



Future Dreams

September 2000
By Haydn Woolley
9/25/2000

IMPORTANT NOTE

Depending on how far advanced your swimming technique has evolved at the current time, this topic may vary in importance to you. Please be aware that the technical part of your stroke that should be improved initially is that of body position. Without good balance and streamline first, a focussed approach on the pull may exaggerate faults in other areas of your stroke. It may also make any incorrect habits more difficult to break. It is therefore recommended that unless you are happy with your degree of drag efficiency (streamline) and your experience of relaxation (from good balance) then you should continue to persevere with these areas of your stroke for a while longer.

Part 1 of 2

In this latest article we deal with a stroke component that many would regard as the most important, that of the PULL.

OUR OBJECTIVE

Our aim with any pulling action is simple - to catch as much water as possible in front of you and push it back as far as you can. An efficient method of pulling will produce a good forward movement relative to the energy expended in that action which is what we desire - "efficiency".

So how can we become more Efficient?

Pulling efficiency can be described as the combination of power and technique channelled through any pulling action. Fortunately this implies that you do not necessarily have to be powerful or even exceptionally fit to be a good swimmer. As long as you can gain the most from each pulling action and effectively channel this force forwards with a small amount of drag then you can successfully swim fast.

The factors involved with an efficient pull are many and can also vary within each movement. This is why swimmers simply refer to it as "feel" because it sometimes defies clear description. Many good swimmers are often even unaware about how they pull because they would have learned subconsciously over many years by trial and error. Hopefully you will develop this better understanding of what makes a good pulling action through reading on... The factors listed below help describe why an effective pull still eludes many of us. Take a pen to this list and tick if you can identify correctly with each of the points in your own stroke.



swim@futuredreams.co.nz

www.futuredreams.co.nz

021-2888715

- a) Hand & Arm Angle - down & backwards, so the body is only being pushed forwards, not up and down (in relation to bottom of the pool)
- b) Elbow Angle - bent elbow , so you can develop more power from a shorter lever (your arm is the lever)
- c) Hand & Wrist Angle - quite straight (push with the elbow instead for more power - a bent lever supplies more power than a straight one)
- d) Hand Pitch - thumbs inwardly rotated on the glide (~ 5-15 degrees). Note that this degree of inward turn (thumbs down slightly) is relative to the bottom of the pool and is relevant to the hand path (e) below
- e) Hand Path - through the pull, should be in a relatively straight line below your body, not crossing under. You should also pull through just to the outside of a straight line below your body that is relative to the bottom. Note that if your hand pitch, (d) falls over at the end of the glide (ie, little finger falls over and down), this may cause you to pull under your body and across the centre line - slipping water
- f) Hand Shape - all fingers together creating a semi cupped but quite flat hand-shape for maximum surface area. Keep your thumb together as well.

As you can well understand you cannot practically think about all these topics at once while swimming unless you want your head to explode. The best way to practise is prior to your swim session in the spa pool, either playing with hand &/or arm shapes and positions, but also by sculling and using paddles. These will be discussed further in the second instalment of this article coming in a few weeks. In the meantime please ponder the list above and also the stroking sequence shown in the sidebar of Grant Hackett, Elite Australian swimmer and new Olympic 1500m champion. In particular shots 8,9 & 10 are worth checking out.

All the best,
Haydn



swim@futuredreams.co.nz

www.futuredreams.co.nz

021-2888715