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MEDIA REVIEWS

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Water Fun

By Terri Lees. Published 2007 by Human Kinetics. 192 pp., \$49.95 U.S. for book and DVD.

Reviewed by Stephen J. Langendorfer, Bowling Green State University

One of the newest aquatic contributions from Human Kinetics is *Water Fun*, by Terri Lees, a long-time, experienced water-exercise and swimming instructor. This paperback version is a completely revised adaptation of the original 1995 *Water Fun and Fitness* text. The book's cover and other advertising bill it as primarily a compilation of 116 fitness and swimming activities (a DVD narrated by the author as she describes a number of the activities accompanies the text). My review suggests that this work is much more than simply a book full of various drills, activities, and games. I think that many aquatic practitioners, both novices and experienced instructors, will want to add this text to their professional libraries.

Water Fun is a particularly unique aquatic text because it integrates both water exercise and swimming activities. Most traditional aquatic books either focus on swimming instruction and activities with minimal attention to aquatic fitness or specialize in water exercise with little attention to swimming instruction. To her great credit, Ms. Lees applied her strong background as a water-exercise leader, as well as a longstanding water safety instructor, to the components of the book. The result is a particularly comprehensive and impressive aquatic volume.

I was particularly impressed that Ms. Lees has adopted a lifespan developmental perspective (for detail about the developmental perspective, refer to my editorial leading off this issue of *IJARE*) for *Water Fun*, a viewpoint that rarely has been employed in the aquatic literature. In fact, this may be only the second text aside from Langendorfer and Bruya's (1995) *Aquatic Readiness* to incorporate a developmental perspective. As evidence of this developmental perspective, *Water Fun* features two unique organizational charts: the Fitness Activity Finder and the Swim Activity Finder. The two comprehensive tables lead off the text and provide classification schemes for the fitness and swimming activities in chapters 4, 5, and 6. Reminiscent of the aquatic-games analysis originally proposed in *Aquatic Readiness*, these two activity finders are simpler and more straightforward versions that I think practitioners will find easy and useful for selecting appropriate educational activities that fit the needs of their students.

The Fitness Activity Finder begins by classifying the fitness and water exercises from chapter 4 according to their activity type (i.e., arm works, aqua basics, sport aqua, partner stunts and skills, relay and tag games, or individual or team events) and to the fitness component developed (i.e., warm-up or cool-down, cardiorespiratory endurance, muscle endurance, or interval training). I do have one criticism of these categories. They are not particularly parallel or mutually exclusive. For example, interval training is not a type of fitness focus but, rather, a mode for developing either cardiorespiratory or muscle endurance. I think these

categories could be rearranged into fewer and more appropriate parallel categories. Regardless of this need to enhance the fitness categories, the Fitness Activity Finder serves an important organizational function for the many aquatic fitness activities and water exercises.

I am impressed with the variety of fitness activities that appear in chapter 4, “Water Fitness Activities and Workouts.” The activities were well described verbally and with clear line drawings and illustrations. The chapter begins by describing the elements that the fitness leader can manipulate to alter the degree of difficulty of activities, including water depth, body position, speed and effort of movement, range of motion, body parts, surface area, and leverage used. After the various activities are detailed, models for designing aquatic fitness workouts, as well as a series of exemplar workouts, are provided to conclude the chapter.

Like the Fitness Activity Finder, the Swim Activity Finder organizes the games and activities in chapters 5 and 6 according to activity type (i.e., water adjustment/warm-up, stunts and skills, swimming games, or fitness swimming), as well as according to the “prerequisites” (i.e., independent locomotion, submersion, unsupported floating or gliding on front and back, sculling, or swimming strokes) in which swimmers need to be successful to complete the swimming activity. In addition, each swim activity is described in detail, lists required equipment, and describes variations that can make the activity easier or more challenging for students.

My own text, *Aquatic Readiness* (1995), included over 100 different learning activities, not including variations. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that chapters 5 and 6 of *Water Fun* describe dozens of novel and different swim activities, games, and relays, almost all of which were unique and new to me. I was pleased that each of these activities contained a statement of objective or purpose. This is important because without an explicit statement about the expected goal or outcome of a learning activity the temptation is to employ the activity as a “time filler” rather than as an integral part of the aquatic learning process. While I have never been particularly convinced of the educational value of competitive relay and tag activities, I liked the ones provided in *Water Fun* because most of them are not set up as typical elimination games in which the least skilled players end up getting taken out of the game. These games and relays typically were designed using a more developmentally appropriate approach that keeps participants in the game or allows them to return after a very short absence. Finally, chapter 6, “Swimming Activities and Games,” concludes with a series of “precompetitive” or fitness swimming activities appropriate for intermediate and advanced students. Personally, I identified with one of these, called “zig zag swim,” because my high school swim coach, Ev Kiff, employed a similar approach, which we called “snakes,” to build our swimming aerobic capacity.

If *Water Fun* comprised just chapters 4, 5, and 6, it would be an entirely satisfactory aquatic reference work, but the author has produced a much more comprehensive resource. She provides a straightforward introductory chapter that describes a typical rationale for the advantages of water as an exercise modality: buoyancy, increased density, resistance to movement, and low impact, as well as the lifelong capability to enjoy the water. She also introduces the importance of employing games as a fun and playful approach to learning to swim, as well as developing fitness in the water.

Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive description of how to employ both the Fitness and Swim Activity Finders. Lees has done a fine job of reviewing important concepts associated with water exercise, including the components and elements of aquatic fitness and how to calculate the target heart-rate range for an adequate workout aimed at improving fitness. The chapter concludes with reference to the Americans with Disabilities Act and how to make adaptations and variations to address individual differences and needs of clients.

Perhaps the most innovative aspect of *Water Fun* is chapter 3, “Aquatic Program Safety.” Of course, most aquatic books address some aspects of water safety. The uniqueness of this chapter is the multiple orientations to safety that the author provides. She begins her discussion on facility safety and presents a very extensive facility-safety checklist. She follows this up by discussing program safety, including a comparable program-safety checklist, as well as examining the need for adequate supervision, lifeguards, policy and procedures, and emergency action plans. She also presents a discussion of simple rescue techniques such as reaching, extension, and wading rescues that program personnel can employ to complement lifeguard activities. The chapter concludes with a discussion of participant safety, including oft-ignored basic water-safety skills such as entering and exiting, recovering to standing up, changing body position, and lifejacket use. The author even provides a short discussion about how instructors need to care for their own well-being and safety.

I think that many different aquatic practitioners—new water safety instructors, as well as longtime swim instructors and fitness leaders—can benefit from using *Water Fun* as a resource. It is a very nice addition to the ever-increasing library of aquatic texts produced by Human Kinetics. I am very impressed by all the elements in this text and think it can make a wonderful contribution to high-quality water exercise and swimming-instruction programs.