

HELPED JAPAN TO BUILD UP SPORT

Swimming Enthusiasts In All Parts of the World Ask For 'Dad' Center

By DON WATSON

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A few weeks ago the Australian 1932 Olympic team passed through Honolulu en route to Los Angeles and during the one day the athletes were in town they were entertained by the Hawaiian Association of the A. A. U.

A luncheon was planned at the Young hotel that noon and members of the team and their coaches were introduced to the local people in attendance, several of them being asked to say a few words. Among them was Harry Hay, a few years ago Australia's leading sprint swimmer and now personal coach of Andrew (Boy) Charlton.

"During the few hours we have been in your city I have enjoyed myself thoroughly," Hay said. "But there is something missing. I have been looking for someone—but so far I have not seen him. And I want to say that my visit to Honolulu will not be complete unless I have a chat with the man who has always been the friend of Australian swimmers—where is my old friend 'Dad' Center?"

Japanese Coach

It was only a few days ago that the Japanese Olympic athletes spent a few hours in Honolulu while en route to Los Angeles and the visitors were met off port by a reception committee.

Members of the committee noticed that Coach L. Matsumura, in charge of the Olympic swimmers, was eagerly scanning the faces of the Honoluluans as though he was anxious to find some person, and finally the Japanese coach was asked if he needed help in finding the person he sought.

"I am looking for our friend, Mr. Dad Center," was the coach's reply.

Wanted Interviews

And it soon developed that Coach Matsumura was not the only member of the party looking for "Dad" Center. Six newspaper correspondents, sent to the United States to "cover" the Olympic games for their respective papers, were under instructions to interview the famous swimming coach during their stay in Honolulu.

And when they finally found the genial "Dad" they spent hours asking him this, that and the other thing about swimming.

These two incidents recalled to the writer the national A. A. U. convention in St. Louis in 1929 when dozens of persons approached the Hawaii delegate and asked that their regards be given to "Dad" Center.

All Know "Dad"

Wherever there is swimming competition, no matter in what part of the globe, the name of "Dad" Center is well known. He is known as a maker of champions—as the man who has handled such great stars as Duke Kahanamoku, Mariechen Wehselau, Buster Crabbe, "Wild Bill" Harris, Lady Langer, Ruth Scudder, Lily Bower May and scores of others whose names have been written in the pages of swimming history.

George David Center is the correct name of this tall, broad shouldered chap who has spent most of his 44 years assisting the development of swim champions and in building up swimming as Hawaii's leading sport. But few persons know him by that name.

He is plain "Dad" to all who know him—swimmers, coaches, officials and all who have met him call him "Dad."

Business Pressure

During the past couple of years business pressure has prevented this world famous coach and trainer of swimmers from giving the time to swimming that he gave in the past. Perhaps that is one reason Hawaii is not contributing as many world's champion swimmers to the American Olympic team this year as in the past.

But "Dad" has lost none of his enthusiasm over aquatic sports. He never will lose that. Swimming, surfing and other water sports are a big part of his life, and he is still quietly coaching youngsters along the beach at Waikiki while other local swimming enthusiasts are looking forward to the day when "Dad" can again take his place as the big man in Hawaii's swimming activities.

Native of Hawaii

"Dad" is a native of Hawaii—he was born at Kipahulu, Maui, on December 25, 1887, and except for the period he spent in school in California and the times he has been away from the islands with swimmers or on business trips has spent his entire life here.

While still a small boy Center learned to swim and spent most of his time playing in the surf near his home. Other sports also attracted his attention and while attending McKinley high school in Honolulu he was on the track team, a member of the junior football team and also played basketball, tennis and other sports. He then went to the mainland and attended Belmont Military academy in California where he continued his sports activities.

Active In Sports

Returning to Honolulu at the completion of his school work Center became very active at the Outrigger Canoe club where, in addition to swimming and surfing, he played basketball, volleyball and was on the track squad. From 1910 to 1920 he was captain of the club and in that capacity headed the club teams in all branches of sports.

It was during that period that

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