

STROKE DRILLS AND PROGRESSIONS – Part 2

by Dick Hannula

This is a continuation of a catalog of drills. The first article was for freestyle. This 2nd installment will include backstroke drills.

Backstroke:

A. Progression Drills – Kicking

1. Back flutter kick sitting at the side of the pool, water level.
2. Back flutter kick, arms at the side.
3. Back flutter kick, one arm extended and the other at the side. Trunk rotated through the shoulders up to 45 degrees. 12 kicks right side, then 12 kicks left side, continue to alternate. Repeat this drill at 10 kicks on each side, then 8 kicks, then 6 kicks, and finally 3 kicks on each side.
4. Back flutter kick with both arms extended.
5. Back flutter kick with both arms extended with the hands off the water.
6. Back flutter kick with both arms extended and underwater.
7. Back flutter kick, arms crossed at the elbows, rotating from the hips through the trunk, side to side.
8. Back flutter kick using any of the above drills with short fins.
9. Using the butterfly dolphin kicking drills to increase the dolphin kicking speed off of all walls.

B. Techniques to emphasize

1. Kick with flexible ankles (kicking a loose shoe off the feet).
2. Streamlined kick.
3. Kick continuously.
4. Kick with a fast kick through the body depth range.
5. Kick water away with the feet.
6. Kick from the hips with the knees remaining in the water through the flexing of the knee.

C. Progressions – Arms and Coordination

1. One arm swim, rolling the hips through the trunk and shoulder of the non stroking arm on the entry of the stroking arm.
2. One arm swim as in #1, rolling the hips through the trunk and shoulder of the non stroking arm to a $\frac{1}{4}$ arm recovery on the entry of the stroking arm.
3. One arm swim as in #2 and recovering the non stroking arm to a $\frac{1}{2}$ arm recovery on the entry of the stroking arm.
4. One arm swims as in #1, 2, and 3, changing sides and the stroking arm.
5. One arm swims as in #1, 2, 3, and 4 to full recovery and complete backstroke swimming.
6. Swims #1 through 5 in front of a full body length mirror beyond the end of the lane.
7. Variations of one arm swimming drills. Examples 3-3; 2-2; and then regular full stroke, and 3-1; 2-1; 1-2; 1-3; then regular full stroke.
8. One arm swims carrying the non stroking arm at 90 degrees, directly over the shoulder.
9. Alternating one arm swims to a completion of each arm prior to the recovery of the non stroking arm. “Touch Down” to the side before each successive one arm stroke.
10. Simultaneous double arm recovery backstroke swims.

11. "Touch and Go" drill. Recover to 90 degrees, directly over the shoulders, and hold that position until the stroking arm recovers to touch that arm, then alternate the arm stroking and the arm held in the over water position.
12. "Spin Out" swims. Sit up as in an undersized bath tub and stroke the arms as fast as possible.
13. Swim backstroke balancing a small coin purse on the forehead.
14. Swim backstroke, hesitating at 90 degrees just long enough to rotate the hand for a little finger entry.
15. Swim the rope on one arm for a length and then the other arm on the return.
16. Swim any of the drills with short fins.
17. Swim any of the drills with closed fists.
18. Swim any of the drills with Han's Paddles, Groovers, and/or Grippers.
19. Pull backstroke wearing bands around the ankles and without floatation devices.
20. Kicking with one arm extended and one arm at the side, 12-12 and then 5 consecutive fast full strokes of backstroke, and repeat.
21. "Corkscrew" swimming 7 strokes backstroke, then rotating to 7 strokes of crawl, repeating the sequence. This can also be done 5-5, and 3-3.

D. Techniques to emphasize in the arms and coordination.

1. Use a straight arm or "rifle barrel" recovery.
2. Enter the hand at the little finger side.
3. Anchor the hand and arm in the catch position and rotate the body past the anchored arm.
4. Rotate from the hips through the trunk and shoulders.
5. The head remains in a steady fixed position.
6. The head is back on the water with eyes directed straight up or nearly to that point.
7. Enter deep enough to anchor the arm on the line of the pull.
8. Strive for a direct line of pull through the arm stroke. Avoid or minimize any sweep of the arm stroke.
9. Use "skewered" swimming and trunk rotation. Stay in line on a skewer as the trunk rotates.
10. Exit the arm thumb first with good momentum into the recovery.
11. Enter at near the 12:00 o'clock position.
12. Strive for continuous arm motion and an accelerating hand movement in the arm stroke with the tip of the elbow pointed down.
13. The arm "falls in" to the water on entry as opposed to placing.
14. The arm bends through the mid-section of the arm stroke.
15. Visualize "pressure points" about one hand width below the arm pit and slightly behind the center point. Pressing down at this point will help to keep the legs and hips high in the water through the trunk rotation.

E. Application or major uses.

1. Alignment: Kick drills 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9. Arm drills 7, 11, 13, 14, and 20.
2. Trunk rotation: Kick drills 3, and 7. Arm drills 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 15, 20, and 21.
3. Catch position: Arm drills 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 17, 18, 19, and 21.
4. Power: Kick drills 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9. Arm drills 8, 11, 12, 18, 19, and 20.
5. Direct line of pull: Arm drills 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 18, and 19.