



NEWS

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Photos available upon request

El Camino College Professor Sets Another International Swimming Record; Victory Places Her among the Fastest Women in the World

El Camino College professor and master swimmer Traci Granger set yet another world record in a regional swim meet earlier this month. One of the fastest swimmers in the world, Granger tied the world record in the short course 50-meter butterfly, with a time of 31.13. She also went five for five at the meet, bringing home five first-place medals.

The victory caps a tremendous year for Granger, who set several national and international speed records this past spring and summer. This month's victory is the third world record for 2013. She is a 10-time national champion and has bested many athletes in younger age brackets, claiming these victories after taking nearly one year off from competing due to hip surgery.

Granger set her first national record in 2008, winning her division in the 50-yard butterfly at the United States Masters Swimming (USMS) Short Course Championships. Since then, she continued to win gold medals and break records, often finishing with better times than competitors in younger age groups. Reaching the age of 55 this year, she moved into the 55-59 bracket.

And yet, as a lifelong competitive swimmer, Granger does not set out to be a champion; she just enjoys the workout and the camaraderie of swimming with a group.

"I do better in the pool when I am pushing myself and not thinking about what is going on in the races," said Granger, who trains year-round at the Torrance Plunge with a motivated group of South Bay masters swimmers called the Los Angeles Peninsula Swimmers, or LAPS.

"When I won the world record, I didn't know how fast I was swimming but when I finished, they announced it, and I was surprised. When I race, I'm just trying to beat one of the guys on the team who always challenges me – Duncan McBride – we have an ongoing competition between us."

Granger took a break from competitive swimming in 2012 when she noticed her leg and hip were giving her some trouble. After consulting with doctors, she was diagnosed with a torn hip flexor and surgery was scheduled. The rehab required her to slow down in everything, including walking, and definitely no swimming for three months. She was bored immediately.

"I couldn't sit on the stationary bike all day – I had to find something interesting to do," she said.

Granger soon met up with El Camino College exercise fitness specialist Kim Jones, who created personalized workouts to help with the rehab.

“Training with Kim was outstanding – she is good for me because she asked me about my goals and helped me become stronger.” Granger said. “I told her that I would do anything that was going to make me stronger in the pool, anything that would be good for swimming. It was wonderful, with a lot of variety; I was getting bored doing the same thing. I needed to get my exercise, but I also wanted it to be interesting.”

Turns out, Granger came back even faster after surgery.

In May, Granger traveled to Indianapolis and shook up the short course nationals, winning five events: the 50-, 100-, and 200-yard butterfly; the 50 free; the 100 IM, and broke a national record in the 50-yard butterfly, with a time of 27.45. She felt tired, but did not detect post-surgery problems, so she decided to compete on the international level and enter the long course competition, though she has very little experience in this venue. The long course season includes races measured in meters, versus the yards presented at nationals. International competitors race in metered pools, so champions in these races are considered the fastest in the world.

This year’s competition was scheduled for August in Mission Viejo, the one-year anniversary of Granger’s surgery. She competed in five events, took first place in four, second in one, and broke the world record in the 50-meter butterfly, with a time of 30.97.

“I never want to look at the records or the times because I don't want to put any pressure on myself,” said Granger, who competed in the 50-, 100-, and 200-meter butterfly, the 50-meter freestyle and the 200-meter IM. “At the Mission Viejo event, since it was close to home, we had some friends and family come out to cheer for each other. That’s what is fun. Good exercise, good friends.”

The national and world champion does not like to talk about her victories; instead, Granger is looking forward to getting into the pool every day and working with students at El Camino College, where she teaches intermediate and advanced swimming, health, and first aid.

A faculty member at El Camino College since 1992, Granger was previously the head swim coach at California Polytechnic University at San Luis Obispo. At Cal Poly SLO, Granger developed several All-American and national qualifying athletes. As an athlete, Granger was an All-American sprinter and an NCAA Division II Championship finalist. She has a master’s degree from Colorado State University, a bachelor’s degree from Cal Poly SLO, and an associate degree from College of the Sequoias.

“I’m just trying to have fun and get in my exercise,” she said. “Swimming seems to be a good way to do that.”

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