

Dear Swimmers:

This month, I have a few bonuses for you! As always, you are an inspiration to each other and to the swimming community that you represent so well - keep up the good work !!

For my swimmers, this is either a break part of the year, or long course season. In either case, a good time to stay fit, but not push too hard. Always a good time to sharpen your skills.

My triathletes are coming off a l-o-n-g winter of cruddy weather, but the racing has begun. We have already had a few podium finishes and few newbies break the ice - nice !!

My intention for this month is to send you something everyday for about a week. I have too many subjects in my head -must be spring !!

Today, is the meat and potatoes of my normal newsletter and the theme is : **SOFT ELBOW.**

What is "soft elbow" you ask?

I define soft elbow as the advanced stage of catch development where the swimmer uses a slight break in the elbow (aka : a softening) in order to facilitate a stronger and deeper catch. Think about your mechanics as it applies to the front end of the stroke. The closer you apply leverage to your body, they more powerful you are. \*\*\*This may be easier to think of - in reverse... if you where to pick up a bowling ball, you would NOT stand as far away as possible and try to pick it up. You would approach the ball as close to your body as you could get and lift straight up to where you wanted to put it. Same with swimming. A deep and straight catch will be more difficult to maximize your leverage. As you reach into YOUR CORNERS ( you ALL know where YOUR corners are !), feel a soft break in the elbow (not a full bend) and begin the stroke. If you are not doing this, it should immediately feel easier (always good) and faster (your pull line is shorter). Last month, we discussed **Life is a game of inches** where I alluded to the fact that above the water, your hands need to be about a sheet of paper thickness off the water's surface. This will be the underside of the same story. Ahhh, he does have a point to make... FEEL it. As always, slow down a bit to learn, feel and adapt. Challenge your self to do this as your speed increases to practice pacer and eventually race pace. No other way will work as well...

Here is your video demonstrating some front quadrant efficiency. See if you can pick up on what the focal point is this month:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DmTkEwawPSw>

TI video of front quadrant swimming efficiency

You will notice that the elbow is NOT BENT... It gets a slight softness to it....

Have some fun with this. You can also use your finger paddles and/or a pool buoy to help your focus. Of course, those of you with the Finis Freestyle snorkel will have accelerated learning curves.

As for the rest of the May bonus, this is what is coming (in no particular order):

- 1) swap stuff - those of you looking to buy or sell something can contact me. I already have a couple of these...
- 2) swimming links to some cool sights
- 3) links to race venues
- 4) reminder of what O2 SWIMMING has set up for you regarding new products - swim suits, Pure Sport Hydration & Recovery, etc...

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