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| December 19, 2011  SwimParentJL002.jpg  Please send comments or subscription requests to <news@swimmingcoach.org> =====================================================================  ***Real Information***  By John Leonard  In today’s world, information is easy to come by.  Informed, educated by experience, scientifically based information from a reliable source, much less so.  When exploring the topic of how to prepare swimmers for a long and successful career, this becomes remarkably problematic. An internet search of “Swim Training” will find someone (let’s call it a young coach or a parent) a large number of popularly written articles….unfortunately many typed by people with no serious expertise, experience, or verifiable success levels. But they do have time on their hands and the ability to type, so the drivel winds up on the internet.  And the more “popular” it is, the more readily it is “bought.”  We all want to find an “easier way.”  An example will help comprehension.  Some of the popularly written articles, including one that originally was published in something as generally accepted as Sports Illustrated,  glorify the idea that elite athletes TODAY, in the most modern training programs in the world, train only once a day and at relatively low training volumes but with “high intensity.”  The articles generally go on to talk about this as the “wave of the future” and the sort of “modern swim training” that people should look at to understand how to reach high performance levels.  Due to the writer’s lack of background, understanding and sheer inability to formulate the “right questions,” this is the impression that the young coach or parent is left with if they read this article.  ***Unfortunately, it is wrong on almost every count.***  First, it’s not new.  Since the 1960’s athletes attempting to resurrect their failing careers fall back on the same concepts…..eliminate morning practices, cut the volume of training way back and sprint a lot. And it works…in the short run.  Second, it fails in time. History will show over and over again that it is relatively easy, using the “formula” discussed to relatively quickly get back to “very close” to their previous best times. Very close. Just not quite “there.”  And worse, they NEVER exceed their previous bests. The simple fact is, if you want to swim faster than ever, you have to DO something “more or better” than ever.  Once you’ve “been there,” some freshness and sprinting will get you “close” but it will not (as we KNOW from history) get you over the hump.  Nothing takes the place of hard work. Harder than you’ve done before….  Third, this reduced work load ONLY works with older athletes…those who have previously done the long, hard, tedious work of building the base for training, what Coach Bob Bowman in September of 2011 at the ASCA World Clinic,  called “capacity training,”  when they were younger.  Fourth…Younger…..what helps you swim faster as a 25 year old or 30 year old is NOT what got you there in the first place. You have a seriously different body at 25 than you did at 15 and very seriously different at 30 or 40 as any person training hard at age 30-40 can tell you.  Since you have a different body, your body chemistry is radically different and when you impose a training load on that chemistry, it responds differently. So no, at 12-18, you cannot do what the “old guys and ladies” do at 25-35 and expect to prosper.  Fifth….far from this being the “wave of the future,” it is a methodology (that Coach Bowman called “utilization training”) that works only when you are older, have already done the capacity training in advance of it, and is ultimately destructive of the development process if done too early in ones’ swimming career, instead of the capacity training. Utilization training is a concept for older, physically mature athletes.  And properly so.  They built a “big training cup” by doing capacity training when they were young. Across the board…all of them….that’s how they got “there” (elite swimming) in the first place.  So what IS the proper developmental training pattern for a young swimmer?  Pretty simple. Learn stroke technique…as perfectly as possible. As stroke technique improves, gradually progress the amount of training done….most of it should be easy aerobic exercise with great technique. Progressively increase that amount of work each year from age 10 through age 22.  Progress it first by number of minutes/yards per day, then number of days of training per week, then number of training sessions per day and all the time, training volume per year gradually going up. In the later years, begin to increase training intensity.  Serious intentions will require approximately 20-25 hours of training a week from age 16-22. Less than that is fine for good health, but is not going to be productive of top level swimming.  Volumes will vary by coach philosophy, events targeted and related factors.  That’s the formula that has traditionally and consistently produced world class athletes for more than 60 years in all developed swimming nations around the world.  Every educated coach knows it. Educated coaches are your best source of “Real Information” and NOT, (very specifically) the garbage written for the internet and to populate someone’s blog who has never successfully developed an athlete in their life, but has all sorts of “training theories.”  I like the internet as much as anyone….but the “democratic” ability of anyone, anywhere, to write about anything they chose….leads to a great deal of the blind or malicious leading the innocent. Scientific publications are “peer reviewed” so they are Best Source. There is a reason for that. Most swim blogs could use some of the same, but they won’t do it.  Educated coaches know how to train athletes. If you have questions, talk to your child’s coach.  If you’re a coach with a question, ask experienced, successful coaches.  They have the “REAL INFORMATION.”  All the Best, JL |