

# Sports

## Defunct Oregon swim team keeps its head above water

By Dennis Fernandes

Of the Emerald

The University of Oregon men's and women's intercollegiate swim team was sunk last spring due to Athletic Department budget cuts, but a team representing the Ducks is still swimming.

Most of the faces from Oregon's intercollegiate team have packed their goggles and gone elsewhere. What is left here are a lot of students who want to take up swimming with an added competitive flavor.

It is somewhat similar to a club sport in that it's not sanctioned by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), nor does it receive any monies from the school. What is unique about the program is its new governor, the Physical Education Department, which decided to take the program under its wing and offer it as a one-credit class entitled "Swim Performance."

The team is taught and coached by Dr. Don Van Rossen, a faculty member who was the Oregon men's swim coach from 1959-78. He stresses that his coaching duties are volunteer and only entails the time he spends traveling with squad. Inside the confines of the University's Leighton Pool, Van Rossen stresses he is just "teaching strokes."

The only tryouts for this team are the registration lines at McArthur Court. Van Rossen, dubbed "Vanner" by his student swimmers, reported that enrollment has increased to 78 from fall term's number of 48.

And, just like the classroom, attendance becomes the determinant factor—not talent or athletic ability—when it comes to actually designating roster spots. In order to swim in a meet, a student must attend at least six training sessions per week.

"We've done everything on training, not how fast you are. We know if the person is going to be regular in attendance, they're gonna be in better shape than everyone else and perform better," Van Rossen said.

The idea for this format came from interested members of the swimming community within the University. Van Rossen volunteered his services as a coach and the Physical Education Department incorporated "Swim Performance" into its curriculum.

"We were concerned about how we could find something to

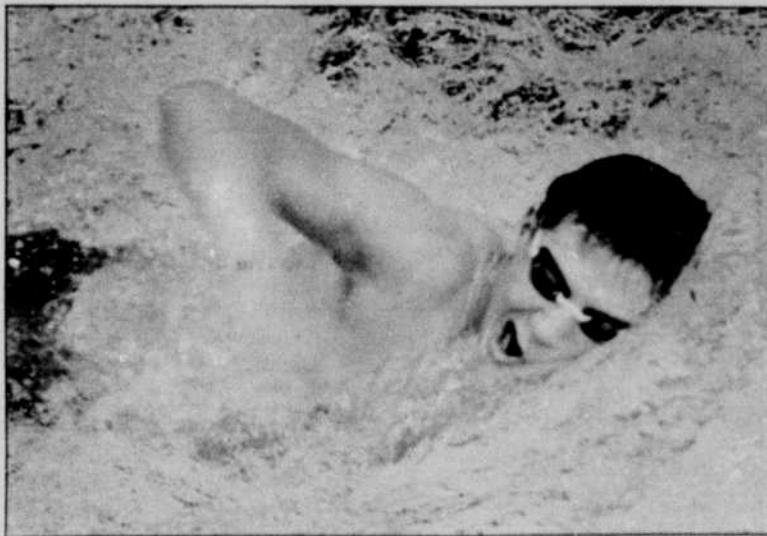


Photo by Michael Wilhelm

Mike Miksis trains for the new Oregon swim team, which will host Oregon State University at Leighton Pool Jan. 16.

continue the program. My ambition is, before I retire, to nail this thing down as a student model, come up with something that says 'look, here's a new model that worked,'" Van Rossen said.

And the new Oregon swim team appears to be working. They have competed at meets in the Portland area and will host the Oregon State University squad on Jan. 16. Among other important meets on tap include the traditional Dolphin Championships at Leighton Pool Jan. 30-Feb. 1 and the Pac-West Championships in Seattle Feb. 20-22.

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