Yippee! then an icy breeze blew in. Out of Yevo, there is a long hill and then as 2nd loop starts, it’s more or less downhill. Reaching speeds of 37mph and a maximum of 47mph. With crosswinds in this section, my Zip 303’s

were perfect. Their lighter for climbing and deeper wheel set makes me uncomfortable in crosswinds. This was a great course for me since I love climbing. Del Dios, Lake Wolford and Mt. Palomar are in my back yard. That said, 8 hours and 22 minutes is a long time on the bike, my final bike split. I wouldn’t recommend this race for slow bikers. All that and my right quad still hurt, but now like H-E-double toothpicks. I cruised into T2, got into my run gear and tried to run but my leg hurt so bad I headed to the medical tent and whined to no avail. The medical crew was very nice, gave me some ice and suggested I shut up and get a massage; good deal. Usually when I finish the massage tent is already packed up and long gone along with the pizza and they’ve run out of medals.

My age group 70-74 had six starters of whom only two finished and they were “age up” guys, really 69. My claim fame, this time was that I was first out of the water in my group at 1 hours 29+ minutes.

It was a disappointment not to be able to run/walk to finish line, but what a training day. What fun! I wouldn’t trade it for the world. I will kick ass at my next race, Buffalo Lake Springs 70.3 later this month.

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