

# SARA JAMES

Inducted 2004

Sara James was one of the most outstanding national level swimmers ever to come out of Minnesota. She was selected as a member of the United States national teams for five consecutive years, narrowly missed making our Olympic team for two different Olympiads, and once held American Records in one individual and two relay events.

Born in Duluth, Minnesota, Sara's family moved to Bloomington when she was five years old. She began swimming with the Bloomington Aquatic Club at age seven. From the beginning, Sara was fast at all events with backstroke eventually emerging as her specialty. She moved through the age group program setting countless records and earning many high point awards.

Sara's first national competition came in 1968 when she was twelve years old. That year she went to the Junior Olympics in Knoxville, Tennessee. When she was in junior and senior high school, girls' high school sports were still a few years away from formation. By then Sara was on the club's senior team, coached by Bud Ericksen.

1970 was a big year for Sara. She qualified for her first Senior National Meet and had an outstanding Junior Olympic Meet winning both the 100-meter butterfly and backstroke, as well as placing fourth in the 200-meter individual medley.

From 1971 through 1976, Sara placed at all her short and long course national competitions. She consistently finished among the top five, and in 1972, at the Coaches Nationals, was first in the 100-meter and 200-meter backstroke. During these six years Sara was ranked in the top twenty-five times in the world in one or more events.

For five consecutive years, beginning in 1972, Sara was selected to United States National Teams. While on those squads, she swam for the United States in England, South America, Australia, and twice in Germany. Sara had effortless and efficient technique. She taught and demonstrated at stroke clinics conducted by the United States' team in South America.

In 1973 in Port au Spain, Trinidad, Sara was on an American record setting 200-meter medley relay. Three years later, in Bremen, Germany, she set American short course records in the 200-meter backstroke, and as a member of the 400-meter freestyle relay.

Sara also went to the Olympic trials in 1972, and again in 1976. The first time she missed making the team by one place and the second time by four places.

After her competitive years were over, she spent ten years coaching at swim clubs in the Twin City area. During the last three of these years she was also girls' swimming coach at Wayzata High School. She had strong squads that finished fifth, sixth, and

second at the State Meet, and in 1988, she received the high school Girls' Swimming Coach of the Year award.

While her involvement in competition ended in 1988, she never lost her love for swimming and has continued to swim for fitness throughout her adult life.