



Throughout the 1980s **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 M and 200M freestyles and Swimming World Magazine voted him World Swimmer of the Year. He was expected to win five Olympic gold medals in Moscow, but he was not able to realize that goal.

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 100M freestyle, the 4x100M 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 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.

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.

Today, Gaines is often referred to as "Swimming's Greatest Amba...

Rowdy Gaines

Speech Topics

- ☐ Youth
- ☐ Sports
- ☐ Overcoming Adversity
- ☐ Olympians
- ☐ Motivation
- ☐ Inspiration

