

PREPARATION – **TAPER** – for the CHAMPIONSHIP
(Letter from Peter Trummer – League Coach)
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GREETINGS COACHES!

As your swimmers now reached their optimal racing level (technique, condition, speed) as a result of your seasonal planning/designing and delivering your training and competition program, you now face the final “rehearsal” for the year end Championship: the TAPER period.

Starting now, swimmers and coaches form a very close association and together enter this final phase of EFSL’s seasonal swimming.

The process of “resting” about two weeks before a season-ending meet, is called a major taper and should be applied for those swimmers who had uninterrupted training and competition during the season. Swimmers commonly improve their best times by 3 to 5 percent after a major taper.

Swimmers should be kept engaged in all three forms of SPR training at least twice per week during the first week of the taper. They should maintain the intensity of their SPR training at near normal levels and the daily duration within one third of the usual amount.

The final week, training distance should be reduced to more than half of COMPETITION TRAINING PERIOD to approximately and maximum 1500 - 2000 m per session. (The figure given depends on each team’s individual training program leading up to the taper) Most of those meters should be done in the form of warm-up swimming and low intensity technical drills and aerobic (END-1) level swims and kicking. Intensive training (SPR-1-2-3) should comprise no more than 400 to 800 meters during the first 2-3 sessions of the final week. All-out sprints should be limited to the 12 ½, 25 and 50 m distances (the two latter in race pace) since they are physiologically not stressful and recovery is rapid. The last three days prior to competition are, perhaps, the most crucial of the taper. Swimmers should rest as much as possible during those days. If the taper has been correct, swimmers will not lose conditioning in three days of easy swimming. Begin each session by warming up as you will at the meet (see below). Then practice stroke drills, starts, turns and relay starts. Next, practice race pace SPR-1 by swimming a few 50’s or 25’s. Finish by loosening down for 200 to 400 m.

Especially during the race pace training, it is crucial to practice the underwater diving phase, or 5th stroke as we term it. Also practice the finish of a race in eliminating breathing on the last few (perhaps 5) meters and a dynamic reaching out for the wall.

Here are some examples of only main sets after a warm up of 200 m – 300 m IM swim, 200 m IM kick and 100 m IM pull, then continue with drills and swims of approximately 800 m.

50 m drill

50 m swim (25 m building/25 m perfect stroke)

25 m swim (race pace of 100 m)

50 m kick

50 m swim (25 m building/25 m gentle negative split)

25 m swim at maximum speed.

Repeat the above set 3 to 4 times. Rest interval after each 50m and 25m should be 15 to 20 sec.

Or another main set – swim:

50m 3 to 4 sec. above race pace of 100 m race

50m 2 to 3 sec. above race pace of 100 m race

50m at race pace, or 1 sec above race pace of 100 m race

25 m faster than race pace of 100 m race.

Repeat the above set 2 to 3 times. Rest interval should be 30 to 45 sec. after each 50m, and approximately 8 – 10 min. active rest (easy swim, drill, kick and pull) between sets.

The warm up (FOR MEET) strongly influences and often determines the swimmers' racing and also training performance. Inform your swimmers how important the power of the mind can be. They should focus on positive thoughts and dismiss and eliminate all negative ones, f.e. poor previous swims or any other extra-swim experience.

Dryland stretching and calisthenics should be done almost like a meditation with concentration on the exercise and their own bodies' feeling and relaxed breathing. In the water, achieve three major objectives in the warm-up: feel LOOSE, EFFICIENT (technically) and POWERFUL.

The following warm-up program suggestion should be “rehearsed” several times before the meet during the usual training session at home. The swimmers thus train and at the same time will know their warm up by heart and can manage it pretty much on their own. This is very helpful when the warm-up situation is difficult. They can also adjust it time-wise to the available warm up period granted to each team.

Actual warm up for meet:

Swim 200m – 300m IM easy at 30 to 40 % effort

Kick 200m IM at about 50 % effort

Pull 100m IM also at about 50 % effort

Drill/swim combination: f.e. 50 to 100 m drills followed by 25 to 50 m swims.

Repeat 2 to 3 times in each racing stroke. Also do extra 50 to 100m kick and pull, if time permits.

Main warm up set: race pace: 2 to 3 times 25 to 35 or 40 m in each racing stroke with approximately 30 sec. rest interval.

Loosen up 100 m.

Short 10m sprints with racing starts 2 to 3 per racing stroke.

Practice a few turns in each racing stroke.

The small pool in the arena will be open for loosening down between races. It is very important to send the swimmers after each race to a loose and easy swimming in order to eliminate the lactate remaining in the muscles and organism as a result of the race effort. Lactate is removed fastest during light exercise, retaining it would negatively influence the next race, and might even affect the future health of the swimmer. During these loosening down exercises, the swimmers should first swim in their previous racing stroke to keep the same muscles active they just used (3 to 5 min). During the next 10 minutes they should practice drills, and swim their next racing stroke.

PLEASE NOTE ON ANOTHER SUBJECT:

The swimmers who attended the winter swim camp in Austria trained very attentively which resulted in an overall improvement. During the course of the 7-day training, they perfected the mechanics of all strokes through the biomechanical stroke supportive drills, the “dives” (as they refer to the 5th stroke), achieving superb streamlining under water and at the surface.

The drill work is very complex and requires intensive focus. A 7-day period is not long enough for sound acquisition. If there is no reminder of exactitude and purpose, one can easily loose in efficiency and fall back into sloppy movements with all negative affects it entails. Therefore, I appeal to all coaches to pay special attention when getting into streamlining and drill work, especially during taper.

The League head coach’ trophy will be presented at the Championship 2010 closing ceremony. Evaluation is based on all medal events during the Championships.

BEST OF LUCK TO ALL – COACHES, SWIMMERS and SUPPORT TEAM FAMILY MEMBERS,

SEE YOU IN EINDHOVEN!