

Tip of the Month

Increasing Sprint Speed

By Coach Ackerson

In describing our team philosophy with other coaches, I always tell them that we have a rather unorthodox approach, when compared to other programs. Seminole Aquatics is really a high school-oriented program that trains year round. Even in the younger age groups, I make it clear that we are training future high school swimmers, many of whom hopefully will aspire to swimming collegiately.

This philosophy has a heavy influence on the way that we train. While many other USA programs bombard kids with long, repetitive swims at sub-maximal efforts, our workouts are more sprint-intensive, with a barrage of starts from the blocks. This is mainly due to the nature of high school swimming, where only three events (200 free, 200 I.M., 500 free) out of the eleven exceed 100 yards. Now, this is not to say that we ignore distance swimming. We still have had several successful middle-distance and distance champions in the program. But there is a strong emphasis on fast swimming here that isn't often stressed as much in programs that push a ton of yardage.

Because high school swimming success is so dependent on the ability to excel at sprint distances, I sometimes have kids that aren't natural sprinters, yet want to become good at sprinting. Here are some things that we tell all of our aspiring sprinters:

1. Develop a positive mindset about sprinting. Look forward to 15's, 20's and 25's not as a chance to have something "easy", but instead as an opportunity to develop your speed.
2. When we do our shorter sprint sets, usually at the beginning and sometimes at the end of practice, approach these swims as absolute, all-out, everything-that-you've-got type of efforts. Telling swimmers to actually swim all-out on sprint sets may sound redundant, but very few of the swimmers actually give an absolute effort on these. To do them correctly is grueling, and likely the hardest things you will do in a workout.
3. Become a technician of sprinting and swimming in general. Focus on all of the details, i.e., perfect head position, never breathing out of breakouts or on finishes, and maintaining perfect stroke mechanics.
4. Develop your kick by challenging yourself on every kick set. Don't pull on lane lines. Believe me when I tell you that *every great sprinter is a great kicker*.



Doing these things will not necessarily take a distance swimmer and instantly convert him / her into a champion sprinter. But it will make any swimmer a faster swimmer, and it can be the difference in a good swimmer becoming a great swimmer.