



Otter Aquatics

# Otter Aquatics Newsletter

## No 48. August 2019

Dear swimmers and others

Welcome to the August 2019 edition of the Otter Aquatics newsletter, your 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:

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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

## Queensland teenager completes a double Channel swim

On 9th July 2019, Brisbane 17 year old Brianna Thompson completed a double crossing of the English Channel, becoming only the second youngest swimmer in history to do so.

For the statistically minded, Brianna's 'splits' for her 'laps' were as follows:

- 🏊 From England to France: 11 hours and 5 minutes, and
- 🏊 From France to England: 11 hours and 32 minutes; a total of 68 kilometres in 22 hours and 37 minutes.

Brianna lost a layer of skin off her tongue and suffered from a swollen throat which made feeding possible only with fluids delivered through a tube. She also battled jellyfish stings and suffered severe leg cramps to achieve this incredible feat, which only 20 others have performed. She also faced the constant threat of hypothermia from swimming in the 16-degree water.

The Channel Swimming Association has strict guidelines for swimming the Channel, including that it must be done only in traditional swimmers, goggles and a cap. The rules also stipulate that Brianna had to completely clear the water in France and spent only one minute out of the water before turning around for the return trip.

Brianna, who lives in Boondall, trains in Brisbane during the week and on the Sunshine Coast on weekends with her English Channel world record holder coach, Trent Grimsey.



**Brianna Thompson swimming the English Channel**

## Stroke tip of the month: bilateral breathing

If you're not already doing it, then start now. If you are, well done and keep it up. For both, read below.

There are a variety of breathing patterns but by far the most effective for most swimmers is what is formally called *bilateral breathing*, or breathing to two sides. But I prefer to call bilateral breathing, 'three stroke breathing' (3SB), simply because that is how we do it and it's the best way to remember it. We count with each arm stroke, exhaling into the water on the first two strokes and inhaling with our mouth to the side on the third. All you need to be able to do it is to count from 1 to 3.

Of course, any odd-numbered breathing pattern will be bilateral. Most swimmers will usually only breathe every 5, 7 or more strokes (9 and 11!!!) in a specific breathing exercise such as our frequent breathing ladder drills which are designed to improve the muscular efficiency and volume of the lungs. Conversely, any even-numbered pattern (such as two stroke breathing – 2SB) will be unilateral or breathing just to the one side.

*Why we should normally do 3SB?*

-  3SB makes our overall stroke symmetrical which, in itself, sorts out many stroke problems
-  3SB encourages us to rotate our body better, which should be between 45° to 60° to each side, in order to achieve a better reach and more effective catch and pull/push. A good rotation utilises the big muscles of our back for propulsion (more so than those in the arms and shoulders) and lessens the likelihood of shoulder injury
-  Because two out of every three arm strokes involves us exhaling with our head in the water – blowing bubbles if you like – it gives us more time to effect a full *exhalation*. This is a necessary precursor to a full *inhalation* which, of course, we need to feed oxygen to our muscles. A full exhalation is important in order to get all the CO<sub>2</sub> out of our lungs as well as to make room for the maximum intake of the oxygen-rich inhaled air
-  3SB makes us swim in a straighter line – especially important for open water swimming
-  Changing to 3SB opens up new synapses in our brain, just as learning a new language or a new musical instrument does.

*Why should we **not** normally breathe just to one side?*

-  2SB discourages a full exhalation as you have time to exhale for only one arm stroke, unless you blow out quickly and forcefully, both of which are not exactly relaxing – a key component to enjoyable swimming. Not exhaling when your face is in the water – or not exhaling fully – means that the time spent with your mouth out of the water has to be spent on completing the exhalation *and* the inhalation; the latter occurring only superficially and inadequately. This will appear awkward and result in an obvious interruption of the rhythm of your stroke and considerably limit your endurance. Remember that you should exhale fully every time your face is in the water and for the whole time your face is in the water

- 👤 2SB (or any even number) is likely to result in excessive body rotation to the breathing side and, conversely, an inadequate rotation to the non-breathing side. This over-rotation causes a loss of balance in the stroke which pulls the body out of rhythm. It may also result in a straight arm catch on the breathing stroke and for the legs to scissor kick apart in an attempt to regain balance, in turn creating huge drag at the back of the stroke
- 👤 The wide swinging recovery action normally associated with 2SB will likely lead to crossing over at the front of the stroke, a poor catch and a straight arm pull/push on the non-breathing side. This, in turn, may result in excessive forces on the shoulder and the arm and hand not achieving a full grip on the water
- 👤 The loss of directional stability in the open water normally seen in 2SBers means that the swimmer will swim over a much greater distance than necessary (one of our 2SB OWSers has even done a 180° turn when testing his directional stability with eyes closed – he reckons it adds interest to his swimming – he never knows where he will end up)



**This poor stroke highlights the problems associated with 2SB**

*Should we do 3SB all the time?*

- 👤 We should regard 3SB as our 'default' method of breathing, meaning that we should do it as much as possible. There will be times when your body tells you that it needs more air, so just give yourself one or more two-stroke breaths (which will be just to one side of course) and then revert to your default pattern of 3SB when you are able to. Most elite swimmers sprinting over a short distance will use 2SB simply because their muscles need all the oxygen they can get in a short space of time and there is little need to conserve energy. Of course, their exhalation is very forceful
- 👤 The other main reason to breathe just to one side (either 2SB or 4SB) may come in the open water when you have the wind and waves (and sun) coming from one side and you will need to breathe to the leeward side (now there's a term for you) if you don't want to cop a gob full of water or get blinded by the sun. If you are a competitor, especially but not only

in an open water swim, you may also need to breath – and look – to one side more often to keep an eye on a competitor or to draft off another swimmer

- 👤 Don't forget the adage which I tell all beginners 'check that your mouth and nose are out of the water before you inhale' – apparently such simple and seemingly silly advice but your body acts in different ways when it is in the water and spatial/body awareness can be different from what you are used to.

*A few other bits and pieces to do with 3SB:*

- 👤 If you are new to it, you will probably expect to be a bit uncomfortable initially breathing to your non-preferred side. We all have preferred sides whether it's with swimming breathing, tying shoelaces or brushing our teeth. Expect that the transition will not be immediate, but it will come with practice. You may wish to breathe to your non-preferred side more often in order to re-train your swimming brain – or you may wish to mix it up a bit with two or more stroke on one side then two or more on the other – but this is just to bring something novel to your swimming breathing. Don't rush the transition. Yes, do 3SB but be relaxed about it, (after all that's why we swim) and it will eventually happen
- 👤 A technique which often works with swimmers new to 3SB is to learn to count from 1 to 3 in a language you are not familiar with. This is a common brain training technique (after all, all swimming stroke improvement is brain training). The idea is that you will be concentrating on sounding out these new words with each arm stroke instead of trying to remember 'I must breathe to the other side with my next stroke', which is a sure way to fail. So next time you are in the water, remember: *ein, zwei, drei* or *un, deux, trois* or *uno, due, tre* (emphasising the three equivalent which is when we inhale).
- 👤 If you are OWSing, take an interest in the changing scenery from one side to the other as you alter your breathing side. Makes life interesting!

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## Return to Murrumbidgee Downs on 1<sup>st</sup> September

For the winter months our Sunday Adults Learn-to-Swim, Stroke Correction and Swimfit sessions are conducted at Redcliffe Aquatic Centre.

From Sunday **1<sup>st</sup> September**, the first day of spring, we return to our usual summer venue of Murrumbidgee Downs Aquatic Centre which is at the corner of Ogg Road and Dohles Rocks Road Murrumbidgee Downs. Our normal arrangements apply: three hour-long sessions commencing at 9am. I will assume that the winter swimmers will maintain their current time slots but please let me know if you would like to change. For new or returning, summer swimmers, again, please let me know which time slot you would like.

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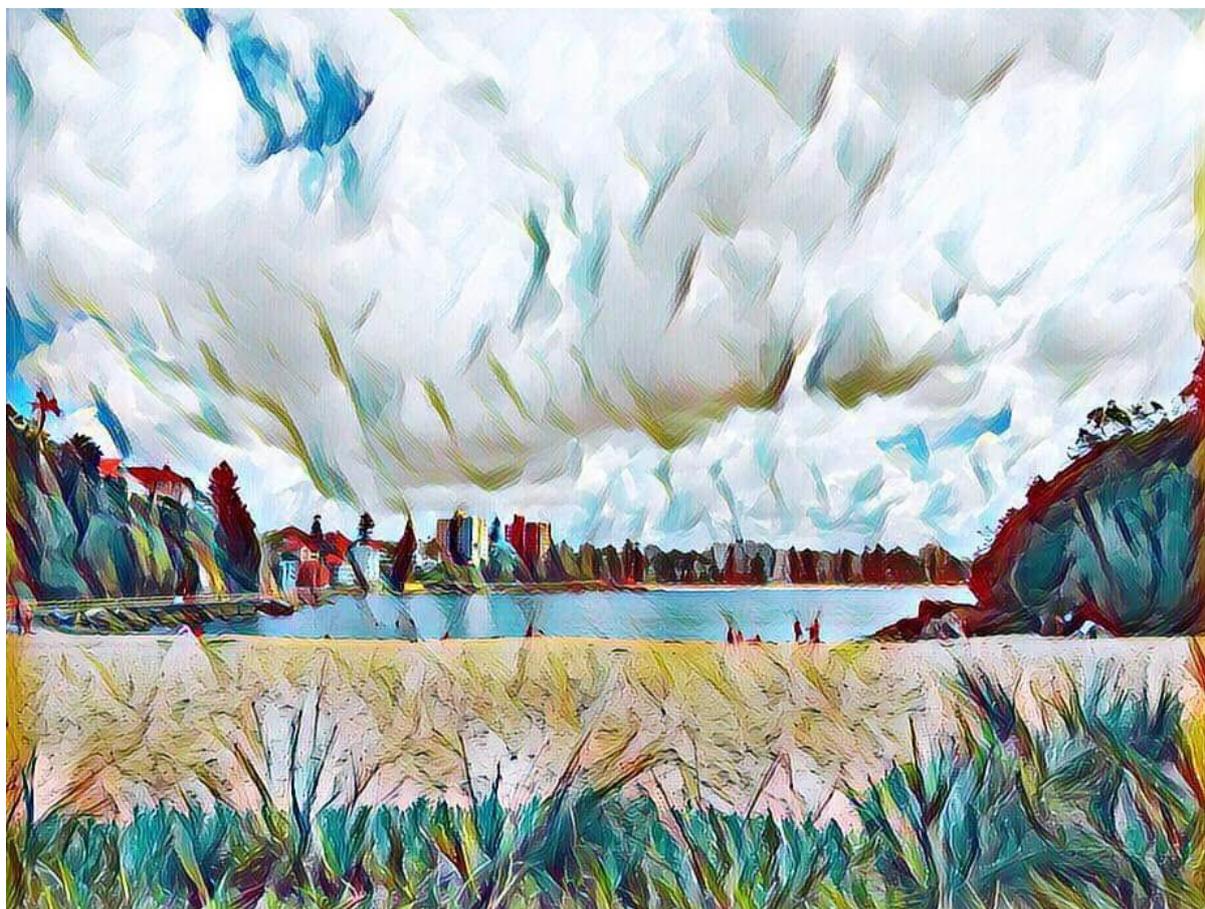
## Shark attack at Shelley Beach

Some of us on trips to Sydney have done the famous 'Bold and Beautiful' swim which starts from South Steyne Beach (the southern part of Manly Beach), through the surf, around the point and finishes up 750 metres or so later at beautiful and calm Shelley Beach. Other swimmers have told me that they sometimes see sharks cruising along the bottom around the point but there has

never been an incident. Well that all changed on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July when a man suffered non-life threatening injuries from a shark attack near Shelley Beach.

But – and it is a very big but – he was attacked at 6am! It is pitch dark at 6am in winter – and even darker in Sydney than it is at that time in Brisbane. If only the victim had read our frequent newsletter articles advising swimmers how to avoid encounters with sharks. The most pertinent lesson is never to swim in the open water in the dark or at dawn or dusk because these are shark feeding times.

The next bit has nothing to do with sharks but has everything to do with the very special part of the world that is Shelley Beach. Our resident tech guru, Tracey Lloyd, achieved her goal of becoming an open water swimmer at that very spot back in 2016. Tracey recently produced the following computer-enhanced image of Shelly Beach based on a photo she took in 2016.



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## Quiz of the month

Last newsletter's quiz question was: how old was Tom Gregory when he swam the English Channel? In 1988 at age **11**, Tom established the record as the youngest Channel swimmer as he crossed from France to England in a time in excess of 12 hours. He was accompanied by his coach following behind in a boat and constantly shouting at him. Tom frequently fell asleep, hallucinated, developed agonising shoulder and hip pain and cried so much that his goggles filled with tears. These days, his coach would be arrested for child abuse. This is a good example of how not to be a sporting coach or parent.

Thankfully, the minimum age for a Channel crossing is now 16 and the French authorities now forbid crossings starting on their shores; so his record will remain.

This month's quiz question is: name two occasions when you may choose *not* to breathe bilaterally?

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## Quote of the month

*'Dive in. Sink in. You're floating. And the world just passes you by'*

ABC TV *Backroads*. S5 Ep3. 1 July 2019

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**Ditty of the month** (another election-related one. Oh, is the election over? I hadn't noticed that anything has changed. Doesn't matter, here it is anyway ... and it's too long to wait until the next election)

Angry woman, repeatedly criticising Menzies at an election rally in the early '60s: 'I wouldn't vote for you if you were the Archangel Gabriel'

Menzies: 'Madam, if I were the Archangel Gabriel, you wouldn't be in my constituency'

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## Pic of the month



**A new roof for Notre Dame? Now there's a thought. But what to do at the point of intersection?**

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