

2007 USMS Annual Convention Report

Anaheim, CA

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Karin Adams

NJ LMSC Delegate and NJ LMSC Fastlane Newsletter Graphic Designer

Upon arrival at the Hyatt Hotel and Convention Center in Anaheim, CA on September 26, I immediately felt more important than I had anticipated. I live swimming every day as both a coach and athlete, so the US Aquatic Sports Convention somehow seemed to me an extension of my daily life. But then in the lobby of the hotel I saw swimmers I have admired for many years; I saw coaches I have learned from in instructional videos, at clinics, and in articles; and I saw volunteers that have fascinated me since becoming involved in Masters Swimming. My notions of what kind of learning experience the USAS Convention would be now seemed so small and I was really excited to get started.

The first real dive into Convention was into the Novaquatics pool in Irvine in the pitch black dark of 5:30am under a large beautiful moon. On the deck were volunteer coaches from Masters programs around the country. The coaching we received in my "breaststroke group" was something that could earn a couple hundred bucks per swimmer in a clinic. But there we were under the California morning sky getting it for free. I was so tired I could barely appreciate it, but was impacted by the sense of giving of the people around me in this Convention.

We rushed back to the hotel so I could get to the new delegates orientation. Parliamentary procedures and voting rules were reviewed. The major issue was whether the new delegates had been to the hospitality suite, and if we knew how important a part of Convention the hospitality suite was. I had been educated on this ahead of time by my NJ co-delegates, and felt a little bit cooler than the rest of the newbies since I had already been in the suite.

The first House of Delegates convened. I really wanted to know who would win the newsletter of the year since I think NJ has a pretty great one that could be up for nomination in 2008. Oregon won, and I am in the process now of figuring out what makes their newsletter special so that we can try to make our NJ newsletter even more special.

I went to the Endowment Fund Committee meeting and learned a lot about the inner workings of money in USMS. Next, I attended the new delegate luncheon with some incredible people that were welcoming and encouraging like few I've met in life. Richard Quick stopped by our table to chat for a while - another brilliant spirit.

I attended the Registration Committee, Coaches Committee, and Fitness Committee meetings. All were fantastic, great learning opportunities. I admired the passionate debate because it illustrated how deeply all committee members care about this organization. They fight for every detail to be right. Its not common to encounter people like this all the time. Maybe I exist in a world of people driven by money, bills, schedules, appointments. It is clear that the USMS volunteers are eager, smart and dedicated, which continues to inspire me. The day concludes with the Aquatic Facility Workshop and a trip to the hospitality suite to chat with new people, new friends.

The second full day of Convention again begins with early bird swim. All of us are on serious lack of sleep yet energized and talkative about all the meetings and votes and progress. After the workout, my day begins by attending Sport Medicine Committee and International Committee followed by Coaches Presentations. I am blown away by all the USMS Masters Swimming programs that are bigger and better developed than most age group swim teams I encounter. Its difficult to understand why New Jersey does not have a 200+ member Masters swim team. We have so many of the ingredients that other areas have, and yet we cannot seem to pull it together like other places in the country. My original perception was that large Masters programs were attributed to warm weather and that all the great programs were in Florida and California. But this Convention has convinced me that they are everywhere, and some of the hugely dedicated Masters teams have never practiced in any pool the likes of Rutgers or TCNJ.

The third day ... Swim practice with these people rocks! Coach Mike Collins helps me with my flip turn. He finds a key to improving my turn that no one else has figured out, and I am so excited to work on it back home. Today, Convention for me includes Championship Committee, Editorial Committee, Colonies Zone Committee, and House of Delegates. Championship Committee discussion really opened my eyes to how important Postal meets are to this national organization. I am not sure how many Masters swimmers even understand what the Postal events are about. I decide to investigate this with the NJ board at the next opportunity. Our Zone Committee exposes the real truth about Rutgers... everyone wants Rutgers to have an amazing Masters program, to host amazing meets, to be an example for the state, the zone, the nation. All are excited to attend the Colonies SCM Zone Championship this December at Rutgers. I am looking forward to seeing some familiar faces so soon again at the meet.

Day 3 ends with the Awards Banquet and lots of post-partying in the hospitality suite. The awards banquet was for all sports in Convention: water polo, diving, synchronized swimming, USA Swimming, Masters Swimming. Rowdy Gaines' voice in person is so similar to when we hear him do color commentary at the Olympics, that it is hard to believe that he is a live person on the podium. The award recipients are intensely grateful. But the most moving recipient speech of the whole night is Kris Houchens, as she accepted the USMS Masters Coach of the Year award. In fact, all the Masters Swimming presentations on the stage are the highlights of the evening, making the audience from all the aquatic sports laugh and cry. It is a privilege to be a part of USMS. It presents younger athletes with a view of the ageless opportunities available after their collegiate careers complete. It is a joy to see all the kids at the banquet, most of whom know little other than their USA Swimming age group experience. They get a chance to see us "older kids" have so much fun with a dose of humor mostly at our own expense.

Day 4 arrives, and as we leave the hotel I see a few more faces I admire, and wave goodbye because they are now my friends. I am really touched by the volunteer spirit of these aquatic organizations. Among the many impressive things to witness at Convention, the most notable by far, is how many volunteers are involved. USMS does have a few people that serve as paid employees, but you would barely know it by observing the larger number of energetic and enthusiastic voices of all of unpaid volunteers. We can have that too in New Jersey - the large number of voices - the outspoken volunteers who care deeply and passionately about this sport and how it can improve our lives. We have some volunteers already, but I have learned at Convention that we can always use more of them. Our NJ volunteers deserve a lot of credit and appreciation for what they do. There is so much to achieve as we move forward, and thanks to my opportunity to attend Convention, I realize the bigger picture and how together we can work on improving the Masters swimming experience in New Jersey.

Ed Tsuzuki

NJ LMSC Delegate, Vice Chair of the USMS Rules & Tabulations Committee, NJ LMSC Top Ten, Records Chair, and Webmaster

This has been the 8th Convention I have attended - always as a representative of New Jersey Masters swimming. While this Convention has always proven to be a very well organized event, I would say that there have been noticeable improvements in the overall facilitation and strategic planning process, with direct involvement from executive board members in all of the committee meetings. I am very proud to represent the NJ LMSC, with our other delegates, and to work on behalf of our entire membership. NJ is very well represented as we are active participants in several important committees and take our role as member advocates very seriously.

I have been very active on the national Records and Tabulation Committee since 1999, and in the last year have assumed the role of Vice Chair. This committee is responsible for establishing and maintaining a standardized process of recording and verifying times and publishing the Top Ten times (www.usms.org/comp/tt/), All-American rosters (www.usms.org/comp/aa/), and USMS national records (www.usms.org/comp/usmsrecords.php) annually for each course. In the last few months, our committee created a "goals and objectives" document to allow the committee to better align with the overall USMS Strategic Plan, which dedicates an almost singular focus on our customer – the USMS member.

Over the last few years, we have made great strides in improving the accuracy and completeness of our data as well as in the automation of the processes for tabulating and maintaining the results. We have established a permanent USMS ID number (the last 5 characters of your ID) for our swimmers and have provided electronic tools to the LMSC top ten recorders to consolidate electronic meet results and validate the results against the registrar's database (to correct all the typos in name and ID number!). The top ten recorders now have access to a secure national registration database of all USMS members. In fact, in our 2007 SCY top ten tabulation, we were able to post 100% of the Top Ten data with IDs (a big deal for us data heads)!

I am still maintaining all of the National top ten and All-American data on www.usms.org and work very closely with Jim Matysek, the USMS IT Director, to continue to enhance our on-line capabilities. I will be building an on-line "knowledge database," which will provide committee members with instant access to committee documentation, templates, databases, and software.

But, let's get back to the customer! The work of the Records and Tabulation Committee is focused primarily on the competing swimmer – those that achieve times in sanctioned and recognized meets. One could take the view that our work is focused on only the best competitive swimmers. We would like to change that. We have had a long-term goal of being able to tabulate ALL USMS swims – not just the Top Ten swims. The permanent ID, on-line access to registration data, and meet sanctions are all steps toward fulfilling this vision. A related initiative, which many of you may have already seen, is the "Top Times" data base, also available on line at www.usms.org/comp/toptimes.shtml. We will be working on developing and refining on-line data validation tools in order to merge the current Top Ten and Top Times databases, while maintaining very high levels of accuracy. Unfortunately, this is not an overnight deliverable, but I firmly believe that we are getting closer and closer to bringing this to fruition. The result will allow the Records and Tabulation Committee to serve a much broader portion of the USMS population!

Susan Kirk
NJ LMSC Delegate, member of the USMS Open Water and
Long Distance Committee, and NJ LMSC Secretary

Convention is an Experience; Not Just Meetings!

That pretty much sums it up.....an experience! And the impact of that experience does not end when you board that plane to return to your home LMSC. It is this experience which is so difficult to define. It is easy reporting back to the LMSC the winners of the 2009 bids for the pool and the open water National Championships, the election results, the award winners, the new rules that were passed by the House of Delegates, administrative changes, and the action items and initiatives that the various USMS committees will be implementing in 2008. And of course, in this technological age, the complete minutes and results from this year's Convention are already posted online on the USMS website for all USMS members to read. The real challenge emerges when trying to convey to you, the NJ LMSC membership whom we proudly represent, the intangibles that happen at Convention.

For four days we are immersed in a think tank-like environment with total focus, passion, brainstorming, networking, and conversations revolving around the inner workings of USMS and their off-spring, the LMSCs. We ask ourselves how can we improve what our LMSC offers our members, how can we make our services reach a larger percentage of our members, how to effectively promote the fitness and healthy lifestyle benefits of Masters swimming to our local adult swimming community, and what can we do to inspire NJ LMSC members to renew their USMS memberships each year. As Convention delegates, we all metamorphose into sponges. We try to take in and absorb all of the great thoughts and experiences that are shared among the delegates and to bring home this newly imparted knowledge and apply it to our LMSC swimming community. The floodgates open and our brains start sprinting down various lanes of possible great ideas. Sure, we have a few false starts, but then we discover that we are no longer sprinting; instead, we have embarked on our long distance journey. And behold, a new program has been born!

Last year during Convention the NJ LMSC Continuous Membership Retention Program was conceived. This program has the potential to touch our entire membership, all of you - whether you are a fitness swimmer, a triathlete, a competitive swimmer, or even a swimmer on hiatus from the pool/ocean that still chooses to support a strong organization which embraces your passion of 'swimming for life' and fulfills your sense of "community." After months of arduous work, with help tracking down the older registration records from members of our "Convention-made" network, we were able to compile all of the registration data of our LMSC dating back to 1986 and determine which members were eligible for the 5 year incremental levels of continuous membership. Earlier this year, through our LMSC communications network - the NJ LMSC website, the Fastlane Newsletter, the NJ LMSC e-mails, and at the First Annual NJ LMSC Banquet - we were proud to recognize all of the NJ LMSC swimmers who had achieved their 5yr, 10yr, 15yr, and even 20yr milestones of continuous USMS membership in New Jersey. As the 2007 registration year comes to a close, we look forward to identifying our new group of members whom have now achieved their 5yr, 10yr, 15yr, and 20yr milestones. Our goal is for this program to not only be ongoing, but also to evolve and to expand in the near future.

As a direct result of attending last year's Convention, and in particular, while attending the Long Distance Committee (LDC) meetings, I was exposed to a well-greased, very efficient, and productive committee which I found incredibly intriguing. I suppose that it was probably about this time last year that I was pleased to learn that I had been selected to join this committee. Boy, have I discovered how productive they really are! The LDC currently runs 10

National Championships each year. And next year, although it is not a National Championship, the LDC will be adding a 25K Open Water Championship Swim to its responsibilities. This year, the LDC meeting opened with a discussion led by the committee's overseeing Board of Directors member, the VP of National Operations, about the new Strategic Plan as it applies to this committee. The USMS Strategic Plan for continued success and growth has been one of the hottest topics this past year. The discussion revolved around the possible restructuring of the LDC with the responsibilities of the Postal events potentially being transitioned to the Championship Committee. The LDC would become the Open Water Committee and would be responsible for overseeing the Open Water Championships with a focus on increasing the awareness of the USMS membership of these events and increasing the level of participation of USMS swimmers.

This same realignment of committees was discussed during the Championship Committee meeting. This organizational restructuring has not been resolved and for now, the Long Distance Committee will still run the USMS National Championship Postal Events and will adopt a new name as the Open Water and Long Distance Committee. Recently, the NJ LMSC also has their sights on increasing the USMS member presence at open water swims held along the Jersey Shore. A NJ LMSC goal for 2008 is to have a USMS Sanctioned Open Water State Championship conducted at an ocean swim.

Efforts by USMS have been underway to try to align at least a couple of the Open Water National Championships with SCY Nationals and LCM Nationals. In 2009, the 1 Mile Open Water National Championship bid was awarded to Millerton Lake (Clovis, CA) which will take place on the Monday following the SCY Nationals in Clovis, CA.

Dr. Jim Miller gave an excellent presentation about hypothermia to help educate the committee about the signs and symptoms of hypothermia and what they can do if they encounter someone who may be experiencing hypothermia either during or after an open water race. This has become an important safety issue as the interest and participation levels of the USMS membership in open water races has increased. There were several hypothermia incidents that occurred this past year at USMS open water events.

Michael Moore opened the Communications Committee meeting with an overview of the committee's alignment to the USMS Strategic Plan. He highlighted the target areas as providing member services, prioritization, keeping it simple, realistic timelines, and maintaining regular monthly communications. The Communications Committee has proposed that a bi-monthly USMS membership-wide e-mail be distributed on the months opposite the mailing of the USMS Swimmer magazine. These e-mails would be aimed at helping to keep the membership informed of fitness events and National Championships, items of general interest to the membership, USMS website content and the like. The efforts are ongoing by Jeanne Seidler as she continues to upload results to the Current Top Times and Individual Results Database. She reports that the database now contains more than 598,386 results from 921 meets. The goal of this database is to capture all swims by registered USMS swimmers at recognized and sanctioned meets. An ongoing project is to nationalize the sanctioning procedure with the goal of building a more inclusive USMS Calendar of Events.

The Accounting Workshop (for non-accountants) for LMSCs/Clubs was well attended and brought about a couple of ah-ha moments from the delegates attending. Segregation of duties was discussed several times. It was stated that the registrar cannot perform check signing and deposit functions. Additionally, the bank reconciliations must be performed by someone other than the person signing the checks or making the deposits. Another item that was brought up is that USMS dues collected by the LMSC as an agent for USMS are not considered revenues and

should not be reported as such, By accurately recording your USMS dues collected as liabilities, the revenues will be lower and this may have an impact on your tax reporting requirements.

The theme of this year's Convention was "USMS - Made for You and Me". After attending Convention this year, I would conclude that the theme was ever-present throughout all of the committee reports and action items for the upcoming year. It is clear that USMS is determined to focus its efforts on enhancing and improving the services it provides to its members. And now, the service that so many of the members have long-awaited is about to become a reality. Online registration! Forget about the stamp, forget about writing a check. Club Assistant has been hired by USMS to build the national online registration system and it is expected to be up and running by the end of this year. Now that's what I call service!

2007 USMS Convention Happenings

USMS 2007 Election Results:

President: Rob Copeland
Vice President of Member Services: Mark Gill
Vice President of National Operations: Leo Letendre
Vice President of Local Operations: Julie Heather
Vice President of Community Service: Michael Heather
Secretary: Meg Smath
Treasurer: Jeff Moxie

2007 Awards Presented:

- Ransom J. Arthur Award: Jeanne Ensign - Pacific Northwest LMSC
- Speedo USMS Coach of the Year: Kris Houchens, Indy Swim Fit, Indiana LMSC
- TYR Newsletter of the Year: "Aqua-Master", Oregon LMSC - Dave Radcliff, Editor
- Raleigh Area Masters National Championship Meets Award: Helen & Bob Brown
- Fitness Award: Mary Sweat - Oregon LMSC
- June Krauser USMS Communications Award: Julie Heather - Southern Pacific LMSC
- 2008 Rule Book dedicated to: Steve Schofield - Southern Pacific LMSC
- 2008 Rule Book cover design by: Raena Latina - Indiana LMSC
- USMS Club of the Year: Walnut Creek Masters - Kerry O'Brien, Head Coach
- David Yorzyk Award: Erik Scalise - Pacific LMSC
- Dorothy Donnelly USMS Service Award:
 - Joan Campbell - Florida LMSC
 - Cav Cavanaugh - Florida Gold Coast LMSC
 - Nadine Day - Illinois LMSC
 - Phil Dodson - Illinois LMSC
 - James Donnelly - Florida LMSC
 - Mark Gill - Kentucky LMSC
 - Chuck Hutinger - Florida LMSC
 - Steve Peterson - Pacific Northwest LMSC
 - Joe Magiera - Illinois LMSC
 - Arni Litt - Pacific Northwest LMSC
 - Kerry O'Brien - Pacific LMSC
 - Loree Watanabe - Pacific LMSC
 - Mary Lee Watson - Southeastern LMSC

2009 Pool Championships Awarded To:

Short Course Yards: Clovis, CA.
Long Course Meters: IU Natatorium, Indianapolis, IN.

2009 Long Distance Championships Awarded To:

One Hour Postal: Ohana - Pacific Northwest LMSC
3000/6000 Y Postal: Clemson - South Carolina LMSC

5K/10K Postal: Minuteman - New England LMSC
2 Mile Cable: Lake Placid, NY - Adirondack LMSC
1 Mile Open Water: Millerton Lake (Clovis), CA - Pacific LMSC
1-3 Mile Open Water: Canandaigua Lake, NY - Niagara LMSC – Jul. 18
3-6 Mile Open Water: Big Shoulders, Chicago, IL - Illinois LMSC – Sep. 12
6+ Mile Open Water: Metropolitan LMSC – Jul. 11