

---

# Between **the Lane** Lines

Volume 2010 Issue 2

---

SwimSuit news: Now that 1/1/2010 has come and gone, we are on the new swimsuit rule from FINA, which is, simply put, Textile materials only, and suit silhouette is navel to knees for men, and upper body (nothing over the shoulder but straps) to knees for women. Essentially, we're wearing jammer length suits once again.

---

## **"The Big Deal About SwimSuits"** From ASCA

Over the past 18 months, the swimming world has been a frenzy of controversy over the emergence of technology in swimsuits. At the recent World Championships in Rome, the constant and overwhelming refrain about suits, echoed the volume and intensity of the last time we were in Rome for a World Championships, when the topic was doping....drugs distorting our sport...in 1994. Fifteen years later, the emotional topic was the new high tech suits that have swept through the sport from the World Championship level down to the local park district championships in the summer league. The parallels were impossible to miss.

FINA, in an unprecedented move at its Congress in Rome, banned the use of all "non-textile" materials from suits beginning in 2010, and limited the coverage of the body to "knees to navel for men" and "knees to shoulder straps" for women. 168 nations voted in favor of the restrictions, against a mere 6 in opposition. (who apparently did not understand the word "textile") This in the face of strong opposition to the move by the sitting President and Executive Director of the FINA organization. Amazing and never seen before. The USA delegation initiated the restrictions and led the opposition. Why such a strong reaction in opposition to the existing plastic and rubber suits?

A parent new to the sport, from a middle class background, might well say "hey, why not? Technology marches on! Equipment gets better. Why not let my son/daughter wear one of the fancy new suits and swim faster?"

*Its a valid question that requires a thoughtful answer. Here it is.*

The answer revolves around two words, with of course, a considerable amount of "side data" that adds to the intensity of the discussion and the strength of the resolution to end the problem worldwide. Those two words are "**Maximizing**" and "**Enhancing**".

Quality lane lines "maximize" the opportunity of the athlete to swim fast, with minimum turbulence in the lane. (you should have seen the waves in the pool back in the 60's and 70's.) Good Goggles allow the athlete to see the turns, see their competitors, and comfortably compete. (to say nothing of allow them to train hard for hours....impossible in the chlorine pool without goggles...in the old days, yardage and performance was a fraction of what it is today.) Goggles Maximize the opportunity of the athlete to work hard. Evolution in coaching techniques in training and biomechanics allow the athletes to Maximize their ability to benefit from their time in the sport. Swimsuits, up until approximately the year 2000, and certainly until early 2008, were designed to maximize the opportunity of the athletes to go fast....the manufacturers designed suits to "get out of the way of the water". Less suit, less friction with the water, less drag, tighter fit, and better materials MAXIMIZED the ability of the athlete to perform to their highest earned level.

Beginning in 2008, manufacturers took advantage (and must be applauded for doing so, within the existing rules, which were close to non-existent) of the idea of designing suits to ENHANCE the ability of the athlete to swim faster. A line had been crossed. Designed suits incorporated plastics, rubberized material and new design criteria, to enhance the ability of the athlete to be buoyant in the suits (riding higher makes you faster), wrapped more tightly (compressing the "jiggly parts" makes you MUCH faster) and shed water from the plastics and rubber materials much more effectively, thereby reducing the drag of the suits remarkably.

Since February 2008, 158 world records have been set by elite athletes. Their ability to perform has moved from being "maximized" by their swimsuits, to being "enhanced" by their swimsuits. This rate of improvement is absolutely farsical in the historical context of over 100 years of our sport. At the world championships, new world records were receiving polite applause akin to the "golf clap" for a good shot, rather than the historical roars of appreciation that a swimming crowd used to provide when a human barrier went down, as it infrequently did, by great athletes at the peak of their power.

So... **"Earn it, or buy it". Which do you want to teach?**

Are you pooh-poohing that? Wait till your son or daughter gets beat the first time by someone whose mommie or daddie could afford a more expensive piece of plastic and rubber than you can. The bitter taste in your mouth is not fun. Not much in the way of "sport" there. So, in answer to the local official who asked "Why are "they" (FINA officials) wasting time with worrying about THAT? Don't they have better things to do?"

*The answer is no, the suit debacle is the most important thing that any of us can attend to. It preserves the heart and soul of our sport....which is reverence and appreciation for the hard work, attention to detail, courage and teamwork required to be a fine competitive swimmer and to learn to succeed with those life-skills. Instead of with your Daddy's wallet. The Congress (not the Ruling Bureau) of FINA took the rules into their own hands after the Bureau had time and again failed to establish the rules necessary to keep our sport vital, credible and important.*

## Nervousness Is GOOD!!

By Craig Townsend

Probably the most powerful and under-rated ally that you possess during your races is your own nervousness! Almost every swimmer I speak to seems to regard nervousness as a sign of weakness, something bad and which they are often ashamed to admit. This is the exact opposite of what it really is! Nervousness creates great performances. If you are not the slightest bit nervous before a really big race, it's quite possible that you are not truly *psyched* for the event, and this may *not* provide you with your best possible swim on the day.

This is not to say that you should worry if you *aren't* nervous! (Boy, some people will look for *anything* to worry about!). This is to say that when you ARE nervous, know that this is exactly how you SHOULD be feeling right before a good swim, and learn to *enjoy* this feeling, and use it to its best advantage. Nervousness is a sign that your energy is ready to go. It is literally a huge reservoir of *potential energy*, just waiting to explode into a huge swimming performance. This nervousness (that you may have hated in the past) is probably the very thing which has helped you to win races and earn all the PB's you have achieved in the past!

The point I am really trying to make today is that the last thing you want to do is waste your energy *hating* the nervousness. Instead, embrace it, regard it as a good friend who will look after you during your race. And here's a really good reason why: Swimmers who hate their nervousness tend to become *overly* nervous - which is a completely *different* physical and mental state which does not produce strong performances.

So just know that when you feel nervous before an event, it is perfectly natural. Don't worry about it at all - instead, smile and know that it means 'you're ready'. Actually, nervousness is really not the correct word for this state at all. The fact is, when you feel this way before a race, you are actually full of 'anticipation', not nervousness. Anticipation basically means to be *absolutely ready and raring to go* (and yes, fear can also be mixed in with this emotion as well, which is absolutely fine). This anticipation is what brings on the physical shivers associated with *nervousness*, as the actual nerves in your body are twitching in eagerness and getting ready to 'perform'.

So if the word 'nervous' conjures up negative feelings for you, ditch it - get rid of it completely. Instead, if someone asks you how you're feeling before a race, tell them you are full of 'anticipation'. This sounds far more positive as well as being technically the truth, and it also reminds yourself that you're truly 'ready to go'.

---

### Fun facts:

- Goggles weren't widely used for competition swimming until 1972.
- The first lane lines appeared in 1924 and were made of cork.
- The invention of butterfly...

David Armbuster, a coach at the University of Iowa, was researching the problem of breaststroke where the swimmer slowed down while bringing the arms forward underwater. In 1934, he refined a method to bring the arms forward over water in breaststroke. While this "butterfly" technique was difficult, it brought a great improvement in speed. A year later, Jack Sieg, a swimmer from the University of Iowa developed a technique involving swimming on his side and beating his legs in unison similar to a fish tail, & modified the technique afterward to swim it face down. Armbuster & Sieg combined these techniques into a variant of the breaststroke called butterfly with the two kicks per cycle being called dolphin fishtail kick. However, even though this technique was much faster than regular breaststroke, the dolphin fishtail kick violated the rules & was not allowed. Therefore, the butterfly arms with a breaststroke kick were used by a few swimmers in the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin for the breaststroke competitions. In 1938, almost every breaststroke swimmer was using this butterfly style, yet this stroke was considered a variant of the breaststroke until 1952, when it was accepted as a separate style with a set of rules.