

## US Masters Coaching Seminar *by Bob Jennings*

There is nothing like the madness of a March Saturday in North Carolina. But more than 25 area masters coaches experienced a different kind of madness. Basketball and St. Patrick's Day were put on the backburner as they headed to Charlotte for a Level I and II US Masters Swimming coaching certification seminar. Club and Coaches Services Director Bill Brenner, Club Development Coordinator Susan Ingraham and iconic swimmer and coach, Mel Goldstein spent the day educating and sharing their experiences in the following areas:

- Understanding and becoming ambassadors of USMS and supporting the USMS mission
- Building a successful masters program through writing workouts, time management and the handling of unique situations
- Improvement of coaching, teaching and leadership skills related to understanding and developing the adult athlete
- Stroke development, technique and stroke correction

Mel led the discussion on coaching management. One of the biggest challenges with coaching masters swimming is not writing a workout, but learning how to properly manage a diverse group of athletes with a variety of backgrounds, interests, goals and abilities. As a masters coach, being on time, being prepared with purposeful workouts and addressing each swimmer by name are just as important as writing a challenging set. Taking the time to get to know each swimmer, such as their purpose for being at practice (fitness, triathlon or training for nationals), adds to the overall coaching credibility. Proper practice management such as starting all lanes together as a group and shortening the distance for the slower lanes can lead to improved team camaraderie and increased individual motivation. Yes, the beauty of masters swimming is that we really can do what we want and really don't have to listen to a coach, but the majority of WILL because we want to continue to learn and improve.

Susan, the technician, showed us videos of each of the four strokes, starts and turns and pointed out flaws and methods of corrections. She also shared with us a great example of putting yourself in "the athletes suit" while coaching from the pool deck. Although you may get funny looks, mimicking what the athlete is doing in the water will help a coach better explain how to fix a stroke, or why they may be having some pain as a result of an incorrect stroke. Susan did a great job with her demonstrations and stories and I am pretty sure most of us were thankful that we didn't swim for her team in Texas and didn't have to do the one-hour postal swim FLY!

When Bill, Mel and Susan were finished sharing their stories, experiences and expertise, you could hear that swimming plans were going to be put on hold until the following Monday morning as plans were being made to watch basketball or drinking green beer (or two). One thing for sure, North Carolina masters swimmers will be coached by better prepared and more knowledgeable coaches in the future!

**"Be the best you can be. Believe in yourself. Don't be someone you are not".** Mel Goldstein quoting his mentor and legendary coach, **Doc Counsilman.**