

## **2009-2010 Report from the Coaches of the Westmount YMCA Masters Swim Team**

Submitted Sept 2, 2009 by Head Coach Robyn Ouimet

Normally this kind of report would begin by addressing the President and the executive, distinguished guests and finally the members, but I can sum all this up in one word: CHAMPIONS!

### **Coaches, Coaching, Training**

#### Review 2008-2009

I am delighted with the strength of our coaching staff. We started the season with Robyn, Luis, Martin and Troy. Luis, who had returned to coaching evenings, moved to both morning sessions when Troy's departure for Nunavut left a space in those slots. The evening spot was ultimately filled by Joey Stafford-Abbott, Physical Education student at McGill whose infectious enthusiasm and willingness to learn has helped him grow immensely in the last year. I recognise Martin's leadership in coaching alone in the interim. The greatest challenge was finding regular coaches for Sunday afternoon practices at the Y when Robyn had competitions with both the youth and masters teams.

Coach rotation began last fall with a pilot project at 8:15, with the result that all practice times now staffed with more than one coach have regular rotations, coaches take a group of lanes for 2 weeks and then trade. Swimmer and coach feedback is positive, with different perspective, style, variety and expertise-sharing being the main benefits. Everyone wins!

Our coaching program this year focussed on preparation for shorter distances – 200 and less rather than the previously popular 400/800/1500 which are rarely offered at meets. This kind of higher-intensity, shorter interval work led to improved speed over shorter distances, but our endurance work still allowed success over longer races despite practice length of only 75 minutes. Our member triathletes also benefit from this hybrid training, with increased ability to avoid lactic acid accumulation and sprint ability to jockey for position in open water swims.

Victims of our own success: practices are close to full capacity. In 2008-2009, this meant we needed a waiting list for 8:15.

The first optional yoga workshop was well-attended in May to positive response.

Our summer training this year continued to focus on equal parts technique, endurance and speed, and we start the fall with many of our swimmers already having a strong base upon which to build.

Jean Drapeau pool practices were popular this season – which we are trying to extend to the last possible moment. Thanks to Jen for coordinating this.

#### Plan 2009-2010

Coaching staff: 4 regular staff: Robyn, Joey, Luis, Martin. Subs and part-timers including Troy Rhoades, Nancy Nelson, Linda Eden.

With so many lanes running at near-capacity, COOPERATION is required to share lanes effectively. How: following the sets as they are given, asking questions if you do not understand and asking the coach how you can make appropriate modifications to accommodate for injury rather than deciding for yourself. Placing safety first, following good etiquette (particularly for passing), and working

collectively towards shared goals.

Our team goals for 2009-2010 include:

1. Repeat as Quebec Masters Swimming Champions in Quebec City in April 2010. 225 days to go!
2. Increase contribution to competition by bringing at least one official to every meet, and a team of officials to meets where we have greater numbers
3. Shorter sub-cycles of training, with specific objectives designed to coincide with progress checks at specific meets. Target meets identified as in 2009-2010. Details to be described on deck during practices and global cycle objectives to be published on the web site. First cycle begins Sept 14. Greater dryland included including more yoga, general strength/conditioning.
4. Relay and individual goals are encouraged. Review of possible records to take place and opportunities planned throughout the year so eligible swimmers can attempt records in multiple age groups.

Robyn is currently in discussion with a NLS-certified guard/coach to take the Sunday afternoon practice and thus avoid having practices led by 'Coach bulletin board'. With Troy's upcoming return to Nunavut, the same individual may be able to take over Friday nights.

Jean Drapeau pool practices will likely be on the same schedule in summer 2010 as they were in 2009. Pay process under review to reduce administrative workload for coaches and volunteer treasurer.

## **Competitions**

### Review 2008-2009

At our summer awards presentation at Sylvia's home, we presented the attached list of awards, which we enter into the record. Our success has become so deep we cannot permit ourselves the time to list these again, but I draw attention to a few achievements: Individually, Ian Smith and Ilka Lowensteyn, both of whom continue to rank in the world top 10 in their age group; Martin Levine (fastest Masters swimmer in Quebec this year in any age group); our fearless rookies including 83-years-young Kimberley (who ages up in January to be our club's sole representative in the 85-89 category and all the swimmers who made sacrifices to swim the 'suicide' events like 200 fly and 400 IM. Our hard training racking up the distance in the MSC Million Meter Challenge and our focus on high quality butterfly helped more of you than ever before to strengthen up and believe that these events are possible – congratulations to you all! As a team: we welcomed our first competitive participants from the downtown Y, took more officials to meets, **WE WON THE LASALLE MEET AND OF COURSE, EDGED OUT 37 OTHER TEAMS TO BE NAMED PROVINCIAL CHAMPIONS!!**

Successful year at 9 meets:

Brossard November 1

Coupe de Montreal November 11

Montreal-Nord December 6 (\*the day after the masters party!!)

Pointe-Claire January 31

**LASALLE FEB 21-22 1ST PLACE TEAM VICTORY!**

DDO March 14

Ontario Provincials March 20-22

**QUEBEC PROVINCIALS APRIL 17-19 WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS!**

Canadian Nationals May 15-18 2009

The St-Lambert meet traditionally held in December was moved to February this year and we did not attend. Festival des Maitres June 20-21 cancelled due to low registration – perhaps because Provincials

was also held long course. We held unsanctioned time trials at Jean Drapeau instead.

#### Plan 2009-2010

I submit the prospective schedule for the 2009-2010 competitive season and I draw attention to some new initiatives: 1. increased inter-club activity through informal 'duel' meets, clinics for recreational and competitive swimmers. Advantages: meet other coaches and benefit from their experience, get a chance to dive off of blocks by visiting their pools. One planned in the fall (Ottawa area), others possible during the year if well attended. Weeknight events possible in the Montreal area.

#### Training and competition equipment

##### Review 2008-2009

The Y purchased new fins, addressing a great need for fins in all sizes. Showers work well. Great team suits and apparel made us look great at meets. Thanks again to Jen!

##### Plan 2009-2010

Thanks to successful fundraising, underwater camera, blocks, stretch cords. Showers work great, especially when used before practice.

FINA swimsuit rules have not yet been clarified for Masters. Team 'fast' racing suits at low cost from Ying Fa (see samples) will be optional, with specific suits to be selected as soon as styles are approved by the FINA rules committee. Men may or may not be required to return to jammer-style with no upper body covering.

#### **Membership and participation in provincial and national bodies**

##### Review 2008-2009

Currently none of our members is individually active with the FNQ. Our last member to be involved was Sylvie Lepine. Our current club policy does NOT require recreational (non-competing) swimmers to affiliate with the FNQ, which makes them members of FNQ - the provincial body, MSC – the national body, and FINA – the international body. Affiliation to FNQ/MSQ, is currently required for competitive swimmers as non-affiliated swimmers do not have the right to compete. However recreational swimmers have benefited from MSC-run programs such as the Million meter challenge and all swimmers should consider opting-in to membership.

##### Plan 2009-2010

Increased coaching ties to FNQ and MSC: a stronger link to both the provincial and national bodies will mean increasing influence over activities available to our team and all swimmers across the province. Robyn began working more closely with the FNQ last year and has accepted an invitation to serve on the FNQ's Masters committee. Robyn and Martin have both begun increasing levels of activity with MSC.

#### **Communications**

We got into the local newspapers! We hope to continue growing our relationship with local media with regular progress reports and swimmer highlights throughout the year.

We have a new bulletin board thanks to the Y's pool guru – THANK YOU MARC! The new bulletin board will facilitate both coach and board communications with members, prevent thumb-tacks being found by swimmers' feet, and supplement web-based communiqués.