HISTORY OF THE SUBURBAN SWIM LEAGUE

During the summer of 1966 there were a number of teams swimming in the Sacramento area without league affiliation.  Some of these teams were newly formed, while others had been in existence for a number of years.  After a successful Championship meet involving three of these teams that summer, representatives from the College Green, El Dorado Hills, Foothill, Park Terrace, and Parkway teams met to discuss the formation of a new Sacramento area league.  In the Spring of 1967, a set of Bylaws was drawn up, meet procedures set, and on April 17, 1967 the Suburban Swimming and Diving League was officially formed.  Of the five founding teams, three (CG, EDH, and PT) remain in the Suburban Swim League; two of these teams College Green and El Dorado Hills, have been members of the league continuously since its inception in 1967.

The first Championship Meet was held at College Greens on the second weekend in August, 1967.  The League received considerable assistance from the Rosemont Swim Team (in the Sacramento League) and the Sacramento YMCA Swim Team (in the Capitol League).  Don Cumley, the Rosemont Coach was the Meet Referee.  Much of the success of this first Championship Meet was due to the efforts of the Meet Director, Gloria Zielke of College Greens.

Over the next dozen years, the SSL went through a number of changes.  New teams joined the league, some of the original teams left (temporarily for FF and PT).  Some time in the mid-seventies, ‘Diving’ was dropped from the league name; there were never any official diving competitions held although the Foothill Flyers did have a diving team for a couple years in the sixties.  Hosting Championships was rotated among the teams in the league until 1979.  They were usually held in six lane pools, the normal configuration for most facilities.

Through most of the seventies, ‘Place Judges’ were assigned to determine the winner of races because the mechanical watches available at that time were only readable and accurate to tenths of a second.  When electronic watches, accurate to hundredths of a second became readily available, time became the sole criteria for placement and Place Judges were no longer needed (but the need for attentive timers became even more important).

With the addition of the Highlanders in 1973, the league had grown to nine teams (two teams, Elk Grove and Rio Linda, swam as a single team in dual meets and separately at Championships).  That year, due to the large number of teams (and only six lane pools to swim in), the league tried swimming in two divisions, with separate divisional Championships.  It was not very popular with a number of teams so the divisional structure was dropped the following year.  In 1974, Park Terrace took a leave of absence that lasted eight years.

In 1979, the Championship meet was held at Sierra College for the first time.  The facilities at the College: a 10 lane pool and 6 lane warm-up pool, permanent spectator seating with space to add additional seating, expansive grounds for team areas, and an air-conditioned office for the use of the league reps was a big improvement over previous sites. Most importantly, 10 lanes meant that there were 10 finalists so 10 kids in each age group received medals for their effort.  That year, there were only five teams in the SSL, each team was able to enter two relays (the ’A’ and ‘B’ relays swam at the same time).

In 1980, the Carmichael Beavers joined the SSL, in 1981, Amador dropped, and in 1982 Park Terrace returned.  The league remained very stable between 1982 and 1987 with six teams (CB, CG, EDH, FF, HD, and PT).  Each team swam 10 league meets during the season, meeting each other team twice (home and away).  The meets were shorter in length; two or three were swum Wednesday evenings.

Loomis Basin and Folsom joined the league in 1988.  To accommodate the additional spectators at the College, the Loomis team parents brought in bleachers (and then took home the hardware; LBD won Championships for the next three years).  There were over 1000 swimmers entered in 1988; as a result the meet was expanded to three days, with the IM qualifying heats being swum on Friday evening.

A number of significant changes took place in 1989; the freestyle events (in both Dual meets and Championships) were split into two distances; a swimmer was only allowed to swim in one of the two in a single meet.  The rationale was that all Dual meets always had second heats in freestyle; why not make these second heats into scored events. Also, the 15-18 age group was split into 15-16 and 17-18 groups to provide for more equitable competition and thus encourage the 15 year old swimmers to stick around a bit longer.  The 15-18 group was retained only for the relay events.  The result was an increase in the number of events from 73 to 95; with most of the extra time added on Saturday.  Except for changes to the numbering sequence, the order of events has remained the same since 1989.

1989 was also the first year that a computerized scoring system was used.  Seeding had previously been done by hand by sorting the lane slips and then typing the program.  The new system provided all seeding, printed listings for the program and the official’s use, and handled all scoring.  Times were taken in the normal manner (three watches and a recorder), and were manually input to the system.

In 1991, the Colorado timing system (three buttons and a backup/recorder) was first used.  Times were much improved over previous years as the main source of error with manual timing is with the start.  However, the timers were not very happy, they no longer had watches, and had no idea of the official time.  This problem was solved in 1992 with the addition of a display board at the end of the pool.  The first year it was used, we had a ten lane display board; subsequently, we have had a single line display that cycles through each swimmer’s time in their order of finish.  This display has been a crowd pleaser ever since.

In 1993, we welcomed a new team, the Sierra Sharks.  Sierra was the result of a split of the El Dorado Hills team along with a number of new swimmers from the Shingle Springs area.  With nine teams swimming, there were over 1100 entrants at Championships that year.  The Carmichael Beavers left the SSL in 1994 (they are now in the Nor-Cal League), and the Foothill Flyers left the SSL in 2001.  In 2002, we welcomed the Broadstone Barracudas to the Suburban Swim League.  The Highlander Dolphins left the SSL in 2004.

With participation continuing to increase, flyover starts were introduced in 2005 and were an immediate success, shortening the length of swim trials significantly on Saturday and Sunday.  In 2006, the League purchased a new league record board for permanent display at Sierra College as well as a Sierra College record board to mark our 28th year at Sierra College and our 40th Annual Championship meet.  With team’s ranging in size from 150 to 350 swimmers, the League introduced the President’s award in 2006 to recognize the team with the best points per splash ratio.