

From Susie Gallucci's Posts to the GoSwim.tv website:  
<http://www.goswim.tv/pmachinepro/forum/forum.php?which=triathlon>

### Topic: **...New Buoy Sighting Discovery!**

Today was an easy workout, a total of 3000, mostly focused on technique. The main set was 8x100 @ 1:30, where it was 50 free easy, and 50 free build sighting the other end of the pool as you would in a race. I averaged 1:20, which was even stronger than yesterday's average of 1:22. (Remember that my comparisons are not necessarily the best since each of the sets I have swum this week have all been different types of sets and not a true measure of threshold, rather just a guesstimate and some type of measurement for now).

My stroke felt exceptionally smooth today, compared to previous days, but not excellent compared to when I'm in shape. As I u-turned (remember, I don't flipturn or pushoff unless it's 1-legged pushoffs) and began to sight, I closed my eyes when my face was in the water and only opened them when my head was out of the water. This helped to simulate what race conditions are usually like. Regardless of whether or not the water is clear in an open water competition, you just don't have the black line to guide you like in the pool, so I like to practice simulating the worst visibility conditions. I realized that I've been spending too much time holding my head out of the water to get a clear view of the buoy.

Now when I say I was spending "too much time" I'm talking about fractions of a second too long. However, during those fractions of a second, my hips and body position seem to sink at an exponential rate, and I realized that I didn't need to have that perfectly clear view of the buoy in order to swim fast to it. I had been holding my head up to gain a perfect non-blurry sight of the buoy, and most of the time, I don't need a perfect sight. I know that I'm heading the right way and I'm usually just confirming that I'm on the straightest path possible, so a blurred or non-perfect sight is just as good, especially because I will still sight just as often (about once every 3-10 strokes, just depending on my comfort level with the direction I'm headed and my surroundings). Now I will sight quicker with a more efficient use of my energy to lift my head. Plus, I won't be slowed as much by the resistance I was creating with my hips sinking. When I sight, I look forward with my eyeballs at the top of my eyelids and then quickly turn my head to the side to breathe and continue swimming. After finishing the sighting, I immediately put my head back in the water with my eyes forward, but head down.

I was so excited about my new discovery that I showed my swim coach, Mike Doane, exactly what I was talking about. I swam a lap with my regular buoy sighting and then contrasted it with a lap of my new quick buoy sighting and he said the difference in my body position and efficiency was greatly improved. If you've ever had neck pain after an open water swim, it is because your neck muscles are working hard to keep your head up, and the frequency of sightings wear out these muscles even more. I expect my new sighting technique to be a big for keeping these muscles fresher.

Due to looking forward for sighting purposes, a mistake that triathletes often make during open water racing, to include many professionals, is to keep your head looking forward during the regular strokes. Sometimes you have to look forward to see other people and make sure that you avoid getting kicked, or due to the waves of the water, but most of the time, you should keep your head in the position you would normally keep it in when you're swimming your fastest in a swimming pool. Anything else is slower.

I was feeling confident and better than I have all week, so I asked Denny DePriest (our intern triathlon coach) to time me in a 400 free so that I could get a measurement for where I was starting out. This way, I can look back and see my progression over the next 20 weeks. I went an endurance (new word, does it work?) painful 5:05, taking it out in a 1:12, and bringing it home in a 1:17. That last 100 was cruel and felt like a slow motion scene that would never end. Remember too, that this is not completely accurate compared to a healthy body, because I push off solely on my left leg on each wall, with open turns (due to my injury). With the first week of twenty winding down, I'm pleased with this time as a starting point. Although I will continue to do periodic 400's for time, just for a mental boost (so that I gain confidence as I improve), I will also start to add in 800's, 1600's, and a 3000, and even a 5000. Hopefully I'll have the opportunity to do the 5000's in open water, since 1-legged pushoffs get to be quite annoying.

Over the next 2 weeks, as I start to get my feel for the water back, and get through this initial super-slow get-in-shape phase, I'll discuss a more specific plan with how I will achieve a podium position at the FINA World Cup 10K on September 11. Stay tuned!

Activate your dreams!

Susie

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