

Competing with Doc's Indiana Masters team a dream for Finn

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It was an amazing collection of talent, and Indiana University psychology professor Peter Finn had a hard time believing he was a part of it.

Here he was on the deck at the IUPUI Natatorium during the U.S. Masters Swimming Long Course National Championships earlier this month representing the team named after one of the sport's most influential coaches.

In addition, his four-man group for the 200 and 400 medley relays in 200-239 combined age category included a colleague at IU (Joel Stager), former South and IU standout Ed Silva and to top it off, one of IU's best ever and an International Swimming Hall of Fame member, three-time Olympian Gary Hall Sr., who won a silver medal at the 1972 Munich games.

They set a national age-group record by winning the 400 in 4:27.93, breaking the old mark of 4:28.5. They also won the 200 medley (1:54.65).

"For me, I grew up in Canada and I was a good swimmer," Finn said. "At 14 and 15, I was breaking records and such and Gary was one of my idols. And here I am swimming with Gary. I turned to Joel and said, 'Pinch me, we're here with Gary Hall.' He's such a wonderful guy, too.

"That was a special experience. Fabulous. When we slammed through the 400 relay and heard we broke the record, it was exhilarating. The other swimmers were high-fiving us."

It was just a part of several titles won and records set by the 42-member Doc's IU Masters Swimming team that finished third in the overall standings.

"It was really uplifting and a great community experience as well as a chance to support each other in our goals," said Finn. "We were all competing. We all like to excel and we got great enjoyment out of doing it together."

Hall proved he's still as fast as ever while competing in the 55-59 age group, winning three titles and setting two world records, breaking one of his own.

Hall, who lives in Phoenix, won the 50 backstroke in 30.09, to snap his 2006 mark of 30.37. Second place was way back at 33.25. He took the 100 back by over five seconds in 1:06.16. The 50 butterfly title came in 26.86, ripping the old world mark of 27.08 set in 2007. Hall was merely human in the 50 free, placing fifth (26.25).

He was the headliner for a group of alumni who came back to bolster the IU Masters and represent 'Doc' Counsilman with the national event so close to home.

Silva, who lives in Brazil, was a double winner in the 35-39s, taking the 50 back in 27.19 to set a world record by .31, and winning the 100 back in 1:01.19. He was also third in the 50 fly (26.03).

Doc's swimmers were strong in the 30-34 age group, as Kosuke Kajima, head coach of the Counsilman Center Swim Team, won the 100 breast (1:06.63) and 200 IM (2:07.97). The IM mark set a world record, smashing the 2000 time of 2:08.89 and the national mark that was set in 1991.

Robert Iglinski won a national title in the 100 back (1:05.23). He was also second in the 200 back (2:22.63), third in the 200 free (2:09.87) and fifth in the 100 breast (1:14.72). And Don Gold was second in the 100 free (54.43).

"We had professors and grad students and undergrads all swimming together," Finn said. "It was neat. We forged a lot of really strong bonds with those folks and we're planning of getting together again in a future national event."

And having so many people cheer them on from the stands was a big boost as well.

"I had some friends and faculty who work with me come up and some people from the lab came and had signs," Finn said. "It's part of IU. It's our pool."

Stager was fourth in the 50 back (35.27) and finished four other races with top 10 finishes in the 55-59 group,

Stager's wife Nan also competed in five events in the women's 50-54 group, finishing as high as eighth. The swimming couple is featured in this month's INStride magazine published by the H-T.

But for Finn and Stager, it was not all fun. It was also a chance to collect research data from a unique sample of athletes for their latest study that examines whether sustained, high levels of physical activity can reduce age-related cardiovascular and mental deterioration. A second component will examine any impact of such high levels of activity have on cognition and the central nervous system.

Stager said routine exercise has been shown in some studies to preserve cognitive function or to reduce the declines typically seen with aging.

"IU really shone at this meet," Finn said.

Other high finishers

MEN

18-24: Matt Hinman, 2nd, 200 breast, 2:46.75; 4th, 50 breast, 33.15.

25-29: Richard Hall, 4th, 50 free, 25.22; Andrew Cornett, 5th, 100 back, 1:06.68.

35-39: Brett Buonadonna, 3rd, 50 back, 29.73, 4th, 100 back, 1:04.75 and 4th, 50 free, 26.17. Eric Arnold, 4th, 100 free, 56.04; T.R. Raese, 3rd, 100 back, 1:04.08; 2nd, 200 back, 2:23.10; Dennis Mullins, 4th, 200 back, 2:26.77; Brian Kumfer, 5th, 50 breast, 33.04; 5th, 100 breast, 1:15.30.

40-44: Andrew Pardieck, 3rd, 100 back, 1:06.21; 3rd, 200 back, 2:26.13; Dave Holland, 2nd, 200 fly, 2:21.38; 3rd, 100 fly, 1:02.26; Fred Schuster, 1st, 200 fly, 2:16.41; 3rd, 200 free, 2:04.74; 3rd, 50 fly, 27.0; 3rd, 100 fly, 59.84.

55-59: Robert Wright, 3rd, 200 fly, 2:49.61; 5th, 1,500 free, 19:40.69. Peter Finn, 4th, 100 breast, 1:18.31.

120-159 relay: Arnold, Buonadonna, Raese and Gold, 1st, 200 free, 1:39.44. Raese, Mullins, Arnold and Cornett, 3rd, 400 free, 3:55.88; Gold, Mullins,

Iglinski and Mike Orr, 2nd, 800 free, 8:57.59. Buonadonna, Kojima, Richard Hall and Gold, 2nd, 200 medley, 1:50.35.

160-199 relay: Raese, Iglinski, Dave Holland and John Kinsella, 1st, 400 medley, 4:22.56.

240-279 relay: Kinsella, Dave Tanner, Alan Somers and Gary Hall, 1st, 800 free relay, 9:55.32.

WOMEN

18-24: Kayla Abbott, 2nd, 1,500 free, 22:00.75; 5th, 100 breast, 1:45.13.

25-29: Meghan Medendorp, 6th, 50 breast, 38.43.

30-34: Megan Ryther, 1st, 200 fly, 2:47.66; 5th, 400 free, 5:04.47.

45-49: Jutta Schickore, 2nd, 200 fly, 2:48.35; 4th, 400 IM, 6:07.23; 5th, 100 fly, 1:15.61.

100-119 relay: Ryther, Medendorp, Abbott and Ellie Meyrowitz, 2nd, 800 free, 10:23.95; 4th, 200 free, 2:08.26.

The Doc's IU Masters Swimming relay team of (from left) Joel Stager, Gary Hall Sr., Peter Finn and Ed Silva pose after setting a national age-group record in the 400 medley relay at the IUPUI Natatorium earlier this month. Courtesy photo

