

LIFE & ARTS

DAVID KIRBY has been swimming laps in the pool for more than half a century. At 75, he considers the resulting green-tinted hair and goggle marks around his eyes badges of honor.

Mr. Kirby was a Division I swimmer at Georgia Tech in Atlanta, where he excelled at the butterfly stroke. After college, he switched to running, logging 60 to 65 miles a week. In his early 30s he developed bursitis, an inflammation of the fluid-filled sacs that cushion the joints, in the ball of his foot. Unable to run, he returned to the pool.

Mr. Kirby joined a Masters swimming program near his home in New Canaan, Conn. After years of running alone, he enjoyed the Masters workouts. "Some of these guys are nationally ranked," he says. "They push me but also give me invaluable pointers on stroke technique." He's been competing for the past 30 years.

He still works as a placement agent, raising capital for investment groups. Recently, he made two significant changes to his routine. Two years ago, a fellow Masters swimmer took him to the gym and created a strength routine for him. "I grew up at a time when swimmers didn't weightlift," he says. "It's made a material difference."

Last year, he started swimming in a 50-meter pool in addition to a 25-yard pool. "The longer pool has taught me that it's not about getting my arms to go faster, but about extending my stroke and getting momentum off the wall on my turns," he says.

He's now swimming times that rival what he clocked seven years ago. When the Masters season ended in May, he was ranked first in the country in the 100- and 200-yard butterfly and the 200-, 500-, and 1,000-yard freestyle in the 75-79 age group.

The Workout

Mr. Kirby swims five days a week with a Masters group at a local YMCA, averaging 8 to 9 miles in the pool each week. Ages range from late 30s to late 50s, with Mr. Kirby the oldest. They warm up with kicking and pulling exercises.



David Kirby is a nationally competitive Masters swimmer who specializes in the butterfly. He also keeps in shape by chopping wood at home.

They might strap paddles to their hands to add more power to the pull of their stroke and not kick with their legs. Workouts might entail four repetitions of 300 meters or eight repetitions of 100 meters, with each rep getting progressively faster.

On non-swim days he lifts weights for 30 minutes. He uses machines to work his chest, lats and triceps. He does 450 leg lifts in sets of 50 for his lower body. "I find they help with kicking, and the low-ab strength they build helps with flip turns," he says.

Mr. Kirby lives on 5 acres and from October through February he gets an additional strength workout by chopping and stacking firewood. He relies on axes, wedges and an 8-pound maul, which has a thick, blunt head for heavy splitting, and splits roughly 5 cords a season—each cord is a stack 4 feet by 4 feet by 8 feet.

One night a week he goes to a 50-minute Pilates class that uses a Megaformer, a version of a traditional Pilates reformer that is tricked out with springs attached in front of a sliding car-

riage. His neighbor, who is in his 50s, introduced him to the workout a year ago and they always go together. Mr. Kirby credits the added core strength from Pilates with quicker flip turns in the pool.

Last year alone he filled up 22 pages in his 48-page passport, making nearly a dozen business trips to Asia. He says scouting pools ahead of his travels ensures he can keep up with his workouts on the road. The JW Marriott in

Hong Kong is a favorite. When he's in Singapore he swims at the OCBC Aquatic Centre.

The Diet

Mr. Kirby abstains from red meat, dairy, caffeine and alcohol. He consulted with his swim coach and doctor 10 years ago before he cut out meat. They helped him find appropriate protein substitutes in the form of grains. After his morning swim, he eats dry

toast, granola and an apple or banana. For lunch, he makes what he calls gruel, a souplike mixture of peas, navy beans, lentils, barley, oats and seasonal vegetables flavored with curry or taco mix. "The spicier, the better," he says.

He has salmon or soup for dinner; occasionally chicken. He always has a salad dressed with vinaigrette. His wife has a less restrictive diet but is envious of his eating habits.

About once a month, he says he splurges and has a bite of her burger. "I hate and love when my wife brings cookies into the house," he says. He usually can't resist chocolate chip and has one with a bite of ice cream.

The Gear & Cost

Mr. Kirby pays around \$1,000 for his annual YMCA membership. He tries to stick to swim meets that are a few hours' drive away and estimates he spends about \$300 a year in travel expenses and entry fees. His Speedo tank suit cost \$35 and he paid \$15 for goggles. He uses hand paddles, a kickboard and a pull buoy, which he hugs between his thighs to create more drag in the water. Each cost about \$20.

"I recently discovered the TYR inflatable pull buoy and kickboard, which deflate so I can stick them in my suitcase and it won't take up extra space," he says. He pays \$36 per Pilates session.

WHAT'S YOUR WORKOUT? | By Jen Murphy

Butterfly Effect Powers A Masters Swimmer

Don't Fear the Butterfly

Professional swimmers like Michael Phelps make the butterfly look effortless, but for beginners, the stroke can look and feel like you're flailing to stay afloat. "Butterfly has a unique balance of strength and elegance not found in the other strokes," says Kerry O'Brien, head coach of the Walnut Creek Masters swim team in Walnut Creek, Calif.

"When done properly, it resembles a set of waves rolling towards the shore, with the head, shoulders, hips and feet each having a moment of being the body part at or above the surface."

Each Butterfly stroke begins with the arms extended above the head and is completed when they return to the same place. The arm recovery is a wide, sweeping, circular motion with the hands staying just above the surface of the water, he says. The swimmer kicks twice during each stroke. The first comes as the hands land on the surface, the second as the hands begin to exit the water.

The key, Mr. O'Brien says, is timing the energy sent from the core to the arms and legs. Because the core muscles drive the stroke, Pilates and yoga are great complements, he says. Resistance band exercises are also useful.

