














Otter Aquatics Newsletter

No 46. April 2019

Dear swimmers and others

Welcome to the April 2019 edition of the Otter Aquatics newsletter, your monthly digest of all things to do with swimming: training tips, history, holidays, events here and overseas – and lots of other stuff. Look inside to find:

-  Winter venue for our Adults Learn-to-Swim, Stroke Correction and Swimfit training
-  Cliff-to-Club swim on Saturday 6th April
-  Australian Swimming Championships 7th to 12th April
-  Sponsorship of the 2019 Veterans Art Exhibition
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Let me know if you would like to contribute an article for these newsletters. Any topic that you think readers would like would be ok. The only changes I would make are stylistic or – no doubt with support from Collette (see below) – grammatical, spelling or punctuation changes.

Don't forget that past newsletters are available on our website (www.otteraquatics.com.au/newletters) as is an index of all topics included in all newsletters since the first one in October 2014.



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- › Learn-to-swim instruction, stroke correction and swimfit coaching – all levels
- › Open water swimming instruction and training
- › Swimming as therapy
- › Swimming-based tourism – domestic and international

Winter venue for our Sunday swimming

Our summer-time venue for our Sunday adult learn-to-swim, stroke correction and swimfit programs, Murrumbidgee Aquatic Centre, will close for the season at the end of April, with our last session being **Sunday 28th April**.

For the past few years, we have reverted to the Redcliffe Aquatic Centre for the winter. However, a number of us have expressed dissatisfaction with Redcliffe because of its poor standard of maintenance, poor lighting and other issues.

For the past couple of months I have been trying to get access to another pool – at least for the winter, but so far I have been unsuccessful. Clearly the best option is to find another heated pool which is happy to accommodate us, satisfies our requirements and is acceptable for most of us. The obvious ones – such as North Lakes, Lawnton, Emily Seebohm – fail on one or more of these criteria. If I cannot find another pool before the end of April, the choice appears to be to go back to Redcliffe or to give swimming a rest for the winter. Of course, there is always the ocean and OWS will continue, rain, hail, snow, blizzard, whatever.



I will email all Sunday swimmers before the end of April with an update.

Cliff to Club Swim

Come along to support our swimmers who are taking part in the Cliff to Club swim on **Saturday 6th April**. The 1k swim will start at Margate Beach at 7.30am and the 2.5k swim will start at Scott's Point Beach at 9am. Presentations will be at 11.30am at the Redcliffe SLSC.

Australian Championships

The Australian Swimming Championships will be held in Adelaide between **Sunday 7th and Friday 12th April**. Unless you are planning to go to Adelaide, check out the TV coverage of an evening (all finals will be held of an evening). The most instructive camera angles are the underwater ones – check out the 'catch' and breathing patterns in particular. The championships will be the selection trials for the following world events:

-  2019 World Para Swimming Championships
-  2019 World University Games in Naples
-  2019 World Junior Championships in Budapest

Sponsorship of the 2019 Veterans Art Exhibition

The 2019 Veterans Art Exhibition will be held at the Arts and Cultural Centre, Banksia Beach, Bribie Island from 9th to 18th April with the official opening at **6pm on Tuesday 9th April**. Otter Aquatics is one of the sponsors of the exhibition in order to reach out to the veterans' community to encourage them to participate in exercise for their own health, particularly our 'Swimming as Therapy' program. If you would like to come to the opening, rsvp on the VeteransArt2019 facebook site.

New goggles have been ordered

As our supplier sometimes has difficulty providing our ever popular DHB Turbo Tinted goggles, I have ordered another batch just in case they run out again. They should arrive in this coming week. Let me know if you would like a pair. The price has risen to \$25. This is the cost price to me and is a service to our swimmers.



Stroke tip of the month – the kick: why and how do we do it?




Do you know that we use up to 70 percent of our body's energy by kicking? And that we get so much less output in speed than the effort we put into it? If you are in a short sprint race, a strong and fast kick will certainly add to your speed, but probably not as much as you may think – no more than about 10 percent. For longer distances, the effort expended in a powerful and fast kick will come at a price of reducing the energy you need for your core and your upper body. And you will tire more quickly.

You might be tempted to deduce that we are better off by not kicking; indeed, some distance swimmers do just that. But that is also not the answer. We need 'an effective kick' to bring our hips and legs up to the surface to create a low-drag horizontal body profile as well as to balance the body, in particular by effecting a good body rotation.

So what is 'an effective kick'? A swimming kick is not like a football kick which is done from the knee. A kick generated from the knee rather than the hip will pull your body position down. It can also cause your legs to sink in full stroke and will cause a lot of frontal drag – the reason many of us find it easier to swim with a pull buoy. An effective swimming kick is one that is consciously deployed with *straight-ish* legs, with only small amplitude (say 10cm to 15cm) to keep the legs and feet within the body profile envelop – and at a relatively slow pace (see below). *Straight-ish* legs does not mean locking your knees; you should have a 'soft' knee action but without deliberately bending the knees. Your feet/toes should be pointed ('plantarflexion') and ideally in a slightly pigeon-toed position.

About the amplitude, everyone's all time swimming hero (well, mine at least), Murray Rose, used to visualise swimming through a worm hole in order to keep his body as streamlined as possible. If not a worm hole, try to visualise swimming through a cylinder the width of your hips and restricting your kicking amplitude to the diameter of the cylinder.

What is a 'relatively slow pace'? There are three main cadences or kicking beat patterns for a swimming kick:

-  A **six-beat kick** (6BK – six beats for every two strokes of the arm). This is a fast beat to achieve maximum speed in a short distance sprint race
-  A **four-beat kick** (4BK – four beats for every two arm strokes) is what most of would usually use for general swimming
-  A **two-beat kick** (2BK) is ideal for distance or open water swimming. It is two beats for every two arm strokes (or one beat per arm stroke). It is like a foot flick – or like trying to flick a sock off your foot – using the opposite leg to the arm stroke. Its purpose is to fire the hip around to achieve a powerful body rotation, which is what causes most forward propulsion.

Kicking practice should *not* be undertaken with a kick board – except for beginners and, in that case, only to provide some degree of comfort or security – as it forces the body into an ineffective and possibly damaging backwards arch by putting the upper body into an unnaturally high position while trying to kick hard. Kicking practice should still be undertaken but without a kickboard and in a type of streamline body position. One arm should be extended while breathing to the other side. Sides should alternate every 25m or so.

So why should we do kicking training at all? In our modern lifestyles we do a lot of sitting at a desk or in a car and we tend to develop tight hip flexor muscles and poor core and glute strength. Good kicking drills can help improve these problems. And while kicking may not deliver the propulsive outcome we expected, it is still necessary.

Kicking training tips. Do use fins/flippers – but not all the time as there is a risk of becoming dependent on their ‘outboard motor-type’ push-along. Long flexible fins help develop a swimmer’s hip, leg and glute strength and promote effective and efficient kicking. Short, stiff fins tend to promote kicking from the quads and knees rather than from the whole leg. Gently tighten your abdoms (try pulling your belly button towards your spine) as well as your buttock muscles (glutes) when you kick. Good coaching will employ various kicking drills, with and without fins. While we normally concentrate on freestyle kicking, the same kicking technique is used just as effectively on the back and the side as well as the front. Dolphin kicking (both legs together as used in butterfly), with and without fins, provides a good variation.

(The content for this article reflects my experience as a swimmer and coach, consulting others and my continual research and learning and comes largely from previous articles on kicking as well as a couple of coaching websites. I have introduced more kicking and other leg exercise into our Sunday swimfit routines lately as the leg muscles of some of our swimmers have become so atrophied that they can hardly stand or walk – so I exaggerate a bit, so what?).

Quiz of the month

The first correct answer to last month’s question (‘who, what, when and why is the gent in the picture’) was sent in by **Andy Dey**. His answer is:

The photo is of 73 year old Chairman Mao Zedong (Tse-tung) swimming in the Yangtze River at the Wuhan’s annual swim on July 16, 1966. Local authorities and media claimed he swam 15km in 65 minutes.

Mao was trying to project an image of robust health at a time his Communist Party leadership was under challenge internally.

The exploits of Mao were met with scepticism by the western world and rightly so. He apparently swam at a speed of 3.842m/sec over 15 km. In contrast, the London 2012 Olympic champion, Sun Yang from China swam 1500m at 1.722m/sec. So a 73 year old swam twice as fast as a 21 year old Olympic champion!

However it is known that Chairman Mao swam the Yangtze River 17 times between 1956 and 1966.

Andy's response was quickly followed by **Marieta Hanaghan** (of course) and **Lee Jones**, both providing much the same answer. Prizes are on the way to all of you (another way to say this is that non-prizes will not be awarded).

But ... did you know that this swim by Mao was the first time that he had had a bath since coming to power in October 1949? Along with this exciting titbit, I discovered that, while he was out of his undies doing his swim, one of his young female acolytes was given the honour of washing them – also for the first time since 1949.

This month's quiz question concerns **Captain Matthew Webb** (1848 – 1883) who was the first person to swim the English Channel. There are five parts to this question:

- 1) What was he a captain of?
- 2) When did he perform his feat?
- 3) How long did it take him to cross the Channel?
- 4) What swimming stroke did he use?
- 5) How did he die?

Grammar competition

I'm so glad that one of our swimmers fell into the trap of finding my deliberately inserted grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors in the last newsletter. Congratulations **Collette Walsh**. For the record, here is Collette's response:

Index page "Queen Beach" shouldn't that be Queens Beach?

P 3 "picked up us" should be picked us up

P 4 "e-partition" should be e-petition

P7 "everyone would have noticed it but were afraid" – should be was afraid

And if this impertinence wasn't enough, Collette disagrees with *my*, not 'our', campaign to ban dogs off-leash at Queen's Beach North (note apostrophe placement!). I must be more careful to avoid the temptation of being so arrogant and so suffer Collette's disapprobation.

The competition is on-going. So pick me up if you dare ... and do not mind suffering Collette's fate of being shamed in this newsletter. But you do win a prize.

Quote of the month

'The human body has about the same percentage of salt in our blood as in the sea. So, in a sense, when we are in the sea, we are going back to where we came from'

(paraphrased from John F Kennedy's address to a dinner for America's Cup crews in 1962)

Ditty of the month

Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside a dog, it is too dark to read
Groucho Marx

Pic of the month



Mooloolaba Marauders. 2.2k in one of the best swimming places on the planet - up to the distant horizon and back. Just beautiful. 1st March 2019. Mark, Therese, Noel

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