

swimming



Photo by Mark Stewart

Steve Hamilton is the captain of Oregon's men's swimming team, not only in his capacity as an all-around swimmer, but as a team leader as well.

Hamilton key cog in Oregon program

By MARK STEWART
Of the Emerald

Senior Steve Hamilton is captain of the men's swim team, holder of three school records and co-holder of another. He was also Northwest Champion in four events last year. He's been a continual bright spot on the financially down-and-out swim program the past few years.

"He's an all-around swimmer," said his coach, Dick Schleicher. "He excels in the backstroke and individual medley. His other capabilities are a good freestyle and butterfly, but he can only swim in so many events."

Hamilton began swimming competitively in grade school, and participated in other sports.

"I began when I was young. I was 8 when I swam for the Y (YMCA) in Seattle," said Steve. "I also played baseball and basketball in elementary and junior high. So it wasn't the only thing I was doing. It (swimming) was the thing I was comparatively better at than anyone else."

He went to high school in Sunnyvale, California, and was recruited by a few schools. Out of high school, Steve said he wrote letters asking for assistance. He got replies from UCLA, Washington, Arizona, Oklahoma, Texas and Oregon. Academics was high on his list of priorities.

"Oregon was second or third on my list," said Steve, "with Washington first. But I got no feedback from them. That moved Oregon up a notch. The California schools (UCLA, USC) were in the middle of cities. Academically,

Oregon is really sound. I thought I could spend 4 years here easily. I didn't play the swimming up too much. It made little difference. I figured wherever I went, I would fit in."

Hamilton had a scholarship when he first came to Oregon, but then the bottom fell out financially for the swimming program. The swim team now sells programs at football games and does other jobs to raise enough funds to keep the program alive.

Steve doesn't seem to mind selling programs.

"It's almost a tradition," said Steve. "It's been going on for four years now, and isn't a real hassle. We have fun at it."

Selling programs seems to have paid off though. The team just got back from a two-week training session in Hawaii. But it wasn't all fun-in-the-sun, lay-on-the-beach, let's-have-a-party trip. The team trained twice a day, sometimes starting at 5 a.m. Steve said the team did have its fun, though.

"Most of the time after practice we went body surfing and tired ourselves out," Steve said.

One of the positive aspects of swimming for Steve has been the travel.

"Swimming has enabled me to see a lot of places," said Steve. "There are not many areas I haven't been. I've been able to see first hand what places are like.

I've come to the conclusion that I want to live on the west coast."

Probably the most negative points about being a swimmer, said Steve, are the hard work, and hours he keeps.

Up at 5:45 a.m., Steve hits the pool at six, swimming until about eight. Then in the afternoon, there's an hour and a half of swimming, followed by weight training, followed finally by calisthenics.

"I really get tired sometimes," Steve said. "It gets hard to get up at quarter 'til six and hard to stay up after nine to study. It takes a lot of time out from school and being rowdy."

It's not likely that Steve will continue swimming after graduation. "Swimming is not something you can live on. There's no professional (swimming) or career in it. The Olympics have been a big drive. It's something in reach but would take a lot of time. I would have to live that goal. I don't see myself swimming after this year."

Steve said that to be a successful swimmer one must have desire and ability to do well.

"You must have the desire to beat the other guy — you have to want to finish ahead of him," said Steve. "As far as techniques go you have to have an ability to start with. Most of the guys on the team do. They are the guys who stick around."

"Steve does the job," said Schleicher. "He's not an egotist. He doesn't want any fanfare. He's a good individual."

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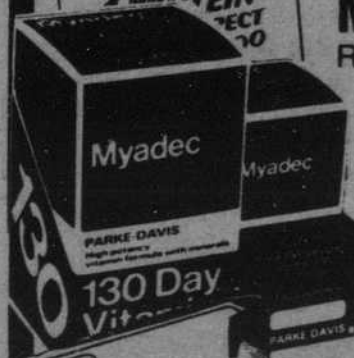
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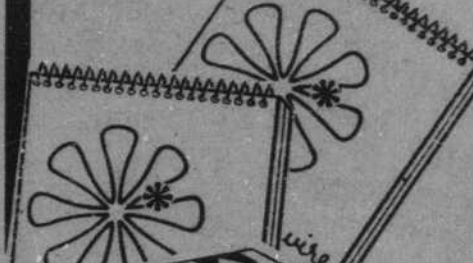
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