

From the Coach

Taper & Shave

What does it mean to be “Tapered & Shaved” and does it apply to me?

The term above is one you hear for older swimmers, like those on the gold team, at the end of a season. To explain what it means for someone new to the phrase, let me give you a little background.

In swimming as in most endurance sports, training is a process of putting the body under stress and forcing it to adapt to adequately handle the stress. Most of the stress we put the body through during the season comes in the form of swimming - so the body becomes more and more capable of swimming further and faster. However, to realize that new capacity to swim more efficiently, the stress must be decreased over a period of time to allow the body to recover to its peak of efficiency. The gradual reduction of stress is where the taper part of the term comes from.

The shave portion of the term is precisely what you would suppose it would be. The swimmer would shave his or her body just prior to their championship meet. Swimming fast is a matter of applying force to overcome drag. The attention to training well will maximize the force available for overcoming the drag and learning to swim with the most efficient strokes will help focus that force more productively. Shaving, along with a sleek, tight swim suit and a cap, are sure ways to significantly reduce the body’s drag and result in faster swimming.

The deferred gratification of tapering and shaving is what swimmer’s live for. In fact, most of the older girls on the team elect not to shave their legs until their last meet to maximize the effect. Check with your coach if you have any reservations about shaving and tapering.

Comments on Taper & Shave from:

The Swimmers

- *Tapering is the part of the season most swimmers look forward to but it’s important not to abuse it.
- *Tapering rocks our socks off!
- *I like it because you get to rest more and I get to gross out the other girls n PE class with my hairy legs.
- *It’s better than doing a harder workout.
- *Better than distance but is very helpful.

The Parents/Coach

- *I like training hard more than tapering because the kids have too much energy sometimes.
- *Hearing this excuse, “Mom, I can’t do any chores, I’m tapering.”
- *They’re so hyper and thy just came home from Swim practice! It’s not fair.
- *The results when they swim are well worth it to put up with them bouncing off the walls.