Don Watson, Honor Coach, United States of America, 2013

Don on the left

Personal Website - (None known)

Don Watson created a powerhouse in a small village outside of Chicago, both in the pool and in the open water after coaching under Honoree Dr. James "Doc" Counsilman at Indiana University. Hinsdale (High School and community) was the center of the professional marathon swimming world when IMSHOF Honorees John Kinsella and Sandra Bucha ruled the waves in the 1970s. Both developed by Coach Watson, they were just two of the many aquatic stars that trained under his innovative tutelage and went on to national and international stardom. In the 1975 his swimmers individually and as a team in 1975 in the 3 mile National Long Distance Championship.

But his legacy went beyond the chlorinated confines of the pool and the dynamic nature of lakes, channels and oceans where he spent countless hours mentoring, training and pushing his swimmers. Most of his swimmers did not end up international champions or record holders, but even more importantly they forged a lifestyle where they were victorious in the game of life.

Don knew how to develop kids into champions. His teams were unprecedented powerhouses. He had his high school students competing against the best in the world in his heyday. Whether it was sitting in a boat dealing with rough conditions or early morning workouts, Don was there. He was a man his swimmers trusted and wanted to reward with very fast swim time. Often coaches who develop young athletes who then go off to college and beyond are not properly credited with their fundamental work. But Don was so good at what he did that his legacy was too large to ignore. He is also an inductee in the International Swimming Hall of Fame (2015).

Don was also an accomplished marathon swimmer – winning the 22 mile Mississippi River race in 1946, 1947 and 1948 when he set the record of 3 hours 56 minutes.

Expanded Biography (Openwaterpedia)

Long Swims Database (Marathon Swimmers Federation) - No entry expected