

Paralympic Swimming

Minnesota has had a strong presence in the world of Paralympic Swimming this year, but in order to keep that strong presence it needs all coaches and clubs to be inclusive and to encourage all disabled athletes to enter National Competitions so they can be included in future line ups of Team USA.

Disabled swimmers in the USA are one of the most talented groups of people in the World. The head coach Julie O'Niel is an Edina native. Each athlete is an inspiration and reminds one of the endurance, dedication and perseverance it takes to really be great. They just won the medal count in Athens Greece not to mention the World this year in South Africa.

These are the athletes that represented Minnesota at the World Competition in South Africa.

Anna Eames of Twin Cities. As a new member of the elite team Anna entered her first meet in 2005) she has had incredible success. This year she won Gold in the 100m Butterfly silver medal (400m Freestyle), two bronze medals (50m Freestyle, 100m Freestyle) - International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Swimming World Championships, Durban, South Africa 2006 and Five gold medals (50m free, 100m free, 400m free, 100m back and 100m butterfly) – Belgian Open, Antwerp, Belgium. Eames was born with fibular hemimelia (a deficiency of the fibula), resulting in a shortened right leg with three toes and an abnormal ankle joint. Her classification is an S10.

Anessa Kemna is from Mach 3 Flyers now coached by Tom Franke. Three bronze medals (SB11 100m breast, S11 200m IM, S11 400m free) - International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Swimming World Championships, Durban, South Africa. Anessa is visually impaired. Her classification is S11.

As a returning member of the elite team Justin Zook has had nearly 10 years of International achievement. This year in South Africa he capped off his successful career with Gold in the 100m back, and a bronze medal 34-pt. 4x100m medley relay. Justin holds several National records in his classification. Justin was born with a short right leg. His classification is an S10.

There are more athletes in the state that are rising to the level of success that these athletes have achieved. But as the adapted chair I am certain that as a state there are more out there that are not even aware of the opportunities that are available to them. As the adapted chairperson I am here to support your club be more inclusive. I have had the opportunity to go the USOC and many Disability Swim Meets to meet with and learn from the athletes who are involved. I will continue to give my time to the swimmer.