

SEASON PLANNING COACHES – SWIMMERS

SPRING CYCLE

It is very encouraging to know that many teams are engaged in various swimming programs after the official end of the EFSL swimming season. Some are conducting technical practices, some do keep in swimming condition exercises and on an individual basis, many swimmers are joining local national/regional programs, also in competition. Swimming is at its best when it is kept close to a year-round concept.

2011-2012 SEASON PLANNING

As a result of your follow up to my letter of March 21, 2011, in the EFSL website Coaches Corner, i.e. evaluating the past season, you might have come to think about the structure of the 2011-2012 Season Planning.

In late August, the EFSL begins a 24-26-week season which should include four parts:

- A GENERAL PREPARATION PERIOD,
- A SPECIFIC PREPARATION PERIOD,
- A RACE PREPARATION PERIOD,
- A TAPER PERIOD.

The GENERAL PREPARATION PHASE should be considered as the foundation of the entire swim season. The principal purpose of the General Preparation Phase is to prepare athletes physically for intense training later in the season. Goals and procedures include improving overall ENDURANCE, speed strength and flexibility in a general manner. ENDURANCE is a term that describes two separate but related concepts: muscular endurance and cardio respiratory endurance. Each makes a unique contribution to athletic performance. An appropriate training program of the GENERAL ENDURANCE PHASE will result in the desired VO₂max, representing aerobic power as the best objective measure of cardio respiratory endurance capacity. VO₂max is defined as the highest rate of oxygen consumption attainable during maximal or exhaustive exercise, i.e. training and competition later in the season, in the RACE PREPARATION (COMPETITION) PHASE.

Minimal cardio respiratory function can occur with “burst type” anaerobic training (SPRINT 1 & 2 – Lactate Tolerance and Lactate Production), but improvements in VO₂max are then minimal. Therefore, entering into any typical regular competition during the GENERAL PREPARATION PHASE makes no sense and can cause all around negative results for athletes as well as coaches.

Another indispensable goal of this period is technique. Coaches and swimmers should devote a great deal of time to improve stroke mechanics, starts, turns and dive (5th stroke). As swimmers later in the season will be training intensely in all strokes and events they will have difficulty changing their strokes at that time. They should make needed corrections during the GENERAL PREPARATION PHASE and then try to use the improved technique during race like training efforts and competition throughout the

remainder of the season. The swimmers must work to AUTOMATIZE those techniques so that they can use them effectively in major competition in the end of the season.

The GENERAL PREPARATION PERIOD in the EFSL 24-26-week season, should last minimum 6 weeks when swimmers have not been training for several weeks in their summer vacation.

Further, Coaches should also prepare for other important trainable components that should be included in the GENERAL PREPARATION PHASE and in every Season Plan:

- Flexibility, strength and power training on land,
- Emotional preparation and mental toughness, positive attitude formation,
- Nutrition – eating habits,
- Time management.

Again, for all reasons – some explained above – to enter competition EARLY, i.e. during this period is ill advised.

I have provided progressively ample material for the next three following PERIODS (see above) during all previous years in the Coaches Corner and am planning to do the same in the forthcoming Coaches Clinic.

SUMMARY

SPRING CYCLE: Involvement in regular “maintenance” work-outs.

SEASON PLANNING:

- Review last season’s results
- Design 2011-12 end August to end February plan
- General Preparation Period min. 6 weeks (no competition)

Training procedures:

- 1) Endurance Training
 - a) Basic Endurance Training (End-1) Overdistance training, short rest interval training.
 - b) Threshold Endurance Training (End-2)
 - c) Overload Endurance Training (End-3)

- 2) Sprint Training
 - a) Power Training (Spr-3) Objective: muscular strength and technique
 - b) Lactate Tolerance Training (Spr-1) (seldom, i.e. 1-2 x per week, very few repeats with long rest intervals).
 - c) Lactate Production Training (Spr-2) (seldom, i.e. 1-2 x per week, very few repeats with long rest intervals).

Other trainable and learning components.

(Material obtained from the works of Physiology of Sport and Exercise scientists:
Wilmore, Costill, Maglischo PHD's).

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