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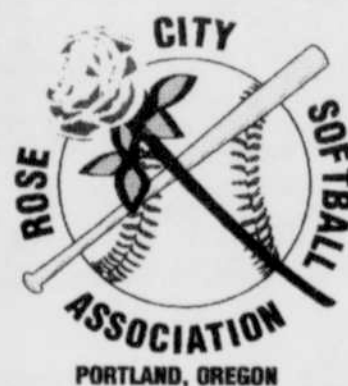


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POOLING TALENT

Team Portland swimmers whet their competitive appetites in anticipation of Gay Games V in 1998

by Inga Sorensen

To do one's best is the ultimate goal of human achievement—so said the late Dr. Tom Waddell, founder of the Gay Games, a sporting extravaganza that spotlights the endeavors of gay and lesbian athletes.

It is also a philosophy embraced by Team Portland Aquatic Club, a group of swimmers who meet regularly to "promote team spirit, a healthy lifestyle and camaraderie through individual and

"Some teams have the money to rent pool space and hire a coach and all that," he explains. "We don't have that rigid type of structure. While we're a team, many of us train independently or with other clubs and then come together during competitions."

Last year, however, the team joined the four-times-per-week coached workouts of Simone La Pay and the Portland Parks Masters Swim Club.

The union, says Kalil, has provided TPAC with a "greater number of directed and inspirational training sessions throughout the week." La Pay is also a team co-captain.

TPAC is a member of the Montreal-based International Gay and Lesbian Aquatic organization, which has nearly 40 member clubs worldwide.

This year more than 1,000 participants are expected to take part in the IGLA Championships slated for mid-October in San Diego. For Kalil and many other swimmers, it is part of the buildup toward Amsterdam.

"I think Amsterdam will be a very memorable moment for those who participate," he says, adding that the team's organizing committee meets

Sports

group swimming activities."

"We want it to be inclusive and enjoyable for people, and that's what we try and make it," explains team co-captain Adrian Kalil. "We view ourselves as ambassadors to the sport."

Not that there isn't the fierce desire to compete.

"Well yes, we do that too, but in a friendly way," laughs the busy Kalil, 44, who has spent the



Team Portland Aquatic Club in New York, 1994

past 30 years swimming in pools and open waters in various competitions in addition to competing in six Ironman triathlons.

"I try to pace myself," he says.

Kalil is joined by an estimated 40 TPAC members—a near 50-50 split between men and women—who enjoy swimming and the companionship a team framework may provide.

"It's the difference between swimming alone or having someone swim in the lane next to you," he says. "When you have someone next to you, I think you tend to try harder.... Everyone's goals may be a little different, but we all like the sense of togetherness."

Established in 1990, the team began with six members. Kalil says that number has jumped nearly seven-fold due in part to the enthusiasm generated by various members' participation in past Gay Games, which were held in San Francisco in 1982 and 1986, Vancouver, B.C., in 1990, and New York City in 1994.

During the 1990 Gay Games, 15 TPAC members journeyed to Canada to compete, and the team placed sixth in the small-team competition.

In 1993, Kalil signed on as the team's swim coach and a year later led a 12-member TPAC contingent to the Gay Games in the Big Apple, where it grabbed another sixth-place finish, securing six gold, five silver and three bronze medals.

He says preparations are underway for Gay Games V, set for August 1998 in Amsterdam.

monthly to discuss plans, particularly as they relate to preparations for Gay Games V.

"Our needs are modest but we do have a few," says Kalil.

TPAC is seeking funding to help defray costs for team uniforms and supplies as well as travel expenses for team members.

The team is also actively searching for new members interested in swimming and water polo.

"TPAC has a future vision for all swimmers and active participation of its members in local, regional, national and international events," says Kalil.

While he says all swimmers are welcome, a U.S. Masters Swimming membership is required. (According to Kalil, the oldest Masters swimmer is a 102-year-old Oregonian.)

"This is a great way to become involved in a healthy activity, maybe drop a bad habit or two, or just have fun," he says.

To learn more about Team Portland Aquatic Club, write to: PO Box 40741, Portland, OR 97240-0741.

TPAC is a not-for-profit organization presently under the auspices of the Lesbian Community Project. Tax-deductible donations should be addressed to CEP (Community Education Project) and sent to the above address.

To join the team, call 228-1596 or 543-6499.