

# Coaches Committee Quarterly

Winter 2001

## Question #1: How do you implement individual or one-on-one instruction into your workouts?

This is one of the most difficult things to do in coaching a large group of people. What I try to do during a set of drills or stroke-work concentration is spend time at each lane. As the lane finishes I hold that lane up (the rest of the pool stays on interval), and I make suggestions and offer corrections to each individual. This is good in that the individual hears what they need to work on, but also the other people in the lane can hear the advice also and learn something new.

Many times individuals do not take "criticism" very well. So I may give a talk about a particular stroke flaw and how to correct that flaw to the entire pool, all of it aimed at one or two individuals. Even if others do not have this flaw it is always good to be reminded of proper stroke technique.

Lastly, during a fitness set I will stop individual swimmers and offer stroke advice. I find it is the combination of these different techniques that best communicates proper stroke technique. I also try to use different verbiage and visualizations because each individual responds differently.

**Donald Koslowsky**  
**Kailua Masters Swim Club**

In dealing with one swimmer at a time, two things can occur. If pool space warrants, move the swimmer into their own lane or a lane less crowded. This way you can work and talk without the confusion of a set being interrupted.

Or, put them in a spot in line where they do not have to focus so much on effort, but can relax and swim a little easier. This will give them the opportunity to focus on the instructions the coach is providing. They may also only swim 50s to stay in the lane flow, but have time to stop and discuss with the coach.

**Dan Meinholz**  
**Express Masters Swim Team**

I use the Eddie Reese paradigm of just sort of prowling the deck throughout practice, looking for the next obvious stroke flaw in need of attention. Most of the swimmers understand that, regardless of the type of set we are doing, I'm likely to stop someone or pull them aside for 1-on-1 input, sometimes at length. Such input may or may not be directly related to the set at hand. Having offered input on a particular subject, I try to revisit that swimmer on the same subject at some point later in the practice.

I employ the "squeaky wheel gets the grease" paradigm, in that those who ask for help are more likely to get help. My preference is to engage in a dialog rather than a 1-way communication. My style is a bit Socratic - I ask lots of questions and try to help the swimmer answer their own questions where possible.

We also do a lot of peer coaching wherein I pair up swimmers, explain a concept, drill or motion, describe specific feedback points and then have the pairs take turns coaching each other. Those who've been with our program any length of time generally demonstrate high proficiency in helping their teammates in this manner.

I make the 15 minutes immediately following practice available to any of my swimmers for 1-on-1 work.

**Emmett Hines**  
**H<sub>2</sub>Ouston Swims**

When coaching the Masters group, that's the whole basis for each workout. I usually have one concept of a set (warm-up, main, drills, etc.) that I write on the dry-erase board and each lane (and, subsequently, each person) gets a personal version of their set based on the written model. Flexibility is the main ingredient to having satisfied swimmers when each lane has a varying degree of ability. There is rarely a unified group that completes an entire set as originally written.

That's the joy of being a Masters swimmer...keep bending the set until it meets your needs for that day. As long as no lanes are being held up, or people aren't denied the opportunity to get the workout in they desire, then I'll be as flexible as the swimmers need.

**Andrew Pulsifer**  
**Rockbridge County Aquatics**

The way in which I implement one-on-one instruction every time I am coaching is to stand by each lane for part of a set. I say their name and I give them one thing to work on. There are times when people (especially novice Masters) want a lot of feedback. I have found that if I give them too much, they feel overwhelmed and frustrated. I let them know that I will give them one thing to work on and when I see them back at another workout, I will give them something else to work on.

**Rose Cholewinski**  
**Davis Athletic Club Masters**

I try to give a small amount of feed back to each swimmer at every workout, but at the same time I focus on 2-3 swimmers and give them lots of feedback. The trick is to keep shifting the 2 or 3 around and not focus on either the best or the worst swimmers.

**Stephen Johnson**  
**Emerald Aquatics**

I use my camcorder (above water) for periodic review. I talk into the camera as I video, telling the camera what is going on good with technique, and just a few major items to work on. Then I talk about it to the person, and take additional video to see if they can transfer comments into changes. Then I cut a VCR tape for each person to look at home.

**Dick Webber**  
**Name of Team**

## **Question #2: Other than word-of-mouth, what promotional idea have you found most effective in drawing new members to your team?**

We held a once-per-month class called MASTERS SWIMMING 101 - it was a one hour intro to masters, where the coach explains what happens at a Masters workout, gives everybody some quick stroke tips and basic body position work. It was a big hit and we always picked up a few new members from it. This one-time class was much more successful for us than the extended fitness swimming classes.

**Mo Chambers**  
**Name of Team**

We do no promoting of the group on a formal basis. We're small, and have limited space and time, and only a few compete with any regularity, but each who come, and subsequently tell a friend about it, enjoy an opportunity to train/workout on that given day.

**Andrew Pulsifer**  
**Rockbridge County Aquatics**

The most important thing I have done has been to invite a lap swimmer to STAY for the Masters workout instead of asking them to leave because "it's our turn." The Novice Masters group at our club is extremely friendly, supportive, social and fun. They usually hear me inviting the person to stay and they all join in on the invitation.

The other thing that has helped people return to the program is to ask them to stop three quarters of the way through the workout. This is usually when everyone is in their "meat and potatoes" set and I have some time to encourage continued participation. I talk with them about our workouts, answer any questions and let them know that I would rather have them get out a few minutes early and say "Wow, that felt great. I look forward to tomorrow," instead of saying, "That was soooo hard. I don't have energy to come back." I like them to get out "wanting more" than to get out so exhausted I don't see them back.

**Rose Cholewinski**  
**Davis Aquatic Club Masters**

We have a strong interface with the local triathlon club and have attracted many swimmers that way (serious triathletes are often the best members and will sometimes swim in pool meets and almost always in open-water races), and we have done some advertising at the University, where the lack of an NCAA or club program has helped us.

**Stephen Johnson**  
**Emerald Aquatics**

We get a lot of requests from people on the web. Once you develop a web page, it is pretty easy to maintain it. This is a great place to post workouts, monthly newsletters, fees, workout times, parties, meet info, etc.

**Polly Upshaw**  
**UC Berkeley Masters**

With roughly 250 members on the team, this is definitely a challenge. We have a 10-minute warm up time and then we progress with a drill set designed to concentrate on one or two aspects of the stroke we are working on that week. I try to get to all 6 lanes and give comments to as many individuals as possible. I find the challenge not only in giving stroke feedback, but following through on any progress made after these comments. I think it is important to vocalize just one or two things per swimmer, so they can focus on the task at hand. Also, try to make the message simple. (For example: relax the hand, high elbows, fingertips deep).

**Polly Upshaw**  
**UC Berkeley Masters**

I usually use a separate lane if available or I use the beginning swimmer lane and have that person do a series of 25's to work on technique. This helps to separate them from the group and still make them part of the team. As they progress with the technique I move them into an ability appropriate lane for the stroke they are working on. If more than one person needs this attention I try to do the same thing with each person going 15-20 seconds apart so I can view and review with them at each wall.

**Peter Calabrese**  
**Dallas Aquatic Masters**

My swimmers follow a workout guide that is hung from the starting block. This allows me to watch swimmers and pull individuals aside or out of the water to speak directly and/or confidentially to them. This makes more of an impact on the swimmer and I think helps them to focus on what we have just discussed.

**Dick Pitman**  
**East Madison YMCA Masters**

I coach the St. Helena Masters Group in St. Helena, Calif. It's a small town with a small pond to draw from. I rely on beginners to keep my program going. To facilitate this I always keep a lane for "beginners" on the deck side of the pool. Once I get everyone else going I start the beginner or beginners on drills. I make it very clear to them when they first come to the pool that I expect them to first learn to swim correctly (balance, rhythm, push against the pressure, not kick, etc.) I tell them they can expect it to take a while and when I think they are ready they can move out of the beginner lane. I continually encourage the better swimmers to forego a regular workout once in a while and come and get some one-on-one instruction.

There is plenty of time in between sets to do all of this unless you are distracted by a morning paper or cell phone. Nothing is more rewarding then seeing the progress a beginner can make with a little bit of encouragement. I also take great pride in the fact that when I gaze out over my pool as everyone swims that I see long rhythmic strokes, no high heads, and no huge splashes of energy waste. Beginners that learn to swim by your guidance become some of the best, most helpful, gracious contributors in the pool because you have helped them "master" something they once feared due to lack of knowledge or a prior bad experience.

**Hermine Terhorst**  
**St. Helena Masters Swimming**

Bring a friend day works well. Some clubs charge a daily fee but this can be comp'ed if you are ahead of the game or you have a series of free passes as part of your salary. Always remember to have them sign a damage/injury waiver!

Another way is to go out and try to work with a local triathlon club and do a series of Tri-specific workouts - open turns and technique between the walls gets a lot of attention. You and your club may want to offer a reduced rate/limited number of workouts to get people in the door and try to work with them separately if you can. Triathletes have different needs than your average hardcore swimmer.

**Peter Calabrese**  
**Dallas Aquatic Masters**

A few years ago our local newspaper decided to write a story about Masters Swimming. I'm not sure where they got the idea; I didn't call them. The result was a front-page article with 3-4 color photos! Our program exploded after that. Our YMCA still has a copy of that article behind glass in the lobby! I try to keep in touch with the media now, which means contacting them when we have a swim meet coming up. Newspapers are always looking for interesting human interest stories. I would bet every Masters team in the country has a few interesting stories to share with the reading public.

**Dick Pittman**  
**East Madison YMCA Masters**

We have a bulletin board at the pool and a web site but the best way is word of mouth. Our team has shirts and swim caps and we find that many people will stop a team member and ask them about swimming. I often urge our swimmers to tell their friends about our swim team.

**Donald Koslowsky**  
**Kailua Masters Swim Club**

Our strong web presence is a primary recruiting tool. In addition to having information about our club, we have a forum which includes an "Ask the Coach" section, a subscription to our email distribution list and a growing library of articles for visitors' perusal.

I ask nearly every person who contacts me about swimming if I can add them to our email distribution list to receive various swimming-related information (but no advertising - except for event info).

I write articles about swimming and many are published in magazines and newsletters locally and around the world. I try to be sure that the name of my team, URL and contact info is included with any article published.

My sort-of-monthly group video clinics are open to the general swimming community for a modest fee. These are done immediately following Saturday morning practices, which clinic participants are encouraged to attend as well.

I do a lot of 1-on-1 swimming instruction with people who are not part of my team, and most eventually join our group.

**Emmett Hines**  
**H<sub>2</sub>Ouston Swims**

## Coaches Committee News

**The National Database** – This newsletter is being sent to all coaches who are registered as such with the National Office of USMS. When filling out your 2000 or 2001 registration, you indicated that you are a coach, and this information is forwarded to the National Office. This is the same database that is used for e-mailing coaches, so if you have not been receiving Coaches Committee e-mail, please forward your e-mail address to your LMSC registrar, who can in turn send it to National. Through this database, we hope to improve coach networking and to keep you informed of the latest in the field of Masters coaching.

**LMSC Representatives** – Virtually every LMSC has a Coaches Rep; do you know who yours is? If not, find out and talk with them about coaching in your area. Every Coaches Rep has been asked to set written goals for his/her LMSC, so inquire as to their plans. It's at the grassroots level that the real work happens, and you can make a difference!

**Olympic Training Center Camps** – USMS, in conjunction with USA Swimming and the Olympic Training Center, is preparing for its fourth training camp in Colorado Springs, Colorado, from February 11-14. The staff consists of Nancy Ridout (Camp Director), Leslie Cooper (Camp Director), Scott Rabalais (Coaches Committee Chairman), Bill Volckening (Camp IV Head Coach), Janet Renner (Camp IV Coach), Don Mehl (Camp IV Intern) and Mark Stoker (Flexibility and Strength Coach). Twelve athletes, six men and six women, have been selected from a list of nearly 100 applicants to attend this prestigious camp.

**Mentor Coach and Open Water Camps** – Applications are now being taken for the hosting of USMS Mentor Coach and Swimmer Camps along with USMS Open Water Camps. See the appropriate contact on the back of this newsletter. Both camps bring in a talented and experienced coach/athlete to share his/her wisdom in a clinic setting. USMS provides a \$500 grant to help defray the cost of the clinic.

**Masters Coaching Conferences** – The idea of having a Masters Coaching Conference, strictly to enhance the knowledge of Masters coaches in regards to team building and coaching (technique/training) is being studied. This type of conference would be held over a weekend at a chosen site in the US, and would feature some of the top Masters coaches in the country. And, you would find many ways to improve your standing as a Masters coach. A registration fee would be charged. If this is an idea that you would like to see pursued or if you think you would attend such a conference, please let us know at coaches@usms.org (Scott Rabalais).

**Coach's Survey** – Thanks to all of the coaches who have turned in their survey, which was sent in the last CCQ and via e-mail to the latest national database (roughly 500 of 800 listed an e-mail address). The results report is expected to be included in the next CCQ.

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