

POETIC JUSTICE III

Splash! swimming readers express their feelings for the sport in verse

The Last Wall

Thinking, as I stand gazing over the pool.
The ripples of water reflecting the morning,
Soon to be transformed into speed infested waters,
But not now, we are all still yawning.

Remembering, the long hours of practice,
The many miles swam, yard, by yard, by yard,
Would it not be a pity, if all this
Was done for nothing, all that has been so hard
To continue doing, day after day, hour
After hour, I remember those cold risings,
before dawn, before many were yawning.
Yet without there would be no power.

In the water. Faster, keep going,
Don't Stop, don't slow down,
Dense water trying to stop my momentum.
To this endless, mindless work, I am abound.

I was, but judgement is today.
The preparation is over, positions
Have already been decided.
My speed only limited by the conditions
Of the cool, crisp water, waiting for my entry.

Contemplating the possibilities, I think,
"Can I succeed, can I fly
across the water, ahead of my competition?"
Questioning myself, I want and have to try.
Anticipating, I stand, gazing over the pool.
Ripples have now become waves.
"In the water for warm-up!" Our coach yells,
and we swim like an orderly group of slaves,
The lanes gather bodies,
Each entrant potent and ready for competition.
I can see them all, under the water,
In this silently rushing world. All in preparation
For the main event. Keep going,
I've got it, I have it, hold on to the lead,
Yet my will loses determination.
I lose it and suddenly feel deceived.

I felt and deserved it, but redemption is today.
Despite what is predicted, anything is possible.
My body feels primed to perfection,
And I realize that for how I swim, I am responsible.
As we leave the white topped water

Watching, through the long morning session,
I place myself among the best,
In my mind and in reality.
Yet soon it will come to finals, the true test.

Realizing, this is my last chance,
I affix my goggles tightly around my head,
And watch as the event before mine swims,
As I feel ready, but a false start I would dread.
The cold metal starting block tingles my feet,
A feeling that almost impels me off,
But not now, I have to keep my cool.

The starting mechanism buzzes and I blast-off,

Like a rocket headed to heaven.
I execute a clean dive; the liquid races past me.
After a few strokes, comes a quick gasp for air,
And I forget the pain, for the wall is all I see.
Like second nature, my legs fling over
My body, and at the instant they touch.

I spring off the wall, my legs aching.
The last lap, each stroke, my arm undergoes
that of a fighter's last punch.
During the remaining few meters I glance to my side,
My competition is gaining fast,
Kick harder, pull faster, hold my breath,
A few more inches, I lunge, I hold it to the last.

Rejoicing, as beads of sweat and water fall,
I feel like I've done it all,
As the sun blisters onto the other racers,
But it feels warm on me.

Bob Jackson
Age 19; Clearwater, Fla. Georgia Tech Swim Team

Hard Swim Practice

My arms feel like they're drowning
My feet feel like they're working so hard like a motor
My body is floating around on the bottom of the sea like I'm dead
My lungs feel like they're being puffed up like bubble gum
My throat is so dry like it visited the sun with nothing to drink
My bathing suit feels like I'm pregnant
My legs feel like they're being rafted around
Lap after lap after lap
Afterwards I'm as tired as a dog
But it feels good to be strong

Elizabeth Pearson-McLaughlin
Age 6; Roanoke, Va.; Roanoke Valley Swimming

Getting to Spring

There are prisons built with nothing more than a mind;
it is an idea you deem yourself unfit to challenge.
The mallard didn't wait all winter for the lake to thaw not to enter it's waters.
You would have to see it from his perspective—something you are reluctant to do.
It is the likeness of his reflection on the water,
the weightlessness of his body.
It is diving beneath the surface through doorways
into yourself.

Ryan Stevens
Age 21; Toledo, Ohio; University of Toledo

Questions About Me

Questions abound me, What has been my purpose? To be all talk? In practice to walk the walk? To which service was my service?

So many hopes, so many dreams, are they shattered by dull extremes? Who do I let inquiries plague my soul? When I know in my heart I went for the goal. I gave all of myself to strive for bliss, for 15 years, how could I? The loss of last year gained back my love of the race. Then, why at the perfect time, was I off of the pace?

Sure the time was well spent, I was graced with best friends, a network of love, shared times of mirth, but Lord, are we the only ones who know what I'm worth?

So whatever Your reasons for this glitch in my plan, I still stand proud, for I know who I am; I'll never know my ultimate talent had to remain occult, but no regrets—for through the sport of swimming, I became an adult.

Karla Wilson
Auburn, Ala.; Auburn University