

Cole Classic Ocean Swim Plate Getter

Blue Mountains Phoenix Masters swimmer Sue Wiles discovered the Cole Classic in 2005, a year after she discovered masters swimming, and she hasn't missed a swim since then. Now, a month shy of 76, she has just notched up her tenth Cole Classic plate. These famous ceramic plates are awarded to age-group placegetters 1, 2 and 3.

Sydney's iconic Cole Classic ocean swim has been a major event in the city's beach life for over thirty years. First put on in 1983 at Bondi Beach by Graham Cole, it is held in late January / early February. It's been swum at Manly Beach since 2005 and remains a fixture in the calendar of many masters swimmers.

Growing up in Sydney, Sue spent much of her childhood at the beach but never ventured past the breakers. She was already into her sixties when she took up pool swimming in the Blue Mountains and joined Masters Swimming, and within a year she had plunged back into the ocean at Manly, taking on the novice's 1 km swim in the Cole Classic.

'There really is no feeling like it, just swimming along in the ocean. It's like that's where you belong. And then there's this amazing sense of achievement when you finish. You can see it on people's faces when they struggle to their feet and make their way up the beach. They have this little smile on their face.'

Once she knew she could do the 1 km swim, Sue decided to tackle the 2 km Cole Classic and that's when she started to collect plates. 'The plates are good fun and I'm very proud when I win one, but for me it's really about taking on a challenge and accomplishing it.' She acknowledges there's an element of risk because conditions vary all the time but she sees that as part of the attraction and she has full confidence in the wonderful water safety volunteers.

One of the friends Sue has made during her Cole Classic years is Margaret Dodds, a former masters swimmer who makes the trip over to Sydney from Perth each year to swim the Cole and visit family.

Why did Graham Cole dream up the Cole Classic? He wanted the swim to be a challenge to all persons to stretch themselves in body and mind to swim a reasonable distance through surf. He hoped it would be 'an incentive to persons to involve themselves in the self-discipline required to get fit; obtain confidence in their ability through swimming, to achieve a pride in having performed something that is, perhaps slightly above average, and finally to receive (in the form of an appropriately prepared Certificate or medal) some recognition of their accomplishment.' Sounds very much like what masters swimmers are on about.

Two photos:

Sue Wiles' 10 Cole Classic plates [ColeClassicPlates_2016.pdf]

Sue Wiles and Margaret Dodds with their plates in 2015 [Sue-Margaret_Cole2015.pdf].