

The Swimmer's Start

Being a 50 Freestyler (Olympian Brendon Dedekind), I know the importance of the start all too well. A great start can mean the difference between GOLD and SILVER. So now how do I go about improving my start so that I can get ahead of the competition from the beginning? Let us break down the start to see how we can improve it.

I want to get off the blocks as fast as possible. To do this I need to respond to the start signal as fast as my mind and body can react, through training my muscles to trigger or explode as quickly as possible. To improve on my reaction time I participate in basic hand, eye and sound reaction drills, which intensify as the meet gets closer.

I want to get off the blocks as powerfully as possible. To do this I believe the "newer" track start is more powerful because I use my arms to help pull my body off the blocks. My legs explode at the same time that my arms are pulling backwards on the block, causing my body to rocket forward. (

I want to get into the water as "cleanly" as possible. There is no short cut for this one. I practice my start over and over until I feel that my body is traveling the optimal distance through the air before entering the water, and once I enter the water I try to get my body to enter into the smallest "hole" possible. This reduces loss of speed when I break the surface tension of the water.

I want to start swimming my race at optimal speed. By this I mean that when I come to the surface of the water to start swimming, I want to have as much of the starting block speed as possible. To do this, I maintain a tight streamline while also performing a well-timed breakout to the surface of the water. I find that stretching daily helps me improve my streamline, and once again, PRACTICE makes perfect on the breakout.

Remember - swimming, as in life, is all about inches. If you take it one inch at a time, and look back, that inch will turn into a yard, and those yards will turn into Gold.