

Swim BC Mentorship

Visit with Michael Brooks, KING Aquatic.



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Swim BC Mentorship Report

Visit with Michael Brooks.

Background

My original introduction to Michael Brooks was through a BC Swim Coaches Conference where he spoke. I don't remember the topic, but rather his intensity, enthusiasm and his academic approach to swimmer and parent education. Shortly afterward, Swim BC began their mentorship program in 2012 and I applied to visit Michael in Pennsylvania. That visit was the first of many mentorships I have sought out and still has impact on our club today.

One of the reasons I originally visited Michael was that, like me, he coached a small club. Michael is a very accomplished coach, both academically as the author of Developing Swimmers as well as his success in the field, placing swimmers on the USA National Team. I found it intriguing that even with that success, he chose to stay with a small club and embrace the challenges that it presents.

When I found out that Michael had moved to coach in Seattle this September, I thought it was a great opportunity for me to re-engage with him.

KING Aquatic has 420 swimmers and trains out of numerous pools both north and south in Seattle. They are the fourth largest club in the Seattle Area and often the fastest of those clubs.



The Visit

As always, trying to match time up for a visit between two swim coaches is a challenge. It was very fortunate that we were able to do the visit a couple of days before the Washington Open Swim Meet in January 2018. I was able to bring six KISU swimmers down with me. They trained with KING for three practices before competing at the meet. I always enjoy bringing swimmers with on mentorships when it is possible as when I come back to my club, the new ideas are reinforced not only by me but also by the swimmers who accompanied me.

We travelled down to Seattle on Tuesday, swam with KING on Tuesday evening, Wednesday morning and Wednesday afternoon before the meet which started on Thursday afternoon and ran through until Sunday.

When we arrived on Tuesday, KING's regular pool time had been shifted due to a High School Swim Meet. Their regular workout times are 3:15-6:30pm . . . yes, 3.25hr. This includes their dryland and post workout stretching. Their afternoon attendance was 40-50 swimmers while their morning attendance is often less than 10. Much of this has to do with the logistics and travel in Seattle. With so few swimmers attending the mornings and double practices being uncommon, they have extended the duration of their afternoon practices.

Although unplanned, Michael made the most of the scheduling change on the Tuesday we arrived and used it as an opportunity for him to review streamlines with his swimmers. He uses video A LOT, especially having his swimmers watch the fastest swimmers in the world. From the time I spent with him in Pennsylvania, I know that he has one of the best video collections of high level swimming in the world and uses it with his swimmers often.

Here are some notes from that session -

Streamlines - "Consistent to 8m. Fast and do it all the time. 4K. Become world class. Make this a skill you can use to your advantage. It is there for the taking. Make it a true habit. Do it all the time well or it won't be in your arsenal when you

get to a race. Make it your bazooka. The thing it is, it is hard. You can't do it only when the coach tells you."

We also watched video footage of the Women's 200 free -

"Ledecky has 4 beat kick. Gets to her catch early. She is guts from the beginning. 3 dolphin off each wall. Breathes only to one side= off Centre. Early on the catch. 4beat enables her to get higher stroke rate."

And then Phelps in 800 free relay.

"Gallop primarily to the right side. Strong 6beat from beginning. 8k-6k-7k streamline. Would have been more on the last one if he had someone beside him. Last kick is part of his first stroke. Good high elbow catch. Metronome 6beat. One goggle. Finger-tip-drag-like recovery."

Michael uses video at least once a week. Often as a station with small groups. Also talks race tactics as part of station work.

In the past years, Michael has become less focussed on the times that the swimmers are doing in practice and more focussed on how they look. None of the KING coaches (and there were a couple others on the deck - Doug and Jason) had stopwatches. Michael does a LOT of work on stroke count, using a stroke count base and "Plus one, or two" when there is an expectation of speed, "Minus one or two" when there is an expectation of quality/slower/recovery swimming. When he is looking for speed, he is also watching for stroke rates.

Michael does not use a dry erase board or any written form of his workout. He has all the swimmers come out of the water when he announces the set. He goes through it once, asks for questions and then they are off . . . often less than 10s after he finishes talking.

The lanes were FULL for the afternoon practices, often 6 swimmers per lane, short course yards.

Fast Fly - Michael often incorporates a fly set (short repeats) at the beginning of each practice when swimmers are fresh. Once a week there is usually a longer fly set.

The swimmers did a Team Cheer at the end of every practice (this is not from Michael. KING was doing it before he got there).

The Ikkos Goggles (<https://ikkos.com>) are dryland goggles that show slowed down video footage of a specific swimming skill. The skill is only a couple of seconds in duration and is watched 30+times, hoping to trigger a subconscious as well as a conscious absorption of the subtlety of the skill. Michael had a prototype of these goggles when I visited him in Pennsylvania. The current version uses the swimmers' phones. They have a club subscription that gives them access to videos of all stroke skills. One of the ideas behind the goggles is that they watch the skill (30x) then go out and execute it blindfolded (they used to use black out goggles when I saw this in Pennsylvania, but now just close their eyes and count their strokes . . . peaking when needed . . . going down one lane and back the other to avoid any collisions). This process follows some of the current theories on learning and is applied particularly to changing skills.

Overall, my visit to Michael was very successful. It reinforced to me the impact that he had 5 years ago, as well as learning more from him and re-establishing him as a mentor coach for me. Unfortunately, he is no longer with KING, but I'm quite confident that our paths will cross again at some point in the future.

Workouts

Tuesday's workout -

Warm up

8x100 @ 1:30

1-4 Free 0-6-8-10k descend the last 25m

5-8 IM 0-6-8-10, descend the first 25m

Parachutes

8x25 @ 40

8x25 @ 30, no chute.

1-4 Fly, 5-8 Free

8k off the walls.

8x100 @ 1:25

Odd 50 Pace, 25 w SC +1, 25 w SC+2.

Use an even “metronome-like” 6beat kick that builds.

8x100 @ 1:20

4-6-8k-underwater. Descend 1-8.

Fast powerful kick . . . “Develop your weapon”.

Main Set

48x25 @ 30

1-8 odd easy, even FAST, Base SC +2 for FAST.

Last 40 . . . As Fast As Possible.

4x25 @ 40

One breath, head down and GO. Last one from a dive . . . no breath.

16x25 @ 30

dolphin on back w arms bent behind head/fly.

Heats/Partners

3(3x50) alternating with partners. 4-5-6k on 45-50-55.

Wednesday morning practice

Attendance at this practice was radically different from the evening practice. Only a handful of swimmers were there. The intensity was very different along with the focus. The morning practices are very focused on technical changes.

Ikkos. 10min.

6x25 eyes closed swimming up one lane back the other. Open eyes every 5-6strokes at the beginning.

6x25 eyes closed with parachute. adding the resistance of the parachute will reinforce the change under different situations/pressures.

Continued to repeat this set, returning to no chute at end.

8x50 1-arm Back w paddles. Focus on shoulder leading the entry, hand slicing into the water. @55.

4x100 Back Swim @1:30

Drive w the back of the shoulder. Drive, drive, drive, drive.

Parachutes

Two times through.

2x25 easy 1-arm

2x25 really strong 1-arm

2x25 regular easy

2x25 regular strong. @30

300 Back. 1st 100 easy perfect. Build by 25s. Build pressure. Finish with good speed.

Finished off with 5-10 min of eyes closed Fr/Back. With some tempo.

Wednesday PM practice

Dryland Session to start -

Activation and Bridge Athletics.

Usually this practice is distance free, but he didn't want to do that to them right before the meet starting on Thursday.

15-20min Ikkos.

12x50 IMO. FLY DRILL @ 55

Five times

50 S/D Fly @50

50 dolphin on back@50

4x25 @30

HRPK - Michael uses lots of acronyms and key points to get a focus item across quickly without a lot of time explaining things.

H - head stay low

R - recovery soft entry buns up.
P - pull around the corners
K - all four beats of the kick. Up and down.

200 1-arm Back. 50 focus on entry wrist-rotate-press. 50 metronomes kick.

6x200 Back build by 25. 8 distinct speed. @2:50

Moved to another pool.

675 brst pull. 50 buoy dead legs. "1/1000" pause at extension. 25 buoy brst w kick.

15x50 brst @55
Alternate Max dps & sprint.

6x200 Free
breathing by 25s breathing 3rd L R 5th.
Odds ankle buoy. Equal out balance right left 2:40
Even no equip. Metronome 6beat 2:30.

Two rounds. Plus one half round.
2x300 SC base plus 1 3:30 or 3:40 or 3:50 2nd at base plus 2 (faster).
12x25 @25. P400

4x50 @45. Long and pretty.

Post workout Dryland
Body line work -

