

Coaches Committee Quarterly

United States
Masters
Swimming



Summer 2001

1. Half of your team is preparing for a big championship meet in two weeks. The other half is not competing in the meet. Do you train them in the same manner or differently? Please elaborate.

I would generally train the taper people with the regular people as the taper people need quality and it is good for the regular people to do quality too. In the final 3 weeks before the big meet, I would put the taper people in their own lane to do a specific workout and not mix.

*Carolyn Boak
Woodlands Masters, TX*

Differently. Regular workouts for the one half. The half competing in the meet get emphasis on speed, technique, speed, turns, speed, starts, and ... did I say speed?

Jim Densmore

I prefer to train all the same, I believe it is good for the non-competitors to get some competition during the workout. However, during taper, I would add yardage for non-competitors and add some starts and turn work for the competitors.

*Patty Corbetta
YMCA - Duncan facility
Arvada, Colorado*

All my swimmers train together, no matter who's swimming in what upcoming meet, but they don't necessarily swim the same distance for each interval.

It is no different than giving the team a union set. For example, the "fasties" swim 150s on 3:00, the "normals" swim

100s on 3:00, and maybe an injured swimmer over in lane 1 kicks 50s on 3:00. Everyone leaves the wall at the same time. These union sets promote camaraderie and discourage stragglers.

During a taper, for that same set, the meet folks may be doing 25 meet stroke sprint/25 drill, but everybody is still leaving the wall at the same time.

*Priscilla Bettis
Virginia Masters Swim Team
Lynchburg, Virginia*

Training for the meet participants would consist of "taper" style workouts with plenty of time allowed to practice starts. Masters attend fewer meets than they did "in the old days" and haven't the opportunity to use their racing/competition techniques. Practices prior to a competition should include time for that and sprint sets. The others would practice as usual and offer their cheers and support between sets!

*Carrie Patterson
Valley Forge Masters
Villanova & Berwyn, Pennsylvania*

I train them all as if they were all going to the meet. I feel that they learn what happens to their conditioning and how

From USMS Coaches Committee Chairman Scott Rabalais

Quite a few e-mails have been flying about the Board of Directors and others regarding a number of current issues. One of the more popular topics regards the growth of USMS, and many in the ranks believe the key to growth is on the local level, particularly through the coaches.

It seems to be an appropriate time to look within our coaching ranks and decide how we, as a coaching group, can best serve USMS in its desire to improve and expand. Without a doubt, the aim to enlist more and better-educated coaches is high on the list.

The idea of an annual or semi-annual coaches conference (for Masters coaches only) is still on the table and may be worth pursuing the the coming months. However, for this -- or any other -- idea to be effected, there must be contributions from the leaders of USMS coaching, which is the Coaches Committee, as well as others who are willing to contribute.

Let's make it happen!

Continued on next page

their body reacts to tapering and it shows them that they can improve their swimming. If they just train every day and don't ever taper they will not see the improvement that they can make. This is also a way of getting them in shape for relays and then introducing them to meets. They all enjoy the taper and can see the difference in their times.

*Carol Macpherson
Rinconada Masters
Palo Alto, California*

When we began to answer these same questions on our team four years ago it led us to totally redevelop our annual and seasonal training plans. Please, read on to discover what has worked for us.

On our team, our members are pretty evenly distributed in that there are approximately one-third triathletes, one-third fitness swimmers and one third competitive Masters swimmers. About four years ago, we realized that each of the components in our program were not getting what they needed to improve. Since our program is sustained entirely by our membership regardless of the reason why they swim, it seemed only fair that each group should feel important and have workouts designed especially for them. Instead of designing three different workouts everyday, we developed a different idea.

First, we tried to recognize the events that motivate each group. Fitness swimmers love the USMS One-Hour Postal swim in January. Most competitive Masters swimmers attend the USMS or YMCA Short Course Nationals in the spring. And the triathlete's season is in the summer (we host a One Mile Open Water swim for them).

Then we came up with an annual training plan that provides equal attention to each group. From October to January is the Fitness Swimmer Season. It focuses on over-distance aerobic training in preparation for the USMS One-Hour Swim. This season is also great aerobic

base training for the Masters swimmers and Triathletes. From February to May is the competitive Masters Season. This season includes the works—lactate, VO_2 , stroke specialty, starts, turn work, etc. This is great for Triathletes and Fitness who now have intervals big enough to swim really fast and see how much the Fitness season has benefited them.

To answer question #1, we have the whole team swim taper workouts. For two weeks the first half of workouts are taper. Then we have those attending Nationals get out and Triathletes and Fitness swimmers (plus a few distance Masters swimmers) finish up with an aerobic set. Finally, the Triathlete Season (Open Water Season) is from June to September. It includes more VO_2 and aerobic than the competitive Masters season. Both Fitness and Masters swimmers have been inspired to swim Open Water events during this season.

We know we can not please everyone all the time on our team, but we have developed a lot of respect and pride between our groups and now everyone works together. And because of that this annual plan has been a success for us.

*Kris Houchens
YMCA Indy SwimFit
Indianapolis, IN*

The constant challenge for Masters swimmers is motivation. Especially in New York City where there are so many distractions, having an event or a goal helps motivate folks to keep coming back. When an event is on the horizon we explain what the event is and invite everyone to attend. Even those who will not attend can still be motivated by working up to the date of the event with the team. And next time they may decide to do the event themselves.

Earl Walton

2.

Discuss how your team has been impacted by its own web site.

Team does not pay much, if any, attention to the web sites.

*Patty Corbetta
YMCA - Duncan facility
Arvada, Colorado*

Our team's web site has been a "God-send" for communicating the schedule changes that occur so frequently due to the pools being shared with college and age-group teams. When meets (or inclement weather, when we practice outdoors) interfere with our workout schedule we are notified via email by our web site manager. We can use the web site to check for schedule changes, site locations, social events, meet schedules, meet results...

We lead busy lives as Master swimmers and can't socialize as much as we'd like to. The web page keeps us connected and secures that common bond we share—love of swimming.

*Carrie Patterson
Valley Forge Masters
Villanova & Berwyn, Pennsylvania*

Our web page is a marketing tool for outside masters. We do all our communicating by email. I have one of my swimmers run the web page. We have pictures and information about the team.

*Carol Macpherson
Rinconada Masters
Palo Alto, California*

3. How do you successfully mix the seasonal triathletes into your year-round masters program (particularly the freestyle-only, no-kicking variety)?

As for triathletes, I emphasize with them the importance of doing our regular workouts with strokes mixed in. I trained a Hawaii Ironman winner back in the late 80's and she refused to do anything but freestyle and ended up injured. So I encourage triathletes to even out their bodies by doing other strokes, especially backstroke. However, I do not push butterfly, and often have choice sets of IM or stroke and do not set hard and fast rules that everyone must do every stroke, simply encouraging triathletes to so come back or breast rather than all free.

*Carolyn Boak
Woodlands Masters, TX*

We warmly welcome our seasonal Triathletes and have a laissez-faire attitude typical of Hawaii. We encourage other strokes, but allow freestyle stroke drills in place of "other than free" and allow fins for kick sets. We also print a monthly calendar with each day's workout, so they know which day is "Backstroke Bonanza" and which day is "Distance Dynamo" and can plan accordingly.

*Amy Patz
University of Hawaii Masters
Honolulu, HI*

Most all our swimmers know our annual seasonal plan. In the Masters Season, triathletes are allowed to swim freestyle during stroke sets but we have discovered surprisingly that many more triathletes are trying the strokes when we do the short sprints and don't require them to do it. Triathletes on our team are always instructed to do freestyle drills during kick sets during the Triathlete Sea-

son. However, we work on their kick during the other two seasons. Also, during our Triathlete Season there are less stroke sets offered, however, Masters and Fitness swimmers are allowed to swim strokes on the freestyle VO2 sets (because of the larger interval). So for this one third of the year the Masters swimmers are varying off the workout and not the triathletes. We have validated the triathletes training in this way on our team.

We do not have a lot of seasonal triathletes. We have about a 95% retention rate with the (100+) triathletes that swim year round with us.

*Kris Houchens
YMCA Indy SwimFit
Indianapolis, IN*

Our practice consists of three interval choices. Swimmers decide where they feel most comfortable, yet challenged. When a set includes strokes other than freestyle the swimmer choosing not to change strokes informs the rest of the lane of his/her intentions and finds an order in the send-off that won't upset the lane's equilibrium. If they have to move to another lane for a faster or slower send-off interval they are encouraged to do so. Frequently, even the "talented" swimmers bock at sets that include fly, substituting free or one arm-alternating fly drills. Swimmers need to communicate with the coach any goals or expectations they have for the practices so accommodations can be made to meet their needs.

*Carrie Patterson
Valley Forge Masters
Villanova & Berwyn, Pennsylvania*

A lot of our swimmers race in openwater events in the summer, and we encourage novices to give these races a try. Incorporating long distance, mainly freestyle, sets from late April through the summer isn't too problematic and keeps our triathletes happy, too. Our view is that even sprinters can have fun in the ocean races: it gets people outdoors and provides a new dimension for some swimmers that can help get them out of a rut, etc. In fact, a couple of our die-hard, I'll-never-race-at-all pool swimmers just participated in the around Manhattan race, on relay teams, and have caught the open water bug!

Using similar logic we've been successful with the reverse as well, i.e. getting triathletes and open water swimmers into pool meets during their off-season.

*Jennifer White
West Side YMCA
New York*

The triathletes in my program are ease into doing the regular workouts. I convince them that a well rounded body doing all the strokes can only help them in the long run. So they learn to do kicking and drills and do all the strokes they are capable of doing. They still do well in their events. I have swimmers doing the California Ironman and many local events, including open water and ocean swims.

*Carol Macpherson
Rinconada Masters
Palo Alto, California*

USMS Coaches Committee News

LMSC Representative Reports

USMS Coaches Committee members have been asked to contact LMSC Coaches Reps and to submit reports on coaching activity in each LMSC. While some reports have been submitted, others have not. If you are an LMSC Coaches Rep and have not been contacted about a summary of Masters coaching in your area, please contact Scott Rabalais ASAP at (225) 766-5937 so that we can include your LMSC in our annual convention report.

Olympic Training Center Camp

Although the tentative camp set for November, 2001, has not been confirmed by the Olympic Training Center, the Coaches Committee is taking applications for coaches to serve on the staff for future camps. If interested in applying, please check www.usms.org under Coaching for an application.

Help On Deck

On-deck Coaching will be offered at both USMS Long Course Nationals in Federal Way and at the convention in Dearborn. If you can assist, please contact Marty Hamburger at martyshamb@aol.com. Thank you!

International Coaching

Applications are being circulated for participation in the International Coaching Program at the World Masters Championships in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2002. If you are interested in aiding USMS swimmers at the meet and receiving a stipend to help defray your meet expenses, please contact Scott Rabalais at coaches@usms.org.

Convention Matters

All USMS coaches are encouraged to become involved in USMS administration. If you cannot attend the USMS convention in September, please voice any concerns or ideas you have with regard to Masters coaching to any Coaches Committee member or by e-mail to coaches@usms.org.

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