

HICKORY-DICKORY-DOC

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Watch an experienced squad train and you will see a precise time and motion exercise. The rest period is as important as the swimming. Training should not just be a way of covering the greatest possible distance but a method of conditioning the energy systems. Experienced squad swimmers develop a sense of timing down to a fraction of a second through the discipline of watching the clock and following the set program. For many adult swimmers it is almost like learning a foreign language. How often do a group of swimmers just jump behind the lead swimmers & swim only at the one pace, without reference to the clock or intensity?

All are capable of explaining the details, but few have developed the ability of just knowing the time they have swum without reference to a clock or even where there is a clock. A coach will not prepare a program with the intention of confusing swimmers. The intention will be to improve the swimmers. Lets examine some of the details.

To improve the ability of the body to use Oxygen in producing energy, as needed in a distance race, it is necessary to swim longer distances. But this is not an ideal way to train as the heart will gradually fatigue and the pulse rate will reduce from what it was early in the set. Instead of setting one 1500 metre, a coach might set 15 x 100s with 5 seconds rest. This might be written on the A board as 15 x 100 R5 or listed as a time 15 x 100 on 1.35 or a time that would give approximately 5 seconds rest. The purpose of this type of set is to have the body work aerobically (using Oxygen) at greater intensity than when the long distance is swum continuously. To complete such a set requires an awareness of swimming with the clock. This type of set is only one factor of training. So many swimmers will not know where they are in a set. An experienced swimmer doing repeats on 1.35 will realize that after 12 sets the clock will be back at the same start position and use it to keep count.

A short distance race is swum faster. There is a need to practice at those speeds. Very quickly the muscles will ache as Lactic Acid builds up. The coach will increase the rest and ask you to increase the intensity considerably. There is only a limited distance that a person can swim near race pace before the Lactic Acid load become too intense. A coach might wish to set a program 3 x 100 fast on 2.30 + 200m easy (ez) in 4 min and repeat set 3 times. The purpose of the 3 x 100 is to produce Lactic Acid in the muscles to about the limit of tolerance. The 200m swum slowly is to dissipate it from the swimming muscles, so that another Lactic Acid set can be swum. The total distance of 1500m would be the same, but the purpose is entirely different.

There are many variations of sets that can be done to improve your fitness and help the interaction of the 3 or 4 energy systems that are used in swimming.

While it is fun to push off just behind the person in front and “wake ride” it is better for your swimming if you watch the clock and go on “your” time. Look at the clock and know the exact times you swim for particular distances in training. Vary the intensity of your training as requested, there is a purpose. If we improve our “clock culture” we train better and it becomes easier for new members to merge with the squad. Many swimmers could explain the timing but can improve their training by being more clock conscious.

Some of the abbreviations used as listed on the A board might include FS = freestyle, BK = backstroke, BR = Breaststroke, Fly = BF = Butterfly, IM= individual medley, fast = fast, EZ= easy, GODOGH = get out, dry off, go home!