

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE
OF U.S. MASTERS SWIMMING
usms.org

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ON THE COVER

"Color Cubes" silicone swim cap by Sporti, presented by SwimOutlet.com. See Swim Bag (page 42) for our review of swim caps.

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Product Testing

> **M**any of you have written to tell us how much you have appreciated the metamorphosis of the Swim Bag department in 2010. Taking what used to be advertising space and turning it into reviews about the products has been a learning experience for us all. We have also received great feedback about the product testing videos we post on our YouTube channel.

Some of you have criticized—saying we have been too harsh or too easy on one product or another, or that our reviews are not technical enough. We sincerely thank you for all your feedback. We read all comments and use them to help shape our approach as we move into our second year of product testing.

We have made a commitment to you to publish useful information about products currently marketed to swimmers. We have also made a commitment to the manufacturers and retailers—not to always say positive things—but to give each product they send us a fair and thorough testing and review.

Products on the market today are as varied and individual as the swimmers who use them. What is effective for one swimmer may be unusable for another. Some swimmers have no problem spending a lot for what they want; others simply cannot afford to. Our goal is to sort through the differences in the brands and provide information that will be helpful to you when it comes time to replace your goggles, suit, fins, etc.

Because of the differences among swimmers, we have gathered a motley crew of testers. Some are highly competitive; others swim for exercise and camaraderie. All possess a passion for getting the most from their gear and

a healthy sense of curiosity. These are the folks that were taking apart household appliances when they were kids to see what made them work.

We have testers in different parts of the country, which was essential for this issue's review of cold-water swim caps, as you will read on page 46. Temperatures had not dropped sufficiently in the Gulf of Mexico in October to give cold-water caps a good test.

Several members of the staff and local Masters swimmers here in Sarasota have become some of the most committed product testers—evident as we head into our third week of wetsuit testing for the March-April issue. Air and water temperatures in the Gulf are now in the high 50s, which, for those of us who are used to the mid 80s, is pretty shocking.

Our testers spend a lot of their personal time on these reviews, interrupting their training regimens to try the products, comparing the different brands, filling out surveys and more, and I am truly grateful for their efforts. I also want to thank the manufacturers and retailers who have provided us with the products and trusted us to review them fairly.

We will be shooting a wetsuit testing video in January that will drop when the March-April issue is published. We hope you will enjoy another year with us and, as always, feel free to contact me directly at editor@usms.org with your comments and product review suggestions.



Allison Tolpa



Laura Hamel, SWIMMER editor

Wetsuit testing in Sarasota, Fla. Both air and water in the high 50s. Left to right: Danette LaFrance, Laura Hamel, Jim Matysek, Ray Becker, Anna Lea Matysek, Rick Walker