Teaching Tips for Fast Freestyle and Backstroke Turns

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Introductory comments:

- Turns done well can enable an average swimmer to win
- Turns can be a source of team pride
- Turns require special teaching time
- Turns require workout discipline
- Turns Require fitness, agility, core strength
- Turns are fun to teach
- Turns Can be used for anaerobic and aerobic conditioning
Are turns done during sets adequate for teaching proper turns?

Turns done improperly wall after wall after wall after wall, become harder and harder to correct.

At what point in career development do you teach turns?

Would you ever stop a swimmer, or a set, or a workout to correct turns?

How much time are you willing to devote to practicing turns?
Teach the fifth stroke first -- underwater swimming
  * LTS is a good place to start
  * Teach push-offs “later,” but not much later
  * Insist on proper push-offs all the time
  * Teach turns near the transition from novice to competitive age group
Teaching concepts common to all turns:

* Depth off the wall
* Kicking strength
* Leg strength (vertical leaping ability)
* Foot depth is related to push-off angle/depth
* When to begin swimming off the wall?
* NO Transition. From Streamlining to swimming.

- continued
Teaching concepts common to all turns:

* Streamlining
  * requires balance – which is NOT natural
* Feet quickness
* Core strength
* The pushoff position is common to all turns
  * How many turns are there?
The Push-off Position

Photo by D. Madison in Fitness Swimmer May/June 2000
Freestyle Turn – just to show the pushoff position within, details later.

Photos by D. Madison in Fitness Swimmer May/June 2000
Correct and Incorrect Positions
Freestyle Push-off Position

Jones

Weber-Gale
Breast
Turn –
Under-
water

Notice similarity in pushoff position with the freestyle turn.
We need to learn to push off the wall properly

- Critical but not often practiced
- Not “natural”
- “sink, touch, push”
- Opportunity to practice push-offs for the entire workout without adding an additional yard or an additional minute of time
  - make every push-off correct
  - “knees up, toes up, head up”
- Combine with streamlining skills
Novice Push-offs
Pushoff Position
Sink -- touch
“Sink – touch – push”
The Good, the Bad, the Ugly
“Better” Pushoff
OK, forget all that….

* What ever happened to the ability to JUMP?
  * (Answer: (Get over it and Get on With it...))
* My kids have vertical jumps of 12...
* ...millimeters
* Practice routines:
  * Vertical jumps on the deck
  * Vertical jumps from the side
  * Blast off pushoffs (next slide)
* Learning to blastoff-pushoff on the back is easier than on the side or belly.
* This is a TEMPORARY solution
After the Push Off...

- Streamline, kick, swim
- Streamlining not natural
  - An advanced skill
  - Balance issues
- Dolphin kick off wall on free, fly, and back turns
- Proper breakouts
  - No transition stroke: streamline to first stroke.
  - First stroke begins underwater
  - Backstrokers’ “favorite stroke”
  - Breathing on second, third, or later stroke
Novice Streamlining
Shadow Streamlining
Dryland work on Streamlining
Novice Streamlining After Expert Coaching
Freestyle Turns

What the ideal turn should look like

- Hands pull to hips, alternately: palms down
- Dolphin kick to help get over
- A nearly straight somersault, head goes just outside the knee
- The head comes to the hands
- Hands are ready, and pointing toward other end
- The feet hit the wall at a 45 degree angle
- The pushoff is on the side
  - Which side?
Freestyle Turn
Phelps
Hey! The wall was there before you were born... and it was there when you were sleeping last night!

- Practice approaches at speed.
- Finish one hand down, then second hand down. Palms down.
“Feet Quickness”
Poor Arm Position Slows Feet Quickness
Freestyle Turns - Progression

* Learning to push-off on side.
* Learning to tuck and turn with hands in the proper position. This is the key.
* Kickboard turn drill
* Approach skills
* In on the belly, off on the back.
* “Pause, think, push”
* Practice. “It’s not learned until....”
Kickboard Drill
Kickboard Drill – not.
Kickboard turn drill – 1 board
Freestyle Turns – Tuck Turns
Freestyle Turns – Mid Pool Turn
Freestyle Turns – Jump Turn Drill
Straight over the top
Freestyle Turns –
Novice Kick In Free to Back
Freestyle Turns – Novice Swim Free to Back
It’s Not Over ...

... Until the swimmer is 3 strokes down the pool

* Kicking progression depends on skills
* Teach dolphin kicking from the very beginning novice level
* When to pull
* Which arm to pull with
* When to breathe
Back Turns

- Get all you can from the approach
- What happens off the wall?
- Depth
- Kicking progression depends on skills
Back Turns

* Keeping the “line”
* When to breathe
* Drills as with free
* Emphasize approach and pushoffs in repeat sets
Back Turn – Age Group
Backstroke Turns – Jeff Rouse

DVD clip courtesy Glenn Mills at GoSwim
Hoelzer and Beisel
Coughlin at Trials
Lochte and Piersol
Teaching Tips for Back Turns

* Stand at the flags and shout out the strokes
  * You do have the flags up, correct?
  * “1-2-3-4-cross”
  * Every swimmer has two sets of numbers
  * This is a temporary solution
* Dedicate time to teaching a practicing backstroke turns
Make the commitment

Have the courage to stop practice to correct turns

Insist on proper pushoffs all the time.

Thanks!