

THE
WILLIAMS

SPORTLIGHT



GEORGE DAVID CENTER

NO SAGA of swimming in Hawaii would be complete without a chapter on "Dad" Center, one of the Islands' first great swimming coaches.

A strong competitive swimmer in his youth, popular "Dad" Center has always been interested in sports, and through the years when he coached swimmers and headed amateur athletics in Hawaii as president of the AAU, he encouraged the young to participate in sports and gave of his time freely in recreational programs.

Like most of Hawaii's native sons, he learned to swim when he was just a kid, and when he was old enough to go into competitive sports, he joined the Myrtle Boathouse club. He rowed and swam for this club for about ten years.

Coached Olympic Team

George Crozier, coach of the Myrtle club, started "Dad" Center on his career as a coach. In 1915 he coached the Outrigger Canoe club and five years later led a team of Hawaii swimmers to the Olympic Games in Antwerp, Belgium. He was made coach of the American Olympic swimming team, which was nucleused by such Hawaii greats as Duke Kahanamoku, Warren Kealoha, Pua Kealoha, Wild Bill Harris and Stubby Kruger.

The Hawaii team made history in the 1920 Games. Duke, Pua, Harris and Joe Gilman cleanswept the 100-meter freestyle—the first time a team from one city had accomplished this feat in the Olympics.

After the Olympics "Dad" Center took his team on a tour through Belgium, France and the mainland United States. That was the first of many trips for "Dad" Center as coach of a swimming team. He took a Hawaii team to Japan in 1926, and the follow-

ing year led an All American-Hawaii team to that country. He also took Hawaii's swimmers to the National AAU competition in 1926 and in 1928.

Business pressure forced him to give up active coaching in 1928, but for years after that he maintained his position in swimming by training classes at Punahou and the University of Hawaii and by laying out the swimming program for these schools.

Developed Many Famous Swimmers

The list of swimmers "Dad" Center has coached and developed reads like a "who's who" in swimming. Among them were the peerless Duke Kahanamoku, fabulous Buster Crabbe, Wild Bill Harris, Harold Yap, David Livingston, Benton Wood, Lilly Bowmer May and Mariechen Wehse-lau. Three of these swimmers, Kahanamoku, Crabbe, and Wehse-lau, held world records in their prime.

Swimming did not claim all of "Dad" Center's time. An accomplished surfer, yachtsman, and fisherman, he made a study of surfing and surfboard building as far back as 1905. He was captain of the Outrigger Canoe Club from 1910 to 1939 and was a member of the Pearl Harbor Yacht club for 10 years. He was responsible for reviving Hawaiian Canoe sailing in 1915.

As president of the Hawaiian Association, AAU, from 1926 through 1929 he helped to revive basketball, handball, volleyball, and waterpolo.

"Dad" Center was born on Maui on Christmas Day, 1886. He was educated at Punahou and McKinley high school, and at Belmont Military college in California.