

Coaches Committee Quarterly

Summer/Fall 2000

If this is your first issue, welcome to the newsletter of the USMS Coaches Committee. This publication is being sent to all coaches who are registered as such with the USMS National Office, a grand total of 801!

In the CCQ, we offer questions to an e-mail list of coaches and choose a variety of responses to the questions. Typically, three questions are posed in each issue. However, with our Coaches Committee survey in this issue, we have limited the CCQ this time to two questions. If you have any questions you would like to pose to coaches around the country, please e-mail them to coaches@usms.org.

Finally, we'd appreciate it if you would fill out the survey on the back two pages and return it ASAP. Your answers will help us track the compensation status of Masters coaches nationwide and, hopefully, improve the financial status for all of us. Thanks for your time!

Scott Rabalais
USMS Coaches Committee

Question #1: In recent years, what has been the most important event for your team, and why?

Our most important event as a team is probably the annual 5/10K Postal National Championship. Following the summer outdoor long course championship season we shift our training as a team to focus on what is an ultra-endurance event. While the sprinters of the team are in agony during this time, everyone recognizes the importance of aerobic base, and this event allows us to have a concrete marker or definite goal to work towards. It is also scheduled near the end of our outdoor season and we perceive this as a team event, a grand finale if you will. The 5K is just as much mental as it is physical, and over the years the event has become associated with bragging rights. Those participating must endure the event, while those who don't must endure a year of bravado from the others. It brings us together as a team with a single focus that is something no other event seems to do.

Joel Stager

Fielding our 85+ relay. Working with four 85+ swimmers is a challenge for both the coach and the swimmers, and getting them to the meet in Clearwater, Fla., took planning. It was worth the effort. The applause and cheering of the younger swimmers brought genuine smiles to the foursome. This warmhearted appreciation, including picture takers and autograph seekers, showed respect for the efforts of these octogenarians. We wanted to demonstrate that these four Masters swimmers are role models to us youngsters. They have goals and aspirations and eagerly look forward to each day, training and another meet. They exemplify an active, healthy lifestyle, have self-esteem and self-confidence. Everyone in Masters can appreciate what our program has done for thousands of swimmers, of all ages, throughout the

US. I'm proud to be part of this outstanding organization, that includes coaches like Ed Nessel, 1999 Masters Coach of the Year, that values the talents of these special senior swimmers.

Paul Hutinger

The single most important event for my team has been hosting a swim meet. From the time that I first proposed the meet idea to the day we hosted our first invitational and subsequent invites, it became one of our team's central focuses for the year. It brought a great sense of pride to our team to run an event that turned out so many people and had such great response from the participants. As a team we were able to involve all of our members in all aspects of the meet, from bringing food to finding sponsors for the event. It turned our group of swimmers into a team with a common goal. Attending swim meets is fun if you are participating as a swimmer, but putting on your own meet and having your membership help develop ideas for the running of it and participating in running it really has a way of bringing a team together and developing a sense of pride in your team.

Gary Reese

Since we are the only team in the Philadelphia area that trains year-round at long course, the most important event for the team each year is to have as many swimmers as possible qualify for Long Course Nationals. In doing this, we get to compete against some of the best, visit new places and make friends.

Dick Jackson

The Annual Woodlands Relay Meet, held Super Bowl Saturday. It's the one meet each year that we encourage EVERYBODY to participate in. Lots of short relays and fun relays so that the so-called "non-competitive" types aren't intimidated. We like it as a recruiting tool because we encourage our swimmers to invite other swimmers that aren't yet signed up in Masters programs to join us. It is well placed with respect to New Year's resolutions for new and returning swimmers.

Emmett Hines

The 400/500 Free has been a very important event for Team Greenville over the last several years. Especially in the case of rookie swimmers, conquering something they consider to be a distance event is quite an achievement, and very motivating for them. Also, it has showed our swimmers that holding a consistent pace is possible, and at a faster pace than what they normally would go in practice. After our newer swimmers swim their first or second 400 or 500, they really gain an appreciation for proper pacing during practice, and tend to be more aggressive on longer sets. And since this event is usually swum in mixed sexes, it gives our women and men a chance to race each other side by side, which usually helps to bring positive results, too!

Roy Dessloch

Question #2: What do you find to be the greatest stroke flaw for butterfly swimmers that you coach, and what do you do to help correct it?

The most common flaw in butterfly seems to be timing the breathing and the arms. Swimmers unfamiliar with the butterfly will tend to (1) keep their head up too long, and (2) get that sinking feeling when their arms are out of the water. In order to make it easier to recover, I try to get them to breathe sooner in the stroke and finish the breathing before their arms recover. Once they learn this skill they find butterfly a lot less intimidating and work on other parts of the stroke becomes easier.

Dick Pitman

The most common butterfly error I see in swimmers is proper timing in the breathing and staying low over the water. For most Masters, these are hard techniques to grasp and relearn. I use one-arm fly drills to correct the kick and arm timing, to emphasize the body undulation. Keeping the head lower and sweeping the arms to the side is harder to correct. Getting the swimmer to look down more on the breathing helps.

Another drill we use the four kicks to one full arm stroke. This allows the swimmer to get the timing of the kick and undulation and then only add one full arm stroke. This is easier than doing a full length of fly. We do walking drills bent at the hips to help learn the arm motion. It is much easier this way so the swimmer can actually see the mechanics of the underwater and overwater movement without struggling while trying to swim full stroke. Then we try to put them all together.

Barb Gundred

The biggest butterfly problem that I see involves problems with kick timing. This is usually due to improper body position (too much knee bend) or emphasis on one kick over the other (i.e., making one kick bigger than the other, and choosing the wrong kick.)

I attack this problem two ways. First, we work to make the kick a bit smaller in amplitude. To do this, I have swimmers try to take more kicks in a given time period. The kick has to be small for the drill to work. If people have trouble with this, I have them consciously bend their knees less while doing this drill. Along the same lines, I have swimmers make sure their feet are under the water for the duration of the kick. Sometimes, the kick amplitude becomes significantly smaller and more efficient just because the feet don't lose contact with the water.

The second problem with kick timing involves the standard problem of getting folks to kick in the right place. The first kick happens when the hands enter, and the second happens before the hands exit. If folks have a lot of trouble figuring out that the first kick can be bigger than the second, then I have them make both kicks the same size. In the long run, this helps both all flyers to use their legs more efficiently and carry the stroke with less fatigue.

Chris Colburn

The greatest stroke flaw for butterfly swimmers in general is probably the biggest flaw in any stroke—not having the rhythm in your torso. If you learn to swim fly with your body instead of just arms and feet, it really isn't as hard a stroke and many people think. In general, I don't try to correct flaws—I just try to teach them the stroke a new way, the same way I would teach someone who's never swum it before.

I start with land drills, standing up, and demonstrate the pulsing motion of short-axis strokes. Then we add arms starting with the arms extended overhead on the forward/downward pulse. I show them how dropping the hips initiates the pull of both butterfly and breaststroke, alternating arm movements for both strokes. Then I tell them to keep pulsing, but stop using the arms. If they stop pulsing when the arms stop, it shows them where the rhythm is.

Next we get in the water and do basic head-lead pulsing drills using fins. I make sure they're keeping their heads in line with their spines and are focusing their movement toward the far end of the pool, limiting the up-and-down movements of the head. Those who have learned fly with the old two kicks to one armstroke method tend to dive down with their heads and arms and then have to kick extra hard to get back up to the surface—very tiring! I tell them not to kick overtly, to let the rhythm of the pulse continue through to the feet like a whip that is snapped.

Ann Svenson

In my opinion, the greatest stroke flaw in the butterfly is the tendency to let the hands sweep out at the beginning of the pull. While it may seem to be helping, letting your hands sweep out usually allows them to sweep outward too far and they stay way outside the shoulders. When this happens, the pull gets very short and less powerful. The swimmer will often lead with the elbow, the hands will press down, and/or and the hands will flatten out - all of which will result in little or no pull through the water.

The direct cause of the excessive outswEEP is from starting the pull too soon. The wider outswEEP gives the rest of the body time to get into a better position for pulling and kicking. In reality, it does not result in better swimming even though it feels right.

I ask swimmers to think about reaching forward or gliding at the front of the stroke instead of trying to pull right away. After a little extra reach forward, the swimmer can begin the pull with the usual press and pull through under the body. To help with the concept of reaching, they should concentrate on getting into a "chest down, butt up" position while they reach at the front of the stroke. This makes the stroke longer, the hips higher in the water, uses the larger muscles in the back for pulling, and allows for more momentum when breathing.

Paul Windrath

The greatest flaw in the butterfly of my more accomplished swimmers is breaking their knees on the up-sweep of the kick. This breaks their streamline, drops their hips and lifts their heads, thereby making it very hard for them to swim more than 50 or 75 yards of quality fly. To correct this I have them kick without a kick board either with their arms fully extended or vertically in place focusing on keeping their knees locked on the up-sweep.

William Geer

COACH'S SURVEY

By the USMS Coaches Committee

The USMS Coaches Committee is interested in compiling compensation and employment information from Masters coaches across the country. Your input will help the Coaches Committee to become informed on the status of Masters coaching today and help us to determine how Masters coaches can be better served in the future. In advance, thank you for your reply.

EXPERIENCE & PRESENT STATUS

Are you a: Head Masters Coach _____
 Assistant Masters Coach _____

Are you: Paid Full-time _____
 Paid Part-time _____
 Volunteer _____

On an average, how many hours do you devote to your Masters coaching position each week? _____
Of these hours, roughly how many are on deck? _____
How many are off deck? _____

How many years experience do you have in Masters coaching? _____ Overall swim coaching? _____

List other types of swim programs that you coach, if any (age-group, high school, college, etc.):

What other ancillary activities are you responsible for?

How many swimmers do you coach directly? _____

If you are a head coach, how many assistants do you have? _____

If you have assistant coaches, how and what are they paid?

Roughly what percentage of your programming is focused on:
Competitive Masters _____
Triathletes _____
Fitness swimmers _____
Novice or learn-to-swim swimmers _____
Other _____

Are you ASCA and/or MACA Certified? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, what level? _____

List other coaching certifications:

TEAM STRUCTURE

Describe your employer (club board, USA Swimming team, health club, YMCA, school, or self-employed, etc.)

Are you employed by a board of directors? _____
If so, are you a member of that board? _____

Does your team have a formal budget? _____

Please list estimates in percentages for sources of income:

Dues _____

Meets _____

Fund-raising _____

Other _____ -- please list: _____

SALARY & BENEFITS

What is your salary for Masters coaching? List any and all that apply:

Annual _____

Monthly _____

Weekly _____

Hourly _____

Do you have a bonus structure? If so, please describe.

Are you provided with:

Major Medical insurance Yes ___ No ___

Dental insurance Yes ___ No ___

Retirement benefits Yes ___ No ___

Life insurance Yes ___ No ___

Any other benefits?

List other remunerative activities that you use for additional income (clinics, writing, event management, etc.)

Are your meet expenses, including Nationals, reimbursed?
Yes ___ No ___

Are your professional dues reimbursed (USMS, ASCA/MACA, etc.)? Yes ___ No ___

Are your continuing education activities reimbursed?
Yes ___ No ___

How much paid vacation do you receive?

Do you have a written contract? Yes ___ No ___
If so, how often is it renewed? _____

Coach's Survey (cont'd)

GENERAL COMMENTS

What overall improvements and advancements would you like to see in the area of Masters coaching salaries and working conditions? _____

What services or programs would you like to see your professional/national organizations (USMS, ASCA, MACA) provide? _____

Any additional comments?

Please return to USMS Coaches Committee, c/o Scott Rabalais, 3537 Christina Ave., Baton Rouge, La. 70820. Fax (225) 769-4323. E-mail: usms@coaches.org.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR REPLY. RESULTS WILL BE PUBLISHED IN A LATER EDITION OF THE "CCQ."

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