

Rowdy Gaines

Olympic Gold Medalist, 100m Freestyle, and 4x100m Freestyle, Los Angeles, CA, United States, 1984
Olympic Gold Medalist, 4x100m Medley, Los Angeles, CA, United States, 1984

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Born: February 17, 1959  
College: Auburn University  
Current Residence: Lake Mary, FL  
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Throughout the 1980's Rowdy Gaines was the fastest swimmer on the planet. His world records confirmed his place in swimming history. The Olympic Boycott of 1980 came during the peak of his career, when he set world records in the 100 and 200-meter freestyles and Swimming World Magazine voted him World Swimmer of the Year. He was predicted to win five Olympic gold medals in Moscow.

After a brief retirement, the allure of competing proved too strong, and he returned to the pool, where the consummate technician resumed his attack on the record books. At the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, no swimmer won more races than he did with his three gold medals in the 100 meter freestyle, the 4x100 meter freestyle and medley relays. During his career he broke a total of 14 World Records.

In 1991, the swimming world was shocked to hear that Rowdy had contracted Guillan-Barre Syndrome, an affliction of the autoimmune virus that attacks the nervous system. Completely paralyzed for over two weeks, Rowdy fought back, overcame the disease and one year later went to the World Masters Championships and won the glamorous 50 and 100-meter freestyle events.

Known as the voice of swimming, he has worked with CBS, TNT and ESPN as a regular announcer for swimming and other events, and called his sixth Olympic telecast for NBC at the 2012 Games in London. He will again be part of the NBC broadcast team in 2016 for the Rio Olympics.

He has also been inducted into the US Olympic Hall of Fame and International Swimming Hall of Fame and works with many charitable organizations including the USA Swimming Foundation, Swim Across America benefitting research for cancer and Special Olympics.

Today, he is Vice President of Aquatics for the Central Florida YMCA as he talks to kids, mentors them and spreads the message that championship comes not from the outside but from the inside, and that dreams can come true if you believe in yourself. He and his wife Judy have four children: Emily, Madison, Savanna and Isabelle.

Today, Gaines is often referred to as "Swimming's Greatest Ambassador." Maybe life goes on without the Olympics, but not for the fastest swimmer on Earth. His determination to compete in Los Angeles in 1984 and his stellar success mark Rowdy Gaines one of the world's most dedicated as well as ambitious athletes and symbolize the American quest for more than gold.



