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Fitness Swimming (2nd ed.)

By Emmett Hines. Copyrighted in 2008 by Human Kinetics. 224 pages, paperback; \$18.95.

Reviewed by Stephen J. Langendorfer, PhD, Bowling Green State University

If you are a serious (or even semi-serious) Masters or fitness swimmer, triathlete, swim coach, or even adult swimming instructor, then you may find the second edition of Emmett Hines' *Fitness Swimming* a must-read or must purchase. Emmett Hines brings extraordinary Masters swimming and triathlete coaching credentials to his authorship of this text. After 25 years coaching all levels of adults, he holds a prestigious level 5 Masters coaching certificate from the American Swim Coaches Association (ASCA). He was honored as the 1993 U.S. Masters Swim Coach of the Year and received the Masters Aquatic Coaches Association Lifetime Achievement Award in 2002. He has extensive clinical experience working in Total Immersion Swim Camps. He also has extensive writing and editing experience with *Swim Magazine* and *Runner Triathlete News*. He has parlayed this combination of coaching and writing experiences into a reader-friendly, conversational, and accessible writing style and "voice." I also appreciated his perspective on why he needed to write a second edition at this point of time: that since his understanding and techniques had continued to grow over the past 10 years, he couldn't allow his first edition with some "frozen" outdated practices to represent him in print any longer.

Why would someone be interested in purchasing a copy of Hines' revised work? It appears Coach Hines has oriented his updated edition toward all types of adult swimmers including triathletes, college swimming instructors, and coaches. Masters swimmers interested in tips for swimming back stroke, breaststroke, and butterfly strokes and events will be disappointed because the author focuses exclusively on the omnipresent front crawl, or freestyle, stroke. Regardless, he has provided an admirable collection of tips, insights, drills, and workouts for the development of swimming fitness even if that emphasis does mainly limit itself to the front crawl.

The three chapters in Hines' initial section provide some common sense advice about the advantages to fitness swimming, list the basic aquatic equipment needs for fitness swimming, and describe a unique approach to assessing one's swimming fitness level using the T-20 swim and swimming golf tests. I particularly enjoyed his sidebars describing typical lap swimming etiquette expressed in his down-to-earth vernacular. I was surprised that he ignored mentioning a nose clip as a piece of supplemental swimming equipment. Those of us who suffer from an allergic reaction to water in our nasal cavities have discovered that nose clips are not just supplemental, but mandatory in order to enjoy our workouts.

The third chapter, assessing your swimming fitness, provides a particularly useful pair of tests that fitness swimmers should find valuable for benchmarking

their starting points and subsequent progress. The T-20 test (or the longer T-30 test for more well-conditioned swimmers) identifies the average cruising speed per 100 for which a swimmer is capable at her or his current level of conditioning and technique efficiency level. It is designed to be repeated at regular intervals in order to observe one's progress. The second test, swimming golf, combines the time for a 50 swim plus the number of arm strokes taken over the 50, averaged over four repeats. The goal in swimming golf, as in regular golf, is to drop the total number. Both faster times and fewer number of arm pulls drop the score. Lower scores indicate that either conditioning or technique or both have improved. Both of these simple assessments are simple and appealing techniques for gauging one's improvement over time.

The second part of Fitness Swimming entitled "Swimming the Right Way" provides two important chapters organized to radically improve front crawl stroke technique efficiency drawn from the author's experience with the Total Immersion method (Laughlin & Delves, 1996). The fourth chapter provides descriptions, ideas, and drills oriented to promoting optimal posture and balance in the water. By learning how to balance the body's core to reduce form drag and optimize streamlining, one can move through the water with less resistance from the body. Hines has provided a series of interesting "side glide" drills to promote both horizontal balance and streamlining in the water. The fifth chapter, "Stroke Integration and Turns," builds on and progresses from the core balance drills with another series of side glide single stroke (SGSS) drills to help swimmers achieve the most efficient front crawl stroke coordination pattern known as front quadrant swimming. In contrast to the much more common oppositional arm pulling pattern, the front quadrant arm stroke pattern produces exceptional efficiency and speed for the front crawl. Front quadrant swimming, also known as the "super position" stroke coordination pattern (Chollet, Chalties, & Chatard, 2000; Seifert, Chollet, & Rouard, 2006) is the one of choice among the fastest and most efficient competitive and open water swimmers. I found it interesting that along with the fairly contemporary notions about front quadrant swimming, the author still employs the classic "over the keg" (a.k.a., barrel) metaphor for maintaining a high elbow pull (Councilman, 1968). Apparently some cues have staying power.

The strength of Emmett Hines' book is probably the third part, "Swimming workouts." It is during this major part of the text that the author describes in detail how to build the intensity of fitness swimming workouts across six levels of intensity. In a similar fashion to how he created a logical and developmental progression from side glide balance and posture drills to side glide swim stroke drills, Hines builds his workout levels from basic drill and stroke development workouts to lactate threshold, speed, and high intensity workouts. The reason for the early emphasis on the T-20 (and T-30) elapsed swim distances and recording immediate heart rates becomes apparent in the workout section. One has to be impressed with the well integrated layered workout system that Hines describes in these chapters. He illustrates why he earlier argued that efficient swimming is 30% conditioning and 70% technique.

For technical and space reasons, I will not attempt to detail Hines' complicated workout system with its six progressive level as part of this review. I will comment that I found his integration of elements from exercise physiology (i.e., swimming lactate-threshold heart rate, training intensity zones), sport and exercise psychology

(i.e., rating of perceived exertion-RPE), and biomechanics (e.g., side glide drills; front quadrant drills) to be particularly noteworthy. I think it is rare for an author and coach to effectively pull together so many disparate elements to create such a well designed workout system.

Fitness Swimming provides interested fitness and Masters swimmers, swim instructors, and novice coaches with the complete package of sample workouts, a plan for training year-round, and a complete set of forms and tables for assessing and recording progress in their training. I do commend Hines' system to interested readers who may be searching for a way to energize their training with both improved stroke techniques and fitness conditioning.

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