**BACKSTROKE NOTES – Russell Mark**

Key to Backstroke is the CATCH

Everything needs to be done to support the catch!

Rotation, finish, tempo, kick – all have to work to make the catch better!

CATCH

Make an early catch. Get to the catch position as soon as you can in the stroke.

1. Palms face toward feet at all times.

Therefore you are pushing the water backwards (not down or to the side)

2. Early flex of the wrist followed by forearm

3. Shoulder to elbow should be in a close line to your back (Not digging deep)

4. Elbow angle a little wider than 90 degrees

5. Arm to the side as opposed to behind your shoulder is in a stronger position

6. Engage your core at the catch (Feel tension through to your opposite hip)

Feels sort of like a crunch

COMMON MISTAKES

Pushing water down

Reaching behind the body

HEAD & BODY POSITION

Hollow chest and slightly rounded back

NOT arched back or head leaning back

Imagine head resting on thin pillow

Core engaged

Kick will be able to move freely (arching the back makes it harder to kick well)

Hips will be just under surface of the water

ROTATION

Maximum rotation 20-30 degrees

(For perspective: all the way on side = 90 degrees; halfway on side = 45 degrees)

Therefore, do not need huge roll for a good catch (remember, it’s out to the side!)

TIMING

Rotate early in the stroke cycle

(crossing over or entering with the back of the hand first is a sign of late rotation!)

At the hand entry, back should be flat on water

Armpits should be back in the water before the hand enters

HOW TO ROTATE EARLIER

Use the finish of the stroke to help push the hips over

At finish, follow through inward and downward to move the hips over

Core connection: Feel across the body from shoulder to opposite hip

FINISH OF STROKE

Begins when hand passes chest

Full arm extension slightly away from body

Hand moves close to body as you lift the arm

“pop hips”

TEMPO

You increase tempo by increasing rotation speed!

(not by just trying to move the arms faster)

Rotation must match arm speed and be on time with arms, or you get late rotation problems

PIVOT body side to side with hips “pop” at finish of stroke

(as opposed to slowly rolling side to side)

IMPORTANT – When you enter, you must quickly change the direction of your hand and arm into the catch!

(Do not follow through or keep reaching down or back once the hand enters the water. This leads to too deep of a catch)

RECOVERY

Pinky edge of hand enters first

Shoulder should not be under chin when recovering (indication of over-rotation)