



ADVANCED SWIMMING

It all boils down to basics

One of the most important concepts to understand about advanced swimming techniques is that most of them do not apply to beginners. This is glaringly clear to me at almost every workshop we conduct for swimming. Triathletes are in general very well read on training and technique, often trying to answer their own questions with their vast—yet many times misguided—“general knowledge.”

Here's a sample of three common questions that highlight the reality that most swimmers need to focus on the basics. What I typically hear poolside:

QUESTION 1: “I read about this new technique in swimming whereby you do not finish the pull and that improves speed and efficiency. I have tried it, but seem to swim slower and take more strokes.”

ANSWER: “Sacrificing a little at the end of your pull in exchange for taking more powerful pulls and a slightly increased turnover can be helpful for a swimmer with a great foundation in their technique. Let me see you swim a few laps.”

What we see 99 percent of the time is an athlete whose pull is very ineffective, and they are shortening the only part that is giving them any thrust. Great results are achieved when we have the swimmer work on the front end of the pull (elbow bend or catch) and put less or no attention on the finish.

QUESTION 2: “A friend told me to scull and that will increase my power, is this true?”

ANSWER: “Once a good rotation is established and a swimmer is using his or her core to help pull while a long axis or full body rotation is in place, many times tweaking the angle of the palms can increase power similar to adjusting the pitch on a propeller. Let me see you swim a few laps.”

Most often this swimmer is swimming very flat and just slipping the hand from side to side. The flat body position has much more drag than the streamlined side position. In this case we get great results by having the swimmer forget sculling and concentrate on rotation.

QUESTION 3: “What about kick? Can a better or faster kick make me a better swimmer? Is it worth it?”

ANSWER: “Yes, a good kick can add to a good body position and can add to speed. Let me see you swim a few laps.”

What the swimmer's interpretation of a “good” kick is has more to do with cycling than swimming! Actually working on minimizing the kick and bending the knees less gives the swimmer a boost in speed and saves energy.

Our voracious appetite to read and to do as much as possible to

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