



HOLLAND'S WILLY DEN OUDEN

ALL TIME LONGEST STANDING WORLD SWIMMING RECORDS

Swim buffs may argue who between Freddy Lane and "Splash" Cavill was first to swim 100 yards below a minute, but no one will argue the first woman to perform such a feat. She is Willy den Ouden of Holland who swam 59.8 on February 4, 1934. It had been two years since Helene Madison swam 60 flat and it was five years more before Ragnild Hveger became the second woman under the magic barrier. It was 1948 before the first American champion broke a minute (Marie Corridon, 59.9).

Willy den Ouden set her first world record in the 100 meter freestyle on July 9, 1933 with a time of 1:06.0. Then on February 27, 1936, Willy swam the same event in 1:04.6, a time that would become the longest standing world record in swimming history. It would take twenty years before the great Dawn Fraser finally took off 1/10, reducing the record to 1:04.5. Fraser eventually lowered the mark to 58.6.

It took the first girl to break a minute for the 100 meters (110 yards) to break the time barrier of the first girl to break a minute for 100 yards.

Willy den Ouden owned the world record in the 100 meter freestyle for almost 23 years continuously, a feat unmatched before or since, by male or female. For her part, Dawn Fraser held the record, except for brief periods, for almost sixteen years. The longevity of these record times attest to the greatness of both den Ouden and Fraser.

Ironically, Miss den Ouden, the darling of European swimming, did all her great performances between Olympic Games. She placed second to Helene Madison in the 1932 Olympic 100 meter and was past her prime by the 1936 Games where she medaled with the winning Dutch relay but not in individual meets.