

# **TAPER INFORMATION**

**By Mike Johnson, Journal Editor**

Taper time is always the most exciting time of the year, but is also the time when coaches find themselves second guessing themselves and questioning some of the things that they are doing. Once you have a good taper or two, it seems that taper time is a little more relaxed, but the pressure is still there for the athletes to perform.

A few years ago, I found a couple of handouts that have helped me explain taper to my swimmers. These explain some of the physiological things that a swimmer can do to prepare themselves for that championship meet. These handouts have given the athletes confidence in what they are doing and has put them at ease in dealing with those funny taper feelings. I'm not real sure where they came from but they help explain taper and the various things that will happen during taper. If anyone knows who wrote these or where they came from, please let me know, I think the author would appreciate the acknowledgement.

## **PHYSIOLOGICAL FACTORS OF THE TAPER**

### **WHAT PHYSIOLOGICALLY HAPPENS DURING A TAPER?**

- An increase in readily available carbohydrates (energy).
- The readily available carbs are moved throughout the body much faster.
- Ability to tolerate lactic acid build-up, ie. Lactate removal, is much faster.
- Increase in red blood cell production which has the ability to carry oxygen more efficiently, faster and with a greater capacity to the needed areas.
- The fast and slow twitch muscle fibers are rebuilt to peak capacity for an increase in strength, acceleration and feel for the water.
- More than two million red blood cells are produced each second.
- Stroke volume, the quality of blood pumped per beat can increase over 20%.

### **SUPER ADAPTATION EFFECT**

During the past 11 weeks, your metabolic processes (metabolism) have been worked near or at peak capacity to replace the resources that you have depleted during each and every work-out session. After weeks of sustained rigorous work-out, your metabolism becomes so conditioned that it continues supplying energy and other essential resources to the body at extremely high rates. During taper, the resources are no longer being depleted and the quantity of energy available will be greatly increased.

### **FACT:**

Another interesting point is that many of you do not know how tired you are. Your body has been keeping pace with its expenditure for 3 months. Thus, you have been accustomed with this feeling both physically and mentally.

## **INDICATIONS/SIGNS OF TAPERING**

**THE FOLLOWING WILL APPEAR FROM 1-3 DAYS BEFORE COMPETITION,**

- Restlessness, more active nervous energy.
- Effortless pace work.
- Waking up before the alarm goes off.
- Not feeling great but times are coming down.
- Having trouble controlling swims...sometimes hard to hold back.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF THE TAPER**

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATIONS:**

**Be prepared for and meet conditions!**

- unusual starting blocks
- crowded warm-ups
- loud, obnoxious teams
- cold water
- pool areas that are either too warm or too cold

### **BE POSITIVE**

- Swim your own race and race the clock, not names and press clippings.
- Be positive at all times during the taper. If you have put in the work, effort and intensity, it will be there!
- Always be confident in what you have accomplished throughout the season and have confidence in your coach and teammates.
- Be proud of what you have already accomplished.
- If you have the will, you find the way.
- Positive self expectancy-BELIEVE
- Positive self motivation-VISUALIZE
- Focus on your potential-TUNNEL VISION
- DESIRE-Don't be afraid. You have worked-out all season with one meet in mind. This is where it all comes together –LET IT HAPPEN!

### **THAT TERRIBLE FEELING**

When Swimmers have been training hard for many weeks and they start their taper, they sometimes feel terrible. This feeling is natural. This can be best explained by this concept: your body must adapt to a new kind of stress-that is REST. With time and rest, this feeling will pass and you will be ready for your big race.

### **INCREASING EVIDENCE**

In the past, it was believed that a swimmer could only hold a taper for about 3-5 days. The evidence now shows is that a swimmer can rest for longer periods of time and still hit their peak times and even improve from one meet to the next. Rest is the key and a positive mental outlook is essential.

### **VISUALIZE**

Visualize the positive. Remember your best swims and concentrate on those as you prepare your mind for the big meets. ALWAYS THINK POSITIVE!!!

