

## **It's Not About Swimming Harder** **By Brenton Ford, Coach Power Points MSC**

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When we want to swim faster, the first thing we think of is to train harder. Luckily there's more to swimming than simply working harder in your sessions. If you're wondering how to improve in the pool, here are a few things that might increase your speed or simply make you feel better in the water.

**Strength training** - Because swimming is low impact, we often miss out on the type of strength work our bodies need for good stability and control. We can get tremendous gains from doing even a basic strength program. Whether it's in the gym or at home, developing good core and shoulder control can improve your swimming.

**Increased flexibility** - The majority of swimmers I see have poor flexibility, myself included. When you take 5-10 minutes after each session to stretch and increase your flexibility, it's easier to swim with good technique.

**Specific training** - So you're training for a 50m sprint. If all of your training is aerobic and distance, it's unlikely you'll get the best result you can. Changing your training to suit your main events can improve your swimming. In the lead up to the open water season at Power Points, we do a lot of aerobic and short rest swimming. This changes as we lead up to States and Nationals when we do more quality work. Shorter distance, more rest and higher intensity.

**Technique** - Minor adjustments to your technique can have a big impact on your swimming. It doesn't matter what age you are, you can still make changes to your stroke. When working one on one with swimmers I look at head position, body position, kick and then pull, in that order.

**Eating differently** - Your body is like a racing car. If you put better fuel in, you get a better output. It doesn't mean you need to overhaul your diet. Making one or two changes can have a positive effect. I strongly encourage swimmers to have a protein or recovery drink like Sustagen within 15 minutes of finishing a session. This helps your muscles repair and refuel.

**Cross training** - When you mix up your training it keeps it fun and interesting. Doing other sports is a good way to improve your fitness and strength without following the black line up and down. Boxing, running, surfing, water polo, water aerobics...get out there and do something different.

**Better skills** - I see a lot of time lost on slow starts, turns and finishes. These are probably the 'lowest hanging fruit' for most swimmers. To improve a second in your 100m freestyle can happen quite easily with a better start, turn and finish.

**Visualisation** - When you go through your race in your head before you swim, it helps your body know what to do. Thinking about your pace, technique, turns, splits...it helps replicate the ideal swim when you get to your race.