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The Swim Coaching Bible Volume II

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The Swim Coaching Bible Volume II

Edited by Dick Hannula and Nort Thornton. Published in 2012 by Human Kinetics. 365 pages; \$24.95. ISBN: 978-0-7360-9408-5

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Human Kinetics' latest competitive swimming monograph is *The Swim Coaching Bible Volume II* which is a revision of the original *Swim Coaching Bible*. Like its original version published over a decade ago, this is an anthology of individual chapters contributed by 25 of the top and well known U.S. competitive swimming coaches (e.g., John Leonard, Bob Bowman, Mike Bottom, Vern Gambetta) and compiled by editors, Dick Hannula and Nort Thornton, themselves legendary high school, club, and college swim coaches. While the *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education* is dedicated to disseminating information about noncompetitive aquatic and swimming topics, presumably most aquatic professionals as well as journal readers have some background in or responsibilities for elements of competitive swimming. Therefore, becoming aware of this competitive swimming resource may be useful to readers and worthwhile being reviewed in this issue.

The 25 chapters are mainly single-author contributions with only several dual authored chapters. The chapters are organized into five main thematic sections, each containing from two to eight individual chapters. The first section, entitled "establishing priorities," includes five relatively general chapters describing elements of individual and team competitive development. Authors described a process whereby individual swimmers theoretically move from learn-to-swim to senior swimming or personal experiences swimming for eight decades including Masters swimming. I found the most fascinating chapter in the section to be Jim Ellis' story about the Philadelphia Department of Recreation program successfully built despite being in a so-called inner city "disadvantaged area."

The second themed section, "leading your program to its full potential," is comprised of four chapters describing the application and integration of scientific principles into the program as well as dealing with program management and motivation for swimmers. The third section of six chapters was organized around the predictable topic of "teaching stroke technique." There were individual chapters focused on "trends and techniques" associated with each of the competitive strokes. A final chapter focused on the skills of starts, turns, and finishes. The fifth and unexpected chapter was devoted to "the fifth stroke: underwater kicking," authored by Bob Gillett.

The longest section, "training for optimal performance," included eight chapters focusing on specific ideas, sets, and workouts for developing sprinters, middle and distance swimmers, and training for open water. Two other chapters included specific chapters focusing on the individual medley and on training for relays. Finally, the last two chapters of part four were devoted to dryland training and maintaining and developing power in the pool. The final section wrapping up the

anthology was titled “final touches for peak performance.” Its two chapters dealt with the importance of positive communication as a motivational technique and developing skills for achieving the best performance during competition.

The text finishes with a meager page and a half of references (coming from only seven of the 25 chapters) and biographies of the two editors and the other 24 contributors. I did not attempt to count up the hundreds of years of total aquatic and coaching experience embodied by this group of authors, but it is assuredly a tremendous amount. If a reader is looking for a scholarly work, they will be disappointed. If they are willing to accept authoritative, expert coaching opinion built around personal and pragmatic experiences and success, then I suspect there will be a lot to like in this resource. While I personally would have preferred a more scholarly and evidenced-based work, I found it heartening that in just over a decade, enough new information and novel practices have emerged in competitive swimming that there was indeed a need for a complete revision of the original work.

As I indicated in the introduction, this volume of the *Swim Coaching Bible* is an extensive work comprised of 365 total pages. It is published as a softcover work for the reasonable price of \$24.95. While printed entirely in black and white and mostly textually-based, it does contain a number of remarkably clear still photographs to clearly illustrate strokes, starts, and turns. The most valuable photographs provide action sequences to illustrate the key phases in a stroke or skill. In the 21st Century, I am a bit surprised that the book doesn't contain a DVD using digital video and isn't available in electronic format instead of print only. Still, as a “bible” (as opposed to a “reference work”) and for the reasonable price, it certainly represents a resource that most aquatic professionals ought to own in their personal libraries.