

# Swimming Posture

By Coach Michael Collins

I am constantly looking for new ways to teach swimming. I attend coaching clinics and swim camps whenever possible to keep updated and inspired to teach swimming better. For the last year or so I have been putting a lot more emphasis on body position than on the pulling and kicking motions based on information learned from top level coaches like Bill Boomer, Milt Nelms, Richard Quick, Terry Laughlin, Emmett Hines, & Tom Avischious. But change is a long slow process. I hope I can help you understand some of these concepts better in this article.

Do you remember in grade school the teacher or your parents telling you to improve your posture. "Sit up STRAIGHT, young man! Stop SLOUCHING in your seat! I remember that distinctly from both parents and teachers (Maybe if I had listened, I wouldn't have had back surgery at age 30). To grow up with all our body parts working properly it was necessary to treat our body well by maintaining proper posture and body strength.

Well guess what, posture in the water is just as critical to swimming well. Most swimmers have some GLARING posture defects which cause them to either swim MUCH slower than they are capable or work MUCH harder to swim at the same speed. The main two goals in swimming faster are to minimize or reduce drag and to maximize propulsion. Instead we are using most of our energy overcoming poor posture in the water and we are not achieving either! Through Snooper video taping over the last few months, I have found most swimmers drastically out of alignment throughout much of their stroke. To swim faster, we must stop spending so much time trying to work harder, and find ways to swim the same speed with LESS effort (lower heart rate). Keeping your heart rate lower will allow you to maintain better body position and speed for a longer period of time. Improving your body position (posture) in the water is the quickest way to do this.

Learn to feel weightless in the water by balancing your body in the water. This is difficult to do since the center of your body mass is about 6 inches above your navel, but your center of buoyancy is between your armpits. By pressing the head and chest into the water with the right pressure your buoy will float perfectly horizontal at the surface. VERY few swimmers do this well. Usually, the head position is far higher than the hips which forces the legs to work harder and the arms to press down to support the head instead of reaching out in front for more distance. This increases the heart rate because the legs are working harder and more arm strokes are required to cover each length.

## Collins' Rules to Long Axis Rotational Strokes (Free & Back)

Rule #1:

Maintain head to hip horizontal alignment by keeping pressure on the buoy. Lifting your head higher than your hips at ANY time during the stroke, especially during breathing is a big NO-NO. Check yourself by imagining a skewer shoved through your skull and down your spine keeping you perfectly aligned, only

allowing you to rotate the head to breathe and not lift it. The skewer tip should always be pointed at the pool wall you are swimming toward.

Rule #2:

Maintain a long "boat" position by keeping a "weightless" arm in front for three-quarters of the stroke pattern. This is also known as Front Quadrant Freestyle. Stretching the arm out front allows the hips to continue to rotate on the side as the recovery arm passes your ear.

Rule #3:

Swim on your SIDE not on your STOMACH. Skate down the pool sliding from one hip to the other. Use hip rotation to power your arms through the water. Anchor the hand out front, and then pull it back by rotation of the hips. Increase speed by increasing hip rotation, not arm turnover.

Rule #4:

"Stealth Kick" steady and narrow just below the surface. Don't break out of the turbulent cylinder created by the body. Legs should not fall significantly lower than the hips, excessively break the surface, or scissor wider than the width of your shoulders.

Rule #5:

Develop a "vertical forearm pull" to increase propulsion. I believe keeping the elbows near the surface at the catch and the finger tips pointed toward the bottom is FAR more important than an "S" shaped pull pattern. Remember though, this is the LAST step and should only be emphasized AFTER the 1st 4 rules have been thoroughly ingrained in your muscle memory.