

## Class of 2025 Ozark Swimming Hall of Fame

### **Contributor: Barbara Archie**

Barbara Archie has been the main supplier for swimming for over 50 years! She began selling swim suits out of velvet frees bins. Ten years later she opened the Des Peres location, which is still open today just bigger. She has supplied uniforms, caps and suits to many zone teams, high school teams, country Club and summer league team and of course many of the USA Swimming Teams in St Louis.

She dove into the business while she had 5 daughters who were swimmers with four of them swimming in college and one had switched to gymnastics.

Barbara's daughter Allison opened their chesterfield store in 1998, expanding their reach across St. Louis Swimming.

Over the years, other stores opened, trying to compete with B and B Aquatics, but none survive today, thanks in large part to B and B's loyal customers and teams.

Barbara's love for swimming and swimmers is great, which is why she is still going strong. She's not bored yet with the great sport of swimming.

Barbara has had tried to follow two simple rules in business. She stays in her lane and never burns bridges.

We are thrilled to recognize Barbara Archie as an inductee to the Ozark Swimming Hall of Fame.

### **Master's Swimmer: Helen Buss**

Helen J. Buss is a notable figure in U.S. Masters Swimming (USMS), particularly associated with the St. Louis Masters swim community in Missouri. Her competitive career spans several decades, highlighting her dedication and prowess in the sport.

1976 National Records (Age 40):

At age 40, Helen Buss achieved multiple first-place finishes in the USMS Top 10 rankings for the 40–44 age group:

- 100-yard freestyle: 1:10.67
- 200-yard freestyle: 2:35.00
- 400-yard freestyle: 5:22.40
- 500-yard freestyle: 6:13.51
- 1500-yard freestyle: 21:23.78
- 100-yard butterfly: 1:24.25
- 200-yard butterfly: 2:50.03
- 400-yard individual medley: 5:48.53

These accomplishments underscore her versatility and endurance across various swimming disciplines.

#### National Relay Record:

In 1976, Buss was part of the St. Louis Masters women's 35+ 200-meter medley relay team, alongside Jean M. Schnorbus, Ardeth R. Mueller, and Dorothy A. Burke. The team set a national record with a time of 2:33.50.

#### Continued Excellence in Later Years:

Helen Buss maintained her competitive edge well into her 50s:

- 1986 (Age 50): Achieved top 10 finishes in the 200-meter freestyle and 200-meter medley relays in the 160–199 age group.
- 1988 (Age 52): Secured a 4th place in the 200-meter medley relay for the 200–239 age group.
- 1990 (Age 54): Attained a 2nd place in the 200-meter medley relay for the 200–239 age group.
- 1991 (Age 55): Finished 6th in the 400-yard medley relay for the 55+ age group.

These results reflect her sustained commitment to swimming and her ability to compete at a high level across different age categories.

Helen Buss's achievements have left a lasting impact on the Masters swimming community in Missouri and beyond. Her dedication to the sport serves as an inspiration to swimmers of all ages.

### **Athlete: Julie Cooper**

As an age grouper, Julie swam for both the Parkway Swim Club and later Rockwood Swim Club. Julie held multiple Ozark and Team Records. She was a Junior National and Senior National Swimmer who went on to swim college at the University of Texas.

A 27-time All-American and seven-time NCAA Relay Champion, Julie Cooper Bliemel was part of a truly dominant era for the Texas Women's Swimming and Diving program in the late 1980s and early 1990s. One of the nation's top freestyle sprinters, she helped lead Texas to a pair of NCAA Championships in 1990 and 1991 and NCAA runner-up showings in 1989 and 1992 as the Longhorns finished first or second in all four of her NCAA Championship appearances under head coach Mark Schubert. Cooper Bliemel was a key factor in a four-year stretch of Longhorn dominance in both the 200 and 400 freestyle relays at the NCAA Championship meet. Beginning with swimming a leg on the American and NCAA-record setting and title winning 200 (1:28.90) and 400 free relays (3:15.38) as a freshman in 1989, she was part of the UT quartet that won the 200 free relay every year from 1989-92 and claimed victory in the 400 free relay three times (1989-90, 1992).

All totaled, Cooper Bliemel was a member of 13 relay squads that finished among the top three at the NCAA Championships. Individually she was a seven-time first-team All-American in the 50 and 100 freestyle events with a pair of career-best third-place showings in the 50 free. She also twice earned honorable mention All-America accolades in the 200 free. Texas hosted the NCAA Championships her sophomore year in 1990, and Cooper Bliemel was a critical factor in the Longhorns narrowly edging Stanford by 9.5 points for the team title. That year, she posted a pair of top-four finishes (third in 50 free, fourth in 100 free) individually while also swimming legs on the victorious 200 and 400 free relays, runner-up 200 medley relay and third-place 800 free relay. She finished fourth in the 50 free, sixth in the 100 free

and was a part of the winning 200 and 400 free relay squads in helping the Horns win the 1991 NCAA Championship. As a senior and competing at nationals in Austin once again in 1992, Cooper Bliemel played a key role on four relays that finished in the top three at the NCAA Championships, winning the 200 free relay, finishing second in the 400 free and 400 medley relays, and third in the 200 medley relay, while earning All-American honors in the 50, 100 and 200 freestyle events. She capped her illustrious career as a 23-time first-team All-American and four-time Honorable Mention All-American. Texas won the Southwest Conference Championship in each of her four years on the Forty Acres. Cooper Bliemel claimed the 50 free individual title as a senior in 1992 and swam on 11 SWC title-winning relays in those four years. Her success extended to the international swimming scene, too, as a three-time member of the USA National Team. She swam a leg on Team USA's gold medal-winning 400-meter free relay at the 1991 FINA World Championships while also finishing eighth individually in the 100-meter freestyle at that event. Cooper was part of Team USA's winning 400-meter free relay at the 1989 Pan Pacific Games. In 1992, she was honored as a CoSIDA second-team Academic All-American for her success in the pool and the classroom. A 1992 graduate of UT with a bachelor's degree in Finance (B.B.A.) with honors, Cooper Bliemel was born in Berlin, Germany but grew up in St. Louis, Mo.

### **Coach: Hossein Dastgah**

Coach Hossein Dastgah is a man whose love for sport, passion for teaching, and dedication to others shaped thousands of lives across two continents.

Hossein's journey began in Tehran, Iran, where he earned a Master of Education in Physical Education from the Teacher's Training University in 1959. He later continued his studies in the United States, earning a Bachelor of Science in Physical Education from Southern Illinois University Carbondale in 1982.

But education was only the beginning. For Hossein, sports were not just games—they were a way of life. He served as Head Coach, Director, Journalist, and Athlete, pouring his energy and heart into each role.

In Iran, Hossein coached the Iran National Women's Swim Team, led athletic departments at major universities, and was a respected sports journalist for Kayhan Publications. As a writer, he covered world-class competitions—including the Asian Games, World Cups, and three Olympic Games—bringing global sport to Iranian readers with clarity, insight, and passion.

He was an All-Star soccer and volleyball player, a physical education coordinator, and a volleyball coach for a championship women's team. Wherever there was sport, Hossein was there—either leading, playing, or inspiring others.

In 1979, Hossein immigrated to the United States with his wife and two young daughters. He came in search of freedom—but brought with him something even greater: a gift for lifting others up through sport.

From 1981 to 1983, he made his mark at SIU Carbondale as an assistant swim coach, soccer coach, and aquatics leader. While at Carbondale, he was the Head Coach of the Saluki Swim Club and Conducted Clinics for Harrin Swim Club.

Soon after, he joined Saint Louis University, where he would remain for more than two decades—starting as Evening Manager, and retiring in 2007 as Director of Campus Recreation.

But it was in the pool, with a whistle in hand and encouragement in his voice, where Coach Hossein found his second home. From 1984 to 2018, he was the Head Developmental Coach for the CSP Tideriders Swim Team, where he built one of the strongest foundations in youth swimming.

He believed swimming was more than a sport—it was a life skill. And so, in 1984, he founded the SuperSkill Swim Camp at Saint Louis University, helping thousands of swimmers—of all ages and skill levels—learn to be safe, confident, and strong in the water. That camp continues to this day, a living legacy of his vision.

Under Hossein's leadership, CSP's youngest swimmers dominated local championships year after year. His 8-and-under swimmers were nearly

unbeatable—because he didn't just teach technique; he taught them to believe in themselves.

He was a coach, yes—but also a mentor, a teacher, and a father figure to many. His swimmers didn't just improve in the pool—they grew as people. Hossein had a gentle, calming presence, a deep well of patience, and a genuine love for his athletes. He made each swimmer feel seen, supported, and capable of more than they ever imagined.

Coach Hossein often said coaching wasn't a job for him—it was a gift. He felt honored to spend time with his swimmers, their families, and his coworkers. And in return, he became a beloved part of their families too.

He gave his life to sport, to young people, and to the quiet, daily work of making the world better one swimmer at a time. His impact will be felt for generations—not just in the pool lanes he filled with laughter and effort, but in the hearts of all those he inspired to work harder, dream bigger, and believe deeply in themselves.

So today, we celebrate not just the career, but the character of Hossein Dastgah: a man of kindness, wisdom, humility, and unwavering dedication.

May his legacy continue in every stroke, every kick, every child who learns to swim—and every coach who chooses to lead with compassion.

Reflections from former swimmers/parents:

"He taught me how to love swimming, push through the hard days, and always lead with a smile."

"My children were better people because of the way Hossein- individually-coached them. How many individuals grew up to be better people because of his investment in them? I ended up having one land mammal and one water mammal, but Hossejn trained them to enjoy a life of sport through training swimming."

"He taught me to not only push myself through the sport of swimming , but also how to work through the hard times in life. Will forever cherish the lessons he taught me."

"Hossein and his daughters Marjan and Khannie were my first Club swim coaches. They made me fall in love with competitive swimming and eventually, becoming a coach myself. I'll be forever grateful to the entire family for embracing me, challenging me and teaching me about effort and personal accountability. What I miss most about Hossein was his huge smile and warm welcoming spirit."

### **Athlete: Tim Hacala**

Tim Hacala is a former competitive swimmer from St. Louis, Missouri, known for his exceptional sprint freestyle performances during the early to mid-1980s.

As a member of the Sugar Creek Swim Club (SCSC), Hacala set a remarkable Ozark Swimming record in 1978 in the 50-yard freestyle for the 11–12 boys' age group, clocking in at 23.14 seconds which wasn't broken until 2022. He won the Bill Karisck Award as the Division I Top Swimmer

Hacala attended De Smet Jesuit High School, where he dominated the 50-yard freestyle event at the Missouri State High School Swimming Championships for three consecutive years:

- 1982: 21.84 seconds
- 1983: 21.56 seconds
- 1984: 21.72 seconds

His 1983 time of 21.56 seconds earned him All-American honors, ranking among the fastest high school sprinters nationally that year.

In College, Hacala continued his swimming career at Saint Louis University, competing for the Billikens during the 1984–85 and 1985–86 seasons.

Tim Hacala's consistent excellence in sprint freestyle events at both the high school and collegiate levels has left a lasting impact on Missouri swimming history.

### **Athlete: Suzanne Scott**

She had been swimming for a few years, but had become somewhat frustrated with results.

Then, at age 12 and during a trip for her brother's soccer tournament, Suzanne Beth Scott and her parents spotted a swimming competition on TV.

"We were baffled to learn that we were watching the highlights for the Paralympic Games in Athens, as the eight women that stood behind the blocks looked able-bodied, at first glance," said Scott, who had been born with spina bifida. "As we watched, we learned that swimming in the Paralympics operates with a classification system, grouping athletes together with similar disability levels."

The moment inspired Scott to challenge herself and, it turns out, she went on to inspire others as she became a Paralympian herself. That's why the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame proudly inducted Scott with the Class of 2024.

Scott competed in the Paralympics for the United States in 2008 in Beijing and in 2012 in London.

The Cape Girardeau native won a bronze medal in 2008 in the 400 meters and, in London, won a silver in the 4×100-meter freestyle relay and two bronzes, in the 4×100 medley relay and 400 freestyle.

She also has nine World Championships medals – four golds, three silvers and two bronzes. The golds came in the 4×100 freestyle relay and 4×100 medley relay in 2010, a year after she won the 100-meter freestyle and 400-meter freestyle.

Her silvers were in the 400-meter freestyle in 2010 and the 4×100 freestyle relay in 2009 and 50-meter freestyle. The bronzes came in the 100-meter backstroke in 2010, a year after a 200-meter individual medley.

She also set the world record in the 1,500-meter freestyle in 2009.

And to think it all stemmed from watching the Paralympics without really meaning to.

"I learned that I was watching the S10 classification compete in the 100m freestyle and wondered if the nerve damage in my legs due to a birth defect



would make me eligible,” Scott said about the Paralympics on TV. “I had been growing frustrated with the sport for awhile and the thought of competing against swimmers with similar abilities was intriguing.”

After attending Cape schools through her freshman year, Scott relocated to the Colorado Springs-based Olympic Training Center as part of its Resident Paralympic Swim Team.

There, she worked with coaches Jimi Flowers, Dave Denniston and strength and conditioning coach Amanda Wittenmyer Fleece.

“The most important meet I needed to compete in was the Paralympic Trials,” Scott said. “However, having experience from competing at a multitude of international meets, including World Championships in Durban, South Africa in 2006, and the Para-Pan-American Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2007, certainly helped my performance in Beijing, and eventually, London.”

Scott broke a 12-year-old world record in 2008, and won the bronze, her first international medal.

In London, she brought home even more medals. In the relays, she swam the opening, the backstroke, in the medley relay.

“I am definitely grateful for each experience on the podium. It has been 12 years since London, and it is honestly still difficult for me to find words to articulate what the experience meant to me,” Scott said.

Truth is, her prior experience at the World Championships set her up for success.

“While I did not medal in 2006, the World Championships were my first international swim meet, and I gained a lot of valuable experience,” Scott said. “In 2009, the World Championships were short-course (racing in a 25-meter pool versus a 50-meter pool), which always presented a bit more of a challenge for me, as starts and flip-turns were never a strong point in any of my races. The World Championships in 2010 was probably one of my favorite meets, and it definitely provided some great experience leading up to London.”

Overall, Scott thanks Jimi, Davo and Amanda, as well as teammates, church leaders and her family, especially her mother.

Swimming wasn't her only success. She graduated from the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs and also holds an MBA from DeVry University.

"I honestly do not spend much time reflecting on my athletic accomplishments at this point as it feels like a long time ago," Scott said. "I have definitely appreciated the opportunities my swimming career brought me, as well as the wonderful people I have been able to cross paths with, so moments like these where I do get to spend a bit more time reminiscing on how blessed I have been are extra sweet."

### **Athlete: Katie Welch**

Katie was a swimmer from the Sugar Creek swim club who still holds an Ozark Record to this day from 1987 and only recently had her distance records broken.

At the 1987 Pan American Games, Katie won gold in the 200 Back setting a games record at 2:13.65, which is still the Ozark Record for 17-18 Girls. She also won silver in the 400 IM and was ranked in the Top 10 in the world heading into the 1988 Olympic Trials.

### **Athlete: Paul Young**

Paul's athletic career was a challenging one filled with difficult decisions and choices. Paul played freshman football and tried to stay involved with school activities but his passion and desire was to become the best swimmer he could.

During his time in Ozark, Paul finished in the Top 16 in USA swimming for each event competed. Paul had well over 40 of these top 16 rankings throughout his high school career with the highlight being ranked number 1 in his age group in 1985 in both the 200 backstroke and 400 IM both short and long course.

As Paul continued to grow as a swimmer, some of some accomplishments within our Region and Nationally include:

Region VIII champion 6 times in the 200 backstroke (3 short course – 3 long course)

Region VIII record holder in both the 200 Yard and Meter Backstroke

Regions VIII champion 4 times in the 400 Individual Medley (3 long course – 1 short course)

Regions VIII champion 4 times in the 200 Individual Medley (2 short course – 1 long course)

Member of multiple Region VIII relay winning teams

Paul made Junior Nationals as a Freshman in High School and placed in the Top 16 in the 200 Back. He moved up to 6<sup>th</sup> his Sophomore year and then won his Junior Year with a Junior National Meet Record, qualifying for Senior Nationals for the first time.

#### SENIOR NATIONALS (US CHAMPIONSHIPS)

In 1985, he was 2nd 200 meter backstroke which qualified him to represent the United States in the Pan Pacific Championships and the World University Games where his 200 Backstroke time was the 6<sup>th</sup> fastest in the World that year.

Paul was offered more than 50 Division I Full Swimming Scholarships and chose to compete at Auburn. He was a two time Olympic Trials Qualifier where he was All SEC in the 400 IM and 200 Back three years and two years in the 100 Back. He qualified for the NCAA Championship three straight years in the 200 Back, 400 IM and part of the 4 X 200 Free Relay.

Two time Olympic Trials Qualifier