

PROFESSIONAL MARATHON SWIMMING

BY: JOE GROSSMAN, Secretary, WPMSF
World Professional Marathon
Swimming Federation

The renewal of international professional marathon swimming races in Guaymas, Mexico, was scheduled for May 29. The first race of world-class endurance swimmers over the 26 mile course since 1959 was directed by Damian Piza Beltran who in 1953 became the first Mexican ever to swim the English Channel.

Prizes offered in Senor Beltran's event totaled \$8,200. The race, which was held after this column was written, was the first event of 1971 held with the sanction of the World Professional Marathon Swimming Federation.

Although Guaymas races have been held since 1959, they have not been open to international swimmers. In the first of the three open events, held in 1957, Tom Park and Greta Andersen, two naturalized Americans living in California, finished one-two over a 28 mile course.

In the 1958 competition at Guaymas, Miss Andersen was the first of six finishers, beating Helge Jensen of Denmark by 39 minutes. The '59 race, shortened to 22 miles because of weather conditions, was won by Canada's Regent Lacoursiere, who finished 25 minutes ahead of Mexican Tonatiuh Guitierrez — the only two among nine starters to complete the course.

Beltran, who made his second English Channel crossing in 1955, when he was fourth finisher in the Butlin Race across the Dover Strait, is a former night club crooner. He once doubled for Johnny Weissmuller in a "Tarzan" movie being shot in Mexico. When he turned to marathon swimming, Damian said he had learned the crawl stroke by watching Weissmuller's jungle movies. On his 1953 Channel crossing, he took 15:23 to swim the 21 mile stretch, feeding on peaches, bread and butter, Mexican honey, and drinking wine mixed with egg yolks!

The Marathon Swimming Hall of Fame made its debut in mid-May, and this column, which published the names of electees for the years 1963 through 1966, now completes (alphabetically by year) the list of those chosen up to and including 1970.

1967 — Marilyn Bell, Canada, the first person to swim across Lake Ontario (1954); Jose Cortinas, Cuba, the first swimmer to cross the San Pedro Channel from the Mainland to Santa Catalina Island (1952); Horacio Iglesias, Argentina, 1967 men's World Champion marathoner; Keo Nakama, U.S.A., first to swim the Kaiwi (Molokai) Channel (1961); Lottie Moore Schoemmell, U.S.A., for numerous "firsts" and records in distance swims in the late '20s; The Cavill Family, Australia (contributors) for participation in racing and solo marathon swimming, coaching and for introducing the crawl stroke to much of the world.

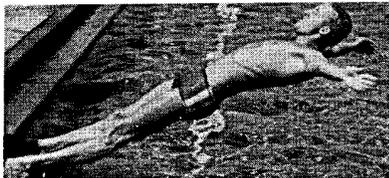
1968 — Barry Davenport, New Zealand, first ever to swim across Cook Strait, N.Z. (1960); Otto Kammerich, Germany, first to swim the 56-mile width of the Bay of Danzig (1928); Linda McGill, Australia, first to swim across shark-infested Port Philip Bay, Melbourne (1968); Tom Park, U.S.A., for many solo and race records set in the 1950s; Henry Sullivan, U.S.A., first to successfully swim both the English and Catalina Channels (1923, 1927); Jabez Wolffe, England (contributor) for participation and outstanding coaching, and for unparalleled display of determination in making 22 unsuccessful English Channel attempts.

1969 — Mercedes Gleitze, England, first to swim the Gibraltar Strait (1928); Cliff Lumsdon, Canada, first to swim Juan de Fuca Strait from Canada to U.S. (1955); David Smith, U.S.A., first to swim Gibraltar Strait from Africa to Europe (1967); Bert Thomas, U.S.A., first ever to swim Juan de Fuca Strait (1955); Patty Thompson, Canada, women's 1969 World Champion; Carlos Larriera, Argentina (contributor), for participation in races and for conducting outstanding South America races.

1970 — Robert Dowling, U.S.A., first to swim around Manhattan Island (1915); Helge Jensen, Denmark, for

(Continued on Page 46)

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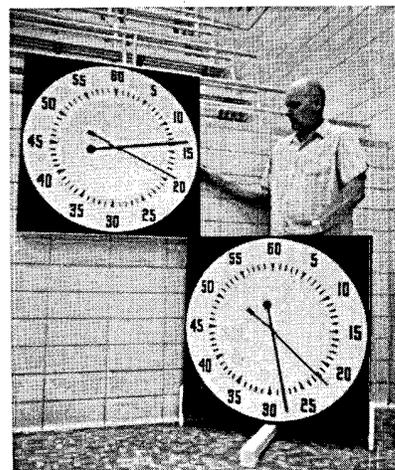
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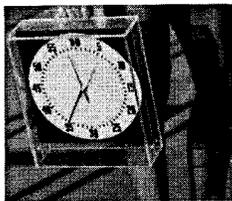
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PRO MARATHON (Continued from Page 32)

setting up an England-France English Channel speed mark which stood for seven years unofficially and still stands in CSA records (1960); Johan Schans, Holland, men's 1970 World Champion marathoner; Brenda Sherrat, England, first to swim the 22.5 mile length of Loch Ness; Montserrat Tresserras, for setting women's endurance swimming on courses up to 105 miles in Europe and South America; Johnny Weissmuller, U.S.A. (contributor), for amateur marathon participation and for becoming first International Commissioner of Marathon Swimming (1970).

Groups of six new electees will be announced each spring for the preceding year. Selectors will include Commander Gerald Forsberg of England, president of the Channel Swimming Association (and himself a Marathon Swimming Hall of Fame electee); Buck Dawson, Executive Director of the International Swimming Hall of Fame, Ft. Lauderdale, and the Secretary of the W.P.M.S.F. of the International Swimming Hall of Fame, Ft. Lauderdale, and the Secretary of the W.P.M.S.F.

SOUNDINGS (Continued from Page 26)

any present event and say it is detrimental to the interscholastic swimmer, or that the high schools have prostituted themselves for the NCAA or the AAU.

Take the 880 (it would appear that the 800 or 1000 would be better since rope finishes have long been dead), ask a few pertinent questions, and then see how it stands up against them. For instance, how does such a long distance affect younger swimmers? The answer might be obtained by a look at the number of high school age swimmers who have made the Olympic team. It seems to be difficult to find negative research regarding the strenuousness of their workouts, or of the length of the races that they swim. You might recall a few years ago that the 400 was thought too long for high schoolers.

What would this event do to a Championship program? Would it lengthen it to the detriment of spectator interest? There might be arguments either way here but on the surface it would seem that this would not be too big a hurdle to its adoption.

How would it affect smaller schools and those schools with small squads? There is no question that it would hurt them. However, since the event is proposed only for Championship meets and since most Championships score 12 places anyway, it is indeed rare when a small squad can stand up to the present odds. Therefore, they would not be hurt any more than they are now.

SOUNDINGS would be most interested in further pursuing the pros and cons of this proposal if there is sufficient interest. If you happen to have a strong opinion contrary or in favor of a long distance event being added to a Championship program write to your **SOUNDINGS**

columnist at the address listed above.

Also, if you desire to obtain information about joining NISCA, please write to our National Secretary, Dave Robertson, at New Trier High School, East Winnetka, Illinois.

DIVING HOME & WORLD (Continued from Page 28)

Federation, Via Roma 9 (Tel. 36576), 39100 Bolzano - Italy. or Mr. John Spanmuth, A.A.U. Aquatic Administrator, 3400 W. 86th Street, Indianapolis, Ind.

Apply for your passport well in advance. Secure your (health) immunization certificate.

IN MY OPINION - This could be the greatest educational and fun experience that Mom and Dad could have with their diver. Bolzano is one of the most beautiful places in the world. It is definitely the Hospitality Capitol.

WORLD DIVING COACHES ASSOCIATION in Karlsruhe, Germany was well attended. There were about 70 coaches representing approximately 40 different countries in the world.

Ten productive days were spent on analyzing diving from A to Z. Coaches in the Medical, psychological, physiological, mechanical, professional as well as the professional diving coach took an active part in the conference. Some of the studies and research presented were over a year in the making.

Many new and improved ideas for coaching and for the administration of the sport were presented and adopted - Some very technical and touchy subjects were discussed and worked upon and solved to the benefit of the diving world, and to the satisfaction of most. I now know **THAT AROUND THE WORLD THE COACHES AND THE ADMINISTRATORS OF DIVING ARE FOR THE BETTERMENT OF DIVING AROUND THE WORLD.**

The next meeting of the WDCA will be at the Olympic Games in Munich. New officers will be elected. In all probability, the 1973 meeting will be in Holland. I predict that if the organization has one more good year, it will have strength and position to last to the end of diving.

The WDCA still needs your support. Join now and do your part. Information on the 1971 meeting will soon be released.

SOUTH AFRICA, far away from the large and important diving centers and with only 21 duraflex boards and less good diving facilities is not standing still. At the World Diving Coaches Association Convention, she was represented by three enthusiastic individuals who say that along with their good neighbors in Rhodesia they intend to build their diving program into international caliber. After observing the interest and dedication of these three and having firsthand knowledge of the will and desires of the South Africans in sport and diving, I have only to comment that they will reach their goal and before too long.

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