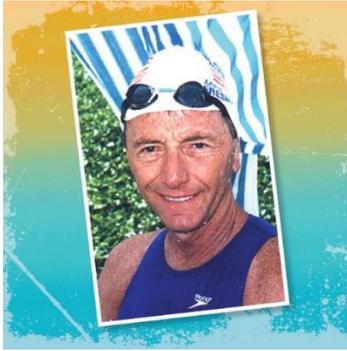




Featured Athlete
Mike Freshley - Swimming



Racing for fun, but swimming for life

Mike Freshley doesn't really like to swim. In fact, he thinks it's pretty boring. But he does like to race – and win. So every day, he gets up and puts in an hour at the pool, cycling through every stroke and pushing his body to go faster.

And his hard work has paid off. Because at 75, Freshley is one of the most decorated Masters swimmers in the country, having set six world records and nine American records alone in the 75-79 age group during the 2016 USA Masters Games in Greensboro, N.C. In fact, he currently holds 15 world records and 24 American records spanning every stroke and every distance.

But Freshley started his remarkable Masters career just like every other swimmer – with a meet.

“I got back into swimming almost 25 years ago because I needed to get into shape,” says Freshley, who was a city champion swimmer in Indiana in his youth and also swam while at Bradley University in Peoria, Ill. “A friend of mine told me about a Senior Olympics event, so I went and competed. Then I found out about another event and went to it. I just kept going to events and swimming regularly, and after two-and-a-half years, I got back in shape.”

A life-long athlete

Freshley has never been one to sit back and rest on his laurels. Despite the fact that he was a successful youth swimmer, at 12 he decided to leave the pool and take up basketball. Within a few years, he was a high school All American and went on to compete with Bradley's 1960 NIT championship team. But that's not all. He also ran track and field, becoming the Indiana state long jump champion while in high school with a mark of 23' 3", and ran a blistering 4:05-minute mile while in the U.S. Army.

“My mother used to yell at me in high school because I would get good at something and then quit,” Freshley recalls. “But I've always craved the unknown – that's what interests me. Most people die from boredom, but I need three lifetimes to get through everything on my to-do list.

“It's the same way with swimming,” he continues. “Most swimmers do three or four events over and over, but I swim an event until I get good at it, and then I switch to another one. That's why I do a lot of individual medleys (IMs). I guess I'm still searching for my identity.”

And an athlete for life

While he loves the race-day atmosphere and the feeling of hitting the wall first, Freshley's ultimate motivation for swimming is something more basic – his health.

“I call my body the thing I walk around in,” Freshley explains. “You’re renting it – and you’d better take care of your rental. Most people will change the oil in their car three times a year, but they won’t do squat for their body. But your body requires regular maintenance and exercise, or the wheels really start to fall off.

“So how do you do it?” he continues. “Get up, put your feet on the floor and just do it. Every day. Your brain will give you five excuses why you can’t do it, but that voice in your head isn’t you. Don’t listen to it.”