



Love to Swim School

Investment Required to Swim Well

By Mary Reilly-Magee

Swimming is hard. I should know, I've been swimming for thirty years and teaching it for twenty. Amazingly though, people often come to me expecting to learn to swim or improve their swimming skills quickly without much of an investment of time, energy or money. How is it possible that people pay hundreds of dollars for golf or tennis lessons that go on for years, but consistently undervalue and underestimate swimming's technical and physical challenges?

Let me make my case. When I was coaching and teaching at Holmes High School, there were always athletes (and coaches of other sports) dismissing swimming as simple and easy, a non-sport really. It was always great when those students would sign up for my Lifeguarding class and have to swim 500 yards (20 lengths of the pool) as a prerequisite for course participation on the first day. The dumbfounded, exhausted look on their faces was so sweetly satisfying. I knew their respect for my swimmers and the sport of swimming had multiplied exponentially right then and there. And those who couldn't swim the 500 couldn't take the class. Justice was served.

Regrettably and unjustly, parents of children in my Learn-to-Swim school undervalue and underestimate swimming, too. I have had parents complain about the cost, the time, and the number of lessons necessary to make their child safe in the water, let alone proficient. Again, I am flabbergasted. What other sport saves peoples lives, is a lifelong activity, and is as conducive to health and fitness? Swimming should be looked at in much the same way reading is: a lifelong activity that gets better the more it is done.

Just as guilty are Adult beginner swimmers as well as runners, cyclists and other athletes. Time and time again I have clients who call me wanting to learn to swim in three weeks, or six weeks for that matter, taking a lesson once a week with no practice in between. Ridiculous. And what about swimming as a cross-training option for athletes? Is there a better non-impact sport than swimming? It improves strength, endurance and flexibility without the pound of running or the strain of cycling.

So, what's my point? Be patient. There's a reason for all those patience clichés: Patience is a virtue; Good things come to those who wait; etc. Recognize that like everything else in life worth having, swimming well takes time, energy, money and commitment. Find a masters program, hire a coach, participate in a clinic, study books and video tapes and practice, practice, practice. And most importantly, be patient. Your hard work and investment will payoff for a lifetime.

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