

JOHN HARTMANN

Inducted 2003

John Hartman was a Minnesota swimming pioneer and a prominent figure in the sport for more than fifty years. Swimming was his great love. He started as a competitive swimmer and a lifeguard, compiled an outstanding record while coaching boys swimming at Blake for thirty-two years, and was in charge of the American Red Cross water safety and first aid instruction for the Minneapolis Area chapter from 1941 to 1967.

The former Minneapolis Central High School swimmer made his favorite sport his life's work, coaching the Blake boys swimming team from 1925 until 1957. During that time his won-loss record was 280-95. He only once had a team whose record was under .500, and all this was accomplished without a pool on the Blake campus. The team practiced and had their home meets in downtown Minneapolis at the Minneapolis Club.

For most of the years that John coached there were not many high school teams in the metro area, and even fewer pools. Blake had meets against most of the Minneapolis city schools, YMCA teams, St. Thomas, Cretin, U High, Rochester, Winona, and their big rival, Shattuck.

Blake and Shattuck were usually the swimming powers in the southern half of the state. In 1933, Blake posted its first win over Shattuck and recorded its first undefeated season. Other unbeaten seasons came in 1947 and 1954. They also were Twin City champs four times.

There were other meets against colleges. Blake won about half the time against the likes of Gustavus, Carlton and the University of Minnesota.

The private schools were not allowed in the public high school state meets while John coached. However, they did take part in year ending meets put on by the YMCA, the AAU, and the University, which hosted the Northwest Open. They finished first three times and rarely placed lower than third in these competitions.

In the late 1940's, a Private School State Meet was started. This continued until all high schools were made a part of the MSHSL. In 1952, Blake was the Independent School State Champion.

John's swimmers remember him for his instruction, his example and his inspiration. "For each of us," his athletes stated, "he set a standard higher than we thought possible, and he made us reach it." Who will ever forget his awesome bellow, "Come on, you can do it!"

Many of his team members went on to become outstanding college swimmers at various schools, from Yale to Stanford and many campuses in between, including the University of Minnesota.

When John started with the Red Cross in 1941 it had four volunteers. He built the program to more than 600, and the Minneapolis Star commented in 1953 that the number of people John had taught to swim would populate the city of Duluth.

In 1963, Blake opened the John Hartman swimming pool, a place where he attended meets and taught swimming classes for faculty and alumni.

John's death in 1980 brought to a close the career of this swimming pioneer, but his legacy continues.