

PROFESSIONAL MARATHON SWIMMING

BY: JOE GROSSMAN, Secretary, WPMFSF
World Professional Marathon
Swimming Federation

Diana Nyad of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., was named winner of the 1970 Greta Andersen Award, presented annually by the former Danish Olympian, who became one of the world's foremost distance swimmers, to the outstanding newcomer among girl distance swimmers on the pro racing circuit.

Miss Nyad, 18, a student at Forest Park (Illinois) College, made her debut in the splash-for-cash marathon world by setting a new women's record in the annual 10-mile Labatt's Championship Race at Hamilton, Ont., last July.

Diana completed the course in 4:23.00, shaving more than a minute off the existing record set in 1967 by Holland's Judith DeNijs. In winning the race, Miss Nyad dealt the Dutch champion her first defeat in her marathoning career, dating back to 1964.

The Florida youngster was also entered in the 28-mile race on the Saguenay River at Chicoutimi, Que., in August, but after completing 15 miles of the difficult course, an incoming tide kept her at a standstill for over an hour, and she abandoned the effort. No women, and only three men, finished the race in which 21 swimmers started.

Miss Nyad was the only first year woman marathoner to score points in the World Professional Marathon Swimming Federation's annual world championship competition, thus entitling her to the distaff "rookie of the year" award posted by Swimming Hall of Famer Andersen. Miss DeNijs (now Mrs. Rob Van Berkel) regained the women's world crown, winning it for the sixth time in seven years.

Marathon swimming in the United Arab Republic is being reactivated, with two races scheduled for this spring. Prizes totaling \$15,000 (U.S.) have been posted for competitions in March and April.

Although the exact distances of the two courses had not been determined at presstime, the first and the first held in the U.A.R. since 1966, will be on Lake Nasser, created by the new Aswan Dam, on March 26. A renewal of the races on the Nile River is scheduled for April 19. The last Nile River race was staged 15 years ago.

Also on the planning board are races for Kuwait and Sudan, both of which the Egyptian marathon swimming federation are hoping to arrange. Another Middle East event, the Jableh-Latakia race in Syria, cancelled in 1970 due first to a cholera scare and later because of the death of UAR's President Nasser, is slated for a 1971 renewal.

Elsewhere, plans are under consideration for a second June race in Holland, to be held within a week of the second annual event at Utrecht. In the United States, committees are working to organize distance races in New Jersey and North Carolina.

Six of the seven races sanctioned in 1970 by the WPMFSF have already announced their intention to stage events this year.

"Swimmer of the Month"

MARY MONTGOMERY: SOUTHERN BELLE NOW ON HER WAY TO SWIMMING BIG

Mary Montgomery's only competition is getting to be a stopwatch.

Last summer, at 13, she burst on the national swimming scene by winning the National Junior Olympic 200 meter individual medley in 2:36.7 at the University of Tennessee pool in Knoxville. She also placed third in the 100 freestyle and fourth in the 100 backstroke.

She really put Asheville, North Carolina on the swimming map when she went to the Outdoor Nationals in Los Angeles and placed in the consolation 200 meter IM, having swam a 2:32.3 to qualify. She also swam her best time in the 100 meter backstroke with 1:11.9, and also competed in the 100 freestyle and 400 meter IM. Her best

times last summer for these events were 1:03.2 and 5:26.4, respectively.

It's not easy for a top 11-12 year old to move into the tough nationals-minded 13-14 division, especially for a girl who had nothing but a 15 yard home pool and a 20 yard Y pool in which to practice, but Mary and her mother Betsy, who coaches her, made the transition.

Mary is now 5-5 and about 125 pounds and although she just turned 14, has big ideas. She is busily working toward Munich. "I can't think beyond that because it's always on my mind," said Miss Montgomery, a shy, reserved young lady, who's father, Wayne, is the mayor of Asheville, an All American City.

Mary's rise has been meteoric. During 1968 and 1969 she won a variety of AAU and YMCA titles throughout the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida. In 1969 she qualified for the National JO's in San Diego and placed third in the 200 m. IM, despite breaking the existing record, and also placed in the 100 backstroke.

In 1970's indoor season Mary was undefeated in dual meets and was named the Region Three Women's Championships' outstanding swimmer, personally scoring 93 points. Took the 13-14 high point trophy at the Pepsi Marlins National Age Group Invitational and then went on to swim in the 1970 Indoor Nationals at Cincinnati, where she was 30th in the 200 yard IM.

In addition to swimming Mary found time to play on the Asheville Y's girls' water polo team along with her sisters, Jane, 16, and Ann, 18. She was also a cheerleader for Broad Junior High, where Mary is in the ninth grade.

The Y has just opened a 25 yard pool and the local college also has a brand new six lane 25 yard pool where Mrs. Montgomery is teaching swimming. Mary does her practicing at the college with the 18 to 20 year old college male team members, who are the only ones in the area who can push her.

Mary learned to swim at one but began swimming competitively at eight. "I've always loved swimming, but the biggest thrill is winning," she said. "I'm always nervous at the starting block, but once the gun goes off I concentrate easily," she added.

Mary is going to concentrate on just a few big regional AAU meets this year, leading up to the National Outdoors in Houston. She trains between 4,000 to 6,000 yards a day over two hours in the morning and an hour at night.

Her goal continues to be a berth on the 1972 U.S. Olympic Team, and now that Asheville will have a 50 meter pool in which she can practice next summer, she has a better chance to make it.

Recently Mary fell off a horse and broke her arm. But the accident didn't dampen her spirit any. As a matter of fact, her father, who is a doctor, put the arm in a plastic cast so she can workout. Although the arm gives Mary some discomfort, she is willing to stand the pain because of her "never say quit" attitude toward swimming.

Mary Montgomery

