

## **An Interview with Mark Shubert: by Dick Hannula**

(Reprinted from an article in The Finals Newsletter, "From the Top")

Mark Shubert has left Mission Bay to add the duties and challenges of college coaching to the Longhorn Aquatics. Mark is the new head coach of the women's swimming program at the University of Texas. Mark has left a giant "mark" in club swimming. His 13 years at Mission Viejo brought 44 national championship team titles, and 22 individual world records. He brought nine national championships to Mission Bay from 1986 through 1988. Mark has been an Olympic Coach in 1980, 1984 and 1988. He is successful. He is hard working, and knows what has to be done to attain real success. Having worked with Mark on the U.S. Swimming Technical Planning Committee and the Olympic International Division, as well as the Board of Directors of ASCA, I believe he is one of the brightest minds in swimming. He is an articulate and persuasive leader who will follow through to see a job completed. **The Finals** is very proud to have Mark Shubert on our advisory coaching staff. His comments should be noteworthy for all coaches.

1. ***What do you consider your greatest challenge in coaching college women?***  
"The academic environment must come first. The challenge will be to assure that we attain high academic standards, and that we compete at high national and world athletic standards."
2. ***How and when do you believe that aerobic training should be graduated through the age groups?***  
"This has to be individualized within the ability level of each Swimmer. A good age group swimmer in the 10, 11, and 12 year category can train two hours a session, five or six times a week. Swimmers who are female and are at least 13, and a few select males at this age are ready for senior training."
3. ***When do you specialize in specific strokes?***  
"I believe that 12 and under swimmers must be I.M. swimmers. They must be taught good technique in all four strokes. Coaches must also see that they compete in all four strokes. At the senior level, you can specialize more with some I.M. training. The high school swimmer should continue all four strokes through school, as you don't know when a swimmer may become successful in an "off" stroke."
4. ***How do you build the confidence and desire in young swimmers to train distance?***  
"Young swimmers aspiring to swim at the Junior and Senior National Championship level can attain success sooner in distance events. Succeed first in distance, and then go down to the shorter events. The other aspect is to provide challenging sets in training to help build that confidence."
5. ***Do you believe kicking is necessary in training? Is it necessary for all strokes, and all distances?***  
"It is essential at the middle distances and below. For some distance swimmers, it may not be essential, but it still must be developed to win the close races. In a close distance race, having the legs coming home can make the difference between winning and losing. I would emphasize kicking for all swimmers, with the shortest distances getting the greatest emphasis. The strokes, fly - back - breast, all need major emphasis on the kick in training."
6. ***How specific should you be in specialized stroke training?***  
"Early season about 20 - 25% in major stroke with the bulk of the aerobic training coming in the I.M., and the free style swimming. Mid-season training should be 50 - 60% in stroke. The taper period should be about 50% in stroke."
7. ***How would you outline your training year?***  
"Early season it is all aerobic. Gradually work in anaerobic sessions twice a week. The next stage would reach three anaerobic sessions, three threshold sessions, and five basic aerobic sessions per week. The taper may be as long as 18 days, to as short as seven to 10 days. This is based on the muscle mass of the swimmer, the sex of the swimmer, and the past history of the swimmer."
8. ***Do you lactate test your swimmers?***  
"We test once every three weeks to help determine the level of fitness, the progression, and if any individual changes need to be made. We also spot test occasionally to verify that we are working at the goal level for that training set."

**9. What dryland training do you use? When in relation to the swim session, and how long and how often?**

"Free weights, and machine weights are done for one hour every other day (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday). These are done after the swim training. Bench and bands are done three days a week, too, on the alternate days (Monday, Wednesday and Friday). These are supplemented with biking and running. They are for one hour, and done before swimming. I also want to emphasize that we do a lot of abdominal work with sit-ups, etc."

**10. What technique tips do you key on in the free, and stroke events?**

"For distance free, I prefer bilateral breathing in competition and in training. Emphasize a high elbow in the recovery and in the underwater pull. Use a thumb first entry. Emphasize distance per stroke, good coordination between the legs and arms, a body roll, and optimum body position. In sprint free, the legs and high body position are emphasized more. Tempo and breath control are both important in sprint free. Each swimmer must determine the optimum tempo that he/she can attain.

Sprint free must also work intensely on starts, turns and finishes. The sprint swimmer must attain distance per stroke while sprinting. This is accomplished by counting the number of strokes for a set sprint distance. The minimum number of strokes drill can also be good.

In butterfly, I look for body undulation, high hips working with the rest of the stroke. Distance per stroke is important, and avoid rushing the pull at the start. Finish the stroke will past the hips. Look for acceleration of the hand stroke. Breathe in conjunction with the body undulation, and time the breathing to occur late in the pull.

The body roll originates in the hips in backstroke. I like a relaxed arm recovery with the top or back of the hand exiting the water first. Teach a deep catch and accelerated pull. You should accelerate the end of the pull into the recovery. Backstrokers need a six beat kick.

I emphasize the sculling out, and sculling in action in the breast stroke. We also pull with paddles. For those breast strokers who have an undulating body action, I look for a body flow with the stroke. It is a heart shaped kick as observed swimming away from you. It accelerates and does not slow or stop at the top of the kick. Timing is very important in breast stroke."

**11. Do you individualize dryland training?**

"In the weight training we emphasize more weights and more sets for sprinters. Distance swimmers use lighter weights and more sets. In the bands, we basically emphasize arms, but breast strokers also do leg exercises for abductor and adductor work."

**12. What do you have to say on discipline?**

"Discipline involves commitment. A swimmer who is committed to going fast, committed to success is going to have discipline. This swimmer is willing to do whatever it takes to succeed. Winston Churchill said, "sometimes it is not enough to do the best you can; sometimes you have to do what is required." This is how I see discipline."

**13. What final advice do you have to be successful as a swimming coach?**

"The coach is the key to the whole program. The coach must be the most committed and dedicated person in the program. When you have this, the program will then improve accordingly."