

The 2015 Review

Whilst there were certainly improvements for many throughout the 2015 season for a number of athletes, I feel the targeted developments within the swimming section of the club, in particular the approach athletes take to swimming as a discipline, has fallen short of my expectations. I implemented three changes as a coach that required the commitment of swimmers to truly make successful from 2014 to 2015, these were:

- **Simplified drills** – The most successful change made over the course of 2015. Swimmers are approaching drills with far more diligence than they were in 2014. My only criticism would be the lack of application from drill to full stroke. This has been correctly implemented by a number of you, and I expect it to be adopted by the vast majority in 2016, all that is required is attention to detail, and not letting your mind wander through a session.
- **Increasing kick mileage** – Kick mileage certainly increased from 2014 to 2015, however I am disappointed in the most part with the attitude adopted towards kick sets. There is a wealth of research and publications detailing its benefits, and it is time these were taken note of by many of the swimmers attending sessions.
- **Greater reliance on stroke counts and times** – Similar to the approach towards kicking. I have a number of swimmers that show extreme diligence towards knowing times and stroke counts, however many do not try to gain this information (in particular stroke counts). When it comes to this aspect of your swim training, I would promote a similar approach I imagine you all take to cycling training: measuring distance, speed, cadence, power output, HR and whatever else your Garmin can produce. All I'm asking for in the water is to you a clock and count your strokes, something that should be a fairly simple exercise that will enable you to develop further this year, if it has been done throughout 2015.

As you should all be aware, my approach to swimming is to have the best quality technique to work with, and apply the speed on top of this. My reasoning behind taking this approach being that if I can make you a technically more able swimmer, your swimming efficiency will improve, thus making it possible to apply less physical effort and be able to swim quicker times. I expect those attending sessions to respect this and work on improving their stroke at every session, not simply turning up and going through the motions.

As we move into 2016, the following are key factors I wish to introduce or see continued development on throughout the year:

- **The introduction of turnaround times** – This will enable swimmers to move away from a prescribed amount of rest to working within a set time requirement, e.g. swimming 10 x 100 with swim/rest times of 1:55. This will allow us to have far more fluid lane swimming, as turnaround times will be allocated by lane. The prerequisite to this is that swimmers know the times they can hold over a given distance, knowledge that should have been developed through 2015.

- **Continued technical development** – Through 2015 I would expect swimmers to have developed at least one technical improvement that is now automatic. This will allow the athlete to develop further this year, thus moving their performances forward year on year.
- **Improved Communication between Coach & Athlete** – If you are particular targets for the coming season, **PLEASE LET ME KNOW AT THE START OF THE YEAR**. The most rewarding part of my job is knowing what you intend to achieve this year and helping you do so. I feel the swimmers to have made some of the largest developments over the course of the year have been the ones who have communicated their targets to me, and we have worked towards these in every session. I would like to do the same for far more of you this coming year.

If there are any questions from any athlete with regards to the content of this review please approach me at the sessions, and I look forward to a positive 2016 season full of improvements for you all.

Tom Macklin
7oaks Triathlon Swim Coach

The 2016 Season Plan

The season plan has been designed in such a way that any individual, regardless of swimming experience or performance level, can achieve their best possible results subject to their commitment and application to training. To clarify what is meant by commitment and application, I wish to define the terms as the following:

Commitment – the regularity of your attendance at training sessions

Application – The quality level at which you conduct each and every session you perform.

Technical Adaptation

Making sure you have an efficient technique to carry forward into the general preparation phase and beyond. This phase will include less mileage than some may demand, however, the benefits of taking this time to fully cement an efficient stroke will pay dividends for not only the remainder of this season, but beyond and into subsequent years.

The aim for the swimmer should be to make the greatest technical gain that can be maintained throughout the rest of the season. As an example, if there are three major technical changes that I feel could be made, but the time during this phase only allows for one or two to be corrected and MAINTAINED throughout the remainder of the season, then that would be a better choice for the athlete as they would be able to transfer the improved areas of their technique into their race performance for the year. The second or third elements in which technical improvements can be made can be done the following season.

During this phase expect:

- Lower swim mileage
- Increased drills
- Increased kick mileage

By the end of this phase expect:

- To have a clear understanding of any technical flaws within your stroke
- To have improved upon a technical aspect of your stroke that you are responsible for maintaining over the remainder of the season, thus making the improvement autonomous in the future.

General Preparation

This phase is designed to prepare athletes physically for the intensity of the training to come in the rest of the season, but also to develop their understanding of what they are expected to know in order to benefit their understanding of their performance in each session.

During this stage there are two fundamentals that I expect athletes to be monitoring at every session, these are:

- Stroke counts (per 25m)
- Times (using the pace clock or coaches timing)

By using these two measures we will be able to improvements as we continue throughout the season, but they we also help you to identify how hard you are working at any giving point within a session.

Due to the distances athletes will be racing (750m/1500m/1900m/3800m), the main components of training will include building aerobic capacity and aerobic endurance, made up of primarily En-1 and En-2 training sessions. Sessions will consist of varying distances and paces, with intensity building through the weeks. During this phase I will expect individuals to be monitoring their times using the pace clock, and looking to improve of these times as we go through the weeks (without sacrificing stroke efficiency and technique). Athletes will also be expected to be able to correspond to perceived effort levels with these speeds, for example knowing that they swim a 400m time of 5.45 at an effort level of 6/10 and a time of 5.25 at an effort level of 8/10.

During this phase expect:

- Mileage to increase week by week
- Intensity to increase week by week
- To monitor your times and stroke counts in correspondence with perceived effort levels

By the end of this phase expect:

- To have a solid physical base that can be built upon over the remainder of the season
- To know your own times and stroke counts for varying distances at varying perceived effort levels.

Overload

During this phase athletes will be pushing at and above swimming race pace. This phase is designed to place maximum stress on the muscles and energy pathways that will be used. Training sessions will consist of predominantly En-2 and En-3 sessions.

During this phase expect:

- The training intensity to peak for the season
- To push yourself to the limit of your physical capabilities – beyond how you would swim during competitive triathlon!

By the end of this phase expect:

- To be exhausted!

Recovery

This one-week will allow your body to recover from the intense previous four weeks. The week will consist of exclusively En-I sessions, culminating in a 7 x 200m step test. The inclusion of this week is to demonstrate and assess the effectiveness of the general preparation cycle in improving your swimming fitness to be carried forward into competition.

During this phase expect:

- Intensity to decrease
- Distance to decrease

By the end of this phase expect:

- To be at a physical peak that we will aim to maintain for the remainder of the season.

In Season Maintenance

As most athletes will be swimming different races at different times of the year, the remainder of the season is broken into four mesocycles, each six weeks in length and utilising the following pattern:

Week 1	En-1
Week 2	En-2
Week 3	En-2
Week 4	En-1
Week 5	En-3
Week 6	En-1

This pattern presents the best opportunity for maintenance and further development throughout the season for those that will not be racing mid-mesocycle.

For those that have a race scheduled mid-cycle, I wish to be notified at the start of the cycle, as I can make allocations with regards to your intensity during sessions.

This shall only be considered for those individuals that have demonstrated a consistent commitment and application to training throughout the year!

This is the case as only those that have committed to the program from the outset will generate any enhancement in their performance by utilising a taper. For those that expect performance improvements by attending sessions in the short term before a competition, any change to the session plans will not gain them a significant competitive advantage come race day.

During this phase expect:

- Your performance in sessions to remain at a similar level to those experienced within the recovery phase.
- For some individuals performance levels will be improved upon through each mesocycle.
- Committed individuals will have some flexibility with the intensity of the sessions, dependent upon race date and the coaches discretion.

By the end of this phase expect:

- To have had the most successful season possible, subject to your commitment and application to training throughout the year.

The program this year is extremely similar to that of last year, with a reduction in the number of test sessions targeted, as using a race season of three / four target triathlons would be a better way of measuring your improvements in performance. While the outline of the season as not changed drastically, the developments I have outlined at the beginning of this document will ensure our training quality takes a step forward, and thus results continue to improve.

Tom Macklin
7oaks Triathlon Swim Coach