

Tom Hodgson's Hall of Fame Story - 2014

Written November 2014

Tom learned to swim at an early age in Lake Pepin and was taught by his mother who was a swimmer. He began swimming competitively his junior year of High School in Rochester, MN and later competed at the University of Minnesota in the late 1960s.

Hodgson was inducted into the Rochester Sports Hall of Fame in April 2012. He won four state championships in three events and set a high school state record in the 200 IM while swimming at Rochester Mayo High. He went on to swim collegiately at the University of Minnesota. He was a co-captain for the Gophers, broke a Univ of MN school record in the 400 IM, and placed second all-time on the school's 200 IM and 100 backstroke lists.

He joined masters swimming at the beginning in 1973 and swam Masters competitively for seven years. His favorite event was the 200 fly, which only shows of that he is a little crazy. His best race was the 400 IM because he could swim the butterfly leg without much effort and have lots left for the back of the race. He did not just concentrate on those two races. He set state records in the 50, 100 and 200 back, the 100, 200 and 400 IM, the 200, 500 and 1650 free. He considered his worst event to be the 50 free.

One of his greatest masters races was the 1500 meters freestyle swam at the 1977 Spokane Long Course Nationals. His time of 19:20.10 set a state record that held up for 37 years, which was finally surpassed in 2014. It was the oldest standing masters record on the books. It probably didn't help matters that Brian Holthus posted the record on the wall of the St. Thomas University pool, where he coached for many years, to impress his college swimmers, so the time became a target.

From talking to people, Tom was involved with the inception of Masters swimming. He downplays his involvement, but his name seems to always come up when people talk about the early days of Minnesota Masters Swimming. He was the meet director of one of the earliest masters meets, he was a coach and therefore visible at many meets. Tom personality and knowledge was a magnet that drew many good swimming to the group he coached called Northern Shores Masters. Tom was always encouraging his swimmers to compete locally and in national competitions. He personally swam at three long course nationals.

Tom's favorite thing about masters swimming was the competition and the people who he met. His Northern Shores Masters team practiced at the Chippewa Middle School in Mounds View. This team included several of the newly inducted Hall of Famers; Ray Hakomaki, Roger Bosveld, Jim Pelissier and Mamie Brown. Northern Shores seemed to be the place to swim for serious Masters Swimmers back in the day.

Minnesota Masters began hosting its State Meet at the new beautiful pool at St. Thomas in 2011. This facility is clearly one of, if not nicest pool, in the state. Tom and his staff helped make these meets possible and very successful.

Tom recently retired from coaching in 2014 and is enjoying retirement and looking forward to possibly getting back into the pool. Maybe there are some new records for him to set in the future.