

## Local Olympic clinic is golden

### Small classes of 41 lead to great times in swimming

By HANK VERESCHZAGIN/Democrat sports staff



Mark Henderson, who won a gold medal in the 1996 Olympics, shows hand placement during the butterfly. (Deo Ferrer/Daily Democrat)

they do."

Santos shocked the swimming world at the 1992 National Championships in Indianapolis by beating Mike Barrowman in the 200-meter breaststroke.

In the previous trials, Santos lost by 10 seconds to Barrowman in the same race.

"I decided, 'How good could I be,'" Santos said. "You have to chose things you are passionate about. There are people out there to help you, but it's up to you."

Santos, a Chico native, decided he wanted to be better.

In Indianapolis, Santos defeated Barrowman, who had five world-record times in the



Roque Santos, who swam the breaststroke in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, shows how to reach out during the stroke. (Deo Ferrer/Daily Democrat)

It worked out beautifully. Instead of 50 swimmers hitting the pool while trying to improve either the breaststroke, butterfly, backstroke or freestyle and possibly not ever being seen, many times swimmers went out solo in a lane.

Smiles were aplenty Saturday at Charles Brooks Community Swim Center.

They just weren't coming from the 41 swimmers who partook in the very intimate coaching from four former Olympians, but also from those same people who reached the apex of their chosen field.

"When we were growing up we went to clinics like this," said Sean Killion, who participated in the 1992 Barcelona games. "Having something like this can be motivating. These kids get to see that we're just people who got there because of hard work, a little luck and all that good stuff."

Roque Santos, who also competed in the '92 Barcelona games, stressed that when he met with an afternoon session Saturday.

"I'm just

a normal guy," he said to his group of seven. "Sean, Haley (Cope) and Mark Henderson are really inspirational. They are the best in the world at what



Haley Cope, who won silver in the 2004 Olympics, shows swimmers how to get a full turn in the backstroke Saturday. (Deo Ferrer/Daily Democrat)

three previous years, by 0.04 seconds, winning in 2 minutes, 13.5 seconds.

Watching the tape of that race with his group, Santos kept the tape rolling up to the point where he was shown kissing Barrowman's left forearm.

"I have respect for him," Santos said. "Many races someone screams after winning. I thought that was disrespectful."

Kelly Newsom, who coordinated the Olympian Clinic, couldn't hide her excitement over the turnout for the first event. Forty-one swimmers took up 71 sessions, leaving class sizes very small.

"We could've had 120 kids max," she said. "Considering this is our (Woodland Swim Team) fund-raiser you would want as many people as possible, but I'm really glad it ended up like this. Most of the sessions had just 10 kids so each one had an hour-and-a-half with an Olympian paying attention to their child."

"My grandmother's stroke is faster," joked Henderson with a few of his swimmers working on the butterfly. Then he spent the next few minutes explaining how the stroke should be performed.

Henderson won a gold medal as part of the men's 400 medley relay team in the 1996 Atlanta games. He jumped at the chance to help out the Newsoms and their clinic.

"We need our swimmers to have the opportunity to experience something like this," Henderson said. "The U.S. has talented swimmers and we have to maintain that talent. It's hard to keep kids in swimming because there are so many other things like football, baseball and basketball."

Plus it's a chance to pass on knowledge to the upcoming talent pool.

"We might be able to teach them something that took us 20 years to learn," Henderson said.

It's that communal feeling that pervaded Santos' thoughts about Saturday at Charles Brooks Community Swim Center.

"Swimming is a small community that is tight-knit," Santos said. "When an opportunity comes up like this we usually say yes. We're all friends."

Jon Newsom swam at Cal-Berkeley with Santos, Killion and Henderson. Cope, who hails from Chico, also attended Cal.

Each one agreed that if Kelly Newsom ever called again, her wishes would be granted again.

"It's kind of cool for kids their age to meet an Olympian," Cope said. "You kind of forget how cool that could be. I've never said no to anyone in Northern California. This is a pool I grew up in. They can call me anytime."