

My Favorite Trick for Making Practice go by Faster!

by Olivier Leroy

Oh hello! Think back to the last time you did a big, “boring” swim practice. Maybe the set was something you didn’t see the point of. Your mind wandered. Your focus wavered. Time seemed to slow to a dog-paddle-with-DragSox-on crawl. And hey, I get it...

I am not immune to my mind wandering outside the lane lines, especially when I am dead tired or I am stressed out or I’m fantasizing about the 16-course dinner I am going to stuff in my gullet when I get home.

But if you want to make your swim practices go by faster, there is something you can do (besides wishing coach would write easier workouts). This *something* will also make you a more efficient swimmer. And it will also make you a faster. **It’s counting your strokes.**

When American freestyler Zach Apple transferred to Auburn University, he walked out onto a pool deck that was totally stacked with elite sprinters. Bruno Fratus. Marcelo Chierighini. Renzo Tjon-A-Joe. Olympians, world champions, and NCAA champions littered the lanes. Apple, being fresh-faced and eager to learn, drank it all in.

One of his new teammates, Kyle Darmody, pulled him aside one day at practice and asked him: “How many strokes are you taking in warm-up every day?” Apple, a very late bloomer in the sport, looked blankly at Darmody, an NCAA champion and 6-time SEC champion and said, “I have no idea.” “You just need to take one less stroke per lap in warm-up,” said Darmody.

Apple started counting his strokes. Lengthening it out. Eventually, Apple progressed to the point he is swimming each lap of a yards pool during threshold sets with three kicks and eight strokes. And before long, he was counting medals, top 10- world rankings, and plenty of buzz as a legitimate contender in the 100-meter freestyle for the Tokyo Olympics.

So what does Zach Apple and counting strokes have to do with making practice go by faster? Welp, it’s actually kinda simple... **Counting your strokes keeps you present**

Practice feels longer than a 7-day swim meet when we are thinking about stuff outside of the water. When we are “bored.” When our mind is restless. Counting your strokes is a simple way to keep **yourself in the moment.**

You stay present. You swim each length one stroke at a time instead of wishing that you were the end of the set or practice. When you go to the pool today...And you want to make practice go by faster...Count your strokes. It will go by faster...And more importantly, *you* will get faster.

See ya in the water,

Olivier