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MEDIA REVIEWS

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The Swimming Drill Book: 128 Drills for Every Stroke, Turn, Start, and Finish

By Ruben J. Guzman. Published 2007 by Human Kinetics. 275 pp., \$18.95 U.S.

Reviewed by Stephen J. Langendorfer, Bowling Green State University

Ruben J. Guzman's *The Swimming Drill Book: 128 Drills for Every Stroke, Turn, Start, and Finish* is a new aquatic contribution to instructional, as well as competitive, swimming from Human Kinetics. This paperback book is a completely revised edition of an earlier 1998 text, *Swimming Drills for Every Stroke*, by the same author. As the book's subtitle indicates, it is a compendium of 128 drills accompanied by 375 line-drawing illustrations to help water safety instructors and coaches facilitate the teaching and learning of some foundational swimming skills, competitive strokes, starts, and turns. Pablo Morales, the former Olympic medalist and current University of Nebraska swim coach, wrote the forward, in which he highly recommends the work as a means for helping coaches, teachers, and swimmers continually improve swimming stroke and skill techniques.

My own review of the work suggests that it is quite comprehensive in providing drills and practice activities for basic swimming skills such as body position, buoyancy, breathing, kicking, and sculling, as well as for the four competitive strokes and their respective starts and turns. If it has a weakness for general water safety instructors who are not coaching, it is that it deals almost exclusively with competitive swimming strokes and skills to the disregard of the seven other formal strokes (e.g., elementary backstroke, sidestroke) and the many other foundational swimming and aquatic skills. Nevertheless, I believe that many aquatic practitioners, both novice and experienced coaches and swimming instructors, will want to consider this text for their professional libraries because of its extensive number of proposed drills and practice activities.

The 128 swimming drills were created or adapted by the author, who has coaching and consulting experience at the age-group, high school, and college levels. At the time of writing this review, I am reluctant to evaluate either positively or negatively how effectively readers might be able to employ the drills based on Guzman's descriptions and their simple illustrations. Before I would make such a recommendation, I would want to try out these drills on myself and my students and Masters teammates, something that I plan to do so that I can make more authoritative observations about the proposed drills.

Based on my teaching background and Masters swimming experience, I was pleased to see the various activities for enhancing body position and buoyancy (chapter 1), breathing and kicking (chapter 2), and especially the chapter 3 sculling drills. Chapters 4 through 7 provide a variety of stroke drills for backstroke (i.e., back crawl), freestyle (i.e., front crawl), breaststroke, and butterfly, respectively. The final three chapters focus on competitive turns (and finishes) for freestyle and backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly, and competitive starts.

Each drill describes several common features: the purpose or goal of the drill, procedures for administering it, focus points, and tips. My main criticism of these elements is the lack of a section suggesting variations or adaptations to each drill. From personal experience I know that practically every drill or learning activity can be adapted according to the needs and skill levels of individual swimmers. Unlike what I found in Terri Lees's *Water Fun*, this text primarily focuses on the "error model," that is, a single best swimming pattern associated with elite adult performers. Without including descriptions of possible variations, these drills might not be particularly appropriate for novice and young swimmers.

A feature of the text that I find particularly intriguing is the Drill Finder tables—8 pages at the beginning of the text immediately following the table of contents. These are similar to the tables that we found in Terri Lees' *Water Fun* as a means of indexing and classifying drills according to the strokes or skills for which they provide practice, drill location in or out of the water, element of the stroke or skill practiced (e.g., arm stroke, kick), and goal (e.g., timing, body position, breathing). The Drill Finder should provide an easy and straightforward way to locate multiple drills to promote common purposes and goals.

Although the book has some limitations and drawbacks, I believe that Guzman has provided a large compendium of drills that certainly ought to be useful to many swimming instructors and coaches who work with older high school, college, or adult swimmers. Every instructor and coach I know continually seeks new and different drills to use with their students and athletes. This text provides so many drills that anyone should find something of value. Because of its focus on the nondevelopmental error model, I must withhold judgment on whether these drills are developmentally appropriate for children and nonswimming adults. I do recommend it to practitioners for their libraries to explore the merits of the many and varied drills and activities.