



Left: Ray Cayless's book; above: members of Barnes SC's masters squad, which Tony coaches today

'The thinking was you couldn't earn a living at swimming. You needed a trade to fall back on'

Then a rule change took place. Holders of the ASA Teachers' Certificate could now take a newly constructed ASA Club Coaches' Certificate before being eligible to take the full ASA Coaches' Certificate.

The newly built Crystal Palace National Sports Centre with its ASA Educational Summer School provided the opportunity to take such a course. It was then that I came across Ray Cayless, who was one of the course tutors.

Cine-camera

Throughout most of the course, Ray had a large cine-camera on his shoulder for analysing strokes. However, at that time, the cine-camera was still an early type of slide projector as far as swimming coaching was concerned. Lights out. Lectures consisted of

cine-camera film reel with a buzzing noise and accompanying flickering light. I would hang on to Ray's every word.

But although conditioning was coming to the fore, stroke analysis then was still a cornerstone of swim coaching education. Well, we candidates were lined up on the poolside edge, stroke analysis sheet on our clipboards at the ready.

A swimmer, swimming a specified stroke and speed, would swim up and down in front of us while we would furiously list down in order: body position; leg action; arm action; breathing and timing. Ray would mark us A+, A, B+, B etc, with C being a bare pass.

At the end of the course, our marks were added up to assess what we had learned courtesy of a long list of standardised faults and corrections.

Yes, we were being moulded by a series of thought processes which shaped our approach to coaching swimming. I believed that this was the best approach in the world. In some ways, I still do, but I will come back to this later.

Then, on a hot summer's afternoon before our final assessments, I distinctly remember that we were all exhausted. We had been burning the midnight oil writing out our schedules of work, the yearly plan and profiling the swimmers to whom we had been allocated.


We were all sitting out on the grass by the Crystal Palace NSC Hostel. Ray Cayless then

talked about stroke analysis using the index finger and thumbs of both hands locked together in a square like that of a camera screen. He would vary the distance by isolating a small part of the stroke, blowing it up in relation to the whole stroke. Whole-part-whole. And then came the magic question: 'What did you see in the stroke?' Words I remember to this day.

The Crystal Palace NSC had an underwater viewing gallery. I was then of the understanding that its function was to do with engineering work, and nothing to do with the novelty of viewing 'fish' in an aquarium.

But it was not necessarily the stroke mechanics of what was happening above the water but below the water that was important in swimming more effectively. However, this comparatively new dimension of stroke mechanics still had not really been appreciated as an integral part of stroke analysis.

It was around this time that the famous US Olympic coach James 'Doc' Counsilman of the University of Indiana published his book, *The Science of Swimming*.

Stroke analysis had now entered a whole new dimension and Counsilman's book soon became my new 'swimming bible'. 

Continued next month

• Tony's Masters Swimming website: www.mastersswimming.co.uk

REFLECTIONS