

## LONG-DISTANCE SWIMMING

By JOE GROSSMAN  
Executive Director  
Marathon Swimming Foundation & Hall of Fame

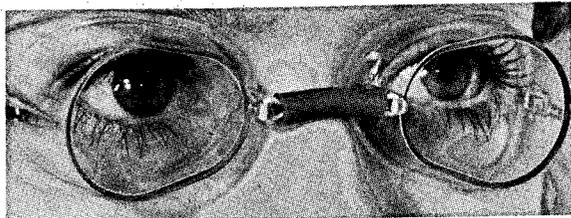
Miss Willy Van Rysel, the Dutch-born English marathon swimming pioneer, has been named 1973 recipient of the Davids-Wheeler Award, presented annually for outstanding contributions to the sport of long-distance swimming.

The Award consists of an engraved silver tray, kept permanently in the International Swimming Hall of Fame in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and in individual trophy presented to each winner. It was originated in 1969 by a group within the World Professional Marathon Swimming Federation in memory of two deceased members, Irving Davids and Capt. Roger W. Wheeler.

In announcing the selection of Miss Van Rysel as its fourth

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recipient, Selection Committee Chairman James J. Doty of Boston noted that she has pioneered in two areas of marathon swimming — gaining acceptance for women distance swimmers while a Dutch teenager, and more recently in promoting the long-distance swimming among swimmers over the age of 40 in England.

Born Willy Van Rijssel in July, 1916, the new honoree began to swim at the age of seven — in secret, since her parents disapproved because it was then thought "indecent" for a girl to appear clad only in a swimsuit. When she became the first woman to successfully swim across the 15-mile stretch of the Zuider Zee (now IJssel Lake) from Stavoren to Enkhuizen (in 9:39.00) after World War II, she again endured disapproval, this time from the general public. However, frequent successful solo swims in Holland turned the "boos" to cheers, and paved the way for such world-ranked Dutch marathoning mermaids as Mary Kok, Judith DeNijs and Corrie Ebbelaar.

Miss Van Rijssel went to England in 1948 to prepare for an English Channel swim. The attempt ended in failure only 400 yards from Dover, which was so encased in fog that her boatmen had no idea she was so close to success and ordered her out of the water. She remained in England, Anglicizing her name to "Van Rysel," and continued swimming and assisting others — including Eileen Fenton, Jason Zirganos and Antonio Abertono.

With the founding of the British Long Distance Swimming Association (BLDSA) in 1954, Willy found new outlets for her marathoning prowess in organized amateur races of from 3 to 20 miles. She has continued to compete each summer in as many as 10 races. In 1955 she became the first woman to swim the 10 1/4-mile length of Lake Windermere in each direction, setting the distaff record of 6:50 on the second swim — at the age of 39.

To celebrate her 50th birthday in 1966, Willy swam The Solent, from Southsea to Ryde — 4 1/2 miles in 3:50.33 — in a hailstorm to demonstrate her deep conviction that "to feel that when a swimmer reaches 25 he is finished is absolute rubbish!" The following year she set a new Solent record for women: 2:09.25.

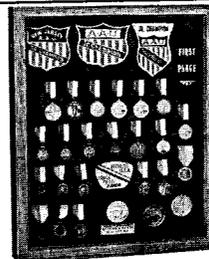
In 1968, Miss Van Rysel conceived an English Veterans' Championship, which the BLDSA organized as an annual event and for which she contributed the trophies. In the first edition of this race for swimmers over 40, Willy was women's winner of the 3 1/2-mile event on Trentham Lake, and she repeated in 1969 and 1970. She has been an entrant (and finisher) every year. These races have kept alive the swimming careers of such British marathons as Commander C. Gerald Forsberg (who is author of several volumes on marathon swimming and was 1971 Davids-Wheeler Award winner), now 60; John Turnbull, 46; Arthur Ayres, 54; and others.

Even before being named as the Davids-Wheeler Award winner, Miss Van Rysel had embarked on a third crusade — emphasizing to non-swimmers and swimmers around the world the dangers of increasing water pollution.

"If this pollution of our waterways is going to continue," she said recently, "all long distance and marathon swimming will be relegated to history. The children of today will tell their children, 'Once upon a time there was a sport called marathon swimming, when people could swim in our seas, rivers and lakes.'"

Elections of officers of the World Professional Marathon Swimming Federation for the 1973 term have resulted in Dennis Matuch of Chicago succeeding Cliff Lumsdon of Toronto as

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President. Judith DeNijs Van Berkel of Holland and Joe Grossman of Washington, D.C., were re-elected Vice President and Secretary, respectively.

Elected to the International Board of Governors were Regent Lacoursiere and Arthur Dufresne (Canada), James Doty and Thomas Hetzel (U.S.A.), Marwan Shedid and Abdel Latif Abou-Heif (Egypt), Osvaldo Schelleberg (Argentina), Rogosic Veljko (Yugoslavia), Geoffrey Lake (England), Jan Van Scheyndel (Holland), Lucio Mezzadri (Italy), Margaret Macrae Howes (New Zealand), Des Renford (Australia), Albert Hreische (Lebanon), Marwan Saleh (Syria), Fausto Ramirez (Mexico), and past presidents (ex officio) Herman Willemse (Holland), George Park (Canada), Giulio Travaglio (Italy), Horacio Iglesias (Argentina) and Lumsdon.

## NCAA WITHDRAWS FROM UNITED STATES OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- The National Collegiate Athletic Association announced its withdrawal from the United States Olympic Committee.

"The NCAA strongly supports the continuation of the Olympic games, but the Association no longer can accept membership in the United States Olympic Committee until it is extensively reorganized," said Samuel E. Barnes, secretary-treasurer of the NCAA.

Barnes said the decision to withdraw from the USOC was made by the 18-member NCAA Council at its fall meeting in Knoxville, Tenn. The action is effective immediately.

"The Council acted upon the recommendation of its International Relations Committee," said Barnes, also a member of that committee. "Similar proposals have been before the NCAA Council, on and off, for almost 10 years. Each time the Council has told our delegates to continue to strive for reorganization from within. Not this time. We have had enough."

The recommendation from the International Relations Committee read, in part:

"... It is apparent the current USOC apparatus is not responsive to the needs of those it is primarily supposed to serve -- the athletes.

"The USOC repeatedly has ignored suggestions advanced by the school-college community designed to improve the administration of the USOC.

"The time has come for constructive reform if the United States is to be properly represented and our athletes are to be properly prepared for future Olympic competition.

"The United States athletes deserve the finest possible competitive conditions and administrative support in order to have a fair opportunity for victory when competing in Olympic games.

"The USOC has shortchanged America."

Therefore, the International Relations Committee recommended the NCAA withdraw from membership in the U.S. Olympic Committee and suggested the Associations allied conferences and affiliated coaches organizations take similar actions, Charles M. Neinas, chairman of the NCAA International Relations Committee and commissioner of the Big Eight Conference, said.

The NCAA's withdrawal means it will not appoint representatives to USOC committees nor offer financial assistance as an organization and will recommend to its more than 700 members that they not assist in fund-raising. It will leave the decision to each college, each coach and each athlete to determine within their own conscience the extent to which they feel they can support the USOC as it is organized at the present time.

Several Congressmen already have called for an investigation of the USOC.

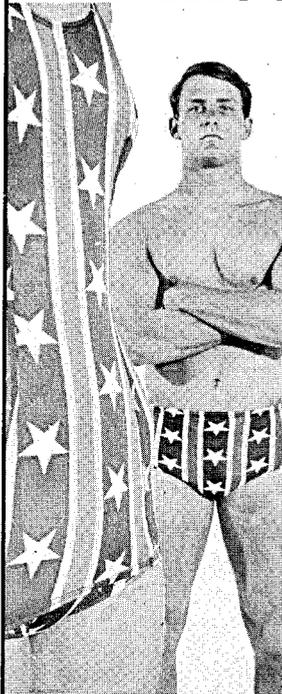
Senator John V. Tunney (D-Calif.) has received Senate approval for a National Commission to investigate the USOC. The Commission would be made up of seven public members appointed by the President.

In withdrawing from the USOC, the NCAA will direct its international attention and emphasis to the United States Collegiate Sports Council. The USCSC provides year-round international sports competition for collegiate student-athletes. Summer and Winter World University Games are held annually in alternate years. The Summer Games will be held this year with Moscow hosting the Games in August.

"We strongly feel we can do more for the student-athletes within the USCSC and the World University Games than through the USOC," concluded Barnes.

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