

Coaching Growth and Clinics by Dick Hannula

When clinic attendance is offered, each coach will get out of any clinic according to what the coach is willing to put into the clinic. I always believed that I needed to learn from successful coaches and swimmers. My own experience was limited to high school and non NCAA qualifying in college. The Red Cross had been a major contributor to my early aquatic training. I was limited and I knew it. When clinics became available, I attended those that were close by and then national clinics. For close to 50 years I have been the clinic director for the Northwest Swim Coaches' Clinic. The best up and coming coaches were selected by me to speak at these clinics. I was always one of the most receptive of the coaching audience every year. My notes were hand written fast and furious throughout the clinics. It is some of these clinic notes that I recently recovered while consolidating my files that gave me the idea for this article. Good advice isn't necessarily only what we currently read and hear.

Mark Schubert has spoken twice at our Northwest Clinic. The following notes are from his first appearance possibly more than 25 years ago. These are excerpts from that talk. He outlined his expectations from 13 to 18 year old athletes. (1) Hard work is necessary and hard work can be fun. The motivation of the coach is the key. (2) Start by building a base on technique. Teach one on one. (3) Give them an endurance background in all 4 strokes. (4) Video tape stroke in practice and in competition. (5) The dry land program is not necessary before age 13. However once they reach puberty, start a progressive dry land program. Develop basic strength first then gradually increase strength and endurance. (6) The early season training consists of technique first. Talk and teach stroke. Teach stroke drills and make them done

over and over until done correctly. The swimming is low pressure.

Mark emphasized that kicking is best done without a kickboard. If and when using a kickboard then use a ½ board. ((Note this was before the smaller kickboards available today) He emphasized kicking in the afternoon with short fins and alternate kicking and swimming with fins. His pulling sets were important and had discarded tubes around the ankles and was building to larger paddles, emphasizing starting the stroke slow and ending fast.

The training notes recommended start challenging the swimmers about a month into the program. Train athletes as individuals and begin to adapt the interval to the individual and gradually progress to fast intervals. Once or twice a week ask your swimmers to attempt something that they might not succeed. It becomes too easy to swim the same sets and the same intervals. Think about what an individual has never done before. Prepare them that they might fail but be enthusiastic about the portion that they do complete successfully. Play games in workout. Change the program each year for change sake. Plan surprises in the workout. Sprinting is done all season long and at least once a day for everyone. It is important to do short sprints such as 12 ½, also 12 ½ into and out of the walls. Sprint 50's all season long at least one or two times a week and early in the workout before becoming tired.

Mark outlined an 18 week high school season to set up 6 week buildup, 9 weeks mid, and 3 weeks taper. In the mid-season race in the workout 3 times a week and some of that head to head. Repeat various types of swimming both easy and fast. Aerobic should be done fairly easy and the threshold swimming from a total of 2000 up

to 6000 3 times a week. Quality swimming was recommended 2 times a week from 600 to 900 yards total. 125's down to 50's would be done all out 100% to 300% of race distance. Distance swimmers can go up to 200 yard repeats. Give your swimmers goal times and chart the progress.

A special workout drill that Mark used was the "Firestone Drill". Divide the team so they are assigned to each side of the pool. Kick on the wall with the face in the water for a stated number of seconds (one example 30 seconds) and then sprint across the pool, one side on top of the water and the other side under water torpedo kicking. Go on 60 seconds for 12 to 20 minutes total. (Caution as to the amount of breath holding and the level of your team members.)

Some Dave Salo's notes on breaststroke include the following: He emphasized streamlining out front, hand speed, and heel speed. Create an extended line out front. He recommends streamline kicking underwater to give the swimmer more feel and awareness of their kick. The bicycle kick is with the head up and draw the heel back to the hip as quickly as possible and alternating legs. The drill keeps the back up on top with no arch. Emphasize fast heels and keeping the lower back up. Follow up pulling at full speed after short distances of the alternating bicycle kick. Look for a straight line path of the heels to the base of the butt. The recovery of the kick is very important. Train the heels to be fast. Deliver the kick with the heels outside of the knees.

A cross pool breaststroke training drill illustrated by Dave Salo was the following: Kick cross pool underwater breaststroke; butterfly kick at the wall to a whistle; alternating bicycle kick head up cross pool; butterfly kick at the wall to a whistle; then

cross pool breaststroke swim as fast as possible (no underwater pull out).

The following hints were given for the breaststroke pull. Pull with a small fast butterfly kick for faster hand speed. Create a line out front. Try to keep the lower back flat, not arched on the reach. Scull, avoid pulling the elbows back. Keep the elbows higher than the hand at the end of the in sweep.

Use the "scrunch" position on the sculling. The head is up and knees tucked up. The "scrunch" position helps to keep the elbows up. Build the components, scull/scrunch/full. Breaststroke pull with a fast flutter kick helps to keep the elbows up. Consider the arms as blades. Focus less on the out sweep and set up the in sweep. It's a constant out sweep and then accelerate the in sweep. The blade is formed from the elbow to the fingertips. Keep the blade straight. As you complete the in sweep the elbows are permitted to come in. Try to flatten the back at this position. The gut muscles will have to tighten. As you drive the hands forward the head drives down between the arms and the forward extension is in line. Breathe with the shoulders and not the head on the in sweep. Focus on driving the shoulders forward on the lunge or recovery and not driving the head down. Pull the elbows in on the in sweep to create a small tube to drive through.

Recover very close to the surface and feel pressure on the hand. The action is almost surfing forward on the hands. Extend the arms into the recovery avoiding stops on the stroke

Summary: Take clinic notes. Read them and re-read them in subsequent seasons. There is always something there that you may have missed the first time around.

