



Greetings!

Don't miss your chance to race at several upcoming meets! The deadline for the Foothills Masters Inaugural Spring Splash Meet 2023 is March 2nd. Entries for the Fast Masters Spring Forward Meet is March 6th. Entries for the COMSA State Meet are open and the entry deadline is March 26th. Don't miss these great opportunities to put your fitness to the test!

COMSA is taking nominations for the Lou Parker Coach of the Year award. Swimmers this is your chance to nominate your coach and show them your appreciation for all they do for you! More information below.

Calling all swimmers, fans, and spectators! The COMSA State Meet is March 31 to April 2. COMSA is looking to clubs, teams, workout groups and individuals to help with timing again this year. It's a great opportunity to give back to our swimming community and have "the best seat in the house!" More details on the "Call for Timers" below.

Happy Swimming!
Katie Glenn
COMSA Secretary

Upcoming Events

Foothills Masters Fun Meet

- Sunday, March 5th (warm up 7:00am / meet starts 8:00am)
- The Ridge: 6613 S Ward St, Littleton, CO 80127
- **Registration closes March 2nd**
- [Meet Registration and Information](#)

FAST Masters Meet

- Sunday, March 12th (warm up 8:00am / meet starts 9:00am)
- Ft. Collins
- **Registration closes March 6th**
- [Meet Registration and Information](#)

COMSA State Meet

- March 31-April 2nd
- VMAC, Thornton
- **Registration closes March 26th**
- [Meet Registration and Information](#)

USMS Short Course Nationals

- April 27-30th
- Irvine, California
- [Meet Registration and Information](#)

For a listing of events around the country, you can always check out USMS's [Calendar of Events](#).

Lou Parker Coach of the Year Award Nominations Open

The Lou Parker Coach of the Year award was created in 1986 to recognize outstanding coaching. These past recipients were nominated by the swimmers they coach and selected based on their contributions to their team with respect to

camaraderie, technical advice, motivation and support of team members.

Please [email](#) your nominations for the Lou Parker Coach of the Year award. The winner will be announced at the COMSA State Meet. **Deadline for nominations is Sunday, March 26th.**



CALL FOR TIMERS!

Timer Reward System/Back-Up Timers Required For COMSA State Meet

COMSA will utilize the successful Timer Reward System implemented in 2022, to ensure that the 2023 COMSA State Meet is run in compliance with USMS sanction requirements (two back-up, hand-held timers, are required per lane for all lanes for all events). Swimmers, family members, friends, fans, and spectators will be enlisted to ensure timing equality for all swimmers.



A financial reward based on time and participation, will be distributed to each workout group at the end of the meet. Workout group timing suggestions will be published with the Psyche Sheet based on workout group size. Workout groups are encouraged to adopt one hour blocks of time increments (two, three, or maybe four continuous hours) and groups of lanes (two or three lanes side-by-side) in advance to streamline the process. On-deck timer training will be provided as needed. On-deck adjustments will be made as necessary, as the meet progresses.

Please contact 2023 State Meet Timer Facilitator Hugh Duffy:
duffyfamily7@comcast.net or [303-981-5120](tel:303-981-5120)
to volunteer as a Leader (swimmers, family, friends, fans and spectators welcome!) for your Team or Workout Group, or for more information.

How to Stay Motivated to Swim as You Age

When your body limits what you can do, here's how to stay excited about swimming

You've probably read many stories that herald older athletes who smash records again and again. That's all well and good.

But sometimes when you're in the pool as an older athlete, things don't feel all well and good. You might be working on a Top 10 time when, say, your knee starts aching, derailing your goal. Or you might be OK swimming butterfly for a short distance but change your technique for a longer race. Or you might find it hard to maintain your times when you work out two days in a row or only able to ace part of the yardage you used to do. You might be wondering how you can continue to be motivated.



Experts say there are ways that don't involve some fake, sunshiney "just be glad you can do as much as you're doing" or "have you considered pickleball?"

The first thing to realize about overcoming discontent and feeling motivated again is that feeling frustrated with your performance may not have to do with age. "It may have to do with what sociologists call the sport ethic: You work hard, and if you do well, you don't rest on your laurels. You set a higher standard and you do even better," says Judy Van Raalte, a professor of psychology at Springfield College and a certified consultant for the Association for Applied Sport Psychology.

It's a sometimes-unspoken ethic so many athletes learn as they spend time in the sports world. The work harder, stronger, longer, suck-it-up mentality is seen as a virtue, except it can work against you: Holding yourself to an ever-higher standard can often mean trying to meet an impossible one, which leaves you in a state of constantly feeling less than you should be. "Part of the sport ethic ties in with being always dissatisfied and wanting more," she says. That's as true if you're 18 as if you're 81.

That said, it's not always easy to watch your times change with age. It's OK to grieve a little for the unbeatable badass you once were. "I think it's very appropriate to grieve for our capabilities and give space for that in healthy ways. But we just don't want to get stuck there," says Jessica Bunce, a licensed clinical and sport psychologist in Cincinnati. There are ways to figure out what you can do to move yourself ahead from where you are now. First of all, know that moving ahead really is possible.

When Robert Rubin was at the department of psychiatry at the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, he conducted a small study with colleagues—and UCLA Bruin Masters—that investigated just how much performance actually declines with age. Studies prior to this one looked at the winning times in various age groups to see whether there was a profound decline in times.

This study, however, looked at what happened to the performance of individual swimmers (in long-course freestyle events) over time. They collected data from 45 swimmers, whose competing ages were 29 to 96; everyone had participated in a minimum of 16 years of Masters competitions. Although they saw that times tended to creep up with age, they saw shallower rates of decline than previous studies did. And here's the optimistic kicker: They also found that many of the swimmers who were above world-record pace at younger ages actually approached world-record times as they got older, sometimes even becoming the world record-holders.

The authors attribute it to the "practice effect." They admit that the energy cost of swimming goes up as you age, the amount of metabolic power you have tends to drop, your stroke mechanics might start to change, and you face increased hydrodynamic resistance at slower speeds, but they also say that practice can somewhat mitigate these declines. Their bottom line, according to the study, published in *Open Access Journal of Sports Medicine* in 2013: The data "support what is seen in practice—the ability of individuals to participate in high-intensity swimming over several decades, competitively improving over those decades until, in some instances, they become world record-holders for their age groups."

But what can you do if you feel you're not part of that ever-tracking-upward group? The bottom line is that aging is a fact, but it doesn't have to be an issue that saps pleasure from your swimming. Let these strategies help you keep the energy into practice and competition for many more years.

Figure out where you can move ahead

Is your technique and training as optimized as you think it is, or are there places you can still improve? For instance, maybe you can work on the timing of your stroke or on your mindset while you're racing, Van Raalte says. The stroke mechanics you have been most comfortable with may be changing, but it's likely that there are improvements you can still make.

One way to approach this is to think about what's letting you down—maybe it's that you're more tired on a Tuesday than you used to be after a Monday workout. Instead of letting it get you down, "I would say, 'Great insight and awareness. I wonder how you can use this in your swimming?'" Van Raalte says. "Instead of looking at it as, 'My body is failing, I'm very disappointed,' you might look at whether rest plays a different role in your swimming now."

The self-awareness of what's happening makes this painful, she says. "But I would ask if there's a way to use that self-awareness to move forward with your swimming and really do well with it. Now you're telling yourself, 'I'm aware that I'm tired, and what can I do? What happens if I try more rest?' That's a little bit exciting because you're finding new ways to get what you can out of the sport and your body and your performance." Even things you do outside the pool—like being consistent about purposeful drylands—can enhance your sense of moving forward.

Think about what made swimming enjoyable before

One thing that can go on in your mind when your enthusiasm starts to slip is that you feel that something you loved—something that was a big part of your life—is no longer enjoyable and there's nothing for you in it anymore. It's a deflating feeling. You can help yourself through that by thinking back to what made swimming enjoyable in the first place.

"If getting better and faster made it enjoyable for you, and now you have a different stroke, maybe you need to set a different goal than you used to have," Van Raalte says. "You can set one that's related to performing with this modified stroke." You're still setting goals and improving; they're just different goals than you may have had in the past. "What can you set goals around that are meaningful to you now?" she asks.

It's important to figure out what you can influence and help. If you can start to recognize what you can and can't control as an athlete, it may help you realize that you really couldn't control the things you thought you could through your training. The whole idea of training ever harder and ever faster, she says, may have made you feel that you can influence the outcome better than you actually could," Bunce says.

Break things into smaller pieces

About that business of setting goals: It's important not to just have short-, medium-, and long-term goals. "You need to have very specific, very realistic goals," says Michelle Cleere, a global performance coach who works with athletes of all levels and ages. "One of the things that has become more apparent to me over the last several years is that short-term goals need to be even more small and deliberate than even I originally thought when I started doing this work."

Suppose you want to work on your turns. "I can't tell you how many elite swimmers have said, 'I need to work on my turns,' yet their brain has bounced all over the place regarding which thing they need to focus on to get better," she says. There's far more than one action that goes into executing an excellent turn, and you really need to know exactly which thing you're going to work on today in the pool. Coming off the wall? Working your kick as you come into the wall? Without knowing that, you tend to bounce from one strategy to another, one piece of the turn to another, "and sometimes we're never really perfecting any of it," Cleere says. Be specific about what you want to work on each day you swim, and plan to make it happen.

Compare yourself to your future self, not your past self

"When you were a kid, you weren't trying to beat a time from 25 years ago," Van Raalte says. "You were just trying to improve on where you were." You can do the same thing now. "Accept the athlete you are now and try not to stress about how your performance may have been different in the past," Bunce says. "If I'm driving a car and plug in my destination on the GPS, if the road is blocked or an accident happens, I have to detour and then navigate that. If I'm focused on the roads I've driven before, that doesn't help me go forward."

Acceptance doesn't mean giving in and not doing anything to increase your performance. "Acceptance is about navigating life as it is, not life as we wish it were," she says. Be ready to change training strategies. If training the way you used to train isn't working for you, it's time to try something different.

Acknowledging where you are can also help take you from a negative orientation to a positive or neutral one by helping you change the narrative. Instead of focusing on how things are getting harder and how that must be a sign that you're just never going to be what you were before and that's going to be so horrible, your internal dialogue might look more like: "This is going to be hard. It wasn't where I was expecting to be right now, but this is where I am," Cleere says.

Ask yourself if something's missing

What motivates you can change as you age, so it might not be helpful to keep hammering away at seeking something that doesn't really light your fire any longer. There's an understanding of how motivation works that psychologists like to use called self-determination theory. Basically, they've noticed that motivation and well-being go up when you feel three things: competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

"When an athlete tends to feel competent in what they're doing, they're likely going to have more motivation and satisfaction," Bunce says. "When they have say or choice over what they're doing as an athlete, they're going to have a greater sense of willingness to pursue their goals. And relatedness—social connection is so important. When these three pieces are being tapped into, you may find that motivation goes up."

Check yourself in each area. Maybe relatedness has slipped, for instance, and shoring up connections with people you feel supported by in and out of the pool can help bring back your motivation. Or maybe

your club has limited practices and you feel hamstrung by the schedule. Is there another way you can get some swims in?

Figure out what else might be dampening your enthusiasm

Even if you're retired, you likely have a lot going on in life—maybe you went back to school, you're consulting, you're starting a second (or third) career, or you're taking on grandkid care a couple days a week. Keep in mind that everything you do in and out of the pool adds up—even good stress is still stress. It can sap your energy and optimism and that can show up in the pool. Take a look at what else is taking your time and energy and ask if that's contributing to what you're feeling about your sport.

by Marty Munson
December 27, 2022

COMSA To Reimburse Club/Workout Group Registration Fees for Clubs/Workout Groups of 10+ Swimmers

COMSA's Executive Board voted and approved that COMSA pay the 2023 club/workout group registration fees for all clubs/workout groups with a 2022 membership of 10 or more swimmers.

Club/workout groups with less than 10 members, should contact the [COMSA Chair](#) for reimbursement requests.

COMSA Committee Open Positions

COMSA is looking for a few good people to volunteer with COMSA!

Executive Committee open position: Vice Chair

Appointed Committee open positions: Club Development Coordinator

[Link to description of positions](#)

Anyone who is interested in volunteering and giving back to the sport of swimming, please contact [Doug Garcia](#).

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