

Editor's Note

The M Word



What does the word *Masters* in Masters swimming mean to you?

Masters, in USMS parlance, merely signifies that you are an adult: age 18 or older.

Over the years, we've heard different reactions: "It's only for fast swimmers." "It's for swimmers age 50 and above." "It's only for swimmers who want to compete." "It's only for those who have mastered the sport." "It's only for pool swimmers." And my personal favorite, from a young age-grouper at our pool, "It's for old Sharks."

As perpetually young-at-heart athletes, many of us believe age is relative, but the reactions from new, would-be, and nonmembers runs the gamut.

In the 1960s, when Dr. Ransom Arthur was promoting organized adult swimming for fitness, the word *Masters* was borrowed from Masters Track and Field and it stuck. Some of the age misconceptions about Masters swimming may stem from this—USA Masters Track and Field does have lower age limits of 30 and 40, depending on the type of event.

Even Masters swimming, which started as a committee of the American Swimming Coaches Association, migrated to a committee of the Amateur Athletic Union, and later morphed into the USMS we know today, had an initial lower age limit of 25. This was dropped to 19 in 1986, and then to 18 in 2002.

Age limits aside, the M word has been a topic of discussion at USMS annual meetings. In 2007, a branding task force considered the idea of dropping it in favor of something perhaps more inviting. But with so much equity and tradition invested into U.S. Masters Swimming, it was decided after careful thought that we would maintain our heritage while repositioning our identity and promoting education and services that would encourage more adults to swim.

Masters swimming is open to anyone age 18 and older, regardless of age and ability. Some Masters programs even have adult learn-to-swim programs for those who have never set foot in the water. Our charitable arm, the Swimming Saves Lives Foundation (usms.org/giving), provides grants to clubs who create such opportunities for adults in their communities.

Our Facebook page (facebook.com/USMastersSwimmingFanPage), is packed with links to mainstream media stories about Masters swimmers. This is an exciting development, and we urge you to pitch stories to your local media outlets—they're always looking for good content and are usually happy to do a piece on your local program, your coach, or a teammate who has an interesting story. Be sure to send us the link when it's published. Sharing these stories helps dispel misconceptions about the M word and helps us to encourage more adults to swim.

Laura Hamel, *SWIMMER* editor

THE SOCIAL SWIMMER

What does the word "Masters" in Masters swimming mean to you?

Michael Ball I think it means that we are like Yoda, but older ... and slower ... and less green.

Travis Arron Dugan Older in age but young of heart.

Nick Markey It's a distinction representing a lifestyle that is earned, like age, by loving your sport enough to never want to leave it.

Candace Nelson I have "mastered" the art of the sport in getting from one end of the pool to the other. Without water wings. Or needing lifeguard assistance.

Brant Allen It means you have "mastered" your schedule so you can enjoy the finer things in life like swimming with friends.

Lee-Ann Skomski Experienced enough to know what a good thing swimming is.

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» » **Five words
that describe
what Masters
swimming
means to you:**

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ON THE COVER

Stuart Kahn, the 2012 Speedo USMS Coach of the Year, is featured in "Pulling Back the Curtain, the Science and Psychology of Coaching," by Laura S. Jones. He also penned this issue's technique feature, "Paddle vs. Propeller."

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