

CAUTION:

MASTERS DIVING IS ADDICTIVE!

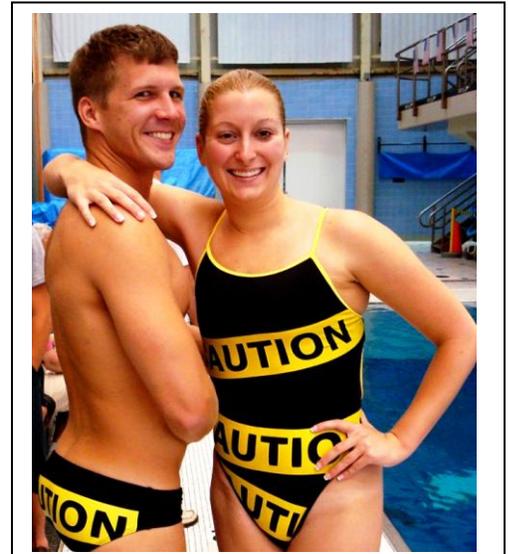
by Ed Richmond, Masters Diving Chairman

If history is indicative of a Summer Olympic year, interest in our beloved sport will again increase in 2008 as millions of couches across the United States will again be dented while spectators watch the world's best divers twisting and spinning for Beijing gold.

With the athleticism, grace, and beauty linked with a "vertical rip entry" - as described by the television sports commentator, viewers around the US will momentarily digress, and personally try to visualize their own ability to recreate the mid-air grace and skills they've just witnessed; by dusting off their own diving recollections for a reference of aerial difficulty.

In most cases, these private comparative memories are pulled out and then, once again stored away for future Olympic rediscovery.

However, a new trend is occurring, and more and more divers are not relying on a faded distant memory for skills calibration. They are heading to the pool and creating new memories while embracing a new and healthy active lifestyle while spreading the news that competitive diving is indeed a lifelong sport, thanks to the existence of Masters Diving.



Andrew Kasney & Kristen Simms at the 2007 Masters Summer Nationals in Long Island, NY.



Karen Ott returns to diving at the 2007 Masters Summer Nationals in Miami, FL with gold medal performances.

Cases in point: **Bob Christiansen** (Men's 50-54) who is again enthusiastically diving at his University of Tennessee Alma Mater, and **Karen Ott** (Women's 40-44) residing in Mount Dora, FL is now practicing with Wendy Lerew in Orlando. Both divers re-found their love for competition at our May 2007 Spring Nationals at the University of Miami after a long hiatus from competition. Both won their 1 Meter & 3 Meter respective events. Looking at them on the boards, you couldn't tell they hadn't dove competitively in years or that this was their first master's event ever.



Likewise **Rob Siracusano** (Men's 35-39) came out of retirement at our Summer 2007 event in Long Island New York to captivate us with his agility, while bringing home two springboard gold's and dazzling his son with what his "ole man" can still do.

Yet, don't let me give you the wrong impression. Not every diver coming back into Master's Diving is winning gold medals. And actually, some of the rewards that divers are gaining are personally more valuable than the actual ornamentation associated with having a championship ribbon dangling around your neck. It goes a little deeper and has to do more with self discovery.

Let me explain: One of my favorite stories this year involves **Christine Fenton** (Women's 45-49) from Virginia Beach. She last competed in a diving event almost ten years ago. And after getting the bug, she signed up for our NY event as way to motivate herself to practice. As the event neared, she realized that she was still missing a reverse category dive which she hadn't done in ten years. Not having much coaching available, she did her best and came to the event anyways. With many divers being coaches, we all were there to support her and each other. And that's when it happened: during the event practice we were able to share in her joy when she got it back! We all cheered as she willed her body past her fears into a reverse dive pike after three balks. And her first reverse in ten years was remarkably worth scores of 5's and 6's.



Even though she was not as accurate with it in competition, Christine walked away from the meet with a feeling of pride an accomplishment that personified a similar high, arguably for her a reward more valuable than gold.

Masters Diving is a welcoming community made up of a fun group of people who love the sport of diving. And to break some possible perceptions, we are not all past Olympians, or NCAA champions. Some of us had our best years competing in high school and college diving, yet we let ourselves slip away from the sport we love because life got in the way.

As we're aging, many of us are realizing that it is not difficult to reclaim the feelings of youth and vitality associated our dusty diving memories. Come give it a try. It's much healthier option than riding an inactive couch as a spectator.

And I'll also provide you a CAUTION: If you do decide to join us.... Masters Diving is addictive!

2008 USAD MASTERS DIVING EVENTS

SPRING NATIONALS: May 17-19 - University of Tennessee (*Tentative.)

SUMMER NATIONAL: August 22-24 - Woodlands, Texas (Mark your calendar!)

Find a pool to practice now ...and play with us on the boards in 2008!