

Robin Kleffman

Minnesota Masters Swimming Hall of Fame

Class of 2019

Robin's competitive swimming career began at Hibbing High School. He flourished in the great tradition there, working his way to a great senior year as an outstanding swimmer and a fine all-around athlete. When he matriculated at Macalester College in the fall of 1965, he looked at his athletic opportunities. Being a bright young man, he noted that the swimming team had two practices—the first beginning at 6:00 AM—and that the butterfly event was 200 yards long. He also noted that practices for the track team held to a much more civilized schedule, and that much of his training involved carrying around two 16 pound iron balls in a bag. So, in college, Robin gave up swimming and threw the shot as a Scot.

But his love for swimming never faded, and when Masters swimming was in its formative years in Minnesota, Robin returned to the pool for the State Meet in 1974, and won the 50 Free (27.2) and the 50 Breast (33.3). Not long after, he found the Northern Shores Aquatic Club team, and became a regular at their daily practices.

It was with Northern Shores that Robin established a national presence. In 1976 at St. Louis, Robin had key legs in helping relays to a 2nd and a 3rd, He also placing 8th in the 50 Fly in his first Nationals. The next year in Spokane, he placed top 10 in every event he swam, including a 5th in the 50 Fly. Then at Dearborn, his next Nationals, his 50 Fly was good for 3rd—28.80 for LCM! More National and State Meet swims would follow, with state championships and records falling, with 2nd places in the 50 Breast and 50 Fly, and a National Championship swim in the 100 Fly in 1983.

Then, as life got busy, and Robin and Elaine opened the Round Barn B&B in the beautiful Hiawatha Valley, that breakneck competitive regimen proved too much. After the 1993 State Meet, Robin took a 10-year hiatus.

As is so often the case, circumstance intervened, and after a recovery from surgery, Robin returned to the pool to swim for his health. In the winter of 2015-16, when bookings at the B&B waned, weekends freed up. So Robin climbed up on the blocks for the Men's 60-64 100 Fly at the Burnsville Throwback meet (appropriately enough), and celebrated his return with a 1:13.34.

Since then, Robin has been on a record-breaking rampage. When he aged up to 70-74, he began breaking the records of some of Minnesota Master's legends: Ray Hakomaki and John Bergman. As of 2019, Robin has accumulated 50 Top-10 national rankings. He loves the competition, but it's not self-focused. He takes joy in watching his fellow swimmers better their times or get a

relay into a national Top-10, and Robin gets as much pleasure out of the team aspect of swimming—something he proved at Northern Shores almost a half-century ago.

Robin Kleffman's Hall of Fame swimming career is like a pair of highly decorated bookends—each laden with medals, weighted with great friendships, and the ends hold between them the best that Minnesota Masters Swimming has to offer.