

SASA COACH DEVELOPMENT

US OPEN MEET REPORT

Alan S. Lynn

SASA COACH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Report by Alan S. Lynn

Introduction

A proposal was submitted to SASA on 18 July 1995 to conduct a research visit of the 1995 Canadian National Championships (August) and United States Open Meet (December) gathering data on the weakest events* as identified by the National Event Coaching Programme.

*NB : These events are - 400 IM, 200 Fly, 800/1500 Free.

Funding was confirmed in September, and therefore only data from the US Open is presented in this report.

Methods

1. Evidence of training programmes to be gathered by means of a standard questionnaire to be completed by the coaches of the finalists in these events. (Appendix 1)
2. Where possible this evidence should be supplemented by a short interview with the relevant coach.
3. Details of results, qualification times. (Appendix 3)
4. Data collated and summarised to produce findings for presentation to SASA.

Acknowledgements

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SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS :

A. In relation to 800/1500 Free, 200 Fly, 400 IM

1. Our swimmers need to significantly increase their training volumes to adequately prepare for these events.

Minimum weekly volumes for success : 80,000m

2. Our swimmers and coaches need to become better educated about preparation for these events.

World Record times, splits, tactics, training methods, techniques.

3. We should learn from our best swimmers as well as those abroad.

e.g Graeme Smith, Paul Palmer, Ian Wilson, James Hickman

4. The SASA should nationally recognise and promote excellence in these events.

Incentive schemes, special events etc.

5. The Competitive Calendar should reflect an emphasis on the development of these events.

Timing of competitions, formats etc.

B. General Observations from US Open and visit to University of Georgia :

6. Our male swimmers need to use land training to increase muscle strength + tone.

Strength training and Swim specific Power training.

7. Our female swimmers need to have leaner, stronger bodies.

Observation of female swimmers world-wide supports this.

8. We should allow proper pre-meet access to competition pools.

Particularly national events, day before etc.

9. We should immediately integrate provision for all coaches and officials at meets.

An "old chestnut" but one in which we still lag the world.

Distance Freestyle

The first fact to report is that American distance swimming is also going through something of a crisis. Many of the coaches I spoke to expressed the view that in Britain with Graeme Smith, Ian Wilson, Paul Palmer we had much more potential for Olympic success than they had. Also in Sarah Hardcastle we had a female distance swimmer to compete with the best in the world despite having taken such a long break from the sport.

They suggested that a look closer to home may provide some of the answers to our current dearth of distance swimmers in Scotland, however, there was unanimous agreement about the fundamental requirement for successful distance swimming - *sufficient training volume swum technically correctly to maximally improve aerobic capacity*. This was set at a minimum of 80,000m per week and the recommendations accompanying this volume were :

- 1. Distance swimmers should begin training and competing in the 800/1500 at an early age. i.e. 12 - 14.*
- 2. All swimmers should participate in these events at an early age following a sound aerobic programme encompassing a 400 IM based focus.*
- 3. Coaches should create a positive environment towards the distance events.*
- 4. Distance swimmers should become adept at negative split swimming.*
- 5. Coaches should use long course competitions as the main measuring point for progress in distance events.*
- 6. Swimmers should use stroke rate and stroke counting to develop their proficiency in distance events.*
- 7. Coaches should train swimmers "down" rather than "up" for events. i.e. overdistance training. e.g. females should train for the 1500 to help the 800.*
- 8. Swimmers and coaches must realise that success in these events cannot be achieved by compromising work and training ethics.*

400 Individual Medley

The American men have long dominated this event with several swimmers continually at the top of the World rankings. (they had 6 in the 1995 World Top 25). From Jesse Vassallo through David Wharton & Jeff Kostoff, to the current stars Eric Namesnik and world record holder Tom Dolan, the US has had a strong reputation for world class 400 IMers.

Interestingly, both Namesnik and Dolan swim under the direction of Jon Urbanchek at Michigan, and the others named above unsurprisingly were products of similar high volume, "tough" programmes at Mission Viejo, Germantown etc.

Also worthy of note are the facts that from the 1995 World Rankings, Dolan was ranked 3rd in the 400 Free, 17th in the 1500 Free, 4th in 200 Back, 3rd in 200 IM, and Namesnik was ranked 21st in 200 Breast, 7th in 200 IM and just outside the World Top 25 in 200 Fly, 400 Free, and 1500 Free.

On the women's side, taking into account Schneider's questionable World Record and the recent accusations surrounding Chinese performances, American women figure very highly in 1995 World (7 in Top 25) and All Time (6 in Top 25) rankings.

The supporting facts for the leading American women are similar to those for the men with all of the 1995 world ranked 400 IM swimmers figuring elsewhere in the rankings, particularly in events of 200m and above.

The main recommendations from the coaches interviewed at the US Open were :

- 1. Development of a sound aerobic training base. All of the finalists in the 400 IM were swimming in excess of 80,000m per week.*
- 2. As supported by the ranking facts, training for each stroke should be based on improving 200m times.*
- 3. The event itself requires specific preparation work in relation to factors such as negative splitting each stroke, effective transitions between strokes, balance of splits between strokes.*
- 4. Developing the IM in young swimmers is a fundamental element of training programmes.*
- 5. Technical requirements of each stroke should be suited to the 400 IM, e.g. breathing pattern on Fly, dominance of legs on Breast etc.*
- 6. Swimmers and coaches must realise that success in this event cannot be achieved by compromising work and training ethics.*

200 Butterfly

An analysis of the 1995 World Rankings shows 8 US women in the World Top 25 and 8 US Men in the same group. The women's World Record still belongs to Mary T. Meagher of the US and only Denis Pankratov has ever gone faster than Melvin Stewart the former World Record holder from America.

This event produced the most diverse range of opinions on what were the main ingredients for success. Some coaches preferred to adopt the traditional approach of high volume programmes similar to those described for 400 IM & 800/1500 Free, others found success with a slightly reduced volume and more emphasis on increasing the amount of Butterfly swum in each session.

The main recommendations from the coaches interviewed at the US Open were :

1. Development of a sound aerobic training base. All of the finalists in the 200 Fly were swimming in excess of 70,000m per week.
2. Training for 200 Fly should be reflected in the amount of Butterfly swum in sessions. All of the finalists were covering more than 40% of their training on Fly.
3. As with the others examined, the event itself requires specific preparation work in relation to factors such as negative splitting in training, , balance of splits in races, maintaining technique at maximal effort.
4. Developing the IM in young swimmers should be a fundamental element of producing the foundations for successful 200 Fly swimming. The stroke should be viewed as equal with the others, and certainly not as a threat or punishment.
5. The technique for swimming Butterfly is evolving rapidly as swimmers experiment with underwater kicking and side breathing. There was no consensus on the absolute best style although all coaches agreed that the use of underwater kicking was a must for top class performance.
6. There was significantly more land training being done by the 200 Butterfly specialists than the Im'ers or distance freestyl'ers.
7. *Swimmers and coaches must realise that success in this event cannot be achieved by compromising work and training ethics.*

Appendix 1 - Coach Questionnaire

Name :

Team :

Swimmer(s) :

Event : 800/1500 Free
400 IM
200 Fly

Introductory details :

Normal training environment ? - long course
short course

Number of swimmers in squad ?

Number of swimmers in this event training group ?

Event specifics :

1. What is the average weekly training volume for this event ?

2. How many hours are spent in the pool ?

3. How many hours are spent training on land ?

4. Approximately how much training is done - kicking ?
pulling ?

5. Do you have any "special" training methods for this event ?

6. Do you have specific race tactics for this event ?

Appendix 2 - Qualification Times US Open Meet 1995

QUALIFICATION TIMES : HEATS --> FINALS
(all times 50m)

Event	24th	16th	8th	Level 4
Women's 200 IM	2.21.97	2.21.07	2.20.33	2.19.91
Men's 200 IM	2.09.81	2.08.78	2.07.80	2.07.09
Women's 400 Free	4.25.05	4.22.56	4.18.64	4.19.30
Men's 400 Free	4.05.59	4.03.38	4.01.83	3.59.77
Women's 100 Breast	1.14.63	1.13.87	1.13.16	1.12.79
Men's 100 Breast	1.06.32	1.05.71	1.04.59	1.04.29
Women's 200 Back	2.20.99	2.20.32	2.18.86	2.19.81
Men's 200 Back	2.10.46	2.08.30	2.06.61	2.04.32
Women's 50 Free	27.45	27.13	26.77	26.68
Men's 50 Free	23.87	23.78	23.58	23.89
Women's 100 Back	1.06.35	1.05.73	1.05.01	1.04.03
Men's 100 Back	59.67	59.20	58.56	58.07
Women's 200 Free	2.06.81	2.05.61	2.04.26	2.04.56
Men's 200 Free	1.56.90	1.55.37	1.54.15	1.52.43
Women's 100 Fly	1.04.01	1.03.61	1.02.82	1.04.11
Men's 100 Fly	56.95	56.59	55.97	55.80
Women's 400 IM	5.03.44	5.00.46	4.57.07	4.57.03
Men's 400 IM	4.41.33	4.36.97	4.33.62	4.27.55
Women's 100 Free	58.89	58.39	58.08	57.60
Men's 100 Free	52.41	52.13	51.73	51.83
Women's 200 Breast	2.42.98	2.39.57	2.37.05	2.35.16
Men's 200 Breast	2.26.16	2.23.00	2.20.92	2.19.70
Women's 200 Fly	2.20.56	2.19.34	2.17.05	2.18.50
Men's 200 Fly	2.08.83	2.06.86	2.05.05	2.03.50
Women's 800 Free	9.05.64	9.00.75	8.52.87	8.55.80
Men's 1500 Free	16.36.77	16.11.36	16.01.92	15.38.85