

Record Setting Swimming at the Albatross Open

by Jon Klein

Six sizzling NCMS sprinters went to challenge some of the mid Atlantic's best swimmers Saturday March 16th at the annual SCM Albatross Open at the fast Eunice and Sargent Shriver Aquatic Center pool in Bethesda, MD. Ruth Jones, Henry Stewart along with the Deadly Medley of Frances McEachran (BA), Jon Blank (BR), Erika Braun (FL) and Jon Klein (FR) made the trip. The air and water temperature were comfortably warm for the adiposally challenged sextet, setting up the perfect conditions for fast swimming.

In the picture the "deadly medley" l.t.r.: Jon Klein, Erika Braun, Frances McEachran, Jon Blank.



Ever mindful of vulnerable relay records, 4 months ago I cajoled Francis McEachran, Erika Braun, and Jon Blank to join me in a quest for the 200-239 age group 200 and 400 Mixed Medley Relay FINA world records. Erika and Frances had been training regularly and they were eager to join the cause. Jon had been on a prolonged sabbatical from swimming after his hugely successful 2010 season. He needed a little, but not much, convincing to come out of semi-retirement. He had only 3 ½ months to get in shape as he was already committed to a 10 day European vacation 2 weeks before the meet. As it turned out that was the perfect taper. Because relays at meets swum in meters are based on the total age of the 4 swimmers I promised to supply more of the age for the relay if they would supply more of the speed. As the years go by I get better at contributing the age, not so much the speed. My strategy of finding 3 really fast NCMS swimmers and then begging to get on their relay once again paid off.

The meet host encouraged fast (younger) teams to race us in the relays, and he even split the 200 and 400 relays up so we would have time to recover. Surrounded by family (my niece Maya volunteered to time at the meet, and to ensure success she was assigned to our lane) and friends we were ready to show what we could do. First up was the 400 where we had the better chance at the record which was 4:32.16. We felt we could go 4:28 by having the front half of the relay split 2:29 with Erika and I combining for about 1:59. Frances led off with her best 100 Backstroke, whittling 2 seconds off the time she went in October. She valiantly tried to keep up with the young stud 15 years her junior from the Germantown team. Next up Jon overtook our competitor's female breastroker as he went 2 seconds faster than he said he could go in our pre-meet planning. After the first half of the relay we were at 2:25. Frances, Jon and I were confident and excited as Erika left the blocks trying to hold off young stud number 2 in the butterfly leg. As expected she swam great, leaving me even with the Germantown female freestyler, and with the record easily in our grasp. Thanks to my relay mates I left the blocks relaxed and able to deliver the needed time. Our time of 4:27.64 beat even our own expectations. Before and between our relays several stellar individual swims were posted by the NCMS team (see below for the individual records set). Here is the link to the full results: <http://www.pvmasters.org/results/ancm0313.htm>

While we all swam well, special mention must go to Erika as she set 2 individual world records and just missed a third. The next to last event of the meet was the 200 Medley. Again Frances leads off with a personal best (even faster than her 50 back earlier in the meet), she stays close to the Montgomery Ancient Mariners younger lead-off swimmer. Jon does his best to try and stay with former Olympic Trials qualifier Wally Dicks. Next up Erika goes up against former national collegiate record holder Clay Britt on the fly leg and her split is within one tenth of a second of his. I try to catch their freestyler but it was not to be. We come in at 1:59.43 which is off the WR of 1:57.63 set by an American team consisting of 2 Floridians, a Georgian, and Coloradoan.

Our time is 2nd in the world and 2 seconds faster than the 3rd fastest team. To cap off the meet Ruth and Henry go mano a mano in a 50 Free time trial. Ruth has a blazing start and they are neck and neck with about 15 meters

to go, testosterone triumphs over youth. We have a nice team dinner at the Marriott after the meet. Within 1 hour of the meet ending ½ of the Facebook universe knows of our exploits thanks to Erika's nimble fingers. It was all great fun and it has left me with more cherished NCMS memories.

Ruth Jones (RAM)- Meet and NCMS 50 FR, 100 FR, 50 FL

Erika Braun (RAM)- World (and everything else) 50 FR, 50 FL. Meet and NCMS (only 0.03 off WR) 100 FR

Frances McEachran (PACE)- NCMS 50 BA, 100 BA

Henry Stewart (RAM)- NCMS records 50 FR, 100 FR

Jon Blank (RAM)- Meet and NCMS 50 BR, NCMS 100 IM

Jon Klein (DUKE)- NCMS 50 FL