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the POOL'S EDGE

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WARM IT UP!

BY KARLYN PIPES-NEILSEN

Obviously, it is hard to swim smooth and relaxed when you are freezing, so here are 10 tips to help you stay warm at your next meet.

Your body performs better when it is warm. However, a simple pre-meet warm-up may not be enough to ensure peak performance. Here are 10 suggestions to help you stay warm at your next competition so you can swim your very best.

START THE DAY RIGHT

Start your day with a hot breakfast, then get to the pool early and warm up for at least 25 to 30 minutes. Start out easy to allow your body to wake up gradually. "Rev up" the heart with pace work and a few sprints off the blocks. Don't forget to check out the backstroke flags and unfamiliar walls or bulkhead.

PACK WELL

Indoors or outdoors, pool decks can be chilly. Be prepared by bringing warm clothes such as a parka, warm jacket or sweats and plenty of towels. Save your towels from sogging out by using a shammy first to wick away the water.

TOP IT OFF

Wear a hat to prevent loss of body heat through the head. Putting something on your noggin makes sense, especially if your hair is wet. Wearing a swim cap all day will have a similar effect.

SHOES ON YOUR FEET

Pool decks are wet and cold, so adding a barrier between you and the cement will help you stay warm. UGG boots, shoes or socks and sandals are a better alternative than going barefoot. Wearing shoes will also keep your legs fresh, as walking or standing around all day on a hard surface can promote tired legs and feet.

CONSUME HOT DRINKS

Warm up from the inside out by drinking hot liquids or soup. Save the chili for after the meet because something this heavy may come back to haunt you in your next race.

EXTRA SUITS

Spending an entire day in a wet suit is not fun. The amazing Rita Simonton—90 years old and still going strong—stays warm and toasty by putting on a dry suit after every swim. She creates additional warmth from energy she expends from her pre-race ritual. While not everyone will change as often as Rita, do make sure to bring extras just in case. By the way, she still looks fabulous in a swimsuit!

HOT SHOWER

Raise your core temperature by

taking a hot shower before or after your race. If you have a long enough break, take a hot shower and change into dry clothes.

PRE-RACE WARM-UP

Swimmers like to warm up right before they race in order to loosen up. However, you may want to reconsider if the pool is cold and getting in will only cause you to tighten up. Instead, stretch, swing your arms or take a hot shower. After your race, plan to swim down an extra 10 minutes to make up for not getting in before your race.

TOWEL TO THE BLOCKS...A MUST!

If you are behind the blocks and the wind hits you—even if the temperature is a blazing 100 degrees—you will get chilled. The solution? Outdoors or indoors, *always* show up for your race with a towel around your shoulders, and do not take it off until the whistle blows.

CHEER FOR OTHERS

Generate positive energy and warmth by cheering for your teammates and your friends. Your efforts will be appreciated, you will be less stressed about your events AND you will have more fun. ♦

In 2008, Karlyn Pipes-Neilsen of Aquatic Edge Inc. has set more than 15 FINA Masters world records while traveling the globe hosting swim technique clinics and camps. For more information about what Karlyn offers, please visit www.aquaticedge.org or e-mail aquaticedge@hawaii.rr.com.