Breaststroke Technique and Training Ideas

Shawn Smith
Head Coach
Univ. of Denver Hilltoppers
Coaching Breaststroke

- Observe your athletes, key in on what is successful for them.
- Keep an open mind
- Experiment
- Much of the methodology our program uses has been developed through trial and error.
• Maintain Lowest possible ratio of time with head/torso above the water vs. below the surface
• Prioritize lowering resistance vs increase propulsion
• When teaching: isolate specific body positions that focus on timing of the breath, timing of the kick
• When swimming fast: Focus on the flow of energy, and the connection of kick/momentum from end of kick into next catch
Key Technical Concepts
Ideas and movements common to almost all fast Breaststokers

1. **Time the Breath** with the widest Part of the stroke
   - Synchronize initiation of the breath as the palm of the hand turns from outward to inward

2. **Catch**-Establish vertical forearm angles

3. **Spineline**-No Neck Movement/No Back Arch/Minimize Hip Drop

4. **Pull** ends at width of the ribcage
   - Hands should be moving forward by the time they make contact with each other

5. **Recover** with “Thumbs Dry, Hands Wet”

6. **Time the Kick** as elbows lock (some variation as to when “momentum” is maximized)

7. **Top of Kick**- Knee position about width of hips (lot of variation)
   - Feet turned out at the top of kick, vertical shin angle

8. **Direct foot path**- from top of kick to close, (avoid outward, wide foot path)

9. **Finish of the kick**- knees lock as ankles touch

10. **Rhythm**-Weaves all the “points” together
    - Connection of Kick through outsweep and into next catch
Drills

I-Y Drill

Purpose= Time the breath correctly.
Description= Pause at the widest part of the pull to “freeze frame” proper body position at the initiation of the breath.

Piece by Piece

Purpose= Teach Balance and Timing
Description= Athlete does pull pauses 1 sec in glide, then kick into 1 sec glide

Piece by Piece w/ Dolphin Kick

Purpose= Teach Balance and Timing
Description= Athlete does pull followed by dolphin kick (timed at moment when you want your feet to turn out on Breast Kick), then Breast kick connected into next outsweep/catch

Delayed Kick Build

Purpose – Teach Kick Timing
Description – Start with purposefully late kick, progressively eliminate delay between Lung + Kick until timing feels right

1 Pull/2 Kick

Purpose – Quickness of Breath+ focus on connection of momentum between strokes
Description – We emphasize using second kick with almost no glide to practice great connection from the end of 2nd kick into next catch
Training Methods: Types of Kicking

**Un-Resisted:** Generally done with snorkel (board or in glide)

**Types of Resisted Kick:**

- Vertical Kicking with weight
- Med Ball w/ snorkel+ Vertical Kicks at each wall
- Vertical Swimming w/ weight belt

**Technical Improvement Kick:**

- Mirror Kick
- Partner Kick with Cord
Breaststroke Weekly Training Plan

**Mon PM** - Some Breast Kick mixed into general kicking

**Tue AM** - Breast Pull w/ buoy or Breast w/ fins

**Tue PM** - 200 Stroke Training.
   - Geared toward peak effort on distances of 50-200’s.
   - 12-16 min Vertical Kick after main set

**Wed PM** - IM Training, no breast isolation

**Thu AM** – Breast Pull w/ buoy or Breast w/ fins

**Thu PM** - 100 Stroke Training.
   - Mainly sprint 25’s mixed with FAST 50’s/75’s.
   - 16-20 minutes of Vertical Kick

**Fri PM** – Some Breast Kick mixed into general kicking

**Sat AM** - Practice almost always ends with High Rest, Off Block sprinting.

**Sculling is mixed into warm-up/down throughout the week**
Higher Stroke Rates (especially in the 100 BR)- See Russell Mark’s charts/studies from 2012

* Upkick on the finish of Kick