

## INTRODUCTION

### *The Connections.*

- *What is connection?*
- *When 2 motions, thought to be infinite and mutually exclusive, meet in a moment.*
- *Of Time?*
- *Yes.*
- *Time does not exist.*
- *There is no time.*
- *Time is a straight plantation.*

*The Lost Writings of Jim Morrison*

*DOORS (Poems 1966-1971)*

## MASTERS SWIMMING AND HOW TO SURVIVE

IT



# TIME STARTS NOW .....

by  
Tony Pearce

## Autumn Leaves

Names. There are no names.  
No outside influences as such.  
Just influences that create a mood of a time.  
An isolated old run-down open-air swimming pool.  
Here, somehow, time stands still.  
Autumn has a certain beauty.  
The sun seems to shine even brighter.  
Leaves grace the pool surface.  
Congregating around the rusty old pool steps.  
Amidst the condensation from the pool water.  
Clogging the lanes.  
Weary old backstroke flags.  
Derelict wooden poolside lockers.  
Their fading paint.  
The sound of silence.  
A locker door opens.  
A lone swimmer appears.  
Athletic appearance.  
Albeit a little unsteady.  
Wearing a somewhat worn pair of trunks.  
Double breasted endurance training trunks.  
He walks out on to the poolside.  
Lifeguards give an acknowledging nod.  
He walks to a lane.  
Yes. The same lane.  
Seemingly. Everyday.  
Faithfully clutching his bag of training equipment.  
Kick board, pull buoy and fins.  
And a huge pair of black hand paddles.  
He meticulously places the bag at the end of the lane.  
So as to be readily accessible.

He eases his plain black swimming cap on.  
Adjusts his tinted racing goggles accordingly.  
He then enters the water.  
He momentarily looks up at the pool.  
Then, a long push and glide.  
From the fingertips to the toes  
Slowly. Smoothly.  
He commences swimming front crawl.  
Yes. His swimming practice has begun.  
The silhouette of his stroke on the water.  
The way he swims.  
Calculated.  
One practice follows another.  
Like chapters in a book.  
In a way, one cannot help but feel sorry for him.  
Because it would be really sad if he wanted something else.  
But it's a way of life that appeals to a certain sort of person.  
Particularly a certain sort of masters' swimmer.  
You, one of the readers perhaps?

That Summer of 1962.

London, 1962. That winter was one of the coldest winters on record.

Starkly unforgiving.  
Undoubtedly beautiful.  
British society's ruling class.  
Continues to rule.  
Aristocratic arrogance.  
Bohemian touches.  
The beatnik generation.  
The way opens.  
The hippie cultural revolution.  
Yes. The swinging 1960's.  
That summer of 1962.  
My first Swimming Nationals.  
My first bed and breakfast.

The historic Derby Baths at Blackpool.  
The salt water swimming pool.  
"It's got to be my best time. Hasn't it?"  
The swimmers chant at each other.  
The North against the South.  
"Oooo!!! The Blackpool Tower"  
"What lovely Fish and chips!"  
By the seaside. By the sea  
An ice cream.  
"Do you remember when?"  
"Didn't we have a great time?"  
"Going next year?"  
The landscape of British Swimming was changing.  
Bobby MacGregor wins his first national title.  
The 100 Free.  
The era of Ian Black was over.  
That old black magic had lost its spell.  
But what of the other side of the pond?  
The 1962 U.S Nationals revealed another winner of his first national championships.  
Don Schollander. Yes. But this time it was the 200 Free.

*Later, at the 1964 Olympic Games at Tokyo Schollander became the first multi-Olympic gold medal winner. He won the 100 Free, the 400 Free, 4 100 Free Relay, 4 200 Free Relay and the Free leg in the 4 x 100 Medley Relay. In the 100 Free he closely edged out MacGregor to a silver medal. Schollander, a product of the world-famous Santa Clara Swim club in California founded by the legendary U.S Coach George Haines.*

*SEARCH on your own YouTube connection:  
U.S Swimmer Don Schollander  
:200m Freestyle 1962 Men's AAU Swimming Championships*

**This final saw another era end. Murray Rose. The transplanted Australian. 1956 and 1960 Olympic Champion. In my opinion it should have been in 1964 as well, but that's another story. It also**

saw another swimmer who I believe to this day was never given true recognition. Roy Saari (pronounced "Sorry"). The first swimmer to break 17 minutes for the 1500 Free. Roy Saari hailed from a little town of El Segundo on the west coast of California close to Santa Monica. Here, Roy's father was his coach until Roy went to USC College where he was coached by yet another legendary U.S coach Peter Daland.

An interesting point to note is that Olympic competition at that time only catered for the 100 Free, then the 400 Free and the 1500 Free. There was no individual 200 Free except being included as part of the 4 x 200 Free - 800 Free Relay. Interestingly there was no 200 IM either. Only 400 IM.

I probably related to Saari as a swimmer for he was a middle distance free, distance free and IM swimmer, not to mention a water polo player as well because I carried on into masters swimming including water polo.

Saari also could have played for the U.S water polo team at those Olympics but the single sports participation ruling prevented this.

Having a natural scissors ("trudgeon") kick in his front crawl probably related to his water polo also.

Note that there was no Olympic 200 Free event until the following 1968 Olympics at Mexico where Schollander gained a silver to another Australian, Mike Wenden, who was a pure sprinter.

Schollander and Saari were great rivals and friends. They both were part of the winning U.S 4 x 200 Free Relay Team at the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games. It was unfortunate that illness, a cold, prevented Saari's expected individual performance.

And myself? I got an England Trial but unfortunately, I fell foul of the then dreaded glandular fever(mono) and as a result nearly dropped out of swimming altogether, not to mention final exams and starting work (an apprenticeship).

The result was that I got lost in the onslaught of the Age Group Swimming for Children (Over 16, certainly Over 18) and went out of fashion so to speak.

After the 1964 Tokyo Olympics Saari did not swim competitively again. Saari died in 2006 of congestive heart failure. He was only 63. As mentioned beforehand, Schollander carried on swimming mainly through college until the 1968 Mexico Olympics.

Neither Schollander or Saari ever swam competitively again in their mature years. Not even masters. Besides, masters did not even exist then.

And Schollander now? By all accounts he just swims occasionally at his local masters swim club but does not compete. I carried on through to not only play water polo at national league level but also swim masters at international level

### The Chill of Winter

A Masters Swim Meet is like entering a room where, even as time has passed, somehow time has also stood still. Here, either other swimmers either pretend that you know who they are or you pretend that you know who they are.

"Hello Tony. Remember me?"

"Of course, I do!"

"You haven't changed a bit. Exactly the same!"

"Nor have you." I reply.

I think to myself, "Who the hell is this?"

Almost like the narrative of a film using flashbacks and flash forwards. But what would be gained by knowing what really happened? By really knowing these people? Friendships are like car tyres. They wear out as time goes by. Then it hits you. All your friends are either dead or not moving. Time marches on.

But in my opinion, masters swimming is one of the most proximate examples of existentialism in sport.

Just one aspect. How did we all find each other? How did we all seem to be in the perfect masters swimming situation for Us?

Yes. Having a certain inquisitiveness. Mixing it up with different philosophies of being in masters swimming worldwide. Travel

supposedly broadens the mind. For me "Go West young man man" did not stop in south west London. So, we all travelled not only in

Europe, but also across the pond to the U.S to compete with the best of the best.

As a result, other coaches and swimmers venturing into masters grouped together accordingly.

A figuration seeking the ambience of a certain period. In the end, though, all this wandering about made me into a separate entity. Hence, I am my own brand. A man should be what he can do. Tony Pearce. Masters Swimming Coach and Competitor High Performance.

But what does the word Performance really mean? That word keeps cropping up. Very fashionable it seems. So, I added it in. Then I thought about it. To be the best that you can be. Fitness, fun and friendship. Or just anything that turns you on. Right! High Performance. Train hard. Fight easy. Not specific enough to be a person. More like a vibe.

### Follow the sun

So, still a story without an ending?

But what about now?

This whole edit has been about throwing time away: cutting forwards and backwards.

But isolation is not a practical ideal.

So, it's back to the old open-air pool.

I pause before I swim and start my first lap.

I feel the warmth of the sun shining down on my back.

Yes, I know who I am.

And I am alive.

And to my knowledge. Well.

So, how do you really find your way from the dark?

I start my first lap.

Yes, that 200 distance is the key.

I'm training for the next age group up.

Spring has come.

Yes. Follow the sun.

It will take you right home.

What will happen to me in time?  
A whistle blows.  
I step up to the starting block.  
A little unsteady perhaps.  
I look up at the long black lane line at the bottom of the pool.  
The 200 Free.  
An official's voice dictates over the microphone.  
"Take Your Marks!"  
Then, with all my toes firmly over the starting block.  
I grab the end of the starting block as tight as I can.  
And await the starting signal.  
Time starts now .....

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