

Swimming's Super Salesman

MATT MANN can talk for hours. Mostly he talks about swimming. But he'll also talk about his son and daughter—who coach swimming; his grandchildren—who swim; Oklahoma children—who don't swim; his summer camps—for swimmers; the Olympics—in swimming; the myth of the weaker sex—in competitive swimming; "his boys"—from past and present swimming teams.

And when the sport's best salesman finally pauses for breath, even the listener who doesn't know a swimming pool from a lily pond is ready to plunge right in.

Matthew Mann II has been laying siege to the swimming world for better than a half century. In 30 years at the University of Michigan, the Mann-coached teams took 16 Big Ten crowns, copped 13 national titles, placed second nine times, only three times finishing out of the country's top three. The Olympic team he piloted at Helsinki in 1952 won the world championship.

The Mann from Ann Arbor had achieved undisputed deanship in aquatic coaching circles. In 1957 he was elected to the Helms Foundation Hall of Fame. Last year Michigan voted him into its Sports Hall of Fame.

But Michigan had made its big mistake in 1956. A compulsory retirement rule was allowed to bench Matt Mann at age 70. That's when Athletic Director Bud Wilkin-

son hired himself a swimming coach, and Oklahoma began to learn what one man's enthusiasm can do for a floundering sport.

Heading into his fifth season at O.U., Mann can boast that his Oklahomans have never finished out of the national top ten. His first Sooner team was third in the nation—with the help of a fine aggregate of South African swimmers who came to Norman after the Olympics. The following year O.U. placed seventh and has been eighth for the past two years.

As for the Big Eight (only six of whom have swimming teams, with O.S.U. and Missouri lacking facilities), Mann never worries about conference competition—optimism that's a trifle unusual in Sooner coaches. Mann prefers to call it realism.

"I'll tell you if we're going to win. I'll tell you if we're going to have a tough time. I'll tell you if we're going to lose." He'll then recall that during his first four years the Sooners lost only one dual meet—to S.M.U. last year. And with four conference titles in his pocket, Matt Mann is a hard man to doubt.

Besides, Mann has had the personnel to do the job this year. Twelve lettermen returned to the squad and were joined by eight top sophomore contenders. For the first time, Mann has been forced to leave some of the boys home when the team travels. Forty swimmers came out this season.

The varsity is comprised of 20 swimmers for the Big Eight meets, 15 for dual competition.

Larry Lermo, a senior from Bend, Oregon, team captain, is the Big Eight freestyle distance champ at 220, 440 and 1,500 meters. Second only to Lermo in these events, Bob Connor, Gamboa, Canal Zone, senior, shares his teammate's all-American standing as do Gordon Collett, Carlyn Cruzon and Charles Lechner. All-Americans are the top ten men in each event as chosen by the national coaches association.

Collet, a junior from Belmont, California, is O.U.'s national champ and record-holder at the 100-yard breaststroke. Collet is followed closely in breaststroke events by senior teammate Carlyn Cruzon of Bartlesville.

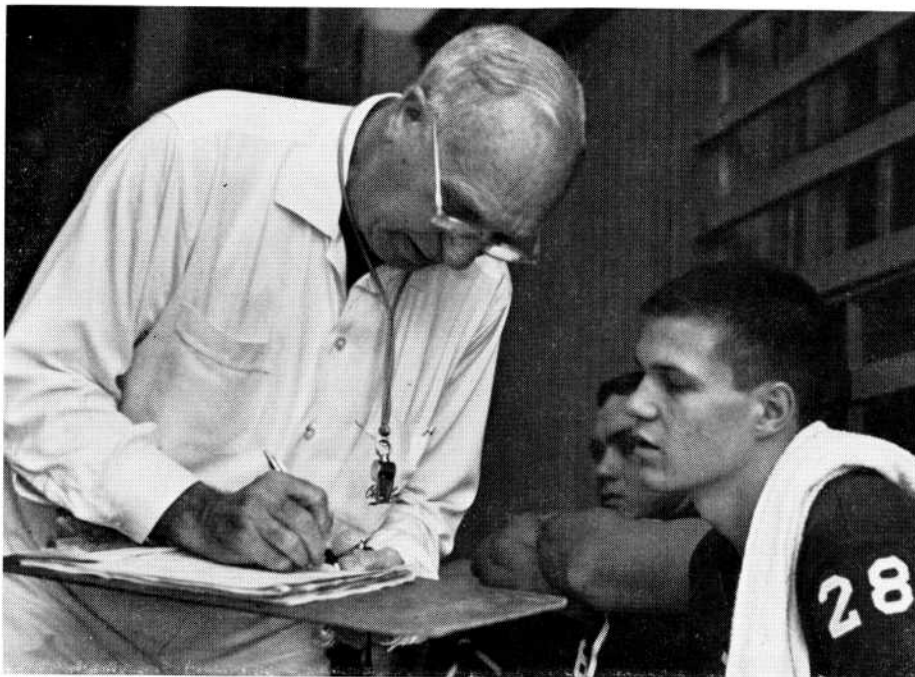
Symbolic of Mann's sophomore strength is Johnny Day of Oklahoma City, who is out-backstroking last year's Big Eight champ Charles Lechner, a senior from Lake Forest, Illinois. Tulsa sophomore Carl Zahn, who wasn't eligible until second semester, promises to collect the laurels in the butterfly events for several seasons to come.

Mann depends on sophomore freestylers Steve Skold, Campbell, California, and Barron Housel, Kentfield, California; junior Phil Brougher, Oklahoma City, and senior Big Eight 50-yard champ, Ernie Drowatzky, Wichita, Kansas, to add to O.U. point margins.

In the diving department seniors Johnny Williams, Jackson, Mississippi, and Harry Klug, Brooklyn, New York, and junior Lorne Hale, Peterborough, Ontario, have been holding their own.

The team works out twice a day, year around. Mann himself, who still maintains his home in Ann Arbor, is in Norman only during the season, from mid-November through March. But wherever he happens to be, Mann—at 75—doesn't spare himself the workout routine, swimming 500 yards a day when time allows.

Twelve of the Sooner swimmers are veterans of Matt Mann's summer swimming camps in Canada. Mann has had more than 200 all-American swimmers take part in the seven-week sessions. He and his wife own all the stock in the two camps. Their son, former national champion Matthew Mann III, swimming coach at Lansing-Sexton High School, Lansing, Michigan, runs the boys' camp, and a daughter, Mrs.



Coach Mann checks out one of "his boys" before a dual meet with Southern Methodist University. Last season S.M.U. handed the Sooners their first defeat in four years. O.U. took this meet 51 to 44.

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of the highest importance. When I was an undergraduate, I made a vow that, when in due course I became a lecturer, I would not think that lectures do any good as a method of instruction, but only as an occasional stimulus. So far as the abler students are concerned, I still take this view. Lectures as a means of instruction are traditional in universities and were no doubt useful before the invention of printing, but since that time they have been out of date as regards the abler kind of students.

It is, I am profoundly convinced, a mistake to object on democratic grounds to the separation of abler from less able pupils in teaching. In matters that the public considers important no one dreams of such an application of supposed democracy. Everybody is willing to admit that some athletes are better than others and that movie stars deserve more honour than ordinary mortals. That is because they have a kind of skill which is much admired even by those who do not possess it. But intellectual ability, so far from being admired by stupid boys, is positively and actively despised; and even among grown-ups, the term "egg-head" is not expressive of respect. It has been one of the humiliations of the military authorities of our time that the man who nowadays brings success in war is no longer a gentleman of commanding aspect, sitting upright upon a prancing horse, but a wretched scientist whom every military-minded boy would have bullied throughout his youth. However, it is not for special skill in slaughter that I would wish to see the "egg-head" respected.

The needs of the modern world have brought a conflict, which I think could be avoided, between scientific subjects and those that are called "cultural." The latter represent tradition and still have, in my country, a certain snobbish pre-eminence. Cultural ignorance, beyond a point, is despised. Scientific ignorance, however complete, is not. I do not think, myself, that the division between cultural and scientific education should be nearly as definite as it has tended to become. I think that every scientific student should have some knowledge of history and literature, and that every cultural student should have some

acquaintance with the basic ideas of science. Some people will say that there is not time, during the university curriculum, to achieve this. But I think that opinion arises partly from unwillingness to adapt teaching to those who are not going to penetrate very far into the subject in question. More specifically, whatever cultural education is offered to scientific students should not involve a knowledge of Latin or Greek. And I think that whatever of science is offered to those who are not going to specialize in any scientific subject should deal partly with scientific history and partly with general aspects of scientific method. I think it is a good thing to invite occasional lectures from eminent men to be addressed to the general body of students and not only to those who specialize in the subject concerned.

There are some things which I think it ought to be possible, though at present it is not, to take for granted in all who are engaged in university teaching. Such men or women must, of course, be proficient in some special skill. But, in addition to this, there is a general outlook which it is their duty to put before those whom they are instructing. They should exemplify the value of intellect and of the search for knowledge. They should make it clear that what at any time passes for knowledge may, in fact, be erroneous. They should include an undogmatic temper, a temper of continual search and not of comfortable certainty. They should try to create an awareness of the world as a whole, and not only of what is near in space and time. Through the recognition of the likelihood of error, they should make clear the importance of tolerance. They should remind the student that those whom posterity honours have very often been unpopular in their own day and that, on this ground, social courage is a virtue of supreme importance. Above all, every educator who is engaged in an attempt to make the best of the students to whom he speaks must regard himself as the servant of the truth and not of this or that political or sectarian interest. Truth is a shining goddess, always veiled, always distant, never wholly approachable, but worthy of all the devotion of which the human spirit is capable.

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Rosemary Mann Dawson, women's swim coach at Michigan University, runs the girls' camp.

Matt Mann is proud of the fact that his daughter was recently given the authority to field a varsity swimming team for women at Michigan, the first in collegiate competition. Fighting the prejudice against competitive swimming for women is one of Mann's favorite "causes." He points to his 11-year-old granddaughter, who recently swam the outdoor mile in 28 minutes, as an

example of his claim that girls need never take a back seat to boys in swimming competition.

Part of Mann's job at Oklahoma is encouraging swimming among the state's younger athletes. He contends that the shortage of collegiate swimmers in this area goes back to the fact that Oklahoma youngsters simply don't learn to swim.

"You can take a boy who's never played football in his life, and if he has the physical assets you can work with him a year and teach him how to play football," Mann theorizes. "But you've got to start a swimmer when he's 10 or 12 years old." Convincing the people of the state to build high school and community swimming pools and to teach their children to swim is part of Mann's mission.

Sooner facilities are described by Mann as "a nice pool but a barn to house it." However, he is enthusiastic over the possibility that the University may acquire the abandoned south Navy base and its excellent in-

door pool. At present the men's pool is located in a frame building back of the Field House with a seating capacity of 300 to 400. Most of the meets pack the building to overflowing.

When Matt Mann refers to "his boys," he means exactly that. Seldom if ever does he lose track of any of them. He considers them worthwhile human beings and doesn't recognize a failure in the bunch. And he has a clear conscience about persuading promising swimmers to come to Oklahoma—in fact, he sincerely believes he is doing them a favor.

"When I was at Michigan, all we heard about Oklahoma was football," he recalls. "But when I got down here, I found that Oklahoma was a good school where these boys can get a good education. That's what's important.

"I was a Michigan man for 30 years, and I didn't think that I could ever be anything else," Mann will tell you emphatically. "But I'm an Oklahoma man now."