

Good swim techniques insure rewards

By Marilyn Osgood-Knight
Of the Emerald

Students who are hesitant about lap swimming because their aerobic conditioning is sub-par at present, or have perhaps learned to swim by watching others and emulating their mistakes, or are afraid of "looking like an amateur" in a pool of better-trained athletes may wish to take some pointers from Jim O'Connor, University swim conditioning instructor.

"Start by investing in a good pair of swim goggles," O'Connor says, "and make sure they fit your facial structure, which means trying them on first before you buy a pair. And if they leak, leave them in a glass of water overnight to condition the rubber."

O'Connor adds, "Pool etiquette is needed, niceties like always staying on the right in lap swimming, tapping a swimmer on the heel if you need to pass (pass on the left)." Showering before and after swimming and walking, not running, on wet deck surfaces are basics, he says.

With regard to body fat, O'Connor says a little extra fat is a plus in swimming, helping with buoyancy and as a hedge against hypothermia.

Sometimes a recreational swimmer, trying to keep up in lap swimming, abandons one stroke too soon to get to the next, and ends up in a mad scramble in the water. According to O'Connor, this is called "spinning your wheels," which means the swimmer's technique is giving him or her a lot of "turnover," but the swimmer isn't "grabbing" anything, and is just exhausting him or herself in the process.

University lifeguard Lisa Patterson says that timing of strokes is important, and that improper timing can lead to breathing incorrectly, which is common with beginners.

"Relaxation is crucial," O'Connor says. "Sometimes new swimmers flail up and down the pool for a few laps, then give up swimming because they get 'too tired.' They may be crossing their arms past the midline of their bodies, or not extending fully." Doing 'too much, too soon' is one way to wreck the relaxation factor, he adds.

"Sometimes students try to do too much without a proper stretching program," says Patterson. "They may remember to warm up, but then they forget the cool-down, which is important, too."

University lifeguard Dave Krupicka adds that swimmers can tone their whole system cardiovascularly through proper, safe swim conditioning. "Use regular workouts, at least three 12 to 20 minute sessions a week," Krupicka says. "Try jogging in the pool occasionally, and learn proper stroke mechanics."

"Use long, slow distance for strength, and interval training (sprints) to improve time and conditioning," says Krupicka. "Respect the dangers of diving into water. Never dive into murky water. Instead, crawl in or lower yourself in — don't risk permanent injury."

According to O'Connor, the proper crawl (freestyle) stroke is beautiful to watch, but it takes proper training. It's the fastest stroke known to humans.

The best swimmers will say that their freestyle stroke feels "as simple and natural as walking," O'Connor explains. It is a fine-tuned, highly synchronized motion. The direction of the swimmer's arm pull should be down the center of the body, and then back out again as the arm extends back to the thigh. O'Connor suggests thinking of each hand tracing one side of an hourglass.

"We probably all have a natural favorite in strokes, partly from body type and partly from what we want from



Emerald file photo

Students can gain added fitness and reduce the stress of academia with a lap or two in one of the University's two swimming pools.

swimming emotionally," said Krupicka.

One swimmer may best perform the front crawl, another may do best with the butterfly stroke, with its dolphin kick. A swimmer may love the breaststroke if he or she has the proper ankle flexibility for its combination wedge-web kick, or enjoy the backstroke, emulating the style of Olympic gold medalist Rick Carey.

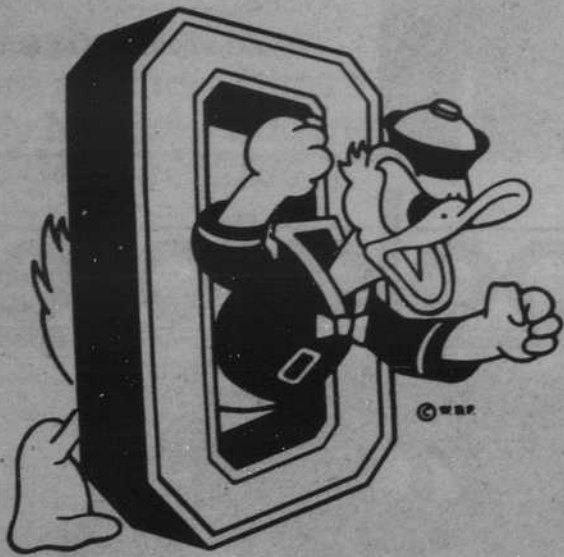
The University lifeguards say swimmers can make use of water aids like pull buoys and hand paddles, swim fins and kickboards. "But you will need to properly warm up to prevent injury when using hand paddles," cautions Krupicka, explaining that such aids accentuate strokes. For swimmers recovering from running injuries, pull buoys

can help rest the legs, helping them cross-train for another sport so they don't lose cardiovascular fitness levels, Krupicka adds.

Recreational swimmers may choose one of two campus pools. Leighton Pool is 25 yards long, and Gerlinger Pool is 20 yards long (two lengths equals one lap).

Fall term full-time students have already paid for a term's recreational swim pool use. Information on pool hours is available at the intramural office in Gerlinger Hall.

You can reduce your resting heart rate and the stress of the academic load by swimming, says O'Connor, and have fun in the process.



Attention Duck Basketball Fans! Students Only

To avoid hassles you can buy a **discounted** \$40 season ticket for 14 of the hottest nights of basketball in the Pac-10

Remember: Student tickets will be open to the public two days before each home game if not purchased in advance. Student season tickets are going fast.

Ticket Information: 686-4461

Tickets available at the Mac Court ticket office.

