

KEY SKILLS & DRILLS
FOR
AGE GROUP COACHES



Presented by

COACH JENNIFER GIBSON

Speaker Profile

- ◎ Started “teaching” swimming in 1975, at the age of 15.
- ◎ Began coaching in 1978, at age 18 and have never looked back!
- ◎ Have coached with four great swim clubs starting at:
 - Southeast Family YMCA, Fort Wayne, IN 1983-87
 - Fort Wayne Aquatics, Fort Wayne, IN 1988-2003
 - Mecklenburg Aquatic Club, Charlotte, NC 2003-2007
 - Phoenix Swim Club, Phoenix, AZ 2007-2011
- ◎ Extensive Clinic Attendance for the past 25 years. Attend at least one clinic each year.

My Resources:

- Reading
- Internet
- DVD's
- Clinics
- Watching/Following other sports
- Mentors

Jennifer's "M.O." for practices:

- **“Walk the Walk” Look and act professional at all times (Differences with Girls/Guys)**
- **Smile**
- **Be relaxed**
- **Be organized, but flexible to handle change**
- **Goal-oriented each and every workout**
- **Remember to keep it a “2-way street”**
- **Try to make it personal for each athlete**
- **Attempt to incorporate different learning styles of athletes-Visual; Kinesthetic and Auditory.**
- **Have fun!**

FREESTYLE

Body Position-

- “Posture-Line-Balance”
- Stress the core for balance and rotation.
- Line runs from the top of head to the feet.
- Lead with top of head, eyes looking down.
- Body line riding the surface of the water.

Kicking-

- Front=Prone (Superman)/ Prone with hands in “Catch” position
- Right Side/Left Side (Face looking at bottom)
- *All kicking can be done with or without the use of board; snorkel or fins.

Sculling-

- Focus on “Catch” position with arms out front in prone position. (Elbows slightly higher than wrists)



FREESTYLE

Drilling-

- **Rotation Drills Right side/Left side (hold 6-8ct. & rotate; 1 ½ strokes and rotate, etc)**
- **DeMont Right & Left (1-arm stroke, other arm down, breathe to side that arm is down) Breathe every stroke.**
- **Bow & Arrow (hold 4-8 ct; line to line)**
- **Slow Fingertip Drag**
- **Forearm-Wrist-Fingertip Drag**
- **Kick/Drill/Swim with Snorkel**



Breathing-

- **Roll to breath when fingertips on opposite hand enter water; face back down before hand passes face.**
- **I name all breathing patterns with both stroke work and in swimming sets**

Videos to View:

Frank Busch/Richard Quick

Tools to Use:

**Board; Pipes; Snorkel
Paddles; Fins**

Toys:

**Wood
Doll**

Freestyle Observations & Thoughts

- ⦿ **Focus on “front-quadrant” swimming.**
- ⦿ **Fingers pointing to the bottom of pool help keep elbows high and limit crossover**
- ⦿ **Finish stroke at hip or slightly past; pop elbow up on exit of hand. Don’t over-emphasize finish.**
- ⦿ **Dislike when swimmers swim freestyle “back to front”. Survival mode; leading with head &/or breathing early.**
- ⦿ **Don’t agree with teaching age groupers straight-arm freestyle**

Backstroke

Body Position-

- “Posture-Line-Balance” as in Free, just in opposite position.
- Line runs from top of head to feet.
- Lead with top of head.
- Eyes looking up.
- Water frames the face/both ears remain in.
- “L” finger position at throat for alignment check.



Kicking-

- On Back=Prone position
- “Streamlined with fingertips pointing up & out of water=tighter streamline”
- Right Side/left Side=looking up/chin to shoulder
- *All kicking can be done with or without fins.

Backstroke

Drilling-

- Rotation Drills Right Side/Left Side (6-8ct/rotate, 1 ½ strokes & rotate, etc.)
- Single-arm combos
- 2-2-2
- 3-2-1
- Double-arm
- L-Drill



Timing-

- Simple=Not letting hands stop at entry or exit phase of stroke to
- More complex=Tempo training (hand speed and stroke count)

Breathing-

- Many coaches believe that backstroke can use breathing patterns as in freestyle-example="inhale on right arm, exhale on the left arm."

Videos to View=

Richard Quick

Lenny Krazielburg w/MP & RL Paddles

Tools=

Board; Fins

Toys=

Wood Doll

Hockey Pucks

Backstroke Observations and Thoughts

- **Relax Shoulders-open & back. Helps to bring hips up.**
- **Enter pinkie 1st/pop opposite hip.**
- **At the catch, let hand follow natural line to finish at the hip.**
- **Dislike wrist first exit of hand. Carries too much water with the hand.**
- **“Duck” hand position to work on entry correction from flat hand entry or overreaching to entry.**
- **Look at the hand on the recovery arm versus looking away.**

Butterfly

Body position-

- **“Posture-Line-Balance”**
- **Need to stress the importance of the core.**
- **Focus on the goal to stay close to the surface with a flatter position vs. up and down motion.**
- **Use the longest body line possible.**
- **Dolphins at play vs. at work**



Kicking-

- **Start the kick at the armpit/chest area and use body, not just knees.**
- **Streamline kick on all sides-front; back; right & left sides.**
- **Hands down kicking on back to focus on fast feet**
- **Kick with face in using board; breathe every 3-4 kicks.**
- ***All kicking can be done with or without fins.**

Butterfly

Drilling-

- Piano Drill
- Single arm combos-Right/Left; 3 Right/3 Left;
- 3 Right/Streamline Kick/3 Left
- 2-2-2; 2-2-3; 2-2-4; 2-2-5
- 5k-1P; 3k-1P; Swim
- 4k-2P
- Fly arms/Free Kick
- Swim with snorkel, face in
- Fly releases



Timing-

- Work on starting the breath on the entry of the hands, so that actual breath is when hands are under chin and finishing when hands are ready to exit in back.

Breathing-

- I would recommend ALWAYS telling the swimmers the breathing pattern you want.

Videos to View=

Richard Quick

Bob Bowman with MP

Tools=

Board; Paddles

Fins; Snorkel

Butterfly Observations and Thoughts

- **Using the body, not just the knees to kick.**
- **Prevention of/breaking the habit of big, slow kicking “Whale tales.”**
- **Looking up (and down) to breathe.**
- **Lifting elbows to start recovery, instead of staying low and relaxed while finishing stroke with the fingertips.**
- **Equal exposure to short-axis stroke work!**
- **Avoid having swimmers swim “survival” fly swimming.**

Breaststroke

Body Position-

- “Posture-Line-Balance”
- Focus on “riding the line” at the surface of the water.
- Focus on “striking the line” at the surface of the water.
- Don’t let the hands drop down when shooting forward to finish the pull.
- Pop the hips to finish the kick and the stroke.

Kicking-

- On front and back-Both streamlines and hands down.
- Face in using a board, working on “breathe-kick-glide”
- Vertical kicking



Sculling-

- On front=Arms straight out in front-work on beginning press
- “Windshield wiper”
- On back=Hands overhead, feet first
- Hands at side, feet first

Breaststroke

Drilling-

- Seahorse Drill/Scull
- 1 Pull-2k; 1 Pull-3k
- 3 full strokes under/3 on top
- Breast Pull/Fly kick; Fr kick
- Paddles, no straps
- Swim with snorkel, face in



Timing-

- Continual work on “Pull-Breathe-Kick-Glide”
- Should almost be back to the streamline position before the kick

Videos to View=

Richard Quick
“Go”-Brendan Hansen
Amanda Beard (Kick)

Tools=

Board; Snorkel
Paddles; Fins

Toys=

Tennis Balls
Noodles

Breaststroke Observations and Thoughts

- **Not looking up or lifting to breathe (coming “unhinged”).**
- **Hands hesitating at the chest or under the chin during the pull.**
- **The key to most IM’ers is the Breaststroke.**
- **Many age group coaches (or beginning level coaches) are not patient enough to spend the time necessary to conquer breaststroke.**
- **Kicking back vs. kicking too wide and letting go of water.**
- **Not using the hips or undulation in stroke, most evident at the end of stroke.**