

The Importance of Year Round Swim Training

By John Leonard, Executive Director American Swimming Coaches Association.

In 1906, Charles Daniels set an American and World Record of 1:03.6 in the 100 meter "crawlstroke". The next day in the NY Times, a story appeared about the spectacular new time. Next to the story was a sidebar (who knows what they called them in those days!) that described the "abusive training" his coach had put him through. That training consisted of 3 one half hour sessions per week, covering the "phenomenal" distance of a half mile in the water.

Similarly, in 1936, Adolph Kiefer of the Chicago Athletic Club won the Gold Medal in Berlin in the 100 meter backstroke, and again, the newspaper story discussed

the "abusive training" regime of Kiefer and his coach.

Adolph trained five days a week, for a mile and a half, once a day. He trained 7 months a year.

In the 1960's similar stories appeared regarding the athletes trained by George Haines, Peter Daland, Doc Counsilman and Don Gambriel (all USA Olympic Coaches) and the famed Australian Coach Forbes Carlile. Carlile began "year round" swimming training in 1964. Many others followed in his footsteps.

Our standards of abuse have changed. Swimmers at a world class level now routinely train 5 hours a day in the water and an additional 1-3 hours a day of dryland training. At the highest levels, swimming is a profession. Collegiate champions train 3-5 hours per day, and high school champions routinely arise at 5 AM for 2 plus hours of morning training, repeating the regimen in the afternoon, plus dryland training and do it 11 plus months of the year. Age Group swimmers train similarly.

Year round swimming produces champions, and also produces athletes of any ability level who are dedicated to being the best that they can be, and who learn discipline, structure, dedication and the ability to

focus on long range goals and achieve them. There is no sport at the high school or higher level where an athlete can afford to participate in multiple sports if he or she hopes to excel in one. The age of athletic specialization is here, and has been here for a decade and a half.

Modern physiology of training is based on the constant improvement of the aerobic capacity of the athlete. Aerobic capacity is never stable or stagnant. It is always either improving or declining. Year round training produces chemical improvements in the aerobic system that will provide life-long health advantages, as well as short term competitive excellence.

The modern swim training program incorporates training twice a day, (sometimes 3 x a day) for anywhere from an hour to 3 hours in a session, and carefully planned, alternates a variety of 5 different types of chemical/adaptational stress on the body, so that each system is progressively improved and developed. Training is trained in blocks of time known commonly as micro (week) meso (month) and macro (6 months or longer) cycles and each is precisely and intricately structured to create both progress and adaptation of the body.

While many high school swimmers enjoy the sport coming to practice once a day for up to 12 weeks, they will never experience their full potential under this sort of recreational training program. While that may be fine in relation to goals of many, those wishing elite performance must train as the elite do. As Willie Sutton said when asked why he robbed banks, "that's where the money is." The performance is in the careful application of dedicated, year-round training.

Studies at both the high school and collegiate levels reveal that swimmer students get better academic performance levels DURING the period of their training, and lower performance levels when they are "on a break". This is because during the training periods, the swimmer's day is extremely busy, with every moment counting, and the swimmer

learns to maximize the time available to them, and study specifically and in a highly focused manner.

The simplest test is mention the word "swimmer" to any experienced college admissions officer and get their reaction. Swimmers get preference because of the nature of the sport and the swimmers year round dedication and excellence.

We've come a long way from Charles Daniels and his "abusive training techniques". Good swimmers now do more in an hour than Mr. Daniels did in a week. And their results, both athletic and academic, reflect their increased expectations and capacity.

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