

*By Craig Anderson, TRYM swimmer*

*Craig swims with TRYM in New Bern, NC, and he faithfully keeps track of our team's progress in the USMS Go the Distance program. He posts our team's results each month and does a great job getting everyone on the team involved in this fun event. Here is what he has to say about the program:*



## **Go The Distance....What For?**

Why Go The Distance? Why NOT Go The Distance? There are so many ways for a swimmer to be active in USMS, regardless of whether you are young or old, new or experienced, fast or slow. This is one of the beauties of USMS – there is something for each swimmer that fits the reasons they got involved in the first place. As one of those older guys, somewhere in between slow and fast, and only in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year as a swimmer, GTD was really my first involvement. And although I now compete in meets, do postals, and am really proud to be a USMS swimmer, GTD remains one of my favorite pieces of the whole puzzle.

I believe there are many benefits of participating in Go The Distance. If you enjoy setting goals and challenging yourself, this is perfect. The feedback provided from the GTD site each time you enter some yardage tells you exactly where you are....how many miles thus far, how many more to the next milestone, how far off the pace you are to reach your goal, the percent of your goal reached, etc. I hate getting the message "You'd better pick up the pace" to reach your goal, after missing a few workouts; and so, I push a little harder to get caught up in order to receive the "Congratulations" message instead and keep my goal in sight.

Knowing I have a mileage pace to maintain in order to reach my goal helps motivate me to get up at 4:45AM and get to the pool on time for practice. And because I have a rather ambitious mileage goal, it also motivates me to get to the pool on non-practice days to swim extra. For those swimmers who are training for a specific meet or postal event, GTD helps support the need to train and train regularly.

Go The Distance is not designed to be a competitive event, so it is an ideal way to participate with many other swimmers without the winning/losing aspect. I do enjoy comparing my GTD mileage with that of my teammates, other swimmers in my state, and those in my age-group from all over the country. There are swimmers around the country who don't know me and also do not know that I am trying to get past them on the mileage list! But that is simply a personal challenge and nothing else. Whether you are ahead or behind anyone does not mean a thing, because again, there are many different reasons why we all swim. It still helps ME to get to the pool and keep swimming.

GTD can be a wonderful team activity as well. Every swimmer on our team, including our coach, participates in GTD. We have a team goal for the year that we try to reach. At the end of each month, emails go to all swimmers to remind them to update their yardage in their fitness logs for that month. A member of the team then gets everyone's new totals off the USMS site and updates a list showing each person's mileage, as well as a bar graph that reflects the team's month-by-month progress towards our goal. This information is posted on our team bulletin board in the pool. GTD is something we do together, every yard counts, and each swimmer makes a contribution.

For me, and I suspect for many other swimmers, Go The Distance is a positive, helpful, and enjoyable part of their total swimming experience. I look forward to entering my new yardage each day right after I get home from the pool. I like to see my mileage increase; my goal get closer; my "ranking" get higher. I have a great appreciation for those warriors who already have accumulated several hundred miles, as well as those individuals who may only add a small piece of a mile when they swim. Participating in Go The Distance can only enhance your overall swimming. So, if someone asks me "Why Go the Distance?", my quick reply is "Why NOT Go the Distance?!" **Keep Swimming!**