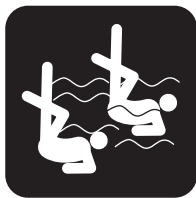


POST'S
GUIDE
to the
PAN AM
GAMES



SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING

GUIDE TO THE GAMES

BY ERIKA GILBERT, NATIONAL POST

Venue

CIBC Pan Am/Parapan Am Aquatics Centre and Field House

Venue acronym

PAC

Landmark status

Medium

This venue is the largest new build for these Games and, according to organizers, the \$205-million facility also represents the largest-ever investment in the history of Canadian amateur sports. It is co-owned by the City of Toronto and the University of Toronto (Scarborough campus), located nearby.

GUIDE TO THE GAMES

The Aquatics Centre includes two Olympic-sized pools and a dive tank with platforms at three, five, 7½ and 10 metres.

Other events at venue

Diving, fencing, modern pentathlon, roller sports (speed skating), swimming (Pan Am and Parapan Am), sitting volleyball (Parapan).

Transit options

This trip would normally involve a lot of time on a bus, possibly multiple buses, and it would be terrible. Fortunately, there is a shuttle — the conveniently named Aquatics Centre Rocket, also known as the 194. It leaves from Don Mills Station (on Line 4) and is non-stop to the Aquatics Centre Loop, a short walk from

GUIDE TO THE GAMES

the venue. Other options: the 198 U of T Scarborough Rocket express bus from Kennedy Station (Line 2); the 95 York Mills from York Mills Station (Line 1); or the 38 Highland Creek bus from Scarborough Centre Station (Line 3) or from the Rouge Hill Go Station. For drivers, the site is conveniently located near Highway 401. What this location lacks in downtown convenience it makes up for in downtown prices: Be prepared to shell out \$20 for parking in lots G and H at the U of T Scarborough campus.

For exact directions, try:

Triplinx.ca

[TTC trip planner](#)

GUIDE TO THE GAMES

Schedule

July 9 Technical routines

July 11 Free routines

[See the full competition schedule at the Pan Am website](#)

How it works

Synchronized swimming is basically underwater dance. Or, if you prefer to emphasize the athletic side of things, underwater gymnastics. Swimmers perform a synchronized (hence the name), choreographed routine involving complex moves, including lifts and throws, all set to music. Swimmers aren't allowed to touch the bottom of the pool, staying afloat by moving their arms in a sculling motion and their legs like an eggbeater.

GUIDE TO THE GAMES

Routines are judged on both technical and artistic merits. Only women compete.

Nations competing

Argentina, Aruba, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, United States and Venezuela.

Canada's team

Duet event

Jacqueline Simoneau, St-Laurent, Que., Karine Thomas, Gatineau, Que.

Team event

Gabriella Brisson, Calgary; Annabelle Frappier, Saint-Hyacinthe, Que.; Claudia Holzner, Calgary; Lisa Mikelberg, Montreal; Marie-Lou Morin, Westmount, Que.; Samantha Nealon, Morriston,

GUIDE TO THE GAMES

Ont.; Lisa Sanders, Gormley,
Ont.; Simoneau; Thomas



Canada's duet, Jacqueline Simoneau, left,
and Karine Thomas.

Event format

There are two medals on the line here: one for duets and one for teams of eight. The format should be somewhat familiar to longtime fans of ice dance/figure skating — the first day of competition

GUIDE TO THE GAMES

involves a technical routine in which specific elements must be performed in a certain order, and on the second day swimmers complete a free routine without required choreography.

Results from 2011 Pan Ams

Canada won gold, the U.S. won silver and Brazil won bronze in both the team and duet events.

Why it's worth watching

Yes, the shellacked hair, clownish makeup and plastered-on smiles make synchronized swimming a little more theatrical than other sports, but make no mistake — this sport is tough. It requires strength, flexibility, endurance, skill and timing; it occasionally involves getting kicked in the

GUIDE TO THE GAMES

face, and holding your breath until you almost pass out is par for the course. This is a particularly interesting time because since the 2012 Olympics the judging system has undergone a figure skating-style change [aimed at making it more objective](#), and the Canadian team is among those trying to keep pushing the sport forward with more physically demanding routines. Plus, there will be a Rio 2016 Olympic berth on the line for the top duet.

Competition outlook

Canada is a strong contender, having won both gold medals at the 2011 Games and finishing in the top five at the London Olympics, 2013 World Championships and 2014 World Cup. Both Can-

GUIDE TO THE GAMES

ada and the U.S. have medalled at every Pan Am Games since 1971. Brazil and Mexico also finished in the top 10 at the most recent World Championships and World Cup.

Photo:

Frank Gunn / The Canadian Press

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