**August Stroke Tips**

**The “No Hands" Open Turn**

An  Open Turn is common during Butterfly, Breaststroke, and I.M. (all turns except Back to Back; possibly Back to Breast, and Free to Free) events. It is also common for those who do not flip during their Freestyle events. By "No Hands" we simply mean that during the turn, there is a time where we have lost complete contact with the wall. The trail hand, the last to be touching the wall, actually releases and moves to join the lead hand above the head before the feet reach the wall to push off. If you can feel wall contact at the same time with the hand and the feet, your turn is not as fast as it could be.

**Stroke Rate vs Stroke Count and The Best of Both Worlds!**

If you've counted your strokes at different swimming speeds, you probably found that your stroke count increased as you swam faster. But, how much did your stroke count increase and does that mean that your technique changed?

Swimmers naturally move their arms faster to swim faster which increases their stroke rate. As stroke rate increases beyond a certain point, stroke length unavoidably decreases (and stroke count increases). There is a very common technique change that causes the decrease in stroke length - swimmers' hands transition from the push phase to the exit phase at a more severe upward angle. In an effort to increase stroke rate, swimmers naturally "round off" the finish of the stroke to move their hand to the surface at a faster rate.

A minor change in the push to exit transition is usually effective because it helps to increase stroke rate. However, most swimmers prioritize stroke rate, complete the push phase prematurely, and needlessly shorten their stroke length. If a swimmer makes the effort to maintain the same technique as speed increases, there is a better chance he or she will benefit from a more complete push phase and a longer stroke length at higher stroke rates - The Best of Both Worlds!

**Sometimes - Be Your Own Coach**

Swimming imitates life, and it both cases, it’s pretty cool what you can learn from self-discovery and evaluation. During your time of aquatic back and forth, in is not a bad idea to spend moments visually seeing if what you think you are doing is actually happening. Occasionally, pull your head off your spine line to see if you are extending your arm forward in a “downhill slide” so that the hand is below the elbow and in a better position to set an early catch. Once in a while, pay attention to the high elbow recovery that frames a window for you to breathe through. When I turn my head to breathe, can I see above the water and below the surface at the same time? In backstroke, if my hands are crossing into my line of sight I am probably over-reaching. If you happen to swim when the sun is high, see what you can learn by seeing your shadow on the bottom. The shallowness of our pool makes this pretty easy. Don’t hesitate to ask the coaches questions like*, “If I were to focus on my head position during a breaststroke breath, what should I be seeing?”*  Try this a few times, and let’s “see” what happens.