



Two area swimmers win medals at national senior Olympics

By Samantha Joseph

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MARTIN COUNTY —

Every afternoon, Ray Bowles spends about an hour in the pool doing drills, speed work or long-distance swims.

Three times a week, he mixes tennis and bike rides into his fitness routine.

That's how the 75-year-old Palm City man stays in championship form.

And last month, the hard work paid off at the University of Houston when top qualifiers from around the country met for the senior Olympics.

Mr. Bowles was one of two Martin County swimmers to make a strong showing at the games.

Fellow Palm City senior athlete, Fred Bobb, 53, also proved to be a fierce competitor in the pool, beating out younger swimmers to bring home a bronze medal in the 100-yard breaststroke and a fourth-place ribbon in the 50-yard breaststroke race.

"That race was so close between the silver and my



Photo courtesy Deanna Kernan

Palm City resident, Ray Bowles, 75, displays his bronze medal from the National Senior Games.

fourth-place ribbon that when I touched (the finish) and I looked up at my dad, he said, 'I think you got another bronze medal,'" Mr. Bobb said.

Just 0.13 seconds separated the silver medal winner and Mr. Bobb in the hotly contested faceoff.

For the two local swimmers, the Houston races

were the culmination of two years of training, plus proving themselves against competitors in Martin County, the region and across the state.

Before he got to the senior Olympics, Mr. Bobb first had to qualify at the Martin County Golden Games last November, where he defeated eight

swimmers in his age group to win three gold medals.

He was then off to the next round of competition, the state meet in Fort Myers, the following month.

There, he captured three silvers, qualifying for the nationals.

For Mr. Bowles, the veteran of the state completion made his fifth showing at the Florida-wide competition last December, only to return with five medals.

He won gold in the 50- and 100-yard freestyle, silver in the 50-yard breaststroke, and two bronze medals in the 100-yard breaststroke and 500-yard free style.

"I had a good week," he quipped.

Last month's visit to senior Olympics was his second time participating in the national contest.

He won a bronze medal in 500-yard freestyle; and fourth-place ribbons for 50- and 100-yard freestyle.

Both men are already eyeing the next national race, set for summer 2013

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Palm City resident Fred Bobb, 53, captured a bronze medal in the 100-yard breaststroke and a fourth-place ribbon in the 50-yard breaststroke race at the senior Olympics.

Photo courtesy of
Fred Bobb

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at Cleveland State University in Ohio.

At that time, Mr. Bobb, who will be 55, will be swimming in a new age group, 55-59.

"I'll be the youngest in my age group, so that could give me an edge for a silver medal perhaps," he said. "I won't have to swim against those young hot shots."

Mr. Bowles, who was a competitive swimmer in college, and later a member of the United States Master Swimmer Association, plans to continue swimming for the rest of his life.

"Swimming is very kind to your body," he said. "At the nationals, there were men and ladies in their 90s who were swimming very well. Some of them swim better than they could walk."