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Eight and Under Swimmers participate in special event

By Lucy Amaral



Coaches Jesus Salcedo (OCC), Chris Horner (Meadow) and Kevin Honey (Sleepy Hollow)
Photo Kaye Jacuzzi

More than 650 swimmers, all ages eight and under, from eight Lamorinda swim clubs converged on Meadow Swim and Tennis Club in Orinda, July 19 for the 39th annual Meadow Mini Meet.

Designed specifically for the smallest swim set, this was truly a battle of the ages, where each child swam against someone their own age rather than being grouped into a "six and under" or "seven/eight" category. "The purpose of this event is to highlight the younger swimmers," said Kaye Jacuzzi, who along with Joy Braitberg, organized this year's event. "It evens the playing field, age-wise."

Jacuzzi said that this event serves as the main fundraiser for Meadow to support swim team activities and as an official meet, the results count on a League level. Joining Meadow swimmers were Orinda/Moraga Pools Association teams including Orinda Country Club, Orinda Park Pool, Moraga Valley Pool, Moraga Country Club, Campo Cabana Club, Sleepy Hollow and Miramonte Swim Club.

Jacuzzi estimated that more than 1,500 people filtered through the club during the day in both the form of

swimmers and fans. Accenting the festive day, food from Baja Fresh and Jamba Juice was available, a 'mini meet' store with inexpensive trinkets was set up for the kids, and a swim gear vendor offered its wares. "We even have a woman who braided and beaded hair, raising money for Helping Hands."

Jacuzzi said it was a truly swim club-wide event. "Our own Meadow's nine and up swimmers work at this event," she said. "They work in the mini meet store, shepherd the kids when it's their turn to swim. It's a nice full circle." Marilyn Blackburn, whose daughters swam for and still belong to Meadow, headed the committee that put on the first Mini Meet in 1970. The meet, she said, was conceived along very pragmatic lines. "We needed new lane lines and the swim team didn't have the money for lane lines," said Blackburn.

She and the other swim team committee members decided that an invitational focusing on the youngest swimmers would fit the bill. "If you're four years old and swimming against someone who is six, you don't stand a chance," said Blackburn. "We wanted to give these kids a chance."

Not that Blackburn was expecting any County times, but it was serious business for the kids and she made sure they were rewarded for their hard work. "Everybody got something after they swam, either a place ribbon or heat ribbon," she said.

Thirty-seven years later, the Mini Meet is going stronger than ever and, of course, every competitor still receives a ribbon "The kids love it," said Jacuzzi. And, she added while it's an invitational, "It has the feeling of a championship meet. It's very official and trophies are given to the winning team."

At day's end, Orinda Country Club's swim team took first place, Meadow Swim and Tennis Club's team took second and Sleep Hollow Swim and Tennis Club's team took third.

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