

Swim Smooth

**The complete coaching system for
swimmers and triathletes**



Paul Newsome • Adam Young

Swim Smooth

*The complete coaching programme
for swimmers and triathletes*



AND
ADAM YOUNG



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Foreword

We were delighted to be asked to write the foreword for *Swim Smooth*. As the National Governing Body for the development of triathlon coaching and coaches in Great Britain, our mission is focused on developing a world-leading triathlon coaching system, and indeed world class coaches to support the development of triathletes at all levels, from grassroots to high performance. As part of a recent review of our coach education system, and supporting learning resources, we identified the need to bring in respected specialists in a variety of areas to help us provide the most up-to-date innovative thinking. Swim Smooth was identified to support us on the swim coaching aspect of our education programmes.

We didn't just want a swim expert *per se*, we needed a company that understood triathlon swimming and, crucially, how to coach it in a real context. Swim Smooth has built an impressive international reputation and it is exciting that we can now utilise their experience and skills as part of our coaching programme. Swim Smooth will add significant value to our coaching delivery as the demand for coaches in the fast growing modern Olympic sport of triathlon continues to grow year on year.

Feedback from the coaches has always mentioned how the Swim Smooth section has improved their swim coaching. New and developing coaches have engaged with Swim Smooth coaching methods and new drills. One of Swim Smooth's introductory breathing drills – '*breathe-bubble-bubble-breathe*' – is an excellent example of a simple but highly effective drill any coach can use to make an immediate improvement with any level of athlete. Swim Smooth's methodical step-by-step approach to swim coaching helps remove the clutter which many swimmers report they feel when trying to improve their technique.

We look forward to a long and successful partnership with Swim Smooth, and seeing the benefits and added value for our coaches, athletes and the wider sport.

—Paul Moss,
Coaching Development Manager,
British Triathlon

—Giles O'Brien,
Coach Education Officer,
British Triathlon

Preface

The 11-Year-Old Girl

You are in the pool one day, enjoying being in the water and working on your freestyle swimming. You are pretty happy with the progress you have been making and swimming is definitely becoming easier and a little quicker too – which is really satisfying. You set off for a few more laps and then suddenly in the next lane over a young girl jumps in the water, probably about 11 years old, and comes flying past you like you are barely moving. Before you know it she has executed a perfect tumble turn and comes back past you the other way, a near blur of fast moving, perfectly synchronised arms and legs.

If you are an adult who has been swimming for a little while you have almost certainly had a similar experience to this. It can be quite a shock and even disheartening. 'How can she do that? She is just a kid!'. Don't worry, everyone has been passed by a much faster swimmer at some point in their lives and made to feel a little inadequate. Kids are not as physically strong as adults and don't have the option of muscling their way through the water; instead they must use a good stroke technique – and high levels of aerobic fitness – to propel themselves quickly forwards. The fact that someone so small with very little strength can swim so quickly shows you what amazing potential each of us has in the water if we too can develop these areas of our swimming. Try not to be disheartened by the speed of fast swimmers but instead see them as an inspiration: how a child can swim so well and be so comfortable in the water is an amazing thing and there are many lessons the aspiring adult swimmer can learn from them.

This book is devoted to anyone looking to improve their freestyle swimming. You might be very new to swimming and are trying to become more comfortable in the water. Or perhaps you are a triathlete or open water swimmer looking to improve your speed and efficiency and move up through the field. Or you might be a top-age group or elite swimmer searching for a cutting edge in your races. Whatever your level, we have worked with



A big hello from one of the Swim Smooth Squads in Perth!

hundreds of swimmers just like you, both in our coaching base in Perth, Australia and on our international clinic tours. We have developed and improved each and every one of those swimmers and as you will discover in this book, we know how to improve your individual swimming too.

Before we get started on that, let's take a quick look at the background behind Swim Smooth and how our coaching system came into existence.



We Live Swimming

Swim Smooth are based in Perth, Western Australia, and if you've ever been here you'll understand why! We are very lucky to have fantastic outdoor pools, a beautiful ocean and a warm sunny climate to train in. We run coached swim sessions for adult swimmers like you every day, with around 300 swimmers choosing from 15 weekly sessions. Whatever your current ability level you would fit in nicely if you were here! We have beginners starting out who struggle to swim a lap at the moment, intermediate triathletes looking to improve their performances, age-group swimmers challenging themselves with swims of 20km or more and elite triathletes and swimmers dominating their races. We are very proud of our ability to coach and develop this huge range of swimmers.

Alongside these squads we use advanced video analysis above and below the water to help swimmers understand what is holding them back in their strokes and exactly how to improve their speed and efficiency. We have been at the forefront of this technology for the last twelve years and have conducted thousands of analysis sessions in that time – in fact many of the photos in this book are taken from these video analysis and stroke correction sessions. In Chapter 16 we will show you how to run your own video analysis session at your pool using your own camera in movie-mode. This will give you such a powerful insight into your swimming that we strongly recommend you film yourself if at all possible.

Developing coaches outside of Swim Smooth is also a real passion of ours and we regularly travel to North America and Europe to run advanced level training courses for swimming coaches to further their skills. In

2010 we were appointed by the British Triathlon as coaching consultants for swimming and have re-written the syllabus and training courses for their Coach Education system based on our methods.

We run year-round open water skills sessions (great fun and our favourite sessions of the week) and regularly consult with elite triathletes and open water swimmers from around the world looking



Paul and Adam.

to improve their swimming. If that wasn't enough to keep us busy, all of the Swim Smooth coaches are competitive swimmers or triathletes themselves and have been racing for many years.

Working with so many swimmers in such an in-depth way has created an insightful, innovative and unique programme for you to enjoy whatever your level of swimming. No other group in the world has immersed itself in these experiences simultaneously for over ten years – we really do 'live swimming' – and don't we know it when the alarm goes off at 4:15am every morning for squad training!



Becoming 11 Again

Before we get into all the details of stroke technique and how to train, let's consider something possibly even more important: your mental approach to swimming. This might be a key advantage that our 11-year-old swimmer has over you: she swims without inhibition or self-imposed limitation. She doesn't over-analyse, she's not self-conscious and she doesn't doubt herself. She looks forward to getting out of school, jumping in the water and having fun. Fun is a key part of the Swim Smooth philosophy because enjoyment really does have the power to make you a better swimmer. With enjoyment comes motivation and the desire to practice the right things on a consistent basis that will ultimately result in improved performance.

If swimming is currently a bit of a frustrating experience for you, or even a 'necessary evil' for triathlon, then of course you need to improve your stroke technique and possibly your fitness preparation too, which we will show you how to do in this book. But over and above that, a positive 'care-free' mental approach is so important, it could literally make the difference between you achieving your goals in the water or not. From time to time we will challenge you with coordinating an area of your stroke or perhaps undertaking a tough training set. We can't promise you that it will always be easy but if you are ever tempted to think 'I can't!' then take a leaf out of that 11-year-old's book: clear your mind and just go for it! You'll soon be on the way to more comfortable, more efficient and faster swimming as a result. Who knows, you might even show some 11-year-olds a thing or two in the water!

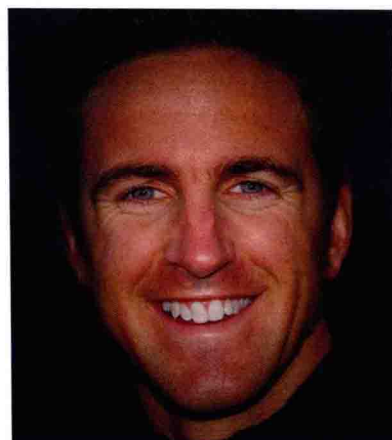
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Paul Newsome

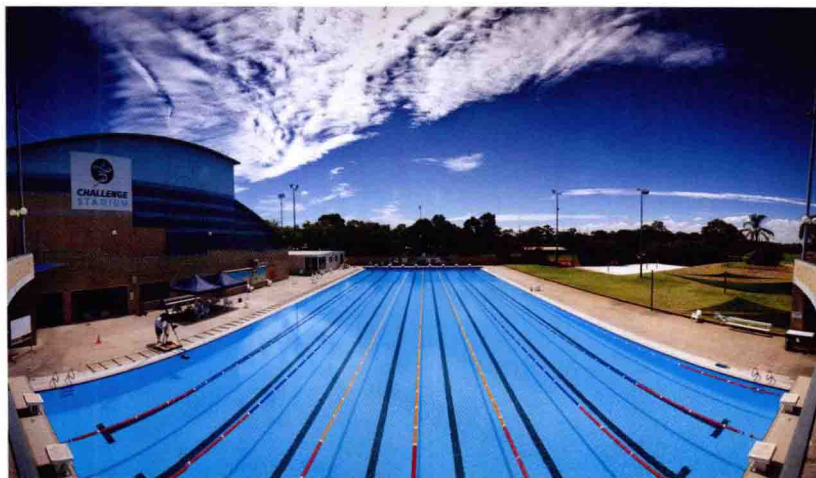
Writing this book has been a dream come true and I guess my Grandma Rose was correct when she told me that one day I'd write a book. About what? I'm not sure she was able to predict given that she sadly passed away before I had even created Swim Smooth in 2004. Still, here we are, almost exactly seven years since we produced the very first Swim Smooth DVD and with a piece of work of which I am extremely proud. However, none of this work would have been possible without the help, guidance and inspiration of quite a few key people in my life.

I was always told by my mum (Linda) at swimming competitions to do my best and that no one else could ever ask any more from me than that. Given that I knew quite a lot of kids with very pushy parents when I was in my pre-teens, this advice certainly helped seal my love for the sport of swimming as a keen interest rather than something I was forced into. My mum's devotion to taking me training every morning and every night and suspending her own interests out of commitment to my own passion was totally selfless and something I can only dream of aspiring to with my children. Thanks Mum – this book is for you.

I read two very inspiring and thought-provoking books just prior to commencing work on this project, which got me thinking about my own development as an athlete and now a coach. The first, *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell, says that to excel in any field, one must accumulate at least 10,000 hours of practical experience and sound application of those experiences. When I emigrated to Perth in Western Australia I was fortunate enough to find a hub of swimming activity for all levels, ages and backgrounds far surpassing anywhere else in the world. With more 50m pools per head of population than anywhere else on the planet, and a multitude of fantastic open water swimming venues, I found myself immersed in a swimming Mecca with the demand for professional coaching enough to support a thriving full-time business. Over the years I have been incredibly fortunate to work with such a massively diverse group of swimmers and triathletes. If it weren't for them I would not have been able to formulate the ideas behind our unique Swim Types system. I owe thanks to each and every swimmer who I have ever coached in a 1-2-1, clinic or squad situation for allowing me to analyse their strokes and make sense of what efficiency means, not just scientifically, but on an applied basis in the real world. This book is also dedicated to you all in recognition of the need to sometimes go against convention and discover a more pragmatic way to coach a range of different swimmers.



Paul Newsome



The mighty Challenge Stadium, Perth as seen in our DVDs.

In the second book, *Bounce* by Matthew Syed, discussion is drawn to the fact that dedicated hard work rather than raw talent and chance encounters with the right people at the right time in your life helps nurture success and cultivate new ideas. Every coach that I have worked with as an athlete has always instilled this idea of hard work and dedication within me and fortunate liaisons, close friendships and training and racing experiences with some of the world's best athletes have all

helped form my coaching knowledge, persona and understanding of what it takes to achieve at a high level in both swimming and triathlon. To my coaches: Geoff Edmunds, Tony York, Mike Craven, Mrs Brown and Mrs Greenall who all played a role in getting me started in swimming at my first ever club in Bridlington, East Yorkshire; Eric Elbourne who first suggested to me at the age of ten that video analysis would be a good way to show me what I could be doing better in my own stroke, and Ben Pollard who showed me that swim coaching could be a professional pursuit at the Hull Olympic Club; Martin Mosey who encouraged me (at the time as a triathlete) to join his elite swim programme for solid early morning sessions, and to Maurice Pegg who showed so much passion and enthusiasm for swimming at the Borough of Kirklees Club; my running coach Brian Burgin at the Halifax Harriers who demonstrated how a no-nonsense mindset can drive an athlete far beyond his physical capabilities; David Lyles, Ian Turner and 'Bernie' at the University of Bath who again all encouraged me to swim within an elite programme witnessing first-hand how the best swimmers in the UK and Europe train even as a triathlete when many swim coaches might have scorned my triathlon interests; Richard Hobson who gave such support during my university days and Robin Brew who showed me the technicalities of an efficient open water swimming stroke in a language that could be easily applied; Chris Jones my long-term triathlon coach who took me to excellent results at the World Student Games and European Triathlon Championships whilst demonstrating the need to be analytical and scientific in his coaching approach; and to Billy-Jean Clarke, Roy Shepherdson, Jonathan Aspinall, Andrew Blow, Eliot Chaulifour, Nigel Leighton, Brian Squires, Duncan McKerracher, Simon Lessing, Craig Ball, Julian Jenkinson, Jodie Swallow, Mark Foster, Tim Don, Michelle Dillon, Stuart Hayes, Richard Allen, Peter Robertson, Bill Kirby, Shelley Taylor-Smith, Aaron and Warren Milward, Ceinwen Williams, Yann Rocheteau, Wayne Morris, Paul Downie, Lisa Delaurentis, James Forbes, Amanda Nitschke, Judi Clemie, Natalia Vollrath, Bae Hooper, Lawrence Stubbs, Andrew Hunt and Geoff Wilson I thank you all and hope this book does justice to the many, many training hours we have all invested over the years. I am sure I will have accidentally omitted someone's name in this list, but rest assured, if I've trained with you for any reasonable time I owe something to you too – thanks!

Swimming coaching is notoriously 'system' oriented and the large majority of successful coaches tend to work for local, state or national governing bodies who are able to support and assist with funding and salaries. Unfortunately this approach has never been for me as I have always preferred to have the

freedom to do things my way and in a manner that I believe in—devoid of politics and committee decisions. With freedom, though, comes risk as a self-employed coach, and without doubt I have to credit this entrepreneurial spirit to both my dad, Shaun, and my step-dad, Stephen, who have both shown me the organisation, mindful planning, tenacity, will to succeed and, above all, a love for their craft, which has been so important in my development as an independent coach. My dad and my sister Sheryl's love of graphics, animations, text / fonts and visually stimulating displays of colour and motion in their line of work has also arguably had a massive impact on my desire to make Swim Smooth a visually attractive learning tool. After all, if a picture paints a thousand words, imagine what an animation can do!

Many things have led me to where I am at this point in my coaching career but none so interesting as how I came to meet my now business partner, Adam Young, on an internet site no less! Shortly after I released the original Swim Smooth website in December 2004, my attention was brought to a popular triathlon forum in the UK called TriTalk. People write in and discuss various matters pertaining to triathlon, with some of the more hotly 'debated' areas being that of correct swimming technique. Between 2005 and 2007 I had been a regular poster to the site under the 'avatar' of 'Swim Smooth', and aimed to help a wide range of swimmers and triathletes solve their swimming inefficiency woes. On the forum at the same time was someone going by the pseudonym 'Younggun' who posted some excellent advice about cycling and running. We struck up a few conversations via email about training philosophy and our shared interest in photography and after Younggun had attended one of our Swim Smooth Clinics in Windsor, I suggested he come over to Australia for six months and see how we do things 'Oz style'. A great friendship was born and in early 2008 Adam officially became my business partner in Swim Smooth. For the next 15 months we worked feverishly hard building and developing the Mr Smooth animation and the website as we now know it, all with the single-minded goal of helping the world's triathletes and pool and open water swimmers improve their knowledge and understanding of what makes an efficient freestyle stroke for them. Adam's work ethic is incredibly fastidious and together we started releasing the ideas and methods that I had been generating for the last few years in a manner that could be accessed easily by all, most notably the Swim Types system. Without Adam many of these ideas would have stayed just that – thoughts without any substance or practical application. We now blog on a weekly basis to over 52,000 people worldwide (as of November 2011) and would like to believe that we have helped create a movement against there being just a 'one size fits all' approach to swim coaching. We hope that our recently appointed status as coaching consultants to the British Triathlon, and our work with the thousands of coaches worldwide who share our philosophy, will aid this effort further. The world needs better swimming.

Thanks also to Giles O'Brien and Paul Moss at the British Triathlon for seeking our help with the British Triathlon coaching programme and to Miles Kendall, Andrew Kennerley and all the publishing team at John Wiley & Sons Ltd. who have allowed this dream to come to fruition by approaching us to produce this body of work you have in your hands right now.

And, finally, a massive thanks to my wife Michelle and my children Jackson and Isla who have supported me through all of the hard work and devotion to my swim coaching career. I have to sacrifice much on a daily basis to do what I do and I often wonder if a nine-to-five job would be a better pursuit in this respect. However, this just wouldn't be me and I have massive respect for Michelle recognising this within me. Michelle has been there from the very start of Swim Smooth: from the very early days travelling around the UK and Europe in our Swim Smooth camper van trying desperately hard to fill clinic places, to now selling out clinic places around the world within a couple of hours of date release. Michelle has witnessed the rapid growth that Swim Smooth has achieved in the last three years as I partnered with Adam, and, as a well-respected physiotherapist herself, is primarily responsible for my

knowledge and desire to know more about the anatomy of the shoulder joint, which helps to prevent and cure shoulder pain in swimmers. Without Michelle, none of this would be possible and I thank her for the love and patience that she continually shows me.

Here's to smoother swimming for everyone!

—Paul Newsome

Perth, Western Australia, November 2011

Adam Young

Whilst trying to avoid this becoming a mutual back-slapping piece between us two authors, I simply have to say that Paul's passion and extreme talent as a swimming coach were obvious to me the first time that I saw him at work on a Swim Smooth Clinic way back in 2007. A few months later when I came to visit his squads in Perth, the latent potential of his coaching methods were so apparent that I felt determined we should take them to the world. Paul, thanks for trusting me and my own ideas, the brilliant insight you offer into swimming, the laughs on the pool deck, the shared journey, and all the 4:15am alarm clocks! Most of all thanks for the chance to work on something important – I wouldn't change anything for the world.

There are many great things about Australia but perhaps the best is how open and welcoming Aussies are to new arrivals. My time in Perth so far has been an absolute pleasure and I would like to extend a special thanks to all my Aussie friends including Jo, Lisa, Jo, Michelle, James, Nikki, Martin, Helen, Lindy, Therese, Mary, Judi and Janet. Thanks for making this Pom so welcome, extending your friendship, sharing many glasses of wine . . . oh, and the use of your spare rooms!

I would also like to thank Seth Godin for the huge difference he has made to my professional life and in many ways my personal life too. Your understanding of the present and vision of the future has been astounding and has given Paul and I the confidence and methods to take our ideas to the world. Thanks so very much for lighting the path for us.

—Adam Young

Perth, Western Australia, November 2011



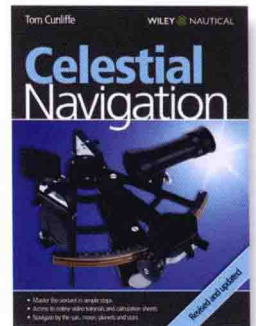
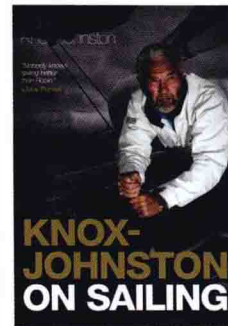
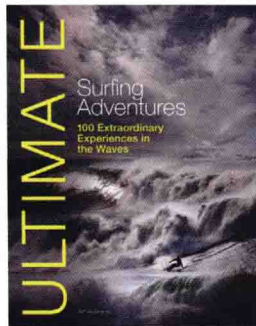
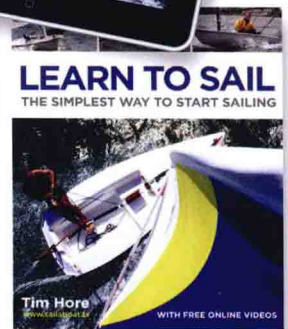
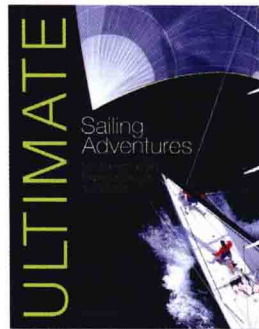
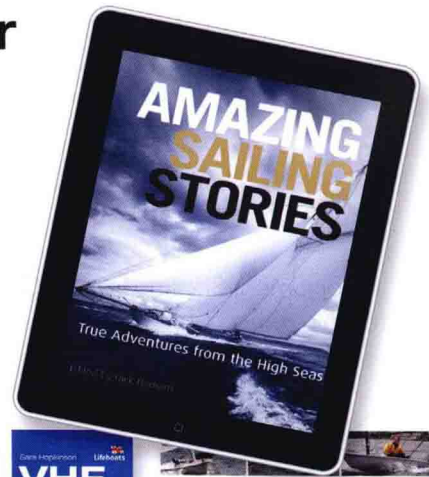
Adam Young

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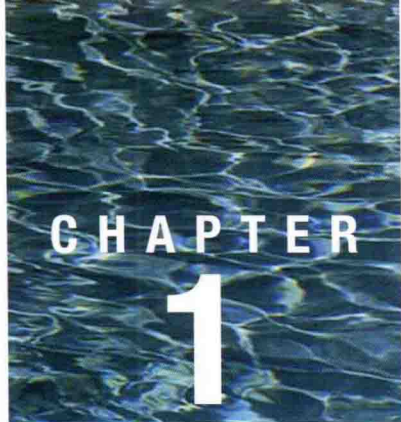
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All the images in this book are of genuine swimmers in action. Swim Smooth never show swimmers doing impressions or falsely modifying their strokes.



Getting Started





How to Use This Book

The Swim Smooth Complete Coaching Programme for Swimmers and Triathletes covers the very best methods from the Swim Smooth coaching system and is used as a comprehensive resource to develop your swimming, or that of your swimmers if you are a coach. You can read it from cover to cover or use it as an ongoing reference as your swimming improves and as you work on different areas of your stroke technique and preparation.

As with everything Swim Smooth, we have tried to keep the technical jargon to a minimum and made our programme as easy to understand as possible, keeping things in a form you can easily apply to your stroke. The graphics and pictures have been selected to be engaging and insightful, and lead you through the topics as if we were coaching you face to face. If we start talking about 'smiley faces painted on the palms of your hands' or 'kebab sticks running down the length of your spine', we are doing so as a simple way of translating the complex biomechanics of an efficient freestyle stroke into something you can easily apply to your own swimming.

In the book we make extensive use of such 'visualisations' to simplify areas of the freestyle stroke that many swimmers have historically found quite hard to interpret. Swim Smooth has a very visual coaching style and we know that our swimmers love this approach and find it a refreshing way to learn. Even if you are at an advanced level in your swimming, you will find our approach motivating and you will really benefit from decluttering some of the thought processes involved so that you can become more focused and take your swimming to the next level.

From time to time we will recommend equipment and training aids that we find significantly benefit the swimmers and triathletes that we work with on a daily basis. We have been fortunate enough to have tried most of the swimming products on the market – some great and some not so great – and you can be assured that anything we feature gets our full seal of approval and is well worth considering for your own swimming – see Chapter 3. Please do not feel the need to rush out and buy every product we mention; the tips and techniques in this book will give you significant grounds for improvement in their own right without the assistance of these additional tools.