

Balance In Cleaning Up A Dive

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As a diving coach of many years I can not count how many times I have had to deal with the problem of the diver splitting his or her legs at the end of the dive. Sometimes this is what I call a “froggy” split and sometime it is a “scissors” split. For a long time I would just tell the diver to get stronger on the “squeeze” of the legs to keep this from happening. Sometimes I was successful and sometimes I was not. I have also observed that this splitting problem is more common with only some types of dives. Where I have seen this happen most frequently is at the end of Back or Reverse dives straight and also at the end of front, back and reverse twisting dives.

To help in solving this common problem I had videos taken of my divers from all angles. These were beginning, intermediate and very advanced divers including a few masters who have been diving for twenty five to thirty years. After many hours spent looking at videos of my divers frame by frame I begin to see a pattern that I think has given me the answer to this problem.

One part of the problem comes from the athlete. This is an athlete with a very good sense of balance. I define this as the athlete knowing where he/she is in the air and having a good “feel” for how the entry should go into the water. Over the years I have had many of this type of athlete. Even when they get off the board wrong, whether it is a bad approach, a knee buckle, or some other error, they always seem to be able to get to the water without the “smack.” The other part of the problem can be identified as a lack of symmetry in the entry or most often in the exit of the dive.

For example, one of my divers was doing a very good Back dive straight, with a great stand up and very vertical entry, but she would always scissors her legs about twelve inches. It was also after watching this many, many times that I finally saw a small difference between the left and right arms as she closed from the “T” to the stretch for her entry. Because of this small but very critical lack of symmetry she was feeling it and using her legs to maintain her balance and body position. When I had her correct the arm motion, the legs corrected themselves, in that, she was balanced and had no need to scissors for balance.

A second example, and perhaps the most telling was a diver who was doing both a reverse and a forward twister. In both dives, even though the diver had more than enough time and height to complete the dives, the diver would always drop a leg on the “square out.” Again the correction of squeeze harder was not a sufficient direction to the diver to enable him to fix the error. After moving to the back of the board and watching the diver execute both dives I finally was able to see what was causing the leg drop on the “square out.” When the diver was “squaring out” the behind the head arm was coming to the correct “T” position. However, the “front” arm was dropping down the front of the body for a short distance and then to the “T” and then into the stretch for the entry. This was throwing the diver off balance and he was able to feel it and thus the leg drop to counter the incorrect motion. Once I was able to see this, I was again able to fix a serious leg split by fixing an incorrect arm action.

As a result, when I now see a leg split from one of my divers, I first look for why they are being thrown off balance. Once I conclude what the cause of the loss of balance is, the correction or fix usually becomes basic and not too difficult. The key to solving what

is needed to correct the problem is to remember that once the diver is in the air he or she is a free body and that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Thus if the arm action is off the desired line of the dive, a diver with a good sense of balance will feel this and try to correct with the legs.

I hope this short article can help all of my fellow coaches and through them to their athletes to have a more successful season.