

= Tim McKee =

Alexander Timothy McKee (born March 14 , 1953) is an American former competition swimmer and three @-@ time Olympic silver medalist . He was a successful medley and backstroke swimmer , and is often remembered for being a part of the closest Olympic swimming finish in history and the resulting rule changes regarding the timing of international swimming events . McKee is a Pennsylvania native who was raised in a family of swimmers , and had notable successes as a collegiate swimmer at the University of Florida .

= = Early years = =

McKee was born in Ardmore , Pennsylvania . He was the fourth of nine children in his family ; his father Alexander " Big Al " McKee was a former All @-@ American for Ohio State University 's Buckeye swimming and diving team in the late 1930s . While McKee was a child , his parents moved the family to Newtown Square , Pennsylvania , so that he and his siblings could walk through a path in their backyard to the Suburban Swim Club to practice , where his father served as coach from 1962 to 1968 . Three of his brothers and two of sisters achieved some measure of national or international recognition as competition swimmers . McKee graduated from Malvern Preparatory School in Malvern , Pennsylvania in 1971 .

= = College swimming career = =

After high school , McKee accepted an athletic scholarship to attend the University of Florida in Gainesville , Florida , where he swam for coach Bill Harlan 's Florida Gators swimming and diving team in National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) and Southeastern Conference (SEC) competition from 1972 to 1974 . He followed his older brother Mark to Gainesville , where Mark McKee was an All @-@ American swimmer for the Florida Gators from 1969 to 1971 . As a freshman in 1972 , he finish fourth in the 200 @-@ yard backstroke , and fifth in the 400 @-@ yard individual medley , as the Florida Gators finished seventh overall at the NCAA men 's swimming championships . In his three years as a Gator swimmer , McKee was recognized as the SEC Swimmer of the Year in 1972 , won six SEC individual titles , and received four All @-@ American honors .

= = International swimming career = =

After graduating from high school , McKee was chosen as a member of the U.S. national swim team for the 1971 Pan American Games in Cali , Colombia . He finished second in the men 's 200 @-@ meter backstroke with a time of 2 : 07 @.@ 9 , earning his first silver medal in international competition .

Following his freshman college season , McKee qualified for the 1972 U.S. Olympic team despite recovering from a bout of mononucleosis . At the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich , Germany , he represented the United States in three different events . Most memorably , McKee won a silver medal in the men 's 400 @-@ meter individual medley in the closest swimming decision in Olympic history , losing by a margin of two one @-@ thousandths (0 @.@ 002) of a second to Sweden 's Gunnar Larsson . Initially , the scoreboard showed that Larsson and McKee had tied with an official time of 4 : 31 @.@ 98 , but in a controversial decision , the event judges named Larsson the eventual gold medal @-@ winner ten minutes after the race was over ? Larsson 's electronic clock time was 4 : 31 @.@ 981 , McKee 's 4 : 31 @.@ 983 . The time difference was variously calculated as one @-@ tenth of the time of a typical blink of a human eye , and the distance as the thickness of a coat of paint , a sheet of paper , or the minor imperfections in the individual lanes of the Olympic pool . As a result of the controversy , the international swimming federation , FINA , subsequently clarified the timing rules for competition swimming ; international races are now required to be timed to the hundredth of a second , and timing to the thousandth of a second is prohibited for tie @-@

breakers . It was the first and only Olympic swimming event ever decided on the basis of thousandths of a second . Afterward , McKee attributed his second @-@ place finish to a tactical mistake : he looked over his shoulder to see where Larsson was in the final leg of the race .

At the 1972 Olympics , McKee garnered a second silver medal in the men 's 200 @-@ meter individual medley (2 : 08 @.@ 37) , again finishing behind gold medalist Larsson , who set a new world record in the event (2 : 07 @.@ 17) . He also placed fifth in the final of the men 's 200 @-@ meter backstroke (2 : 07 @.@ 29) .

After his junior year at the University of Florida , McKee left the Gators swim team to train full @-@ time for the 1976 Olympics . The 23 @-@ year @-@ old McKee again qualified for the U.S. team in the 400 @-@ meter individual medley at the 1976 U.S. Olympic Trials . At the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal , he repeated his second @-@ place performance in the men 's 400 @-@ meter individual medley event , finishing behind gold medalist and fellow American Rod Strachan . The times of both Strachan (4 : 23 @.@ 68) and McKee (4 : 24 @.@ 62) broke the prior world record in the event final , with Strachan setting the new mark .

During the course of his career , McKee set six American records (short course 200- and 400 @-@ yard individual medley , 400 @-@ yard medley relay ; long course 100- and 220 @-@ yard backstroke , 200 @-@ yard individual medley) .

= = Life after competition swimming = =

McKee was inducted into the University of Florida Athletic Hall of Fame as a " Gator Great " in 1987 , and the International Swimming Hall of Fame as an " Honor Swimmer " in 1998 . He is a veteran celebrity swimmer for Swim Across America (SAA) , a charitable organization that raises funds for cancer research , and has participated in sixteen SAA events . He has worked in Miami Beach , Florida as a life guard and public safety officer for over 20 years , has also worked in real estate , and has helped train other Olympic swimmers including Nancy Hogshead . McKee married his wife Courtney , a former competition swimmer , in 1998 .