

Wayne Goldsmith: Moregold Sports

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Wayne's site offers some great insight and ideas related to various aspects of swimming

BETTER BUTTERFLY AND BREASTSTROKE BEGINS WITH BRILLIANT TURNS

By Wayne Goldsmith

Like freestyle and backstroke, butterfly and breaststroke events are won or lost on skills like dives, starts, turns and finishes. Whilst the swimming strokes of breaststroke (breast) and butterfly (fly) appear very different, the technique for turning effectively in both strokes is surprisingly similar.

Characteristics of great breast and fly turns include:

1. A fast aggressive approach to the wall. In breaststroke this means driving hard to the wall with long powerful strokes and a strong rhythmic kick. In fly its keeping your head down, trying not to breathe inside the flags.
2. Make sure the turn is LEGAL as well as fast. Two-handed touches are essential in competition. Touch with two hands every time that is every breast and fly turn in training. Most of the swimmers who get disqualified at swim meets for one-handed touches are also guilty of doing this in training. TRAIN AS YOU WANT TO RACE!
3. A tight, strong body position on the wall.
4. Hands and arms kept close to the body, controlled and tight.
5. Two feet on the wall, flat and shoulder width apart to allow maximum force to be applied to the wall during the push off.
6. A powerful drive off the wall, with a tight streamline, chin on chest, biceps squeezing ears, fingers stretching and reaching to the other end of the pool.

The big difference between good breast and fly turns and GREAT breast and fly turns is getting your FEET on the wall first. The faster you can get your feet to the wall, the faster you can apply power to the wall and drive off hard for the next lap. Touching the wall with your hands in breast and fly turns is only half the story. Many swimmers touch the wall first at the turn, only to be surprised to find that they are not the first out of the turn. Usually it is because they are too slow at getting their feet and legs from being stretched out behind them during swimming to a tight position on the wall.

Great turns are TIGHT turns, with the body moving into a tight tuck position, heels close to your backside.

One technique for improving fly and breast turns is called the MID POOL TURN METHOD, (a set of turning drills made popular by Coaching Legend Bill Sweetenham).

The **MID POOL TURN METHOD** aims at teaching you how to get your body tight and your feet on the wall faster.

Step 1:

Start by floating face down in the middle of the pool. Your chin should be on the water eyes looking ahead, hands and arms stretched out in front of you, sculling a few centimetres below the surface, your bottom and heels just on the surface. This is called HOVERING.

Step 2:

From the HOVER position, you will turn towards the left in the MIDDLE OF THE POOL. That is, you will do a full breaststroke or butterfly turn without the wall to touch or push off. The goal of this drill is to teach you to get your feet and legs through fast and onto the wall quickly (in this case it's an imaginary wall!). Imagine the wall is there so kick out and back hard. Keep your legs up tight under your body as you turn. After you turn, go back to your hover floating position, only now you should be facing the opposite direction from where you started.

Step 3:

From the hover position take 3 full strokes of breast or fly. After the 3rd stroke, do a mid pool turn to your right, kick out and back hard and hover again facing the opposite direction. Remember to tuck your legs up tight under your hips and bring them through fast.

Step 4:

From the hover position, take 5 full strokes of breast or fly. (Breathe on the 3rd stroke only if doing fly). Do a mid pool turn to the left legs in a tight tuck, kick out and back hard and fast. Continue this drill with 7 strokes, 9 strokes, 11 strokes etc until you actually get to the end of the pool and do a real turn.

Mid pool turns are a fun variation on turns practice and can really get you turning fast.

Once you have touched the wall (with two hands) it is important to keep your arms in tight and close to your body. The arm that comes away from the wall first (your LEADING hand) should be kept under the water and point back towards the end of the pool you will be swimming towards. A common fault is to let your lead hand drop towards the bottom of the pool. This pops your body up on the wall and makes it difficult to push off effectively.

The second hand to leave the wall (TRAILING hand) should snap back close to your head. Some swimmers bring their hand in front of their goggles. Some like to brush against their ear. Some like to snap it behind their head. Whatever technique you use, keep your hand in tight and close to your head. Many swimmers keep their trailing arm straight almost as if they are trying to wave at Mum and Dad in the stands!

A great practice is to learn to turn to both sides equally well. In training you have many ways of developing this skill:

1. Morning sessions turn to your left. Afternoon sessions turn to your right.
2. Monday / Wednesday / Friday turn to your left. Tuesday / Thursday / Saturday turn to your right.
3. Alternate turning each lap. First lap turn to the left, second lap turn to the right.
4. Alternate turning each effort. If doing 10 x 100 breaststroke, turn to your left on the odd number efforts (1,3,5,7,9,); to your right on the even number efforts (2,4,6,8,10).

As with anything, the more you properly practice a skill the better you get at it. For variation, when you are swimming long freestyle sets, make your last three strokes into the wall breaststroke or fly, do a fast breast or fly turn, explode three strokes off the wall in breast or fly then go back to swimming freestyle.

Other little tricks of the trade

Breaststroke

Always do an underwater pull off the wall in breaststroke.

DRILL sets and KICK sets (without a board) as well as in all breaststroke SWIM sets.

During the underwater pull off the wall, as you bring your arms forward, cross them over when they are under your body. This allows you to get them really close to you and keep a tight streamline. As you reach forward at the end of your underwater pull, turn your palms out so that the backs of your hands are together. This allows you to get really streamlined and your hands are in position for your first stroke.

Butterfly

In fly turns, take short sharp fast kicks underwater after you push off and while still in streamline. In all fly turns take at least 3 strokes before pushing your head forward to breathe. Stay underwater for as long as you can maintain a speed faster than you can swim (up to the legal maximum of 15 metres).