

# The Wet Gazette

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Serving Masters Swimmers in Virginia and West Virginia

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## Volunteer Summit: “Relay 2022” Denver, CO: March 4-6, 2022

Our LMSC is looking for members who want to become stronger leaders and volunteers within our LMSC. With the possibility of the USMS Annual Business Meeting taking place virtually each year, there is still a need to gather the volunteers in-person to network, share ideas, collaborate, and motivate each other.

The USMS Volunteer Summit (called “Relay 2022” this year) is designed to strengthen communication and collaboration between USMS and its volunteers, empowering volunteers to serve the USMS membership effectively. This is all in service to the USMS mission of becoming the premier resource for adult aquatic fitness and making swimming available for as many adults as possible. The annual USMS Volunteer Summit is an opportunity to **engage**, **equip** and **energize** volunteers through:

- **Engaging with subject matter and sharing experience/expertise**
- **Cultivating peer-to-peer and/or friend relationships**
- **Contributing to solving a problem and providing needed input**

USMS will pay travel expenses for this trip. The LMSC for Virginia would like to send additional members who are interested in attending. If interested please contact Caycee Buscaglia ([bb2cp@aol.com](mailto:bb2cp@aol.com)).

Additional information about Relay 2022 can be found at [USMS.org](http://USMS.org).

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## Brute Squad Virtual Event

by George Sushkoff (the LSCM’s Very Reluctant Communications Director\*)

Here's one for those who really like distance and the B strokes (butterfly, backstroke, and breaststroke). It's the Brute Squad ePostal Swim: [Davis Aquatic Masters - Brute Squad \(damfast.org\)](http://damfast.org).

Swim a 200 fly, 400 IM, and 1650 free. The stopwatch starts when you start the 200 butterfly. It doesn't pause when you touch the wall on that last length of fly. Oh no. Time keeps running until you complete the 1650 (that's 66 lengths, kids).

It's a challenge of both body and spirit. If you rest on the wall between swims, you will get some recovery. However, time is still ticking. What's the best strategy? Power through all 3 so that there is no rest time added to your total time, or take some rest between to give you better swims on the IM and 1650? The world may never know. By the way, there is no requirement to be a brute to enter this event, but it couldn't hurt. There is also a "lite" version with a 100 fly, 200 IM and 500, but who cares about that?

*\*If you are interested in the position of Communications Director, please contact Caycee Buscaglia ([bb2cp@aol.com](mailto:bb2cp@aol.com)).*

## Current and Upcoming Events

### EPostal Brute Squad and Brute Squad Lite

November 1 - December 18, 2021; Virtual

### Carol Chidester Memorial Swim Series

Meet #4: January 16, 2022; Annapolis, MD

Meet #6: March 21, 2022; Annapolis MD

### 8th Annual Solstice SCM Swim Meet

December 4, 2021; Boyds, MD

### Occoquan USMS Invitational

December 19, 2021; Manassas, VA

### 2021 Go The Distance

December 31, 2021

### David Gregg Meet

SAVE THE DATE: February 5, 2021; Henrico, VA

## General Information

LMSC for Virginia Website: [www.vaswim.org](http://www.vaswim.org)

USMS Website: [www.usms.org](http://www.usms.org)

Nearby LMSCs

North Carolina: [www.ncmasters.org](http://www.ncmasters.org)

Maryland: [www.teamunify.com](http://www.teamunify.com)

Potomac Valley: [www.PVMasters.org](http://www.PVMasters.org)

Nearby Zones

Colonies Zone: [www.ColoniesZone.org](http://www.ColoniesZone.org)

Dixie Zone: [www.DixieZone.org](http://www.DixieZone.org)

Online Meet Registrations:

[www.clubassistant.com](http://www.clubassistant.com)

## LMSC Officers

Chair: Caycee Buscaglia

Vice-Chair: Ken Gardner

Secretary: Alice Phillips

Treasurer: Becca Latimer

Membership Coordinator: Chris Stevenson

Coaches: Rich Williams

Fitness: Dane Schwartz

Long Distance: Dave Holland

Newsletter: Heather and Chris Stevenson

Officials: Charlie Cockrell

Records & Top Ten: Chris Stevenson

Review: Heather Stevenson

Safety: Jim Miller

Sanctions: Kyle Ahlgren

Webmaster/Social Media: George Sushkoff

**GREAT NEWS:** We have the first LMSC of Virginia sanctioned pool meet since COVID!! Occoquan Swimming will host an invitational meet on December 19, 2021 at the Central Park Aquatic Center in Manassas, Virginia. COVID safety measures as described in the meet information will be implemented at the meet. Click [HERE](#) for a link to the meet information at the USMS Calendar of Events.

**REGISTER FOR 2022:** USMS Registration is now open for 2022. This year there are two registration options:

- Annual registration (this is the standard annual registration)
- USMS+ registration (this is new)

Register online at [USMS.org](http://USMS.org).

USMS+ provides a standard membership plus an exclusive welcome package, free registrations for all Fitness Series events, ePostal events, and virtual events, free USA Swimming Supporters Club membership, access to Olympian-featured webinars, free All American patches when you reach All American status, and a free Go the Distance 50-mile cap when you reach 50 miles. The cost for USMS+ is \$199. You can find more information about USMS+ [HERE](#).

If your club is not listed on the registration website, it is because the club itself has not registered. In that case you can either register as Unattached (UC12) or you can convince your club representative to reach out to Chris Stevenson and register your club. Note that if you register unattached, there may be time restrictions to transfer to another club - again, reach out to Chris for that information.

Note that One Event registrations are also available for some events. However, if you will be entering two or more events, the annual membership is more cost-effective.

## ARE YOU INTERESTED IN COACHING?

USMS hosts a number of coaching clinics around the country. USMS Level 1 Coach Certification is now available online. Level 2 and above require in-person classes. A Level 3 Coach Certification course will be held in Raleigh, NC on December 11, 2021. You must have completed Levels 1 and 2 of the USMS certification program to participate in the Level 3 certification course. Bill Brenner, Sr. Director Club and Coach Development for USMS is teaching the course in Raleigh. Bill has 35 years of coaching experience at the age group, college and USMS levels. He is a USMS Certified Level 4 Masters coach. He has been involved in the development of the USMS coach certification program and has taught hundreds of these classes to thousands of Masters coaches. If you are interested in attending, please contact Cayce Buscaglia for LMSC scholarship availability.

# Five Tips to Improve Your Backstroke

By Andrew Sheaff\*

Practice is where every swimmer improves their skills and improves their fitness. Improved skills and fitness should result in faster racing, but that's not always the case. To swim faster, you have to execute your races effectively, and this is a distinct skill that is often overlooked when preparing for competition. To help you improve this skill, I'm going to provide you with specific ideas to help you improve your racing.

As with all of these tips, I'm going to focus on the critical areas of race management, and then describe how each of those areas is relevant to each particular stroke. Today, we're going to explore some key ideas for how to effectively race backstroke events. While these ideas can be immediately implemented in your next meet, you have to PRACTICE these tips in order to be most effectively at executing these skills in competition. You want these strategies to be habits, and that's only going to happen with practice. Let's check them out.

**1. Accelerate under the flags.** Most swimmers tend to relax going into the walls, and this is particularly true in backstroke. The stroke tempo will drop, the legs will fall off, and swimmers will slowly roll over into the turn. Once swimmers see the flags, they slow down. This tends to result in a significant drop in speed, and a major increase in your times.

To make your turns an asset rather than a liability, attack the walls. As soon as you see the flags, turn up the effort and attack the walls. Pick up your kick, pick up your tempo, and get through the turn as quickly as possible. Not only will this speed up the turn itself, it will help you start each lap with a higher speed. This is a win-win situation that will serve to improve your times.

**2. Manage your legs.** As I am sure you know, when your legs fatigue, bad things happen. With backstroke events, the legs are especially critical. It's really hard to keep the stroke together when kick tempo falls off. At the same time, overworking the legs typically provides little benefit in backstroke. Kicking really hard early in a 100 or 200 race will only create more fatigue for your legs, without any added speed.

Rather than hammering the legs from the start, incorporate a more conservative approach. The first quarter of the race, use a solid, yet light kick. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the race, slowly increase the effort you put into your kicking. During the second half of the race, feel free to give it all you've got with the legs. With a small adjustment in your approach, you can make sure your kick is much more effective during the second half of the race, all without sacrificing any speed in the beginning of the race.

**3. Sustain your tempo.** Backstrokers tend to let their stroke rates drop from lap to lap as well as within each lap. Over the course of a race, this leads to significant losses speed. The best way to mitigate this strategy is to consciously attempt to start each successive lap with a high stroke rate during your breakout, as well as pick your stroke rate up during the second half of the lap.

By attempting to re-establish a high stroke rate at the beginning of each lap, and picking your stroke rate up in the middle of each lap, you'll likely be successful in sustaining your stroke rate over the course of the race. If you can do so, you'll be at a significant advantage compared to your peers. You can work on this strategy in practice, and the more you do so, the more natural it will be in practice.

*(cont'd on page 4)*

**4. Know your underwaters.** For many swimmers, underwater dolphin kicking is faster than swimming on the surface. However, it's only faster if you have enough air to stay underwater, and enough skill to kick well for every kick. You want to take as many kicks as you can, provided your swimming is faster underwater than on the surface.

Beyond knowing how many kicks you should take in general, you want to be able to make your last wall as effective as your first wall. If you do too many kicks off the start, you'll go too long without oxygen, as well create too much fatigue in your legs. This may leave you too out of breath and too tired to execute an effective last wall. It is your last wall where your dolphin kicks can be most impactful, as your swimming speed is likely to be lowest. You want to make that wall as fast as possible.

Instead of starting off too strong, you're better off doing slightly fewer kicks than you could on the start to ensure that you can maintain the same number of kicks at the end of the race. How many you choose to take is up to you and dependent on your kicking skill and fitness. However, make sure it's a kick count you can maintain, and execute to a high standard. Know your kick count, and practice it to perfection.

**5. Have a plan.** There are a lot of different ways to swim each race, and many of them can work. It's important to know what's going to work best for you. While I can't necessarily predict what your best strategy will be, I'll provide you with some options. Regardless, I know that the plan that won't work is the 'see what happens' plan. Unfortunately, this is a plan that a lot of swimmers use, even really fast swimmers.

Swim your race rather than someone else's. Know what race strategy is going to be most effective for you, and stick with it. Not sure how to approach your race? Here are some strategies to play with, as well as the distances that these strategies tend to work well with. Remember, to experiment in practice, and once you find a strategy that's comfortable, make it a habit. Regardless of your plan, remember to integrate the other tips into your race strategy.

- **All out-** This strategy is as exactly as it sounds, you go as fast as you can, for as long as you can. This strategy is perfect for the 50 backstroke, as well as for certain brave souls in the 100.
- **Control, build, blast-** For this strategy, the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the race is swum fast and controlled, the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter is swum build to maximal effort, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> half is swum all out. This strategy is best suited for the 100 and 200 backstroke.
- **Negative split-** When negative splitting, the goal is to swim the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the race faster than the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the race. At about the halfway point, you really make a move and then bring it home fast. This can work well for the 200 distance, particularly if you rely on your staying power rather than your blinding speed.

## Conclusion

While training sets the stage for fast racing as it develops your abilities, you actually have to execute your races to display those abilities. Too often swimmers simply attack their races with great enthusiasm, and little intention. When racing backstroke events, you can avoid this mistake by planning your breathing, managing your legs, controlling your tempo, attacking your turns, and executing a race strategy. If you can accomplish these objectives, you'll be well on your way to accomplishing your goals.

*\*Andrew Sheaff is currently an assistant swimming coach at the University of Virginia, the 2021 NCAA Champions. He helps swimmers and triathletes find comfort, ease, and speed in the water by providing the foundational skill development tools that enable them to achieve their aquatic goals. If you have any questions about skill development or improving your performance, he can be reached at through his website [www.andrewsheaffcoaching.com](http://www.andrewsheaffcoaching.com) or via e-mail at [andrew@andrewsheaffcoaching.com](mailto:andrew@andrewsheaffcoaching.com)*