

Rowdy roars with inspiration

IT MATTERED, what Rowdy Gaines had to say to about 60 people Monday at Farmington Hills Mercey. But it was more important that he was there.

There wasn't much he could tell a group that size in a 90-minute session that would be of practical use. Sure, he could show them a few things, give them a couple of tips, and maybe, just maybe, it would help one of the aspiring young swimmers in the audience win a race some day.



C.J. Risak

But that wasn't the true purpose for Gaines' appearance. He wouldn't be able to perform someone's stroke, or work with individuals to improve turns. But he could provide a much-needed ingredient in a swimmer's diet — inspiration.

"The nice thing is, they get to see him," Mercey and Redford Catholic Central swim coach Chuck McClune pointed out. "It sinks in a little deeper when an Olympic champion comes in and tells you something. If I say it, it might go in one ear and out the other. But when Rowdy Gaines says it, they do it."

GAINES was everything a group of high school swimmers — the vast majority of those in attendance — could have wished for. He was expressive, extremely friendly, informal, charming. He dressed the part, too: worn-out jeans, Reeboks and a USA National Swimming Team T-shirt — the laid-back California look most swimmers relate to.

He was anything but aloof. He related his own feelings toward swimming in a brief talk, then changed into his swim suit and plunged into Mercey's pool to conduct a short lesson. To the children and developed into, as he described it, just the "basics of freestyle — very basic stuff."

His is not your typical swimming success story. Unlike many of his peers who started competitive swimming as children and developed into stars, Gaines didn't start until he was 17, when he joined his high school team in Florida. Two years later he was competing in every free event from 50 to 500 yards at Auburn University.

And just eight years after going out for his high school team, Gaines was an Olympic gold medalist in the 100-meter mens freestyle.

HE BROUGHT that gold medal, which he won at the Los Angeles games, with him to show his admirers. Pass it around, he told his audience. Just make sure I get it back.

He told them of the high regard he had for swimming. "There's no doubt in my mind," Gaines said, "that you guys train harder for your sport than

any other athletic does for his. No-body else is in the ballpark. You put so much dedication into it. And I'll tell you something: I'll carry over into your whole life."

Imagine the effect his words had on that audience. Unlike basketball or football or baseball, swimmers have few role models — and they are only visual during Olympic years. Since financial success is rarely linked to swimming prowess, the sport has a shortage of spokesmen.

Gaines is one of the few. Sure, he gets paid for his appearances (\$750 for coming to Mercey, airfare included). But when a high school kid dives into a chilly swimming pool on a freezing winter morning, it will be worthwhile if he can remember something positive from Gaines' words, his experiences.

Heroes are important to youth. Too often the adored athletes want to dodge the responsibility of their success. It's never easy to figure out why some are worshipped, while others — more suited to the role — are bypassed.

But being a hero in the public's eye is not open to auditions. It is sim-

ply bestowed, with or without consent. When you become a public figure, you must be ready and willing to accept fame and adulation.

GAINES SEEMED unaffected by both. He related to his audience as equals, although it's improbable any of those present would reach his stature. He let them fondle his medal, then snap photo after photo of him; he let himself be induced to sign his name in all sorts of places, from goggles to T-shirts, kickboards to posters — even the walls in the boys locker room.

He answered all sorts of questions, including why he changed his first name. "I've always been called Rowdy," he answered, chronicling its origin back to the "Rawhide" TV series. "And," he added with a grin, "my real name is a family name: Ambrose Gaines III."

He raffied off a pair of goggles he wore at the '84 Olympics, signed a few more autographs, raffied off the USA National Swim Team T-shirt he was wearing, signed more autographs, then finally left — more than a half-hour later than scheduled — to catch his plane.

Gaines left behind more than his signature, a pair of goggles and a T-shirt, though; he left behind some solid advice, needed encouragement, and inspiration to a bunch of kids greedy for such guidance, whose sport rarely provides such moments.

Thanks, Rowdy.



Return of season lures quail hunters

My dad had the best quail dog I've ever seen. His nose was so good he'd find quail anywhere. One day, a man came by the house, and the dog started going crazy.

"Wait a minute," my dad said. "Do you have a quail in your coat pocket?"

"No," replied the man.

"Have you been hunting quail today or been around quail?" Dad asked.

"No," replied the man.

"I don't understand it. The dog only acts like this when there's a quail around," explained Dad. "Anyway, what's your name?" Dad asked, extending his hand.

"Bob White," replied the stranger.

— Jerry Chipetta at a local outdoor show

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources. "We've kept a watch on them since 1978, and the population has been up and down. But the last three winters have been pretty mild, and a few counties that are adjacent to each other now have enough birds to open the season back up."

Oakland and Wayne are two of those 19 counties along with Macomb, St. Clair, Lapeer, Genesee, Shiawassee, Tuscola and Sanilac to the north. To the south and west, open quail hunting will be allowed in Monroe, Lenawee, Hillsdale, Branch, Calhoun, Jackson, Washtenaw, Livingston, Ingham and Eaton.

The bag limit is five per day, 10 in possession and 15 for the season.

MALE QUAIL establish their breeding territory in the spring by whistling. White the male birds are conducting this whistling activity is when the DNR conducts its whistling survey.

A 20-mile route is established in every county, and a DNR field biologist travels the route keeping track of the number of birds heard whistling. The biologist must bear at least 10 different birds before the area is considered for an open hunt.

"Quail hunting is a very enjoyable hunt," said Nederveld. "You'll need a dog. It's difficult to flush them without a dog, but when you bust a covey (a group of quail) they'll fly in every direction possible. The adult birds will then whistle a covey call to let the other birds know where they are. Then they'll covey up again."

Bill Parker is happy to answer questions readers may have about the outdoors. Successful deer hunters are also urged to send in your success stories. Send your name, phone number and information about the deer including sex, date and county where it was taken along with a brief explanation of how the deer was taken to: *Outdoors, Observer and Eccentric, 1225 Bowers, Birmingham 48012.*

outdoors calendar

IMPORTANT EVENTS AND DATES

- Through Nov. 14 — Sighting-in Days at the Western Wayne County Conservation Association in Plymouth Township. The fee is \$5 and the ranges are open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Call 453-9843 for details.
- Today — A dinner party and auction, sponsored by the Huron Valley Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, will be held at the Warren Valley Country Club in Dearborn Heights. Eighty-four percent of the proceeds from this fundraising event will remain in the state. For more information, call Hugh Marx at 477-6953.
- Oct. 28 — Quail season opens in 19 counties. Check the Michigan Waterfowl Hunting Guide for details.

- Nov. 2 — Monthly meeting of the Livonia-based Four Seasons Fishing Club. A family-oriented clinic designed to help anglers enjoy the fun of fishing while learning the skills needed to avoid being skunked, will be held at 7:30 p.m. at the Maplewood Center in Garden City. Guest speaker will be Bill Taylor, field tester for Lure-Jensen. Taylor will speak on river fishing for salmon and steelhead from small boats. Visitors are welcome. For details, call Anthony Brecher at 477-3816.

- An organizational meeting of the Independence Oaks and Addison Oaks Woodland Park will be held at 1:30 p.m. Sunday at the Independence Oaks Nature Center. Volunteers are being recruited. For details, call 659-2393 or 693-8656.
- Paper Caper, a mini class in which youngsters can learn about the origins of paper along with cutting, folding and coloring tricks, will be offered at 10 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 5 at Independence Oaks. For details, call 625-6472.
- Camping is offered through the weekend at both Addison Oaks, near Oxford (693-2432), and Groveland Oaks, near Holly (634-9811).

north to James Bay, will be offered at 1 p.m. Tuesday at Stony Creek.

- Saturday Morning Stuff, a workshop for children ages 6-12, which will explore Thanksgiving traditions, will be offered at 10 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 5, at Stony Creek.
- Toys-N-Thanksgiving, a workshop for children ages 3-5, which will explore Thanksgiving traditions, will be held at 10 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 6 at Stony Creek.
- A Look At Michigan Wildlife, a slide program and discussion about the creatures that live in the outdoors of Michigan, will be held at 1 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 6, at Stony Creek.
- Most Metropark programs are free but all require advance registration and a motor vehicle permit. For registration and additional information, call the Metroparks at 1-800-24-PARKS.

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