

How I Swim

By Bill Davis



Last month, Bill explained to us why he swims, this month he tells us more about how he swims: LD swimmers, pay attention!!

Swimmers all have their favorite sets or events. You have the diva-esque sprinters. You can tell a sprinter from a mile away. They need three days between fast 50s to recover, have a special relationship with the hot tub, and any distance over a 100 is considered “mega-distance” training.

The next group is the IMers, a curious crowd. They can switch speeds and strokes like the rest of us change our clothing. They remember complex sets with ease and look down upon those of us who prefer a single stroke per repeat. I generally am suspicious of this crowd with all their flailing about and drastic muscle memory changes.

Next up are the mid-distance swimmers, focusing on the 200s and 500s. Just when a swim gets interesting, they decide to bail, like a 525 might require oxygen or a trip to the ER. Hopelessly stuck between distances, they are a people without a swimming home.

The true bread and butter of swimming is distance swimming. Every pool should have a sign that says “1650/1500 is just the beginning”. I can sense the eye rolling and grumphing of non-distance swimmers at this point. I am not saying this simply because my sprinting resembles the dance of a three legged goat, at best.

When I swim, I like to swim, not hang on the wall. I know when Coach Patty meets me coming out of the locker room that it will be a distance day. When she hides I know it's sprint or IM and I'm doomed/ridiculed. I find distance lets me settle into a pace and focus on my technique for extended periods of time. I also greatly enjoy adding aerobic capacity over a long season, and, to do that, you have to do some distance training.

A few of us at SwimMac Carolina have been training for the The Great Chesapeake Bay Swim the past few months. The training sessions have been long, but fun. Here is an example of a set we did recently.

1000 warm up
12 X 150 – mix of stroke and free
3 X 500 free
1000 free
3 X 500 free
300 cool down

So, while every stroke and distance has merit and value, I am drawn to distance. Although I would never ever admit it to my teammates, doing something other than distance sets probably has great benefit to my distance training. Please don't let any of them know that, especially the sprinters.