

ROW SWIMMING

APRIL 2025 NEWSLETTER

MEET HIGHLIGHTS:

Cunningham Classic

ROW'S FAST AND FREE
INITIATIVE

SWIM-A-THON 2025

COACHES' SPOTLIGHT:

Ron Forrest

FUN FACT ABOUT OLYMPICS:

Tied for Gold: The
Surprising Olympic
Tradition You Didn't Know
About!

*Region of Waterloo
Swim Club*

ROW AIMS TO PROVIDE
OPPORTUNITIES FOR EACH OF ITS
ATHLETES TO ATTAIN THEIR MAXIMUM
INDIVIDUAL POTENTIAL IN THE SPORT
OF COMPETITIVE SWIMMING.



Meet Highlights:

Cunningham Classic

CUNNINGHAM CLASSIC

The Cunningham Classic is named in honor of Angus Cunningham, one of the longest-serving officials at the Region of Waterloo Swim Club. This meet is a tribute to Angus and his unwavering commitment to the club. Even after his daughter graduated in 2011, Angus has continued to serve ROW year after year. His dedication to the club and his ability to create an athlete-focused environment make him a cornerstone of our swim community.



MEET LOGISTICS

The first meet after March Break is designed to ease athletes back into racing while setting the tone for the rest of the season. Junior and less experienced swimmers are learning to transition from short course meters (SCM) to long course meters (LCM) racing, facing a valuable learning curve. This meet marks an important starting point for a new training block, and for many athletes in SD, RSA Comp, AGD, JD1, and JD2 groups, it will be their first experience racing in an LCM format.

DAY 1: LONG DISTANCE

Day 1 of the meet focused on distance events, with races offered in the 400 IM, 800 Free, and 1500 Free. Several athletes took on distance racing for the first time, including Ankit D and Ananya P in the 400 Free, and Parnia A in the 400 IM. Many swimmers competed in the 800 Free, such as Miran D, Eliza L, Sadie R, and others, while a large group, including Le Anne D, Nathan L, and Mia T, tackled the 1500 Free. The day featured strong performances, highlighted by Kate H achieving her second OSC standard, officially qualifying her for the 2025 Summer OSCs.



DAY 2: BUILDING ENDURANCE- MORE RACING!

Day 2 challenged both juniors and seniors with tough racing conditions designed to build endurance and resilience. Juniors raced early in the morning, an unusual experience for 12&U swimmers, focusing on maintaining effort, technique, and body position, especially in the second half of long course meters (LCM) lengths. Many competed using converted seed times, and some, like Ellen B (100 Fly) and Nora H (200 Fly), raced new events for the first time. Seniors faced intense back-to-back sessions with just 1.5 hours between, testing their ability to fuel, recover, and push through fatigue. Despite the demanding schedule, there was incredibly spirited racing, with some athletes even achieving lifetime personal bests in their fifth and sixth events of the day—an impressive feat given the meet's design.

Cunningham Classic



DAY 3: TEAM RELAYS

Day 3 brought a high-energy sprint session where all age groups raced together, creating an electric atmosphere and a strong sense of unity on the busiest pool deck of the year at WLU. Athletes worked collaboratively to ensure everyone could warm up and compete effectively. One of the day's standout moments was the non-traditional 300 Free Relay, where teams were formed based on a combined age of 68 years or under, mixing swimmers across different training groups. Led by National Development athletes swimming the first 100m, it was thrilling to see the teamwork across levels. The women's B team—Le Anne D, Athena L, Stella N, Chloe F, and Dakota L—captured first place and the gift basket prize, while the top men's team—Lucas LB, Ethan W, Liam B, Harry F, and Sebastian F—finished a strong second.

ELIMINATOR EVENT & CLUB RECORD

Cunningham Classic

The exciting Eliminator event took place on Day 3, featuring multiple rounds of 50s with elimination after each race. Although technical issues limited the event to only the first two rounds, athletes showed outstanding speed, stamina, and racing spirit, pushing through increasing fatigue. A big shout-out to all swimmers who qualified for this high-energy, non-traditional event across Fly, Back, Breast, and Free:

Fly Qualifiers:

- Girls: Athena L, Angelica C, Sophie R, Ishita P, Le Anne D, Esther S, Olivia G, Sunny X, Erin G, Abigail C, Mia T
- Boys: Zade M, Ethan W, Beckett S, Aris C, Sebastian H, Nic W, Jackson W, Michael T, Tiger Q, Oliver O, Lucas LB, Joseph L, Nathan L, Kentaro D, Edy N

Backstroke Qualifiers:

- Girls: Violet P, Alex S, Anna G-F, Le Anne D, Olivia G, Sunny X, Mia T, Erin G, Megan B, Dakota L
- Boys: Zade M, Ethan W, Oliver M, Nic W, Xavier H, Oliver O, Nathan B, Lucas LLB, Kentaro D, Nathan W, Cam S, Sebastian F

Breaststroke Qualifiers:

- Girls: Athena L, Neha V, Emilia T, Sophie R, Anna G-F, Ishita P, Ananya P, Kate H, Camilla C, Dakota L, Gabby H
- Boys: Zade M, Leo SM, Beckett S, Aris C, Sebastian H, Nic W, Michael T, Xavier H, Tiger Q, Edy N, Nathan W, Joseph L, Nathan L, Sebastian F, Cam S

Freestyle Qualifiers:

- Girls: Athena L, Violet P, Sophie R, Alex S, Olivia G, Le Anne D, Esther S, Sunny X, Mia T, Megan B, Abigail C
- Boys: Ethan W, Leo SM, Aris C, Oliver M, Beckett S, Sebastian H, Michael T, Tiger Q, Xavier H, Joseph L, Lucas LB, Nathan L, Kentaro D

Club Records: Chris Rus set two new club records in the 11/12 Boys LCM category, clocking 35.53 in the 50 Breast and 29.83 in the 50 Fly.



COACHES' CORNER

RON FORREST



You've been a part of ROW since you started swimming as an age-group swimmer. How would you say that ROW has grown and changed throughout the years?

I was part of ROW from when I started competitive swimming at age 10 until I was about 16 years old. Between then and now, there were almost 40 years, so hopefully my memory serves me. I think the biggest change that I can see now that I have come back to ROW is that it is a much bigger program now, with many more groups than when I was young. When I was growing up through ROW, we had basically one track, and you started as a Novice and moved up through two Novice groups, then to a group called Age Group 2, then to Age Group 1B and Age Group 1A (the equivalent of the PD1 group I coach now). From there, you moved on to Seniors (or ND, as we have today). The team, if I remember correctly, was only about 200 swimmers, and we had only about five or six coaches on staff at the time. And we only used WLU. The Rec Center didn't exist, and we didn't use any of the other facilities around the two cities we use today.

What's one piece of advice you always give to your swimmers, especially before an important race?

I think the biggest piece of advice I try to remember to pass along to swimmers, especially at big meets or important swims where maybe someone is wanting to qualify for something or place at a certain level, is to just race the rest of the field. I've found over the years, if swimmers obsess about "making a time" or something along those lines, a lot of times you tend to "swim away" from them—meaning there's so much mental clutter and stress going on, it's actually tiring, and swimmers end up underperforming regardless of how ready they might be to accomplish the goal. The best way to swim a great time, or break a record, or win something is to just race. If you can let yourself get drawn into the fun (gasp... swimming is fun??) of trying to beat seven other people and remembering some technical details on how to win the race (i.e., a better last underwater off a final wall), a lot of times you will find a swimmer will find extra effort and will push themselves harder. And many times, this is what gets them to achieve the original goal desired. I use the example that in the Olympic Games, when eight swimmers line up in a final, nobody cares what their times are at the end. Nobody cares if it was a best time. Everyone in an Olympic final is simply racing to get their hand on the wall first to try and win that Olympic gold. However, Olympic finals usually also end up being very fast, and many records are broken and best times done as the result of worrying about doing everything they can do just trying to race to get their hand on the wall first.

COACHING

PD1 &

WLU VARSITY

What are some of the biggest challenges when coaching at the highest level of the sport?

I've found the greatest challenge of coaching elite-level athletes is just the unknowns—the surprises, especially if they are setbacks. Elite athletes are just like normal people: things go right with them, and sometimes things go wrong. You can do all the planning in the world, laying out almost to the week what you will do to help your athlete achieve elite performance at the right time. Then bad luck strikes, wipes everything out, and you have to be ready with contingency plans or alternatives. This is where the ability to be flexible—to throw out a plan and make a new one, or just try to muddle through until a situation is fixed and you can get the athlete back on track—is needed. In the lead-up to the 2004 Olympics, our path to the top of the podium in the two years prior was littered with hurdles and setbacks, including things like a completely blown-out ACL, minor heart surgery and a major cardiac issue, a lower spine disc herniation, and—last but not least—contracting mononucleosis 60 days out from the Olympic Trials. None of these will ever appear on long-term development plans for most people. But, as they say, life happens. So the biggest challenge isn't the planning—it's how you deal with the roadblocks when they come. Because elite athletes are still people. And things will happen.

What's the most important thing you have found is best for longevity in swimming?

One of my main goals over the years is to make sure that, as a coach, you are setting up your athletes for the best chance at longevity in the sport—which, usually from my time coaching in America, means being able to remain in the sport and be competitive for four years of college, where at that time, most swimmers reach retirement. Everything we did was based on this principle, and I think one of the most important pieces to this is: PERSPECTIVE.

I think it is crucial to make sure that everyone involved understands the concept that, at its core, we are playing a game. And games generally are supposed to be FUN (there's that word again). Is swimming hard sometimes? Sure. Is it stressful? Yup. Can you question if it's fun? That's actually natural if you are pushing your own limits at times. But people need to remember perspective.

This can be an athlete understanding that not every swim, or even every season, is going to be a smashing success—and understanding that swimming is a months- and years-long sport, not a days- and weeks-long one. Parents need to remember perspective—that this is something for the swimmers, and that being overly overbearing or over-demanding takes the fun out of it (regardless of whether the athlete says it out loud or not). Coaches need to remember perspective when moving an athlete through their swimming careers. Not all swimmers will be able to do what a coach thinks should be done at certain points, and excessive expectations—and the weight that can bring—can also drain the fun from the sport.

I think over the course of years (and for some elite athletes, even decades), the athletes and the support group around them that keep their perspectives are the ones that go highest and farthest.

I was once given the best example of what we do—even in an Olympic Games final—that I have kept with me. And that is: all sports can be broken down to ancient times when two people stood together and one said (probably smiling), "Hey... I'll race you to that tree and back."

That's all we are doing. Racing to the tree and back.

Perspective. Keep it, and you will go far.

Introducing “Fast and Free” *ROW's Mental Health Awareness Campaign*

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and at ROW Swim Club, we're launching a new initiative to bring mental health to the forefront of our community—“Fast and Free.” This campaign is dedicated to the memory of Veradis “Vera” Romero Nielsen, a beloved member of our club whose journey reminds us of the importance of supporting one another, both in and out of the pool.

To commemorate Vera's passion for swimming her coach Kaitlyn coined the term “Fast and Free” to capture the spirit Vera brought to every race—especially the 50-meter freestyle, which was her favourite event. The phrase now lives on in our club, symbolizing both speed in the water and the feeling of freedom that comes with being your true self. In honour of Vera's legacy, we're encouraging athletes and families to use #fastandfree on social media or through written testimonies throughout May, sharing what makes them feel proud, resilient, and supported.

We're proud to continue the Fast and Free Award, which will be presented at our year-end picnic. This award recognizes a swimmer who embodies Vera's spirit—demonstrating strength, courage, and kindness towards others.

As part of our campaign, we'll also be welcoming a guest speaker to talk with our athletes about mental resilience and mindset, focusing on how to honour ourselves even when things don't go as planned in the pool. Our goal is to help each swimmer feel strong, valued, and empowered to reach out for support when needed. Yes, I like this statement – asking for help without shame or stigma needs to be taught – especially for the quieter athletes.

Let's celebrate Vera's memory together by championing mental health awareness at ROW. Join us this May, embrace what “Fast and Free” means to you, and help foster a stronger, more open community.

Fast & Free





SWIM-A-THON 2025



Huge congratulations to everyone for raising an amazing \$17,267 for the ROW Swim Team! Your hard work and dedication are truly inspiring, and we couldn't have done it without each of you.

The big day arrived – the Swim-a-Thon! It was an exciting event as swimmers showcased their skills, and top fundraisers were awarded amazing prizes. The social room buzzed with energy as everyone who participated had a chance to win in the raffles! We also made a thrilling update to the Swim-a-Thon Raffle: for every \$25 raised (previously \$100), participants earned a ticket for the prize draw. And there were plenty of incredible swimming prizes up for grabs, making it an unforgettable day!

- The top 3 individuals raised the most funds:
 1. Beckett Shannon – \$1300
 2. Zade Moellenkamp – \$1050
 3. Sadie Robb – \$1000
- The highest group fundraiser was PD1, raising \$3235, followed by PD2 with \$2874.50, and JD2 with \$2480.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this event a success! The results are based on data collected as of April 4. A portion of the funds raised will go toward purchasing a new underwater camera system to enhance training and support our swimmers' development.

EXCEEDED!

**FUNDRAISING
TARGET:
\$12,000**



#GOROWNATION

www.rowswimming.ca

communications@rowswimming.ca

OUR SPONSORS

WALTERFEDY



FUN FACT

ABOUT

OLYMPICS



SHARING GOLD:

When Every Two-Thousandth of a Second Counts

In the 1984 Olympics, something epic happened: Carrie Steinseifer and Nancy Hogshead shared the gold medal in the 100-meter freestyle! That was the first time in Olympic history that swimmers tied for gold. Fast forward to 2016 in Rio, where Simone Manuel from the U.S. and Penny Oleksiak from Canada did the same thing in the women's 100-meter freestyle. Gold for both!

But here's the fun part: the tradition of sharing medals actually started way back in 1972 at the Olympics. It was during the men's 400-meter individual medley, where Sweden's Gunnar Larsson and American Tim McKee both finished with the exact same time—4:31.98. But after checking the timing system, officials realized that Larsson touched the wall just two thousandths of a second faster than McKee. Guess what? They gave Larsson the gold, but they also decided that from that point forward if swimmers tied down to the hundredth of a second, they'd share the medal.** So, if you're almost as fast as the other guy, you both get the gold!

So here's the secret: you don't need to be the fastest swimmer to grab that Olympic gold. You just need to be close enough to match the time down to the hundredth of a second. Pretty cool, right? You could be standing on the podium too!

Over the last fifty years, we've sent 12 swimmers to the Olympics, including Alec Elliot (Rio 2016), Keith Beavers (Beijing 2008), and Jennifer Fratesi (Athens 2004). Who knows? You could be next!



THIS COULD BE YOU!

EVENT 20		HEAT 15
LANE	PLACE	TIME
1	3	14:55.67
2	5	15:02.89
3	6	15:22.10
4	1	14:26.38

** Source: Lohn, J.P. The Most Memorable Moments Olympic Swimming, Rowman & Littlefield, 2014

INTRODUCING ASSISTANT COACHES

PART 3



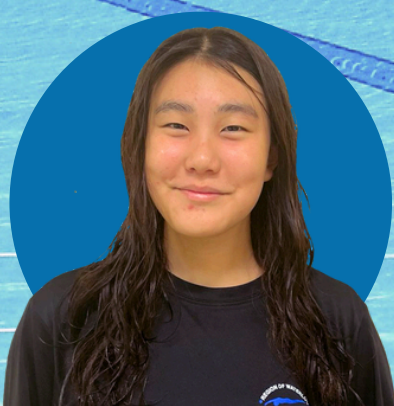
ADELINA NGUYEN

	SWIM EXPERIENCE	10 YEARS
	COACH EXPERIENCE	~5 YEARS
	FUN FACT	CAN MAKE BALLON DOG
	FAVOURITE FOOD	POKE
	FAVOURITE SPORT	SWIMMING



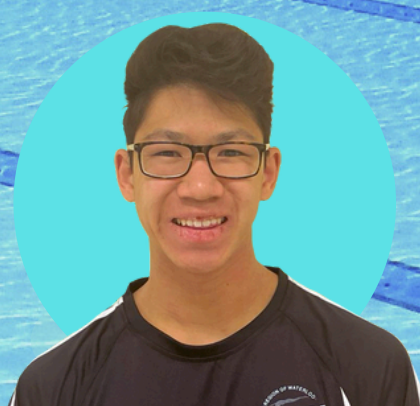
KSENIA TITOURA

	SWIM EXPERIENCE	9 YEARS
	COACH EXPERIENCE	>4 YEARS
	FUN FACT	LOVES BAKING
	FAVOURITE FOOD	CALIFORNIA SUSHI
	FAVOURITE SPORT	SWIMMING



ERIN GUO

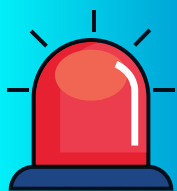
	SWIM EXPERIENCE	4 YEARS
	COACH EXPERIENCE	2 YEARS
	FUN FACT	HAS TWO BIRDS
	FAVOURITE FOOD	TACO
	FAVOURITE SPORT	SWIMMING



TYSEN WONG

	SWIM EXPERIENCE	8 YEARS
	COACH EXPERIENCE	DNS
	FUN FACT	KNOWS KUNG FU
	FAVOURITE FOOD	PANCAKES
	FAVOURITE SPORT	SWIMMING

IMPORTANT UPDATES



IMPORTANT DATES

- May-2-4th Travel Meet Windsor
- May 4th Novice Meet
- May 9-11th GMAC & Top Cup
- May 14th Club Championship
- May 19th All groups OFF
- May 24-25th Mallard's invitational
- May 30-31st MAC Rising Star



UPDATES

- Swim Ontario Distance Camp Invitation – Sunny X – March 24th – 26th
- Swim Ontario – Canada Summer Games preselection #3 – April 24th – Le Anne D & Sunny X
- WLU to be closed May 5th & June 10th-17th – Changeroom renovations, members will be receiving more information once pool time is finalized
- Introducing our Post Graduate Swimming program—an exciting opportunity for athletes to keep pushing towards their swimming goals after high school!



GROUP RESTRUCTURING

The coaches are currently working on group restructuring. As mentioned at the AGM, a new group, PD3, may be introduced for the 2025/2026 season to further strengthen our programming structure. This restructuring will carefully consider factors such as age gaps, athlete progression, and appropriate meet schedules for each age group.

SPRING: GO ROW GO!!!



THANKS OUR VOLUNTEERS

- A big thank you to our travel committee for organizing the travel meeting and handling all the complex logistics.
- We also want to express our gratitude to the volunteer officials at the Cunningham Classic, especially for the challenging but exciting eliminator event. Setting it up and managing the timing system was no easy task!





Keep Swimming, Keep Smiling!



**Compete with Heart,
Win with Pride!**

Push Hard, Swim Strong!

#GOROWNATION



THANK YOU TO OUR AMAZING
VOLUNTEER OFFICIALS!!



DAKTRONICS

Welcome to 2025
Cunningham Class



Thank you