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THE SEXY NEW COSMO-tized Mandy Moore

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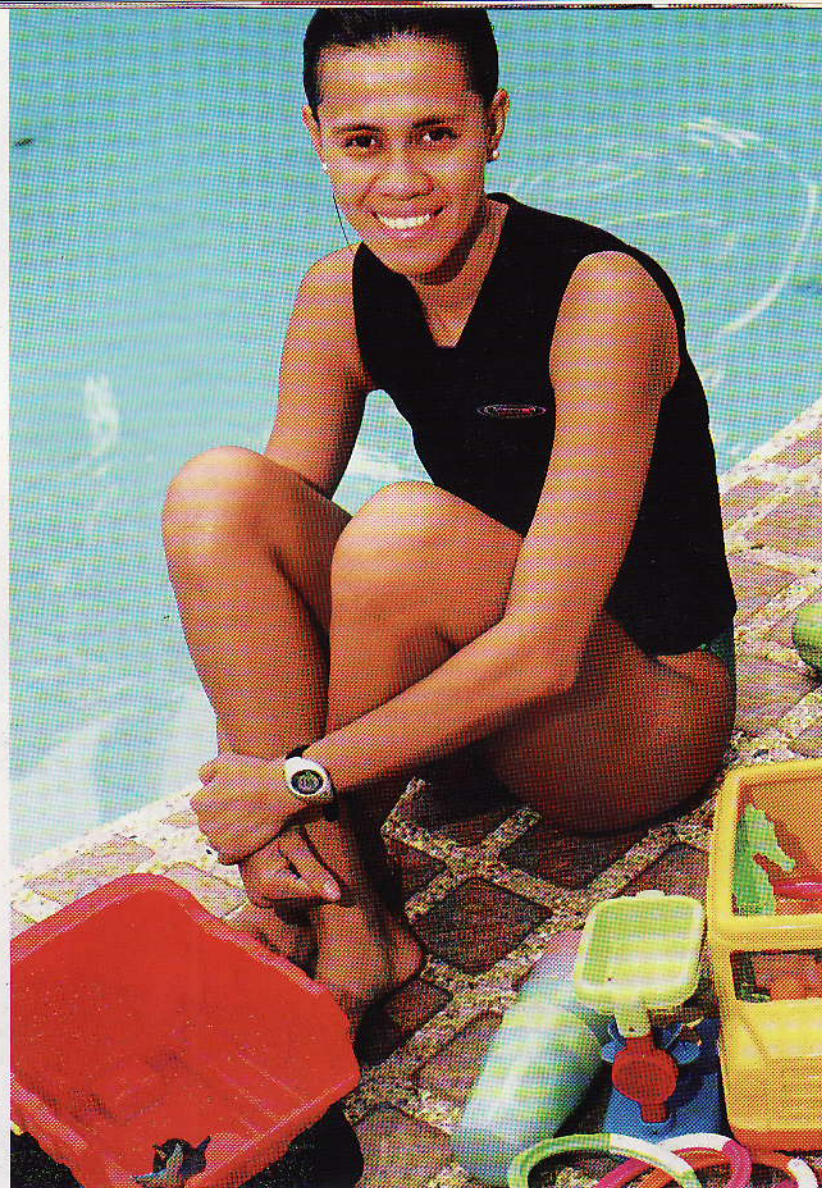
RIA MACKAY, 28
TOTAL IMMERSION
SWIMMING COACH

Watching Ria Mackay teach toddlers how to swim is an enviable encounter. The young coach is so comfortable in the water, it seems she can walk on it if she wants to.

“The water brings out the best in me!” exclaims Ria. “I don’t even notice the time when I’m teaching in the pool. I spend at least three hours in the water everyday, sometimes eight, and I still enjoy teaching swimming, even if I’ve been doing this for 12 years.”

As a child, Ria was an avid swimmer and was part of the school varsity from grade school until college. She began teaching children to swim as a summer job when she was a freshman in college in 1992. (“Just to earn a few bucks. *Alam mo naman, sa magulang lang tayo umaasa at the time!*”) For several summers, she taught as many as 45 students. However, like many young people, she believed that a corporate job was the right path for her and tried working for several companies. “I was earning more than most of the people my age since I was in sales at the time and was earning on commission, but I wasn’t happy,” shares Ria. “I would find myself dropping my desk job and running around with our bosses’ kids whenever they would bring their children to work. I realized that my calling was really to be with kids.”

After surfing the net and finding two workshops that appealed to her, Ria quit



“It was a big risk for me to give up my job and pursue something new... Teaching swimming isn’t really something people consider as a career.”

her job in 2000, taught swimming to save up for tuition and airfare, and flew to New York to attend a Total Immersion workshop, followed by a Baby Swimming Teacher Workshop in Florida. “It was a big risk for me to give up my job and pursue something new,” shares Ria. “Teaching swimming isn’t really something that people consider as a career...that’s why I decided to take workshops and bring it to a different level.”

Today the young swimmer is a senior instructor of Total Immersion Philippines, a program that approaches swimming as a natural and precise art.

All year round Ria conducts swimming workshops for both children and adults, and has also done a Total Immersion workshop in Singapore. There are future plans to continue these international workshops in other neighboring countries by 2004.

“My advice to women out there is to do what you love best!” Ria exclaims. “I never thought I would come this far—I’ve been teaching swimming full-time for almost four years and I don’t have any regrets. Because I love what I do. I feel I’m here to share the joy of swimming and I hope I can do this for the next 10 to 20 years!”

KAI HUANG