

**“I Am too Competitive to Do Something Only Half Way”**

*Swimming ethos and the development of the University of Michigan Women’s  
Swim and Dive Team between 1958-1973.*

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April 20, 2010

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank all the academic support I received in the research and writing of this thesis from Erik Mueggler, Elana Buch, Liz Roberts, and Vince Diaz. I have to thank my parents, especially my mom who has given me unwavering support through this whole process. I have to give special thanks to the women that I interviewed that swam and dove at the University of Michigan in the pre-varsity era. Their dedication to the sport and the program was remarkable. Women of the Michigan Swim and Dive Team be proud and cherish the history of your program.

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## Introduction

I step onto the pool deck at the Don Canham Natatorium and am immediately engulfed in the familiar, warm, chlorine air. The white steel beamed cathedral ceiling is centered over the fifty-meter pool and as the florescent lights slowly flicker on, the water transitions from a cool blue to a vibrant turquoise. I walk the length of the pool and run my hand through my tousled curls, still damp from morning practice. Today the lane lines cross cut the pool and rows of plastic buoys create numerous twenty five-yard lanes. Goggles and water bottles are already in front of lanes where my teammates have claimed their spot. A little before 2:30 in the afternoon our coach comes out of his office, smiling as usual. As we huddle up for a quick team meeting, I gaze around; my teammates and I are all wearing similar suits and putting on University of Michigan caps. This is when I begin to recognize my teammates not by their faces or hair but by their height, calves and backs. Once Jim finishes his talk, one of the captains loudly shouts, “We’re going on the 25!”

I watch the red numbered digital clock click to 25 and without hesitation, I dive straight into the cold water, feeling small bubbles stream by my body. I take my first few strokes and feel the water press against my palms, forearms and then biceps, as I efficiently swim through the water. After eleven years of competing I still make slight adjustments: reach out farther, push my chest down, or re-angle my head, warm-up and prepare for workout...

.... I flip, push off the wall and do a few quick, dolphin kicks to the surface... I reach the wall, breathing hard, but hitting my desired pace. I hear a “Great job ladies! Keep it going.” I hear myself say “Half way there!” The encouragements are said between deep breaths and sips of water. I glance at my teammate, nothing is said, but from the tilt of her head I know she is struggling. Yet through her shaded goggles I see her eyes, focused, determined and unwilling to

surrender to the pain. We are each other's source of motivation, relying on each other to complete every workout. No matter how numb my arms are, or how little water I am kicking, I see my teammates next to me and I want to stay with them.

“Last one Blue!” And I push off the wall, my quads contracting with fatigue. Waves and bubbles are spiraling and in my peripheral vision I see my teammates on either side of me, grasping the water, using everything they have for this last fifty. Finally I touch the wall, head down, clutching the gutter to stay afloat. My heart is pounding; as my arm extends over to the next lane, a quick hand squeeze is all that is needed. It is a squeeze of good job, a squeeze of great effort, and a squeeze of thank-you for pushing me to my best. This scene occurs almost daily and is required to be a collegiate swimmer. From the challenges that we face together as a team, a uniquely tight bond is formed and we all deeply care about each other, as well as our performances.

Still breathing hard, I float on my back, letting the water carry me. I look up at the banners, hanging off the beams that surround the pool. These banners honor the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the Big Ten Championship teams from years past. The first NCAA Championship for the men was in 1927 and the first Big Ten Championship for the women was in 1976. The difference in years is enormously noticeable. But why? I gazed up at the banners for almost three years before I began to ask, and then after asking, discovering that the history of the University of Michigan women's swim and dive team is vague and fuzzy. My love of this team and this sport inspired me to understand the history of swimming at this institution and why it's development has been so different between the men and the women. Two years ago I began my quest at the Bentley Historical Library, sifting through newspaper clips that had turned raw umber with age. I was able to find evidence that a women's swim club

was established in 1923. I read about how the club hosted “welcome teas” and practiced their strokes in gray wool suits. Around 1943, women’s interest in speed swimming wavered and the focus of the club shifted to synchronized swimming. In 1954 the Michigan Women’s Athletic Association built a women’s pool, now known as The Margaret Bell Pool. In 1956 RoseMary and Buck Dawson started the Ann Arbor Swim Club, which trained pre-collegiate female swimmers. At that point the women’s swim team at the University of Michigan in 1958 was not fully formed, but by 1973 the swim and dive team was organized enough to be chosen as one of the first varsity sports for women at the University of Michigan.

Most sport history books often pass over the 1950s and 1960s and focus on women’s collegiate sports after Title IX was passed. Through this decade, there was wide variation in which sports and what kinds of athletic involvement were available to women at different universities. For the women’s sports teams that were able to self-form, historians and social scientists have the unique opportunity to study team development. The late 1950s marks the first time that women were successful in forming competitive collegiate teams.

The US Congress passed Title IX in 1972, radically opening opportunities for women in competitive sports. Title IX states that: “No person in the U.S. shall, on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal aid.” Initially not aimed at sports and some Texas state legislators tried to even exclude sports from the amendment but failed, thereby requiring schools receiving federal funding to create opportunities for women to participate in athletics. This law as it pertains to collegiate athletics has caused universities to create parity between men and women’s teams. A common misconception is that Title IX passed and then women’s sports teams were formed. In many cases quite the contrary occurred. Women’s pre-

Title IX sports teams had no financial and little administrative support, yet were conducting themselves as varsity teams, organizing tournaments and competing in national championships. It was these teams that pushed for the change.

My study takes one team, from one university, and examines and breaks down the details of the team's development and experience. Title IX was a revolutionary law and in the context of college athletics it altered the ways women were able to compete in college, but it cannot be given credit for starting the changes. Why were the 1950s the first time that women were able to form competitive athletic teams? Why during this time were universities so unsupportive in women competing? Historical circumstances starting in the 1920s explain the variety of factors that contributed to the development of men's varsity collegiate programs and the factors that prohibited the development of women's varsity collegiate programs. Gender and body performance play a huge role in how athletic governing organizations created a dichotomy between men and women and the appropriate activities for each sex. All of these historical factors contribute to the challenges the women face in developing the University of Michigan women's swim and dive team.

The competitive women club swimmers that were attending the University of Michigan wanted to swim in college, and they wanted to swim in specific ways that they had practiced and believed in for years. The conditions to enable what they felt were the morally correct way to train and compete were not available to them in college. Women's limited participation in sports at Michigan was not based on their lack of physical abilities but rather the varsity Athletic Department and the Department of the Physical Education for Women's historically rooted beliefs about gender that prevented the women from competing to their full potential.

### *Organization of the Paper:*

The first three chapters give a historical perspective, which shaped the relationship between gender and athletics leading up to 1958. Chapters four through seven discuss the development of the team from 1958-1973 in the context of the University of Michigan. Chapter one focuses on the historical aspect of sports and the specific ways men and women participated in sports in the 1920s. Concepts of gender and body performance in relation to the sport of swimming during this time will be explained. The narrow intersection of class, race and gender will frame the group of women being studied. Women's athletic experiences were controlled by men's sporting organizations and women's organizations that were affiliated with women physical educators.

Chapter two describes femininity in relation to swimming. The relationship between femininity and swimming is historically tied to synchronized swimming. Hollywood movies with Esther Williams bridged the gap between femininity and athletics. Esther Williams made swimming synonymous with glamour and beauty. Finally a discussion about how water itself masks masculine aspects of sport will be analyzed.

Chapter three explains the structures and practices of swimming. The Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) was the governing body of swimming and organized the meet systems. It is important to understand how AAU swimmers defined morally correct ways to train and are ingrained with this swimming ethos through training the body. Swimmers shared this understanding of the morally correct ways to train across the nation.

Chapter four describes the beliefs and practices of the Department of Physical Education for Women and the varsity Athletic Department during the 1958-1973 time frame. The views of these two departments at the University frame the obstacles endured by the women in forming a



team. On the flip side chapter five reveals the opportunities that allowed a swim and dive team to form at the University of Michigan. Michigan's swim and dive team was first organized like an AAU swim club which subsequently attracted and motivated elite athletes to continue to swim and dive in college.

Chapter six details success and struggles that the women faced training in college. Women had the opportunity to train with the women's swim and dive team or in some unique cases the men's varsity swim and dive team. This chapter also describes the conditions that needed to be present in order to establish a varsity team which were not met until 1973.

Chapter seven examines how competition relates to team development and training. Two swim meets, about ten years apart will demonstrate the changes that occurred in the way women were able to race in college. In addition, examining competition allows for an understanding of how other swim and dive teams were developing programs in comparison to Michigan.

### *Methodology*

My research process involved examining archival materials, interviewing past swimmers, reading scholarly texts, and drafting off of personal experience. The Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan was essential in my research of the early years of the women's swim and dive team. Looking through newspaper clippings, annual reports, letters, personal reports, and photographs helped me understand development of athletic culture at Michigan. Through Sheryl Szady, a University of Michigan women's sport historian, I was able to contact pre-Title IX swimmers and divers, and she gave me specific newspaper clippings along with swim meet results. These results not only give the most detailed report of the swimmers on the

team but also other teams that were competing. A wide variety of anthropological theory, gender theory, sports and history of sports texts was used for my background and theory work.

Personal interviews were the most valuable source of information. I interviewed twenty-two people for this project. I interviewed nineteen women that swam at Michigan between 1958 and 1977. I interviewed two male coaches, Dick Kimball and Gus Stager, and one key informant Sheryl Szady. A list of the people interviewed and the questions that were asked is located in the Appendix. The women contacted not only told their stories but also provided photos, personal notes and newspaper clips. I emailed women to make initial contact, and then set up phone interviews or in-person interviews. We usually talked for a little over an hour. I asked similar questions to all the women but they changed a little depending on the dates that the women swam at Michigan. My questions were about when, and how they started swimming and their club swimming experience. I asked why they decided to try and swim at college and then why Michigan. I asked them many questions about where they lived, majors, friends, and then what they did after college and if swimming or athletics still plays a part in their life now. This information did not make the paper but was important for me to frame the whole Michigan swimming and diving experience, in the context of their life.

When I began this project I was interested in what women during this time frame thought about their bodies. I had hypothesized that these women might have felt uncomfortable in swimsuits and that they received negative reactions for being athletes. I was pleasantly surprised to find out that overall the women I interviewed had grown up in suits and felt completely comfortable in them, and most women never received any reactions when co-eds learned that they were athletes. After I started writing, I went back and re-interviewed and in some cases tri-interviewed women to specifically ask them questions about team dynamics, training practices

and competition experiences. These interviews were truly the most rewarding part of the whole thesis. It became apparent that I was not just gathering information; I was connecting with former team members.

One of my most important resources was former head diving coach, Dick Kimball. Kimball retired in 2002 after coaching at Michigan since 1958. Despite being retired, Kimball is still at the pool almost every morning and afternoon coaching. We had an initial formal interview, but several times afterwards we would see each other on the pool deck and have unplanned conversations and I slowly extracted more details of the time period. Another highlight occurred after practice. I was talking with Kimball and Gus Stager walked up. Stager swam at Michigan and then was the head coach from 1955-1979, 1981-1982. Standing between these two men while still wearing my swim cap from practice, we ironed out details of the past. I could not help but feel like a swimmer in the 1960s.

In this paper I will not only cite with names but also note the years the women were at Michigan. I have purposely named people in a variety of ways. Coach Gus Stager and Coach Dick Kimball will be introduced by their full names and then I will refer to them by their last names. I am trying to stay consistent with how swimmers and divers referred to them during their interviews. RoseMary Dawson after initial introduction is referenced as RoseMary. The women always used her first name when they talked about her. Like the other people in this paper I will introduce the swimmers and divers by their full names. I will write their first name, then in brackets if appropriate, their last name during college, and then their current last name. Also next to their names I will put the date range they attended Michigan. After stating their full name I will refer to the women by their first name. When I discuss their experience at Michigan I want my description or their quote to reflect them and their identity. I feel using their last name

retracts from who they were during this time period in their lives. When I cite a quote I will use their last name for convenience in referencing them.

My personal swim experience on the University of Michigan swim and dive team for the past five years, and my competitive club swimming experience since 1996 has fortified my interest in this subject, as well as allowed me to relate to and convey the experiences of these women. When a woman described certain practices and what workouts and meets were like, I can connect on a very personal level. I am able to describe at a corporeal level the details of swimming; I have known what it feels like to step up on a racing block so nervous I was shaking.

Despite extensive interviews, research and personal experiences, there is an obvious bias and some limitations within this thesis. There is more explanation regarding swimming than diving. Since my background is in swimming, I cannot explain the experience of diving as fully. In addition, at any given time, there are significantly more swimmers than divers on a team. As a result, there were simply more swimmers than divers available to interview. Although I tried to conduct as many interviews as possible, the arguments and examples I use are based on only a fraction of the women swimmers and divers who participated on the team during the 1960's and 70's. Also being a historical piece some key informants have passed. The story I try to convey can never be as fully formed as a present day ethnography.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Historical Perspective: *The Organizations Controlling Women's Athletics, 1900-1957***

Women were breaking barriers by competing in intercollegiate athletics during the late 1950s and 1960s. To understand these barriers, it is essential to know the historical background and how the intersection of gender, race, class and athletics from the 1900s to the 1950s

influenced opportunities for female athletics. Ideologies about gender and its relation to athletics set up the conditions and organizations that dictated how women could participate in sports, on and off college campuses.

### *Sport: A Man's World*

Competitive sports have traditionally been viewed as a man's world. Athleticism encapsulates "distinctively masculine virtues of assertive action, competitive control, deliberate deprivation, and decisive denial (of doubt, fear, pain, and dependency)" (Wacquant 2005, 462). These traits described have been socially constructed, as masculine and athletic competition starting in the 1900s was a way to develop these traits. Men established athletic organizations, which regulated competition and created a specific arena where men could perform and strengthen the qualities of masculinity (West and Zimmerman 1987, 125). The Amateur Athletic Union (AAU)<sup>1</sup> was established in 1888, the modern Olympics were founded in 1896, men were working to foster athletics in college and the first Rose Bowl was held in 1902. These different organizations began to grow, providing a variety of ways for men to participate in athletics, thus enabling them to establish the physical skills and appearance that made them men.

### *Women can play, but only in a certain way*

With the rise in popularity of athletic competitions for men, some women also wanted to compete. As women pushed to enter this masculine world and participate in athletics, certain powerful men and women's organizations raised concerns about appropriate feminine behavior.

Women were considered fragile, emotionally unstable and weak (Cain 2001, 349). Starting in

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<sup>1</sup> The AAU was an organization that worked to unify and set standards for amateur sports in the United States. It did and still does today organize competitions for most sports in the United States. The AAU was a key factor in the development of club swimming in the U.S.

the 1920s the sportswomen became socially problematic and society had to reconcile how to manage the new emerging women. “Those traits which competitive sports supposedly foster—strength, independence, competitiveness—directly contradict traditional gender roles assigned to women—weakness, dependence, passivity—making the female athlete a problematic and potential disruptive social subject” (Williamson 1996, 7). By taking part in athletics, a firmly established masculine arena, women were disrupting socially acceptable gender activities. In response, men’s organizations like the AAU, the Olympics, and women’s organizations, like the Women’s Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation all took part in controlling the physical behavior of women (Verbrugge 1997, 275). These organizations established that some athletics were appropriate for women while some were not. These separations were based on the behaviors and body compartment required to do specific sports.

Flirting with socialized norms, women began to participate and compete in athletics by organizing their own athletic teams and competitions. Swimming and diving was at the forefront of the women’s athletic movement and by 1916 the AAU, concerned with women organizing their own national championships, agreed to sponsor swimming nationals for women (Sherrow 1996, 9). Soon after, American women were crusading to attend the Olympic games. When the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF)<sup>2</sup> first rejected the women’s request to be included in the Olympics, the women formed the Federation Sportive Feminine International (FSFI) and hosted their own games in Paris in 1922 (Adams 2002, 144). In 1924, the IAAF reconsidered and the FSFI came under the jurisdiction of the IAAF. Although it appears that in both the AAU and IAAF situations, women were gaining acceptance into the male-dominated athletic world, in reality, women were giving up control of their own organizations to men.

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<sup>2</sup> The IAAF was an American association that worked closely with the International Olympic Committee.

Leaders of men's organizations gained the ability to monitor how women's sports progressed. The President of the IAAF, Sigrid Edstrom, knew that by allowing women to participate in the Olympics he "could maintain a 'watchful eye' over the activities women were allowed to participate in, ensuring the events were conducive to their bodies and acceptable in relation to social perceptions of the time" (Adams 2002, 145). By setting these boundaries he was maintaining the status quo of male control over women at the highest level of athletics. Avery Brundage, president of the AAU, expressed in 1949 that "women's events [in the Olympics] should be confined to those appropriate for women; swimming, tennis, figure skating and fencing but certainly not shot putting" (Adams 2002, 145). Brundage made it clear that some kinds of competition require athletes to comport their bodies in a manner inappropriate for women. Women that took part in shot put displayed brute strength, and to be successful had to be taller and larger. The ways women's bodies developed to compete in a sport like shot put was not characteristically feminine thus not appropriate. Swimming and diving were socially acceptable and will be further described as feminine, which contributes to its popularity starting in the 1950s.

Even though men ran the AAU and IAAF, women were still able to compete and excelled in swimming in the early years. In 1924, Sybil Bauer broke the men's world record in the 220-yard backstroke, and Ethel McGray swam the 440-yard freestyle to break the men's world record by two seconds (Cahn 2003, 32, Sherrow 1996, 292). In 1926, Gertrude Ederle became the first woman and sixth person ever to swim the English Channel, reaching the shores of Kent, England two hours ahead of the men's world record. These feats garnered great media attention, and after Gertrude Ederle's remarkable channel swim, the newspapers questioned if women were indeed the 'weaker sex' (Guttman 1991, 148). These early accomplishments represent women's

growing confidence that they could successfully participate in athletics. With the arena of athletics for women expanding, women began to ‘play’ with the idea of intercollegiate athletics. However, this movement was aggressively stopped by women physical educators who, like the governing bodies of the AAU and IAAF, aimed to control collegiate women’s bodies.

### *The Suppression of Intercollegiate Athletics*

Some women’s organizations were also uncomfortable with the rise in women participating in competitive athletics and wanted to shape the way women were participating in sports. Lou Henry Hoover, President of the Girls Scouts, along with many other women physical educators, launched a massive campaign to suppress women’s intercollegiate athletics (Guttman 1991, 175). Women physical educators sharply criticized competition, individualism, win-at-any-cost mentality, commercialism, and ‘prototypic males values’ (Verbrugge 1997, 279). With this critique of men’s sports and illuminating the ‘evils’ of the way male competition was organized, the women P.E. leaders firmly conveyed the behaviors that were not acceptable for women. This ban was hugely successful at the high school and college level and programs were scarce until after Title IX passed in 1972. The women physical educators wanted to ‘educate’ the way women moved and expressed themselves (Struna 1984,126). Women physical educators used athletics to teach the proper ways women should control their bodies, and socially behave.

In addition to wanting to suppress intercollegiate competition, P.E. teachers had to teach sports in specific ways. The fear of women athletes and physical educators being portrayed as homosexuals framed the way women physical educators taught. In the 1920s, P.E. teachers were developing this new department in the world of academia. Due to the already present suspicions about sports making women masculine and turning them into lesbians, women P.E. leaders had



to maneuver that stigma in order to legitimized their field and gain control over the education of women. “Conformity was especially important, even obligatory...[and] practicing normative femininity, women physical educators could avoid accusations of “mannishness” and “deviance”” (Verbrugge 1997, 294). Even in the late 1960s when Jan (Pfleegor) Wallace (’68-’72) was attending Michigan, the physical education department was actively disassociating themselves from any homosexual relations. “In the P.E. department it was frowned upon to be gay and we were asked to ‘snitch’ on those that we thought had tendencies.” In order for P.E. teachers to be accepted, especially on a university campus, the women ‘adopted conventional views about gender and physicality due to their status as white, middle-class women’ (Verbrugge 1997, 284). This meant that heterosexual norms needed to be expressed. To enforce these heterosexual and feminine norms, women P.E. instructors described how the distinct biological anatomy of women shaped the specific ways women could physically participate in athletics by “emphasizing characteristics like skill, grace and beauty, which [were] more socially acceptable” (Wrisberg 88). Women were taught that they could biologically only move in a certain way which reinforced social traits of femininity. Between the 1920s-1950s, P.E. teachers needed to educate women to comport their bodies and behaviors to conform to the heterosexual white middle class ideals, in order for the academic major to be viewed in a heterosexual way, thus gaining mainstream acceptance (Cahn 1994, 28).

The practice of physically grooming women to be the ideal women through athletic body control was only standardized at ‘white universities’. At black universities, primarily in the south, black women P.E. educators had different ideologies about ways women should participate in athletics. These women were not conforming to the white middle class norm and adversely supported inter-collegiate competition for women. They were aligning their views on

competition with the AAU; the organization most white P.E. teachers were against. Although many people in the U.S. were surprised, the opportunity for U.S. black women to competitively train and race produced amazing athletes who dominated track and field at the Olympics in the 1950s-1960s (Verbrugge 1997, 286).

The new emphasis for women's college athletics was not on learning a sport to win but rather learning bodily control through a sport and being socially active. The campaign slogan: "*A sport for every girl and every girl in a sport*" (Guttman 1991, 138), encouraged all women at universities to participate in as many sports as possible. Instead of women participating in one highly competitive sport, women participated in many intramural tournaments and "Play Days" (Sherrow 1996, 9). In the education of women in sports, it is clear that physical educators were teaching women the physical processes without the emphasis on competition. In the physical education book, *Individual Sports for Women*, written in 1943, there is a clear explanation of the role competition should play in university athletics. "Tournaments in themselves are really only the frosting and not the whole of the cake. It is really that the actual playing of the games by hundreds and hundreds of girls in this country that make the teaching of individual sports important" (Ainsworth 1943, 8). By examining how swimming is taught in this reference book, it is clear that skill and not speed is emphasized. The swimming instruction in this book has no mention of how to go faster in the water but rather offers extensive discussion on how to correctly place the hand in the water and how to stay relaxed. Ironically, Ainsworth cites most of the swimming chapter from Matt Mann's swimming book. Matt Mann was a thirteen-time national champion swimming coach from the University of Michigan, and was masterful at teaching and coaching swimming. If women were essentially learning techniques to swim from Matt Mann, their strokes would have been efficient, and furthermore if they had been encouraged

to train they would have been very fast. Women physical educator's aims were to define the behaviors women should learn from athletics. Physical educators wanted the women to embrace women's "skills as limited, yet important, and women's sports as tame compared to men's but challenging in their own right" (Verbrugge 1997, 301). Women were taught to move their bodies to exemplify acceptable feminine behavior.

The reframing of college athletics was also used to create social situations. Ainsworth goes into detail about ways to plan "co-educational recreational Splash Parties" for men and women. They are described as "popular and a valuable part of the program" (Ainsworth 1943, 306). The aims of the "Splash Parties" encouraged by P.E. instructors were to couple-up women and men. This arena was used for women to display how athletics had enhanced their feminine characteristics. "Female physical educator's ideal female was traditional: she was selfless, cooperative, and controlled. [She was a] strong, healthy, normal girl, a little better balanced, and [a] little more capable of taking her place in life because of the training, which she has received, on the field or in the gymnasium" (Verbrugge 1997, 297). The connections between the skills taught by physical educators were clearly transferable to being a good wife and mother. The structure of athletics for women was not only shaping them physically, but also shaping them to take up the ideals of middle class white wives.

### *Athletic Control at the University of Michigan*

Under the leadership of Dr. Margaret Bell, the Dean of the Physical Education Department for Women at the University of Michigan from 1923-1957, Michigan followed the national trend whereby women's athletic activities were organized to promote social interactions. Through the Women's Athletic Association, intramural competitions, play days, telegraphic

meets, and club sports were held. Intramural swim meets were open to all women, and by the 1940s, over 300 women would regularly swim and dive (Women's Athletic Association 1948-1960). After the meet, there was a dinner held at the Women's Athletic Building (Margaret Bell Papers, 1931). Dean Bell considered the swim meet and the dinner, healthy vehicles for social interaction, which supported the Women Athletic Association's stated goal of "furthering acquaintance and friendship between members" (University of Michigan Christian Handbook 1932, 96). During this time frame from the 1920s-1950s intramural sports were the primary opportunities for women to compete in college athletics.

Dean Bell's strong views about women in competitive sports were the underlying principles in the organization of sports for women on campus. During her initial years as dean, 1923 through 1926, she boldly crafted and implemented her ideals about how women would participate in athletics at Michigan. These beliefs can be summarized in three main areas; serious competition disrupts women's reproductive systems, funding for women's sports should benefit all woman equally, and finally, competitive sports reduces a women's femininity and attractiveness as a wife and mother. Margaret Bell's strong beliefs on the proper ways women should engage in athletics were ingrained and became the standard at the University of Michigan.

Dr. Margaret Bell used her medical authoritative knowledge in addressing the biological harm that highly competitive women could endure. She explained that competition creates situations that are exceedingly stressful, and "emotional strain, excitement, worry and nervousness causes menstrual irregularities" (Szady 1988, 37). Dr. Bell discussed how involvement in strenuous athletics while women's bodies were developing was threatening to a women's reproductive system. "Women are responsible for the future of the race in bearing and

rearing of children. We begin to play basketball just about the time we begin to mature, when we are growing most rapidly. These physiological changes go on from about twelve years of age until the early twenties. During this long period of adjustment, we should plan to do everything that is suited to our best development. Therefore certainly strain should be avoided” (Szady 1988, 36). Both statements relate to the fact that competition was seen as having the potential to harm reproductive processes. Women needed to control and limit physical activity of their bodies if they wanted to be reproductively successful later in life. Dr. Margaret Bell made it clear that being a mother and wife should be the real goals of women.

The practical justification of how to allocate limited funds equally for women’s sports negated the development of a women’s varsity program. “In the first place there is a sad deficiency of gymnasium equipment...before we can have any hope of putting out a winning team we must make it possible for all women to participate in play. Many can not be ignored in order to perfect a few” (Szady 1988, 34). Margaret Bell was playing off the campaign slogan, ‘sports for all’ and arguing that all women are the same and equipment was the limiting factor. She clearly undercuts the variations in women’s talents, desires and motivation to excel in athletics.

Bell’s third belief was that training in ‘man style’ athletics altered the femininity of women. Women wanting to participate in competition cannot be women. “Much trouble has arisen from girl’s athletic teams following the example of men’s teams. I think a girl should be a girl. The social position of women does not stand this exploitation and competition” (Szady 1988, 35, Dec 10 1926). She clearly believed competition was for men and when women compete they exhibit traits of a man. It was believed women that participated in manly activities usually did not find a husband. Dr. Bell expressed the desire for a clear divide between activities

for men and women. Dr. Margaret Bell's beliefs ruled the women's physical education department and women's physical activities at the University of Michigan for over thirty years. Attitudes towards intercollegiate competition only began to waiver when Dr. Bell retired in 1957. When women swimmers and divers began to develop an intercollegiate team they were challenging an administration with deeply rooted ideals about proper ways of shaping womanhood.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Femininity of Swimming: *Societal Acceptability of the Sport for Girls***

Swimming and diving was, and still is, considered a feminine sport, and women “encounter little opposition [in] participation in this sport” (Wughalter 1978, 11). This allowed girls to become very competitive without being associated with masculinity. The femininity of the sport is rooted in historical associations with synchronized swimming and the ways Esther Williams glamorized the two sports in her Hollywood movies during the 1940s. She was also able to publicly display how women could be viewed as feminine and athletic at the same time. These factors all worked to dissociate the sport from a male stigma. The acceptability of the sport from the 1920s until the 1950s allowed competitive swimming to grow in popularity, attracting many women to the sport, which allowed for a highly competitive AAU club organization to develop.

#### *Esther Williams and the popularization of swimming*

Swimming, diving and synchronized swimming all developed similarly. In the 1920s through the 1950s, these three sports were commonly taught at the same time. These sports all

require a high level of skill, rhythm, grace and control, which are traits that are associated with femininity (Wrisberg 1998, 88). Esther Williams, the glamorous Hollywood star of the 1940s, played a huge role in the popularization of synchronized, speed swimming and diving. All of these sports became strongly connected to the aquatic Hollywood movies. Esther Williams grew up in Southern California and was Olympic bound when the 1940 games were canceled due to World War II. She retired but was discovered by Mickey Rooney and her success as an actress exploded (Johnson 1994).

Esther Williams played a big role in displaying the ways that women could be athletic and feminine at the same time, traits that previously opposed each other. “Williams was athletic and muscular, but also voluptuous and conventionally beautiful...she necessarily negotiated cultural anxieties about strength and gender. In fact, much of the reason for her success may have been the brilliant way she merged “femininity” and athleticism into an aesthetically pleasing yet politically innocuous form” (Williamson 1996, 8). Although her popularity originated as a movie star, the fact that she had been a national champion swimmer defined her as an athlete. The successful combination of these two worlds cannot be ignored and in actuality helped to change the way athletics for girls and women were viewed.

Esther Williams success and acceptability would play a key role in establishing an arena for girls and women to participate in competitive aquatic events. First, there was a significant correlation between the popularity of her movies and the growth in synchronized swimming on campus. Michifish, the synchronized swimming club experienced a huge growth. Records indicate that in 1941 about twenty women were on the team, by 1949 over one hundred women had tried out but only fifty made the team (WAA records 1948-1950). At same time, it started to become acceptable for young girls to learn to swim, wear Esther William’s signature bathing

suits, and to be ‘beautiful’ just like Esther Williams. An article from the period reports, “If a father believed his daughter would look like Esther Williams, then of course he would pay for lessons” (Johnson 1994). A few of the women that swam at Michigan in the early 1960s discussed how Esther Williams acted as a swimming role model. Esther Williams ‘assured’ society that if girls swam they would not develop mannish characteristics, but rather just as Esther Williams, develop a very attractive feminine body. Bridging athleticism and feminism together was important in changing the social mindset that had exclusively tied athletics to masculinity.

*Women Swimming, Below the Surface:*

The water conceals many of the manly traits of athleticism such as sweating, farting, physical exertion, grunting, and pain (Heinemann 1980, 41). All of these traits are exhibited in swimming but are masked by the body position of swimmers in the water and the water itself. In swimming, the pool water washes away spit and sweat, muffles farts and dilutes urine. The temperature of the water cools the body and the face is rarely red, negating any signs of exertion. The expression of pain in athletics is expressed through grunting, yelling and or facial cringing. Except in backstroke, the face is always in the water, and even on backstroke it is hard to see the face because of the angle of the head. Swimmers experience great pain and fatigue during racing and training, but the buoyancy of the water holds up the body and the expression of bodily exhaustion is limited. The water masks these manly characteristics, which enabled women to train without limits and aggressively participate in swimming without social disapproval. Competition expanded by the ways the water covers the body. These factors made swimming as a sport distinctively unique and allowed for expansive age group club development for boys and



girls. This allowed girls (with boys) to train and participate in a very competitive structured environment governed by the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU).

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Age Group Swimming: *Structures, Practices and Swimming Ethos in AAU Club Swimming***

The AAU was one of the few organizations that provided a training environment that enabled girls to swim to their full potential starting in the 1950s. The goal of the AAU was not to produce the fastest swimmers but the best swimmers possible. The structures of the AAU organized way swimmers trained and competed. The AAU created a hierarchical meet system, with time standards, which motivated the way swimmers advanced in the sport. For swimmers to improve, they had to adhere to a rigorous training schedule. In addition, they needed to embody an ethos, or morally correct ways to train. Both girl and boy swimmers across the nation universally practiced this ethos. This work ethic was based on improving effort exertion and not improved times. This ethos had to be individually trained and practiced, but team environment played a key role in enforcing, and reproducing the correct ways to train. This swimming ethos played a crucial role in the ability for women's college swimming to develop. This section is based on interviews of Michigan women, writings by other swimmers, and personal experience. The aim of using a variety of sources is to show how over time and throughout the nation this swimming ethos has been fundamentally ingrained in the culture of U.S. swimming.

Although girls and boys did not race each other in meets almost every other aspect of the sport was gender neutral. There was no sex division between the ways strokes were taught. With few exceptions, boys and girls trained together in AAU club teams until college. One

exception was the Ann Arbor Swim Club, which was initially a club for only girls. Girls and boys grew up training together and attended meets together. The correct ways of training and the swimming ethos was equally ingrained in boys and girls. Even though boy's racing times were faster than girls, boys and girls were still able to challenge each other in practice. In the early 1950s when tampons were available, women no longer had to miss workout because of menstruation. Gender neutrality in the development of age group swimming was in sharp contrast with the long held beliefs that women physical educators argued about the way women could participate in athletics. Mentioned earlier P.E. leaders wanted to divide boys and girls because of biological differences. The way women learned how to participate in swimming was in great opposition to how PE teachers thought sports for women should be conducted in college.

### *Organization of Competition*

The highest goal in swimming was, and still is, to participate in the Olympics. This goal, along with the overwhelming popularity of swimming in the 1950s, contributed to the national development of AAU club swimming. The AAU was (and still is for some sports in the U.S.) the governing body for a wide array of sports. Within the AAU institution, independent and private club teams were formed. The AAU had guidelines but essentially the clubs were autonomous in their development and structuring of a program. The typical age range to start swimming was nine to eleven years old, which was consistent for the women I interviewed. They all described starting at local summer clubs or taking lessons at the YMCA. Starting young was crucial to a swimmers ability to reach the national level, because it took years of exclusive dedication to the sport to properly train the body.

During the 1950's and 1960's, as increasingly large numbers of boys and girls showed interest in AAU swimming, the goal 'to be the best' became more challenging. The meet system reveals how swimmers over the years moved-up to participate in more competitive meets. "Success in swimming is so definable, and the stratification system so unambiguous, that the athlete's progress can be easily charted" (Chambliss: 1989: 70). Swimmers attended meets and worked their way up the ranks from local to regional, to state, to the national championships, then to Olympic Trials. Each meet had certain time standards and swimmers had to achieve certain times in order to compete at the next level meet. Swimmers were able to understand from a young age how many seconds they had to drop in order to qualify for the next level meet. As the swimmers worked up the system, the number of meets at each level decreased. For the national championships, swimmers from around the nation attended the same meet. Sue Thrasher ('62-'64) recalled, "AAU nationals was a big deal, it was about being at a competition, to meet swimmers from the whole U.S." It is clear that attending nationals was the ultimate goal in a swimmer's career, especially for women who at the time, did not have college swimming as an option.

With nationals being the main focus meet, all lower level championships were scheduled around nationals, which dictated universal training patterns. The training season began in September, when swimmers trained and raced in 25-yard pools. This season ended in March with indoor national championships. Without a break, the spring/summer season began with swimmers training and racing in 50-meter pools. This season ended with outdoor national championships in August. The lower level championship meets such as state championships, were held a few weeks before. The season was so structured because swimmers can not swim their fastest at any time of the year. Swimmers train at high intensity with high yardage volumes

for most of the season. About two to three weeks before a championship meet, swimmers taper. Physically, taper was a way for swimmers to rest their bodies by decreasing their yardage volumes and sharpen their racing technique. Starting from a young age the body learns to mentally associate resting with swimming fast. For swimmers, resting was mentally connected with racing. This cyclical pattern of training, tapering and racing was ingrained and bodies become accustomed to swimming fast at certain times of the year.<sup>3</sup> The schedule of the meets forced all swim clubs and swimmers, at every level, to have similar training plans and prepare for championship meets at the same time of the year.

#### *Training Expectations:*

In order for swimmers to improve and achieve their goals, they had to be committed to training. There were accepted norms for training. On average during this time period in the 1950s and 1960s teams trained four to six times a week, and each practice was an hour and half to two hours. This schedule was maintained year round. In talking with the women, there were slight variations in number of practices a week, as well as hours practiced. Pam (Swart) Anderson ('62-'66) remembered, "we swam from six to seven AM and after school from three to four thirty everyday" and Sue Thrasher ('62-'64) recalled, "we worked out every afternoon, and were always looking for more opportunities to train on the weekends." During each practice, swimmers covered thousands of yards or meters. As it will be explained later, completing these yards was not the sole challenge of participating in the sport. The time commitment coupled with swimmer's ability to maintain the swim ethos determined who participated and improved in the sport.

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<sup>3</sup> The first few years of intercollegiate championships for women were held in December, but as college programs progressed the meet moved to March, coinciding with Indoor National Championships. This change also allowed for a longer training season.

The weekly time commitment to the sport in addition to weekend meets forced swimmers to be highly organized with their time management. A typical swimmer's day was constituted by morning practice, then a full day of school, back to the pool for another workout, then home for dinner, and efficiently doing homework in order to go to bed early. This exhausting schedule repeated for years. Sue ('62-'64) simply described swimming, as "It was a way of life, and source for friendship, a second family really." Sue, like all the women I interviewed, described how the sport did not control their life but organized it. From an early age swimmers learned that in order to improve, or even participate on a team a religious commitment to the training schedule needed to be met.

#### *Uniformity of Structure and Practice*

There was a universal and accepted belief, by both swimmers and coaches, in the practices of training and competing. These rigorous training structures were maintained because younger swimmers had the ability to clearly see the progression to nationals. When younger swimmers watched older swimmers at their goal level, and the younger swimmers knew the path that the older swimmers took to get to that level, younger swimmers wanted to adhere to the swimming ethos and training schedule. Practice regimes and the morally correct ways to train were validated. The French sociologist, Bourdieu, described how social-classes develop particular ways of being or *habitus*. "The *habitus*, [as] a product of history, produces individual and collective practices. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which tend to guarantee the 'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms" (Bourdieu 1980, 54). Similarly to how Bourdieu describes *habitus*, morally correct ways to train were universally practiced and reproduced in AAU

swimming culture. A coach could instruct a swimmer to do a difficult workout, but the swimmer would only be motivated to do the workout correctly, based on their belief that the workout would help them improve. Janice Weber ('62-'66) clearly remembered the desire to swim faster, "We were all motivated to improve and become national caliber swimmers."

With the determination to achieve their performance goals, ways of training were ingrained in swimmers. Over the years there were changes in how stroke technique was taught, and training methods were altered, but the ways that swimmers participated in swimming was maintained and reproduced. There was uniformity in training practice and meet experiences. All swimmers from different parts of the country fundamentally shared beliefs and practices that created mutual understanding between swimmers. The goal of the AAU, was never to have the culture of swimming develop in a certain way, but rather the popularity and the competitive nature of the sport shaped the structures and the correct ways to practice.

### *Techniques of the Swimming Body*

The way swimmers learned to swim strokes was not just learning the motions of the stroke but learning to have body awareness in the water. Maintaining and improving stroke technique was a career long endeavor. It took years of swimmers changing, and tweaking their strokes to really understand the most efficient and powerful way for their body to move through the water. When watching Olympians race, their stroke looks relaxed, flawless and natural. But, the techniques of swimming were by no means a natural movement of the body. Humans do not have gills, fins, or webbed phalanges, we were not meant to swim. Our original human goal for swimming was not for sport, but was to avoid drowning. Yet, our hydrophilic affinity, and our

skins oil glands allowed us to have natural buoyancy in the water and stay in the liquid for long periods of time.

To achieve the natural feeling of the water, swimmers were dedicated to not just learning the techniques but feeling the techniques. Swimmers viewed videos (from the 1960s on), received stroke instruction from coaches, and watched other swimmer's stroke technique. Swimmers could learn all the mechanics of the stroke, but it took thousands of hours of swimming to get a 'feel for the water'. "Touch is therefore about both an awareness of presences and of locomotion" (Hockey 2007, 123). The properties of water contribute to the body's kinesthetic awareness in the water. For every movement in the water, the body pressed against the water, and swimmers were constantly acknowledging the water. Barb (Patterson) Cheney ('67-'71) described her enjoyment in understanding how her body moved through the water, "It was a blessing to enter the water and experience the touch of just turning your hand a certain way and feeling the difference it made in a pull through the water." Swimmers knew what angle their hand needed to enter the water but they had to connect that angle with how their hand felt touching the water, the stretch they felt from their Latissimus dorsi muscle and tensions they felt in their shoulder. "Embodied sense of rhythm and timing requires a highly developed awareness of sensations" (Hockey 2007, 119). This correct technique had to be repeated over and over again until it was ingrained as a natural feeling. A certain way of knowing how the body should feel in the water was acquired. Every swimmer had to make the transition from thinking about swimming to feeling swimming.

### *The Morally Correct Ways to Train*

In addition to swimmers believing in the structure of competitive swimming, and learning to feel the water, swimmers also embodied the characteristics that produced the swimming ethos. As Mary Bennett ('67-'71) explained, "If you get good at it you have to have the right stuff." When Mary referred to the 'right stuff' she was describing, "all the behaviors which are...likely to be positively sanctioned because they are objectively adjusted to the logical characteristics of a particular field" (Bourdieu 1980, 58). The behaviors that constituted a swimmers ethos were extremely demanding. Just as stroke technique was about the feeling in the water, training correctly was not about swimming the particular workout but rather maintaining the drive to train correctly. Morally correct training was the constant push to increase the effort given to each workout. Chambliss's study, *Mundanity of Excellence*, further quantifies the characteristics of the swimming ethos:

Superlative performance is really a confluence of dozens of small skills or activities, each one learned or stumbled upon, which has been carefully drilled into habit and then are fitted together in a synthesized whole. There is nothing extraordinary or superhuman in any one of those actions; only the fact that they are done consistently and correctly and all together, produce excellence. (Chambliss 1989, 81)

Morally correct training was specific ways swimmers physically and mentally approached their training. This way of training was believed by the swimming community to be the right way to train. Morally correct training was hard and pushed the individual out of their comfort zone. Morally correct training dictated that it was better to be challenged by a practice and fail, than to succeed doing an easy workout. Coaches and teammates reinforced these ways of morally correct training by letting swimmers know when they were not giving the required



effort in practice. Swimmers were made to feel they did something wrong if they did not work hard enough. Pain confirmed exerted effort, and being in pain was considered good and encouraged. The swimming community universally respected this swimming ethos and reinforced the morally correct ways to train.

Giving effort, and working hard is painful. As the muscles receive less oxygen, lactic acid is produced and muscles tighten, ensuing pain. To continue to give the effort required, swimmers learn to embrace pain. It takes years to learn how to manage the pain and develop a swimming ethos. “High levels of pain are often treated by swimmers as confirmation of the adequacy of their training work load and seriousness of effort. It is reported that pain can be strangely satisfying to the highly motivated athlete” (Scott 1981, 93). Tim Shaw, a 1976 Olympian, powerfully and accurately described the way swimmers must confront the pain barrier in every workout, and through constantly pushing through the pain barrier the individual develops a swimming ethos:

Each and everyday you know that somewhere in that evening’s main set, he (pain personified) will be waiting for you—looming. Go after him. Look him right in the eyes, and don’t back down. Do not be fooled by the look on his face that he has “your number”—it’s a façade. He’s a paper tiger. Blow right through him. You’ll find that within 150 to 300 yards you’ve driven through to the “other side” for that day, and will finish your set with a great “second wind” and an awesome feeling found in that unique setting. He’ll be waiting for you tomorrow. You’ll have to call his bluff again, but it gets easier and easier everyday, as long as it’s in succession. Eventually it will become a habit, a way of life, to where it’s so “second-nature” that you don’t think about it in school or driving to workout, or on the kick set. That is

when you will be a champion—when you’ve conquered yourself to that degree. (Warner 1999, 174)

This was how the body learned it could swim past its perceived pain limits. This was when the swimmer redefined how fast they could swim. To improve, and get better, swimmers had to regularly do something that they had never done before, which meant tolerating more pain. This was not the natural way the body thinks. When the body was in pain all the natural signals told the body to stop. The only way to swim through the pain was to practice pushing the barrier everyday.

The challenges of improving every day might seem torturous but it was not only required to improve but also embraced by the participants of the sport. “Certain ways of training and competing reveal highly valued morals that swimmers needed to possess. They enjoy hard practices, look forward to difficult competitions, try to set difficult goals...It is incorrect to believe that top athletes suffer great sacrifices to achieve their goals. Often, they don’t see what they do as sacrificial at all. They like it” (Chambliss 1989, 74). This concept was reflected in Micki King’s (‘62-‘66) first club diving experience, “When I went to my first AAU meet I was so nervous. I won the meet, but I realized that next time I wanted to be more prepared. It was then that I realized that this sport turned me on. I liked it.” It was this critical distinction that marked Micki as a diver. Winning the meet for Micki did not satisfy her, but rather inspired her to want to improve. She wanted to be better prepared and she knew that the only way to do this was through practice. Years later Micki won an Olympic gold medal because she was constantly inspired to improve. The correct swimming ethos not only pushed swimmers to their full potential but was needed in order to be accepted into a team.

### *Role of Team*

Swimming is an individual sport but teammates pushed, motivated and encouraged each other creating team unity that reinforced and enabled the swimming ethos to exist. There was a clear connection between the ability for individuals to push themselves in training, and the development of team culture. One of the ways swimmers broke the pain barrier was racing teammates in practice. If a swimmer could perform a certain way in practice, teammates were highly motivated to keep up and beat each other. Swimmers improved by racing each other. This is described by Pam (Swart) Anderson ('62-'66) "We had a very small high school pool. So we had to go in waves, and the top swimmers went off together, so it seemed like we were always racing. I had very good swimmers as teammates." Racing in practice was an obvious contributor to Pam's success as well as enjoyment of the sport. Barb (Patterson) Cheney ('67-'71) described how she was pushed by teammates. "On my AAU team there was another butterflyer. She and I were always competing for the butterfly slot on the medley "A" relay team before every meet." Alyce Sigler ('65-'69) recalled, "I was one of the faster girls on the team, so I would practice with the boys. I was constantly racing them and loved the extra challenge in workout". The daily push to be faster was crucial to individual improvement.

Pushing teammates to work hard created a unique bond and respect among teammates. Durkheim described how people physically pushing each other develops connections, "The fleshy companionship that arises in the course of years of daily training and suffering side-by-side, and especially sparring together-which implies entrusting one's body to the other, and an other increasingly like oneself-is conducive to developing such carnal connections" (Durkheim 1965 [1915], 267). These connections were deeper than friendships, in that teammates did not just enjoy each other's company, but also used each other to overcome individual challenges.

“My club team in Florida trained in a fifty meter salt and coral pool. It was a tough place to swim fast, but it built character. As a team we really bonded by training in the adverse conditions of the pool and had a great time” (Anderson ‘62-‘66). Janice Weber (‘62-‘66) discussed how the team aspect of swimming played a larger role in her incentive to swim. “For me, teammates were a motivating factor for me to come to practice. It was the team that was most important to me. We were a clique and spent a lot of non-swimming time together. It was a special time for me.” It is important to understand how universally swimmers relied on their teammates for training. To be a good teammate, upholding ways of correctly practicing needed to be maintained and deeply valued. Similarly to how Wacquant described the boxer’s pugilistic experiences, swimmers also relish the fact that they “share membership in the same small guild, renowned for its physical toughness and bravery; they enjoy knowing that they are different from other people” (Wacquant 2005, 68). Team members developed a deep respect for each other’s swimming ethos. Everyone on the team went through the same physical challenges and enduring pain brought the team together.

Not everyone had the ability or desire to be a swimmer. There was great pride in being a swimmer because of the skills that were needed in order to participate. The swimming ethos was exclusive and it took years to attain membership to the swimming community. Swimmers could not just compete at nationals but had to earn their right to attend. Because swimmers dedicated years to the sport and worked through the levels of competition, it ensured that the correct ways to train were embodied and reproduced. The women that would enter Michigan were already all highly achieving products of the AAU club program. All of the women had competed in nationals and or Olympic trials. The swimming ethos had been deeply embodied in these

women. When these women wanted to swim in college, they were taking on the challenge of replicating their morally correct way of training in college.

## **Chapter 4**

### **University of Michigan: *Obstacles Faced by Women in Team Formation***

Women that entered this college environment during the 1950s-1970s wanted to continue their swimming and diving careers. During this time frame at the University of Michigan the Physical Education Department for Women and the Athletic Department had long held traditional views that highly opposed women from competing against other schools. These departments had control over athletic activities, which occurred on campus and were the main forces that deterred the women from establishing a swim and dive team. Despite the departments attempt to restrain development of a highly competitive team the women pushed on and continued to train and compete in college. Understandably confrontational conflicts between these departments and swimmers and divers occurred.

#### *Department of Physical Education for Women*

At the University of Michigan before the 1950s there had been a few incidences when women tried to push the boundaries of intercollegiate athletics, but Dr. Margaret Bell, dean of the Department of Physical Education for Women, was firm on her beliefs and those attempts were blocked.<sup>4</sup> By the end of her tenure in 1957, Margaret Bell had achieved her main goal of

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<sup>4</sup> In 1935, Elizabeth (Howard) Arp, was the president of the Swimming Club at Michigan. She was frustrated with just practicing and wanted to have duel meets in the area. She contacted Eastern Michigan, Michigan State and Wayne State to arrange swim meets. She did not remember much about the meets, except that Wayne State had a lovely luncheon after the meet. Margaret Bell was very upset that she had arranged for intercollegiate meets and Elizabeth was not chosen as president of the swimming club her senior year (Arp '32-'36).

building a women's pool, and although she still believed that women should not be competing in intercollegiate athletics, she was content with her career and wanted to retire peacefully.

At the tail end of Bell's tenure, the whole department was becoming more lenient in allowing women to be more advanced in athletics, however, they were still unsupportive and wanted to distance themselves from women's competitions. The Department of Physical Education for Women hired RoseMary Dawson, and Dick Kimball as 'advisors' to the loosely organized swim and dive club on campus. At the same time, RoseMary was head swim coach of the Ann Arbor Swim Club (AASC) and Dick Kimball was the varsity diving coach. The Physical Education Department for Women was very aware and uncomfortable with the line that was blurred between the goals of the AASC and the university women's swim and dive club under RoseMary's leadership. The University's Competition Committee, a sub-committee under the Department of Physical Education for Women, agreed that the women's swim and dive "team could compete in AAU meets", but the committee stated that: "it will be our policy not to train individuals specifically for AAU meets. If the individuals wish to enter AAU meets, the individuals should not be sponsored by the University of Michigan" (Second Report from Competition Committee 28 Feb 1955, Szady, 1988, 78). This report clearly made the statement that the Department of Physical Education for Women would not promote competition, but if women did choose to compete, they should not associate themselves with the University of Michigan. The university was stating that although competition was now not a health concern, it was still not a behavior that the university condones. Sue Thrasher ('62-'64), who swam on the Ann Arbor Swim Club in high school and then on the team at Michigan, recalls the uses and restriction of the women's pool, "The Margaret Bell pool didn't figure into our life much. It was mostly for student swim lessons and Red Cross lifeguard training. It was tightly controlled as to

who could swim there”. The women that wanted to use the pool most were restricted from consistent access, a condition very important for correct training. A year later in 1956, the Department of Physical Education for Women still had the same views about competitive swimming, “A few friendly swimming meets would be desirable but a regular schedule was not advocated...the [Department of Physical Education for Women] felt that the desire for competition should come from the students” (Department of Physical Education for Women Annual Report 55-6, 95-6, Szady 1988: 79). The university was advising that RoseMary not encourage competition or organize competition for women. These statements from the Department of Physical Education for Women stalled intercollegiate competitions for a few years, but RoseMary and Buck Dawson (RoseMary’s husband), in 1962 helped organize the first intercollegiate nationals for women.

### *Varsity Athletic Department*

“Michigan was a man’s campus” (Weber ‘62-‘66) and with the national average of women attending college in 1960 at 37%, this was visibly true. In addition to men dominating the co-ed population at Michigan, women were only able to live off campus starting in 1961 and curfew in the dorms for women was only lifted in 1970. These lifestyle limitations contributed to men’s control on campus. There was no better display of the masculine power on campus than the athletic department. The athletic department had secured athletics as a strictly male arena. “Women were not allowed on the field or in the press box at the Big House” (Lahti ‘68-‘72). Women were not expected to be in any athletic facilities, which is why women being allowed to swim and dive with the men was not only progressive of the coaches but against the rules. “They were very proud,” said Micki King (‘62-‘66) in describing the athletic department

and male athletes, “We did not have a *Marching Band*, we had the *Marching Men of Michigan*, and no female cheerleaders.” The successes of the basketball and football team and the ideology of the Athletic Directors, Fritz Crisler (1941-1968) and Don Canham (1968-1988), helped solidify the male domination of athletics.

Don Canham clearly expressed his views on men and women’s athletics to Barb Cheney, in 1971. Barb explained “We had just returned from nationals in Arizona and I was really disappointed with the support that Michigan gave us compared to other schools. My dad was an alumnus and helped me arrange a meeting with Don Canham. I went right into his office and told him what I thought about the inequalities between men and women’s athletics. He responded by telling me that football and basketball teams paid for the Athletic Department and funds from football had built the women’s pool. He told me that I should be grateful for the support that the women’s team was receiving.” Barb fiercely retorted by telling Canham that, “In a few years, legally, he will have to provide funds for women’s teams as well.” Barb was right and with the passing of Title IX in 1972, Don Canham was pressured to establish women’s varsity teams in 1973. In addition to an unwillingness to support women’s athletics, there were negative attitudes towards women pushed onto the football players. “The front page of the football handbook read: Women are shit! Stay away from them” (Orr ‘74-‘77). Although the aim was to keep football players focused on football, the message was clearly presenting a negative view of women on campus. The attitudes the athletic department had about women are important in understanding the struggles women faced as they started to participate in the male-dominated athletic arena at Michigan.



### *Physical Educators and Women Athletes*

Many of the women swimmers and divers, being interested in athletics, were Physical Education majors. Knowing the history of physical educator's view on women's competition created an interesting dynamic when the PE instructors were teaching the competitive collegiate swimmers and divers. Cathy Mancino ('67-'71) recalls, "Our teachers knew we were swimmers and were not outwardly opposed to it, but they certainly were not teaching us any strategy either." she continued to explain, "we learned the basics of how to throw a ball but not the best ways to win the game." Cathy graduated in 1971, which still expresses the message that the Physical Educators were interested in correctly teaching the game, not how to be the best at it. Although the P.E. teachers at this time were not encouraging the women to compete, they were not judging them either. Micki King, who dove at Michigan, starting in 1962, had a mixed experience. "My Phys. Ed. professors knew I was diving at the men's pool. Some of them were 'OK' with it, but some made it clear that it was certainly not appropriate for me to be practicing at the men's pool." The ten-year gap between the two experiences and the location of where each woman was training (Cathy trained at the Margaret Bell Pool) displays the slow ideological change in the women's P.E. department.

Social changes during the 1960s were occurring on campus and attitudes were trying to change, and understanding the specific cultural conditions on campus in relation to the women's swimmers and divers is important. The Department of Physical Education for Women discouragement of college women's involvement with AAU and the Athletic Department's general negative perception of women, and even the women's professors judging women's participation in athletics, reveals the adverse conditions the women faced. The cultural conditions on campus clearly tried to deter women from competing.

## Chapter 5

### University of Michigan: *Opportunities for Team Formation*

Even though the departmental obstacles were institutionally entrenched in the late 1950s and early 1960s there were some key factors that contributed greatly to development of a competitive swim and dive team at Michigan. First being a club environment similar to what swimmers experienced in age group swimming. The strong leadership and organization of this club resulted in the second factor, which was the attraction of highly talented and motivated swimmers and divers.

#### *AASC Connection with the Michigan Women's Swim and Dive Team:*

The opportunity for women to train and compete at Michigan came about through RoseMary Dawson. As mentioned earlier, with her husband Buck Dawson she started, the Ann Arbor Swim Club in 1956 an AAU club team. Two years later she became the advisor to the Michigan women's swim and dive club at the University of Michigan. RoseMary and the AASC provided an environment for the Michigan women to train. RoseMary Dawson's experience and familial connections made her an invaluable asset in laying the foundation for the women's team. She was the daughter of Matt Mann Jr., the head swim coach at the University of Michigan (1923-1954) and sister of Matt 'Matty' Mann III, part of the 1956 collegiate national championship swim team. Since 1941, she had been head director at camp Ak-O-Mak the first competitive swim camp for girls, in Ontario, Canada. The AASC was started with the desire to continue to train girls throughout the year. Having already established a rigorous summer training program up at Ak-O-Mak, it was a seamless transition to setting up a training regime in Ann Arbor.

When RoseMary started training women in college, she was making a statement that women would train with the same intensity as the AAU swimmers. Between 1958-1963 RoseMary was training college and pre-college swimmers at the same time. RoseMary had successfully ingrained her age group club swimmers with the correct ways to train and compete. Evidence for her swimmers understanding in this swimming ethos is recognized in the team's competitive meet schedule and their achievements at the national level. Nancy Rideout ('60-'64) remembered that in high school, "We had a whole dual meet season and would race the Lafayette Swim Club, Indianapolis Aquatic Club, the Riviera Club, as well as the London and Ontario Swim Clubs." AASC won seven straight Michigan state team titles and took a second place at nationals in 1962. The integration between the AASC and the University of Michigan swim and dive team enabled correct training to be established at college. RoseMary was creating an environment in college with the same structure the women had experienced on their AAU club team and in addition, for the first time in college, women were being encouraged to compete.

*Pool of Talent:*

The new opportunity to swim at Michigan, and Buck's recruiting skills, attracted elite swimmers from AASC as well as other AAU club teams to Michigan. With the knowledge that the Michigan women's swim and dive team was closely connected to the AASC, AAU swimmers understood the type of training they would be receiving. It is important to understand that women coming out of high school were motivated to swim in college and were attracted to swim at Michigan because of the correct training environment available. The initial elite swimmers that attended Michigan had a regenerating effect on the program and women

continued to be attracted to swim at Michigan for years. Of the small number of college club teams that existed less than a handful were connected with AAU clubs. The AASC and Michigan connection that existed made competing for Michigan very attractive.

It was Buck's recruiting in the early 1960s that brought in a talented group of women that really sparked the program. Pam Anderson ('62-'66) swam at Pine Crest swim school in Florida and remembers Buck and RoseMary taking the AASC down to Florida for winter training. Buck explained to her the club situation at Michigan and she decided to apply. Micki King ('62-'66) was also encouraged to go to Michigan by Buck. "I was all ready to go to MSU, they had the sexy pool. But because Dick was at Michigan and Buck talked to my parents during one of my high school meets, my parents decided that I was going to go to Michigan" (King '62-'66).

Marcia (Jones) Smoke ('59-'62) grew up in Oklahoma where Matt Mann coached at the University of Oklahoma after he retired from UM. "I worked out on weekends with Matt Mann and through him [talking with Buck] arranged for me and my older sister to go to the University of Michigan" (Smoke '59-'62). All these women were very talented AAU swimmers and were instrumental in promoting the university team.

This early talent on the team proved to be crucial in the promotion of the team. Women were motivated to come to Michigan because they knew the caliber of the team based on reading the results and articles about the team in swimming magazines. Marcia came to Michigan in the fall of 1959 when there were hardly any programs in the nation, "not a lot of colleges at the time had swim programs. I looked at results in *Swimming World*<sup>5</sup> and I knew there was an AASC and UM club team connection". Ginny Duenkel ('65-'69) was an Olympic gold medalist in 1964 and had aspirations of continuing to swim till the next Olympics. "When I started as a freshman

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<sup>5</sup> *Swimming World* was and still is one of the premier swimming magazines in the nation. *Swimming World* was the main mode of communication for the swimming community. Monthly, the magazine printed results from across the nation. This was one of the only ways that swimmers knew how fast their competitors were swimming.

[in 1965], U of M had the number one team nationally for women's swimming. That was a huge motivating factor for me to attend" (Duenkel personal letter '65-'69).

In later years, just the knowledge that there was a team motivated the women to continue to compete. "It seemed natural to try to continue to compete in college. I sought out information on a swim team and joined" (Sonnanstine '65-'69). "I don't know why I kept swimming, I liked to swim, and I liked doing it. When I picked Michigan I knew they had a team and that was important to me" (Mancino '67-'71). "I continued to swim at Michigan because there was the opportunity to continue and because I loved all aspects of the sport" (Jan Wallace '68-'72). Women were motivated to find an established collegiate program. Michigan was appealing because of the AASC connection and the team's previously established successes. This demonstrated to women that they would be on a team with women who were also dedicated to swimming competitively.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Swimming Training: *The Pathway to Establishing a Legitimate Varsity Team***

The Michigan college women swimmers wanted to reproduce the structures and practices of swimming that the women had experienced in AAU club swimming. Women knew that correct training was the only way to transition their college swim club into a legitimate varsity team. As it has been explained, the way women trained and competed in club swimming was considered extremely demanding. The ability to replicate this swimming ethos required conditions in college to be a "near-perfect reproduction, which is completely valid only when the conditions of production of the *habitus* and the conditions of its functioning are identical or homothetic" (Bourdieu 1974, 63). The fact that all the college swimmers swam through the

competitive levels of AAU club swimming created a commonality in experiences and an embodied swimming ethos. The success of reproducing a program at Michigan similar to that of AAU was not limited by women's motivations but by the conditions that existed in college. The structures of AAU club swimming were not present in college for women. There was not always consistent supportive coaching for the women, the team was not always cohesive and pool space was limited. Yet, women continued to come to the University of Michigan to swim or dive and brought with them a very strong sense of how to correctly train. Women had two different training opportunities; sometimes these opportunities enabled women to correctly train, while other times, women were very frustrated with their training environment. Examining the women's frustrations in not being able to train according to their swimming ethos reveals the conditions that were missing in college to replicate correct training. The women were attempting to develop a program without knowing if they would be successful in sustaining a team.

*University of Michigan's Club Swim and Dive Team:*

Morally correct training not only required an individual swimming ethos, but the support from coaches and teammates was necessary to maintain a high level of training. With RoseMary's leadership in the beginning years of the program (1958-1963), it is clear that she was able to create situations that enabled the women to train and compete correctly. After RoseMary left Michigan, women swimmers and divers had to take on the role of creating team motivation.

Under RoseMary's coaching, the Michigan team developed a strong work ethic that started to shape into a legitimate team. RoseMary coached the women at noon at the women's pool (today called the Margaret Bell Pool at the Central Campus Recreational Building) and then

coached AASC at night in the Union pool. The practices were the same and some women swam with the club team instead of the college team. She coached the women's team no differently than the AASC. There was a very strong initial push that organized the team. "There was a correlation between the AAU club experience [and the Michigan team's commitment]. The Ann Arbor Swim Club members that went to Michigan and continued swimming were enriched and challenged by swimmers who came from many places to attend the University of Michigan and swim for RoseMary. It seemed as if the top swimmers were totally dedicated. I definitely was motivated by my teammates" (Thrasher '62-'64). Janice Weber ('62-'66) swam for AASC in high school and then one year in college explained her relationship with RoseMary and how RoseMary created a challenging atmosphere for training. "I was afraid of her, she was a very disciplined coach and would say stuff like, everyone leave your excuses at the door." Pam Anderson ('62-'66) remembers, "RoseMary was really tough. She really knew how to get people to swim fast." With RoseMary consistently pushing the women, and they were able to train hard in college, and dedication to the team developed.

There was a certain level of expectation with everyone having the same work ethic and devotion to come to practice. "We were all quite committed to swimming well and competing well. I don't remember any core team members missing practice unless someone was sick" (Anderson '62-'66). This heightened training practice similarly to how Pam described training in high school. "Just like in high school, the small women's pool at Michigan and the pool at the Y, were also narrow, so again [like in high school] we swam against each other a lot. I don't really remember any time in college when I wasn't being pushed, either by the coach or other women!" Pam described a clear correlation between the way she trained in high school and in college. Teammates helped maintain a swimming ethos by pushing each other in practice.

In the years after RoseMary left (1963), a variety of advisors coached the women. The main motivation of the team then shifted to the women's individual ingrained swimming ethos. The women's individual swimming ethos was the driving force in their commitment to training. All the women coming to practice had the same swimming history and knowledge about what it took to improve. A common respect for each other's work ethic sustained the team. "Everyone came to swim their best, represent Michigan well, and be part of the team such as it was. I know a few of us had the same high work ethic and dedication to come to practice" (Cheney '67-'71). It took great discipline to have the dedication to train without the needed coaching support. Because the women all had the same swimming ethos, a commitment to each other formed. "I enjoyed seeing my friends at practice, but I would have gone regardless because I loved to train" (Stevens '70-'74). This deep desire to train was also described by Barb, "I swam butterfly and freestyle. I remember in a few practices a couple of us were challenging each other on hundreds. I think I challenged myself more than anything else". Cathy Mancino ('67-'71) also discussed how "we pushed ourselves." These women individually had strong swimming ethos and brought that swimming ethos to Michigan. "Yes, we all kept one another going. Despite coaching changes we always came back" (Wallace '68-'72). The training did not match their AAU experiences but their collective presence was making a statement about women training at college. These women all had been training for almost ten years. They all had competed up through the highest levels of AAU swim meets. Right from the beginning, the women swimmers were establishing the high expectations for the team at Michigan. They were instilling the expectations that women who wanted to swim at Michigan had to have a strong swimming ethos. Competing in age group club swimming would become the requirement for women who wanted



to swim in college. This guaranteed that all women swimming in college had developed a swimming ethos.

### *Diving Cohesiveness*

The small close group of divers and the need for a coach were two factors that played into the ability for the divers at Michigan to form a strong unit within the team. With dedicated teammates and consistent coaching, women were able to create the conditions necessary to train and improve. Swimmers can be self coached but divers need a coach present to be constantly give them visual feedback. The head varsity diving coach, Dick Kimball, always assigned the women divers a coach, usually a former diver on the men's team. Being former divers on the varsity team, the women's coaches all had a strong sense about the correct ways to train. Although, the diving coaches changed almost yearly during this period, it seemed that on a daily basis they were reliable. Carol Mackela ('69-'73) recalled, "My sophomore year Alan Gannet was [at the pool for practice] every night and gave us consistent coaching."

Combined with advanced diving techniques, newly available to the women in college, the coaches helped the divers greatly improve, and encouraged them to expand their diving list. Repetition was key to diving and divers must practice their dives over and over until the dive becomes natural. Divers can get more practice outside of the water than in, "you can do twenty-five flips on the trampoline in ten minutes while only doing three dives off the actual board. If repetition is the key to getting a dive down practicing on the trampoline as well as in the pool makes a lot of sense" (Micki King '62-'66). Divers used three methods to practice their dives: trampoline, dry board into a port-a-pit and actual diving into the pool. Spotting rigs were set up in conjunction with these three pieces of equipment to enable divers to practice their flips and

twists in a more controlled environment. Dick Kimball actually invented spotting rigs. To use the rigs, divers put a thick belt around their waist and on each side of the belt cords were attached and then secured to part of the building about eight to ten feet above them. If the diver was on a trampoline she would jump and twist and if it looked like she would have a 'bad-landing' the coach would pull on the rigs before she landed. The rigs allowed the divers to try very risky and progressive dives without the fear of smacking (belly flopping) or getting injured. The divers could push themselves without fearing injury, thus they learned more advanced dives much more rapidly. "We were learning dives so quickly because we were fearless with the belt on. We would show up at nationals and do dives that no one had ever seen women do before" (King '62-'66). The ability for the women to use the rigs and out-of-water equipment benefited them greatly.

It was clear that the women were motivated by the opportunity to learn new dives. "Sometimes after the men would practice, or at clinics, Kimball would let us do the belts and the trampoline" (Bennett '67-'71). "Joe Suriano was also coaching AASC divers and he invited me to come out to Huron High School to dive after the kids and let him spot me in a spotting belt he had mounted over the low board. After a few sessions in the belt, I was doing back 1 1/2s, which I never would have learned otherwise. I wouldn't have been at all competitive without the help he gave me" (Mackela '69-'73). Barb Kaufman ('68-'72) also explained the alluring aspects of diving "I just enjoyed the feeling of being launched in the air by a good take-off and nailing a good dive. I did it for the exhilaration of the dive; I also did it because it was a bit scary, which meant that when I did take the leap of faith and did that new dive, there was no better feeling than that. Some days I woke up in the morning, I couldn't do a particular dive, and when I went to bed at night I could, those memories capture my love of diving." An atmosphere promoting

risk taking was key to improvement. The women also learned a lot from watching elite women divers that practiced with Dick Kimball. “We would watch [Micki King (‘62-‘67) and Lani Loken (‘67-‘71)] and try and learn as much as possible” (Bennett ‘67-‘71). Micki King and Lani Loken were two of the premier divers in the nation. Both were national champion caliber divers and Kimball invited them to train with him at the men’s pool. “I just always liked the fun and satisfaction of seeing someone do a "fancy dive" then trying to learn from watching” (Kaufman ‘68-‘72). With critiquing and helping each other to improve, the divers bonded in and out of practice. The divers were uniquely able to create a diving culture where the conditions allowed them to be pushed by teammates and improve through coaching instructions.

#### *Training with the Boys:*

A few women had the opportunity to train with the men’s swim and dive team. These women all had specific goals, most commonly to compete at the Olympics, and wanted a training environment that they knew had the coaching and training conditions that gave them a chance to perform well. This was a very unique situation that went against rules of the athletic department. The women that were able to train with head varsity swim coach, Gus Stager, and varsity diving coach, Dick Kimball, all had been high performing athletes on AAU club teams. The women knew that they needed to have circumstances where they could train correctly. The women knew that men’s college swimming had the same ethos and training conditions of an AAU club team and they knew that if they wanted to have a chance to reach their goals they had to be training in a certain way. Despite these efforts none of the women that attempted to swim with the men who swam at the next Olympic trials. Dick Kimball coached a few women at the men’s pool, and his divers were successful in competing at national and Olympic levels. Regardless if the

women were successful in achieving their goals, the women training with the men's team demonstrated that the women had the abilities to train at a varsity level.

The women who wanted to train with Stager had specific goals that they knew required a certain level of training. Stager set the rules for the women swimmers and divers training with the men. The women had to be committed and could not date any of the varsity swimmers. Stager wanted to make sure the focus of practice was on swimming and the presence of women would not disrupt the men's training. Pam Anderson ('62-'66) recognized the need for a specific training regime. "After RoseMary left, nobody took her place and I wanted to keep the dream of the Olympics, so I asked Gus Stager if I could swim with the men's team, it was the fall of 1963. I did the same workouts as the men. Gus really cared about me and really helped me with my strokes". Along with Pam, Mary Bennett ('67-'71) also trained with the men in preparation for the 1968 Olympic Trials. Ginny Duenkel ('65-'69), another swimmer that trained with Stager also had Olympic dreams, "My dream at that time was to continue on for four more years and go for the next Olympics. I asked to workout with the men's team and was given permission to do that. I didn't last too long as there were a lot restrictions place on me" (Duenkel personal letter '65-'69). Maggie Stevens ('70-'74) also trained with the men her freshmen year of college. Although the coaching, pool time, and level of training allowed for the correct ways of training, the team aspect of training was not present. All of the women described how the men ignored them, which created an isolating condition. The women had strong desires to achieve certain goals, but without teammates to maintain motivation, finding pleasure in daily training was absent. Without these little pushes it was hard to continue to train.

Dick Kimball, the head diving coach, also coached women at the men's pool. Fostered by strong coaching and receiving respect from the male divers, Micki King ('62-'66) under

Kimball's coaching successfully trained with the men's team. Upon RoseMary's request, Dick started coaching the diving aspect of the university club program. By 1962 he was coaching about six women at the Women's Pool. In 1962, coupled with his frustration of driving across campus and finding parking at noon, he realized the potential of one of his freshmen divers: Micki King. He knew she would benefit from training at the men's pool. After her freshmen year, Kimball asked Stager if he could coach Micki at the men's pool. In addition to having more boards available, the boards at the men's pool were Duraflex, which were higher quality. Kimball had all of his out-of-water equipment, including the rig and belt system perfectly set up at the men's pool. Also the men's pool was exclusively for the men's varsity team enabling Kimball to have full control over when and how long practices were. The men's pool had an environment that was conducive for serious training.

Starting her sophomore year, Micki dove everyday at the men's pool. "I had morning practice every day and then I would go to class and then race back to the pool to train for another few hours at night. It was a busy schedule but I loved it." Micki attributes part of her success to training with the men, especially in her first few years of college "I was learning so many crazy dives so fast. The guys really pushed me. Dick would tell me to do something, something that no women had ever done before. I thought it was impossible, but I was surrounded by all these guys and so of course I could not back down, and so I did it." As the years progressed, Micki continued to train with Kimball and gained acceptance by the men, she was now pushing them. "The new freshmen coming in were a little intimidated by me. If I did a certain dive, then of course the freshmen had to do it." Micki had an incredibly unique opportunity to be one of the first women to compete in diving throughout and after college. This time allowed her to mature and excel in her sport. Micki went on to compete in the 1968 Olympics and win gold in the 1972

Olympics. When interviewing Micki, she made it very clear that she would not have advanced to that level without Kimball and she owes half of her gold to him. His progressive ideas about gender and training made her accomplishments possible. From the beginning of Kimball's career he had been supporting people to dive. "A reporter once asked how it felt to train a woman and I replied, "I don't train women and I don't train men. I train people" (Kimball). Kimball's beliefs enabled a correct way of training to develop for Micki. Her success was a reflection of her training opportunities at Michigan.

Although the situation was positive for Micki, she was making sacrifices to create the optimal training environment. In addition, Kimball and Stager were taking a risk to train her at the Matt Mann Pool. "They really were putting their butts on the line for me." Micki further explained, "about two – three times a year Fritz Crisler (the Athletic Director at the time) would walk through the natatorium and Stager would signal to Kimball, and Kimball would signal to me to just stay low in the water, and the plan worked." Along with the possibility of being caught by Fritz Crisler or any other athletic department administrator, Micki also sacrificed a shower and proper locker room. "Micki used the spectator locker room without benches or showers," Kimball explained. "At the time I was honored and knew how special it was that I was able to train at the [men's] pool, so I did not mind taking sponge showers in the sink" (King '65-'69). Micki endured the locker room situation for many years and Kimball and Stager were never caught. Not only Micki but all the women that trained with the men acted as trailblazers, proving that women could train and should train at the varsity level.

*Struggles to train:*

As discussed, certain conditions were present which allowed the women to start to train in morally correct ways at college. However, many times women were frustrated by the conditions in college and found it challenging to maintain their motivation. Many women were frustrated by the lack of support given to the swim and dive team. Their frustrations show how morally correct training was closely tied to the sport. If women were going to swim they wanted to do it properly. Unfortunately the conditions to enable this environment were not consistently present.

A committed coach was essential in maintaining a high training level. When RoseMary left in 1963, the university appointed or rather scrambled to find various ‘advisors’ to help the team. This struggle reveals how although the women knew the correct ways to train it was hard to maintain swimming ethos without a committed coach. RoseMary left after Pam Anderson’s (‘62-‘66) sophomore year and “I know that Nancy Wagner and I stepped up to coach the women who wanted to swim in our junior and senior years.” These advisors drove the athletes to the meets, but they did little in the realm of sustaining the program or shaping its ‘culture’. Barb Cheney (‘67-‘71) described, “It was hit and miss if they showed up” and Kathy (VanBuskirk) Sonnanstine (‘65-‘69) remembered “we never had an official coach, we had an ‘advisor’ for the club, not sure what her role was, but we did not get that much time to practice.” Tanja Lahti (‘68-‘72) expressed her strong feelings about the situation, “I quit because I felt exasperated that we didn't have a real coach, someone who would know what we needed, what we should do”. The women desperately desired a strong coach to drive them and provide a chance to really train them.

The lack of conditions that enabled women to train at a high level caused some of the women to quit. Ginny Duenkel ('65-'69) tried to swim with the men but the restrictions and the conditions discouraged her. "I guess my 'drive' at that point wasn't strong enough. I had a gold medal and world record and felt that was enough. I retired at that time. As I look back I wish I had stuck it out. But there was little incentive for collegiate women swimmers at that time" (Duenkel personal letter '65-'69). Because Ginny was not able to maintain her high training regime, her speed suffered. Looking at the results from the 1965 women's intercollegiate nationals, Ginny did not win the 200-yard freestyle, her world record event. This defeat was clearly crushing. Ginny's inability to train at the required high level pushed her to retirement. Kathy ('65-'69) similarly described her training frustrations. "I could not get into shape to compete at the level that I wanted with the limited training time allowed. So after the second year, I felt it was not worth the time to swim on the team. I am too competitive to do something only half way". There were strong frustrations around not being able to train correctly. As discussed earlier, the swimming ethos was built on pushing through pain at practice. Pain was perceived as effort. In AAU club swimming if a swimmer did not put in their maximum effort into workout it was ingrained for them to feel bad about not fully pushing themselves. In college, swimmers wanted to train correctly but could not and the perpetuating defeated feeling of not being able to give maximum effort drove some to quit.

Some women did not even try to train in college knowing they would not be able to train at a certain level. Janice ('62-'66) swam for AASC in high school and in a few meets her first year at Michigan. She described the program that would have motivated her to swim. "I would say had there been a program in place with a full time coach, a Big Ten and NCAA meet, I would have looked at the opportunity differently. It was because of the lack of opportunity and



coaching that I stopped swimming. I actually did not have any motivation to swim in college. Our core team was no longer together; they had all retired from swimming. I decided to quit after my freshman year”. In addition, Alyce (‘65-‘69) described how a college program would have given her a second chance at the Olympics. “If I would have been able to really train in college I could have gone for the 1968 Olympics. I would have been the right age, just finishing my junior year of college. But the conditions were not right to continue”. The frustrations of the women were mostly rooted in the structure and practices that form swimming ethos. They were not able to train in correct ways, thus they were frustrated and were not motivated to swim. The swimming ethos and the sport of swimming were intrinsically linked together in how one participates in the sport. What makes the sport important for the women, as well as distinct are the certain rigorous ways to practice. For these women it was not worth swimming unless they were able to train correctly.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Competition: *Women Racing the Race***

Swim meets where individuals and teams competed against each other was essential in women’s college swimming development. Competition is the fundamental and underlying force that shapes training. Aspects of training are designed to prepare the body to give maximum speed and effort when desired. Training and competition work in tandem with each other and the dedication to train was fueled by competition and desire to perform well was dictated by the effort exerted in practice. For a women’s varsity program to exist in college, a competitive meet system had to be in place similar to that of AAU club swimming, meaning that there were dual meets during the season, culminating in a national championship event. For the Michigan

women swimmers, the structure of this meet system was established in 1962, and comparing it with the first intercollegiate nationals being held at Michigan State University. Unlike the very inconsistent training conditions between 1958-1973, there was a clear line of progression in the level of competition from 1962-1973. The heightening in competition can mostly be attributed to the increased number of teams competing at college nationals. Doing an analysis of the women's first intercollegiate national championship in 1962 with the intercollegiate national championships in 1971 reveals how the increase in competition evolved to create a racing environment comparable to that of the AAU nationals. Although the analysis is focused on Michigan, it reflects the growth that women experienced in the opportunity to compete in college across the U.S.

### *1962 Women's First Intercollegiate National Championships*

The 1962 intercollegiate nationals can be viewed as the first step to solidifying a women's collegiate national championship structure. In retrospect this meet was not about competing but participating. On December 2, 1962 the University of Michigan women's swim and dive team pulled into the parking lot of the newly constructed Michigan State University Pool. All the Michigan women were matching in their red skirts, and grey sweaters.<sup>6</sup> They were competing in the first ever women's intercollegiate national championships. Anne Chadwick, the swim coach at Michigan State University and Buck Dawson, organized the meet. Although it was a national championship meet, only ten schools from Michigan, Illinois, and Ohio attended.<sup>7</sup> Also, compared to AAU national championships, the longer events such as the 400

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<sup>6</sup> Yes, the uniform prescribed by RoseMary were Ohio State colors. This displayed the disconnection the women felt from Michigan and a team-pride-school relationship was not present.

<sup>7</sup> The teams that attended, and the place they finished were: University of Michigan, Michigan State, Northern Illinois, Bowling Green, Ohio State, Central Michigan, Kent State, Detroit, and Eastern Michigan.

IM<sup>8</sup>, and the 200 butterfly were omitted from the meet schedule; the meet was completed in one day and the size of the meet was noticeably small. The events swum were the 50 yard and 100 yard distances in each of the four strokes as well as the 200IM. Except for the 50-yard freestyle, 50-yard races were not even events raced at AAU meets. At the Olympics the 50-yard freestyle and the 200 IM were not raced. In addition to racing short, less daunting events Sue Thrasher ('62-'64) thought omitting the more challenging events was ridiculous “we thought it was silly that university administrators thought that women could not swim the same distances that the men did.” Even though in AAU swimming, women had been racing the same events as men for years, the women in college were being held back from competing in the toughest events.

At the first nationals, Michigan came out ahead to win the meet. After the meet, RoseMary gathered the girls around and told the team, “These medals [that the women won] may not mean much to you now” she said, “but in future years I think they will. This was the first meet in which all women’s college swimming teams in the country had a chance to participate. In the years ahead when this meet is truly a national championship you will prize these medals from the first meet” (Bullard 1962). All the women knew the meet did not measure up to AAU nationals but they realized that they were competing for a different reason. They were competing to make a change, and start something new for women at Michigan and nationwide.

### *1971 Women’s Intercollegiate Nationals at Arizona State University*

The increase in competition between the first intercollegiate nationals in 1962 and the nationals hosted at Arizona State University (ASU) in 1971 was exhibited in three key areas. The number of teams who participated increased, who and how the meet was organized changed, and

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<sup>8</sup> The 400 IM, or Individual Medley is an event where swimmers race all four strokes consecutively. The order of the IM is: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and finally freestyle. For the 400 IM swimmers swim a 100 of each stroke and for the 200 IM swimmers swim a 50 of each stroke.

in the end, the seriousness of competition between the colleges, all indicate that women's intercollegiate swimming was beginning to rival the intensity of AAU nationals.

Between 1962-1971 teams attending nationals increased from ten to over fifty. In addition to a greater number of teams attending the meet, the distance that teams traveled to the meet increased. The 1971 nationals at ASU marked the first time nationals were hosted in a non-Midwest state. Between 1962-1971 Michigan took a strong leadership role in the progression of nationals not only by continually participating but also by winning the first five nationals from 1962-1966. Michigan hosted the event in 1964. In this way, Michigan was a significant player and advocate for the movement.

Women's swim programs at colleges grouped together to regularly host the meet until the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) took control, and sponsored nationals starting in 1970. The association was focused on giving the women a proper opportunity to compete, and was the governing organization of women's sports until the NCAA took control in a brutal lawsuit in 1978. The AIAW created an environment, which was more organized with distinct rules of competition. The AIAW worked to establish standard practices of nationals especially as more women were attending the meet. The increased number of teams attending and the official organization running the meet contributed to women's intercollegiate national championships being accepted as a respected swim and dive meet.

The 1971 national championships marked when the Michigan women realized that the intercollegiate meets were very competitive and that women in college were ready to seriously race. The Michigan team stocked up on dry cereal crammed themselves into a van and drove straight to Arizona for nationals, financially unable to stay in a hotel overnight. At the meet, all the swimmers were hosted in dorms, which gave the collegiate women time to mingle. As the

women began to meet recognized Olympians in the dorms, they quickly realized that there competition had grown much more serious. Once at the meet, Barb ('67-'71) recalled being shocked by not only how organized the ASU team was but also how ready they were to race. "They were well organized with an actual adult woman who was their coach. They all had matching burgundy warm-ups and these girls were fired up and very competitive." Witnessing a team prepared to compete like a varsity team was an eye opener for Barb and the rest of the Michigan team. Even though the Michigan women did not have matching warm-ups (all they had were blue suits, and block M's that they sewn on) Jan Wallace ('68-'72) remembers the excitement of the Michigan team to organize themselves. "Since we swimmers were so gung-ho and we arranged all our meets, transportation, and such, we almost went about our season like we were a full-fledged team. We actually joked about being so organized without funding" but as gung-ho as Michigan was, ASU made a strong statement about the competitive level at which they planned to function. ASU proved their abilities by winning the meet. Competition pushed teams to act and perform like a varsity team, which was essential if the women wanted to be officially recognized at their respective institutions.

The change in the way the women competed at intercollegiate nationals achieved a standard. Jan ('68-'72) described the intensity of their 400 yard freestyle relay at nationals "The best relay we ever swum was at [ASU] Nationals. We should have won but we got second. I had the fastest split on the relay, and I did not go last, but I should have. We really wanted gold for the last year!" While listening to Jan describe this relay, it was clear that she was disappointed because she knew how hard everyone had trained and that, as a team they were prepared to 'race the race'. However in the end, the Michigan women just could not catch the team in front of them. The women finished the meet with a very respectable third place. It was

clear that other teams were aiming to gun down Michigan and nationally, Michigan was the team to beat.

It was imperative to the development of the program not only at Michigan but also across the nation that women were able to train and compete at more advanced levels. The increase in competition created a situation where the women became more eager to seriously train and perform well at nationals. With race times at intercollegiate nationals improving, the respect for the meet and for the women as athletes increased. As opposed to nationals in 1962, when the women were just making a statement, almost ten years later, women were not just participating for ideological reasons but rather to really race and be challenged to their potential.

## **Conclusion**

In the fall of 1973 the University of Michigan, with pressure from the passing of Title IX and women collegiate athletes, established six varsity teams for women: synchronized swimming, field hockey, basketball, track and field, tennis, and swimming and diving. With varsity status the swim and dive team went through some significant and beneficial changes. Johanna High, who had been the advisor to the team the previous three years, was given the official title of head coach and received a humble salary for her work. Although Dick Kimball was not paid the first few years, he voluntarily took on the job as head diving coach. The team received funding for equipment, suits, and travel expenses, and as a varsity team, the women gained access to the men's pool for swim practice. The women trained there every afternoon from five to seven following the men's practice.

With the establishment of varsity programs for women, additional fights for parity between the men and women's athletic programs began. Although Title IX passed in 1972, it

held no jurisdiction until 1976, when laws were passed to enforce athletic programs to comply with the true spirit of Title IX. Many women over the decades have pushed for women to be equally represented in financial support as well as opportunities (or ratio of men to women athletes) at the college level. Title IX and women's athletics is still a charged topic today, and new issues surrounding what is equality between men and women are discussed, especially in regards to the representation of collegiate sports in the media.

Even though the women swimmer and divers still faced struggles in the early 1970s, for the first time, the women truly had the conditions that enabled them to train and race in a correct way. Instead of the women worrying about the logistics of travel to meets such as Big Ten championships or nationals, they could focus solely on preparing to train and perform well at those meets. There was a concrete shift in team goals from existence to performance. The women won their first Big Ten Championship title as a varsity team in 1976. This first championship put into place the ingrained team goal for every year after: win for Michigan, which is still true today. With nineteen Big Ten championship titles, more than any other Big Ten school, Michigan has certainly succeeded in its goal.

In this paper I have argued how these pre-varsity team women were driven to train and compete and set the standard for what was expected for college swimmers. College swimming could have developed to cater to any swimming and diving level but these women wanted to train and compete at the same rigorous level as the men's team and the way they had in AAU club swimming. These women set the high standard that distinguishes college swimming today. The women on the varsity team in the early 1970s genuinely respected and upheld the expectations of what the women before them had attempted to instill. Robin Orr was part of the first varsity class and swam at Michigan between 1973-1977. She was not only aware of what

the women before her did, but she conveyed how the team strongly wanted to honor these pre- varsity women. “We wanted to show that we were smarter and better [then the men], that we were going to take over. We believed this and it was really important because we knew that the women before us had worked their butts off to get us to where we were and we wanted to honor that.”

Swimming in college enabled women to continue their swimming careers for four more years and challenge previously held beliefs about women’s peak performances being when they were 16-17 years old. With women competing in college at a respected level in the 1970s, there was a shift in ways younger girls approached swimming and the sport in general. The extension of four more years expanded the opportunity to compete and achieve goals at the national, collegiate national and Olympic level. Club swimmers now knew that they had the time to develop themselves as athletes not just to reach the national level, but also to continue to improve within that level. These social changes reshaped and redefined the way women trained at the end of their career. Today, along with attending nationals, age group swimmers can now work towards swimming in college.

... I am still gliding along the water letting my heart rate drop, enjoying the way the water passes by my body and slowly cools off my red tingling skin. I feel as Tanja Lahti described it “on top of the world”. Off in my own thoughts I let my body go on autopilot. I am in my own lane looking down at the white tiles that are cleaned daily. I have my own locker and over the years I have received more University of Michigan swimming and diving apparel than I have room for in my dresser. The team goes to Puerto Rico for training every year, and before Big Ten Championships we are treated to a juicy steak dinner. Today, the women’s swim and dive team truly has the luxury of solely focusing on training and racing to our full potential.



Many times while researching this project, I compared my college swimming experiences to the women I interviewed. I have read and organized their interviews so many times trying to make sense of the final years of their swimming careers. As I slide through the water, I wonder if in the 1960s, I would have had the drive, the passion to keep swimming in college. Would my love for the sport offset the struggles to train and compete that these women endured? Would I have been able to swim all four years, or would my frustrations in training opportunities push me to quit? Totally consumed with my thoughts I turn my head for a quick breath and hear an infectious laugh a few lanes over, immediately I jerk my head up. Smiling, I weave my body through the lane lines to a few teammates huddled by the wall and catch the end of a story about a crazy swim meet travel experience from the previous year. Already knowing the end of the story I uncontrollably started to crack-up. As I slowly sink under water, laughing too hard to stay afloat, my question is answered: I absolutely would have swum for the University of Michigan.

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## **Appendix A**

### List of People Interviewed

#### *Women Swimmers and Divers*

Marica Smoke 1959-1962  
Mary Kazlusky 1959-1963  
Mrs. Carolyn C. DeLuca 1961-1965  
Sara Watt Smith, M.D. 1961-1965  
Suzy Thrasher (Only went to Michigan for 2 years) 1962-1964  
Ms. Janice M. Weber 1962-1966  
Micki J. King 1962-1966  
Pamela Swart Anderson 1992-1966  
Alyce Kay Sigler 1965-1969  
Kathy Sonnanstine 1965-1969  
Cathy Mancino 1967-1971  
Barbara Patterson Cheney 1967-1971  
Mary F. Bennett 1967-1971  
Tanja Elena Lahti 1968-1972  
Jan Pfleegor Wallace 1968-1972  
Barbara L. Kauffman 1968-1972  
Carol J. Mackela 1969-1973  
Maggie Stevens 1970-1974  
Dr. Robin Orr 1973-1977

#### *Coaches*

Dick Kimball  
Gus Stager

#### *Key Informants*

Sheryl Szady

## **Appendix B**

Questions I asked Michigan women swimmers and divers:

### **Coming to Michigan and background:**

1. Where did you grow up? What type of swimming competition did you compete in? AAU, YMCA?
2. Why did you come to Michigan?

### **Personal Data:**

- Years you swam at Michigan?
- Events Compete in? Did they change at all?
- Major?

### **Questions about the Pool and the Program?**

1. What was the Ann Arbor Swim Club and Michigan Women's Swimming connection? How was it organized?
2. What was it like swimming at the Margaret Bell pool?  
Was it dark?  
How deep was it?  
What did it smell like?  
What did the water taste like?  
What was the temperature?  
What color was the water?  
Were there locker rooms?
3. Did you ever swim in the Union?

### **Swimming**

1. How many practices a week did you have? When were they and how long did you swim for?
2. What did your suits look like, goggles, warm-ups?
3. Did you have interval training?

### **Meets:**

- Did you have intercollegiate competitions? If so with who? How did you get to the meets?
- What do you remember about competing?
- Nervous? Excited?



**Coaches:**

1. What do you remember most about Mary Rose Dawson?
2. Who was the coach after Mary Rose Dawson?

**Campus Life:**

1. What dorm did you live in?
2. Where did you live after freshman year?
3. Who did you live with?
4. What bars/parties on campus did you go to on Saturday nights?
5. Any good swim team stories?
6. Who were your friends on the team?

**Ideas about the Body and Sport?**

1. Did you ever go to class with your hair wet?
2. Did you tell people that you were a swimmer? Did you ever get negative reactions?
3. Was your identity based on being a swimmer or a student that swam?
4. Did you ever feel self-conscious in a bathing suit?
5. Today, as swimmers we complain that our shoulders are too wide and our thighs too big - did you remember having similar feeling about your body?
6. Did you ever feel less feminine because you swam?

**Questions I added to my interview questions. I added these questions about half way through my interviewing.**

I have been reading about how in the late 1920s there was huge push for college educators in women's physical education departments to restrict women from competing. Through my research I learned that Michigan was also following this national trend. It seems that during the 1950s there was a push from women to have intercollegiate competitions. I am trying to understand the ways that women that were going to college in the late 1950s-1970s first competed and then how that relates to your motivation to continue to swim/compete in college.

I am also trying to explore why colleges were so against women's intercollegiate athletics. Although intercollegiate athletics for women began to be allowed in the 1960s, were colleges still trying to push agendas on women: such as making them the 'perfect educated wife'. Did the administrators believe that doing athletics deterred you from becoming the 'perfect wife'?

I also want to have a better understanding about your relationship with swimming. I know you already talked about it, but besides training to compete what other aspects of swimming did you find important?

What is your first memory of competing in swimming? and was that experience related to what 'hooked' you into swimming?

Do you ever remember thinking that competition was something that women should not take part in?

Why did (do) you love swimming? Was it the team, how it made you feel, practice, racing? Do you have a memory that can capture why you love swimming?

What motivated you to swim in college? Did you still have swimming goals that you wanted to achieve?