

Distance Swimming for Masters 35 and Up

by Anthony Byrne

I'm excited to introduce to you **Anthony Byrne**, distance coach par excellence!

Anthony is a USA Coach, an ASCA Level 3 Coach, a QASA Teacher Level 1 Coach and is the Marietta Marlins Distance Coach. He himself is a 3-time Australian National Free Champion in the 400, 800 and 1500 meter distances. He was 3rd at the Olympic Trials in 1976, and he is a 3-time Australian National Surf Lifesaving Champion.

I asked Anthony for some of his words of wisdom for us older swimmer who want to swim middle and long distance, and he was kind enough to write an article and sample workout for us.



Warm ups are an extremely important part of your practice. All too often warm ups are treated as simply feeling the water temperature and waking up. They are, in fact, very important to ready your mind and body for the work to come. If your mind is not in the game your body will take the easy road. The old adage is – if you, show up, “show up ready”. Additionally, warm ups can be used for stroke work, turns and finish simulation, breathing patterns, body positioning and a host of other helpful training aids. Don't let that 10 to 20 minutes go by the wayside. Use it or lose it.

Kick Sets, over the past 20 years, have evolved into elaborate training sets, which have replaced portions of over distance sets. Kicking, and learning how to kick, is perhaps the most important part of any swimmer's training. Elite swimmers and coaches have known this for 50 years. Keeping the area from your knees to your rib cage in tip top shape will allow you to start faster, turn quicker, turn on the after burners when you need to, finish harder, and swim straighter. Additionally, the muscles from your hips down to just above your knees are super big muscles and require enormous amounts of oxygenated blood to operate efficiently. If you haven't prepared your legs, buttocks and core for racing and operating at race pace or better,.....ouch! So when you have a kick set work it and work it hard.

Main Sets are used primarily to put your body into a race-simulated condition and how you can adjust to time intervals, rest and pace conditions. In a single paragraph it would be impossible to discuss the million and one conditions for MAIN sets. Typically for distance and middle distance, main sets are to aerobically condition the athlete to compete in a specific race or set of races. However recent studies have indicated that the body actually gains more through “mixing it up” during main set and have now started introducing Anaerobic/aerobic/MaxVO2 sets combined. The latest training methods are always in a state of evolution. Main sets are extremely important. Simply “swimming” them will only frustrate the swimmer and the coach. 90% of all main sets are constructed to improve either conditioning and/or speed.

Pull and/or Paddle Sets are used for, in order: stroke work, strength and aerobic conditioning. If you can combine all 3 in one set...now that's what I'm talkin' about. I am a firm believer in pulling and paddle sets. Again the elite swimmers around the world use pull and paddle equipment everyday to improve and refine their strokes. Some, albeit a minority, use paddles as their only strength training mechanism. Again paddles can be used in just about every facet of your programs. I should caution that over use of paddles will lead to loss of feel for the water and could also cause injury to shoulders and wrists .

Cool Downs for distance swimmers are a good time to review your season and to stretch out and make sure your shoulders are good. I like to finish out seasons with at least a 200 back, really stretching out and refocusing on the mind more than the body.

Summary:

Long easy swimming is a way of the past. Specific load targeted training sessions have evolved as the winning formula. Use your time in the pool wisely and work hard on improving every aspect of your training. Look at every flip turn as a chance to improve your streamlining, push offs and pop outs. When asked to finish hard with your head down, extended with additional emphasis on kicking, focus on attaining all of them. When the coach ask you for a little extra effort on sets, find that hidden warrior inside and go for it. Kicking is not a rest set. Work the hardest in your kicking sets and I guarantee you will improve. All of these things add up to Personal BEST and PB's are fun!

Don't forget your dry land.

We lose about 10% of muscle every decade after age 50. Do something that keeps your core, back and arms strong. The old fashioned sit up and the even more old fashioned pushup are 2 good places to start. Set moderate goals and adjust them when you start exceeding them. You will be amazed at how hard it is to start and even more amazed at how quickly you can get strong from these 2 simple exercises. Don't try to do what you did when you were a kid. Make sure to stop any exercise if you have any pain. NO PAIN NO GAIN, **does not** work for us old folk. It takes way too long to heal. Good Luck guys!

Sample Practice: Distance to Middle Distance Age 35 and up

Warm Up (1000 yards)

- 600 easy Breathing 3/5 or 4/6
- 4 x 100 IM 30sec rest moderate 75%

Kick Set (1000 yards)

(all kicks sets, unless otherwise instructed should be a race pace or better)

Up and down ladder 50 thru 200

- 50 kick 1:15
- 100 kick 2:10
- 150 kick 3:05
- 200 kick 4:00
- 150 kick 3:05
- 100 kick 2:10
- **50 ALL OUT** 110% Feel the burn...yeah!

200 Swimming Free/back Moderate (relax and get ready for main set)

Main Set (1400 yards)

- 500 Free (odd laps moderate 75-85% and extended / Even laps hard 85-100% all the way thru turns)

1 minute rest

- 8 x 25 on 60 Speed. Race pace or better 100% (big rest big effort)

Repeat above set

Pull and/or Paddle Set (900 yards)

- 12 x 75 [(3 x 75 free 1 x 75 back) x 3] last 25 at 90-100% - hard finish. 30 sec rest

Work on fast/power for last 25 of each 75

Cool Down 300 -600

200 back 100 free (if you need more x 2)