

Tony (right) with Santa Clara head coach Dick Jochums. Between them is the bronze poolside statue of George Haines, 'Coach of the 20th Century', founder of Santa Clara Swim Club and seven-times US Olympic coach



along the beach, watching the disappearing sun set a picturesque end to the day while contemplating my time in the pool.

Until this point, distance freestyle had evolved through the concept of speed through endurance. But now, an appreciation of the training principle of specificity was truly coming into being. The philosophy of 'different strokes for different folks' was born.

It seemed to me that Dick was truly planting the concept of quality into distance freestyle training, the emphasis being on covering significantly less distance than the supposed norm. Intensity was now the key. Quite simply, distance x intensity = work.

However, there was something else, something far more significant. To me, Dick epitomised the real reason why swimming

'In observing Dick Jochums coach, I learned that there is real nobility in simplicity'

in the US was, and still is, so strong. As a coach, you need to be brave enough to coach your own way. The real inner strength of US swimming is its diversity: the diversity of coaching philosophies. I recommend *The Swim Coaching Bible*, edited by Dick Hannula and Nort Thornton. You'll find Dick's philosophy on coaching distance freestyle illustrated in chapter 18.

Stroke technique

In some ways, it seemed to me that conditioning had completely overtaken style and therefore stroke technique was only being emphasised in terms of stroke fundamentals expressed through mere soundbites while training. No point in hanging about - there was work to be done. The fitter you became, the more you were able to change your stroke for the better. It was all about adaption.

Dick stressed his technique very effectively indeed through his own particular style of coaching the simple fundamentals. It seemed to work very well. In observing Dick coach, I learned that there is real nobility in simplicity.

I have followed his coaching career over the years. Long Beach Swim Club, the University of Arizona and then the famous Santa Clara Swim Club, the very house that the

aforementioned George Haines had built.

Here, I recommend the book *Gold in the Water* by P H Mullen, where Dick's time as head coach of Santa Clara is described.


When I finally returned to the UK, I thought about what I had learned. I considered my own philosophy of coaching. My time at Crystal Palace NSC ASA Summer School taking my ASA Club Coaches Certificate had been so valuable and I really had been taught well. Ray Cayless asking, 'What did you see in the stroke?' sprang to mind. Dare I say it, what I had learned in the UK in some ways went much further than what I had observed in the States.

So, what is the right way to coach? In reality, there really is only one way: your own way. The clouds begin to fade and then London appears. The bump of the touchdown on the tarmac. Home again.

'Hello, Tony. Nice tan. Where have you been?'

'California!'

'California? That's in America, isn't it?'

Oh, well. Back to reality... 

Continued next month

• Tony's website: mastersswimming.co.uk

REFLECTIONS