

RECRUITMENT IN OPEN WATER SWIMMING

THE HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDERS AND SWIMMERS

Swimming through bays, rivers, lakes, and straits have attracted people since ancient times, so over time, we come across various records of courageous feats. In ancient Greece there is a record and legend of Heroes and Leandar: Hero was Aphrodite's priestess in the town of Seston on Helospont, and Leandar was a young man from Abydos, a town on the opposite side of the strait. Leandar would swim across the sea every night, straightening towards the lamp that Hero would leave on the roof of her tower. One stormy night, the lamp went out, and Leandar, with no real orientation, drowned in stormy seas... This is the first recorded start of long distance (open water) swimming in world history.

There are numerous ventures to swim long distances in different parts of the world, so in 1821. the great English poet Lord Gordon Byron swam across the Dardanelles. However, the pioneer of modern-day open water swimming was Captain Mathew Webb, an English swimmer who swam the English Channel from Dover in England to Cape Gris-Nez on the French coast on August 25, 1875. Since then, open water swimming movement has been expanding and today there are over 2,500 open water swimming marathons in the world.

In 1986, open water swimming became an independent sport within FINA, World Swimming Federation, and LEN, European Swimming Federation. It separated itself from swimming, becoming an independent sport in FINA. However, the most important recognition occurred with the decision of the Executive Board of the International Olympic Committee held on 27.10.2005., when open water swimming, as one of the oldest sports in general, became an Olympic sport during the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, in the 10 000 m event.

With the desire to popularize this sport even more, especially among pool swimmers to accept OWS as a complementary activity or even as an alternative to pool swimming, the Erasmus Sport+ project Recruiting in Open Water Swimming was designed, the result of which this manual is intended for:

- recreational swimmers and in general anyone who would like to recreate, the information in this manual leads to inclusion in open water recreational swimming
- active pool swimmers who, thanks to this manual, may opt for a "dual career" of pool and open water swimming
- swimmers who are at the end of their pool career or those who are simply bored with pool swimming and are looking for new challenges
- stakeholders who would like their clubs or national federations to have OW swimmers

FOR RECREATIONAL SWIMMERS AND ALL THOSE WHO ARE JUST DECIDING WHICH SPORTS RECREATION TO ENGAGE IN

Doctors, nutritionists, physiotherapists, psychologists... - health professionals regardless of their field are convinced that sports exercise is beneficial, insisting that in conjunction with a balanced diet, it is the best means for leading a long and healthy life. The truth is, doing exercise is the best way to prevent cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, high blood pressure, osteoporosis... but are all forms of exercise equally beneficial for the body, regardless of our age?

Specialists believe that sports should be adapted to each stage of life so that we can choose the ones most appropriate for our age group.

RECRUITMENT IN OPEN WATER SWIMMING

THE HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDERS AND SWIMMERS

- Up to the age of 35: At this stage, the ideal is to maintain muscle mass while keeping the muscles flexible. SWIMMING has the answer:
 - since water provides 12 times more resistance than air does, swimming can be either an aerobic or anaerobic exercise, depending on the duration and intensity of the workout
 - in swimming over two-thirds of the body musculature is worked, including both the lower and upper body, trunk and head, and arms and legs are forced to make a balanced effort.
- Between 35 and 65: During this period, bones are starting to lose density, and if there is a lack of exercise, the loss of muscle mass accelerates. Similarly, there is a need to work harder to retain flexibility. However, intense exercise such as in the earlier stage is not required. SWIMMING has the answer:
 - because swimmers present a higher bone turnover than the sedentary population may result in a stronger structure and consequently in stronger bones (the stronger the muscle, the stronger the bones: yet, unlike in some other sports such as jogging or exercising in the gym, where joints and bones are primarily stressed by bodyweight or gym weights, the muscles formed through activity in the water also contribute to the bone density and strength without the usual stress. This is possible because the muscles are connected through the tendons to the bones which grow to endure the muscle contraction).
 - the range of motion involved in swimming lengthens the muscles in a way that makes joints more flexible and helps recovery.
- Ages 65 and above: The goal now is to strengthen the body as much as possible not only to feel better but also to prevent falls owing to fragile muscles and bones. That is why it is ideal to include exercises aimed at preserving bone and muscle mass, as well as flexibility, and adapting them to the perfect intensity suitable for the person's age. SWIMMING has the answer:
 - because water places an upward force on a person, buoyancy means that the body can experience as much as 90% less weight when in the water. This makes swimming an ideal activity for a low-impact water workout.

In general swimming benefits are:

1. The entire body works:
 - increasing the heart rate without stressing the body
 - toning muscles
 - building strength
 - building endurance
2. It works body insides, too:
 - cardiovascular system (heart and lungs)
 - some studies have shown that swimming may help lower blood pressure, blood sugar...
3. It is appropriate for people with injuries, arthritis, and other conditions, as well as for other issues that make high-impact exercises difficult
4. A good option for people with asthma, multiple sclerosis...

RECRUITMENT IN OPEN WATER SWIMMING

THE HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDERS AND SWIMMERS

5. An efficient way to burn calories

6. Boosts the mood

A trusted source (for fuller details see the paper by Timothy Henwood et al. published in the National Library of Medicine in 1917 "Aquatic exercise for residential aged care adults with dementia: benefits and barriers to participation") evaluated a small group of people with dementia and saw an improvement in mood after participating in a 12-week aquatic program. Swimming and aquatic workouts are not just psychologically beneficial for people with dementia. Exercise has been shown to boost mood in other people, as well.

7. Helps manage stress

Researchers surveyed a group of swimmers immediately before and after swimming at a YMCA in New Taipei City, Taiwan. Of the 101 people surveyed, 44 reported being mildly depressed and feeling stress related to the fast-paced life. After swimming, the number of people who still reported feeling stressed decreased to just eight.

While more research needs to be done in this area, the researchers concluded that swimming is a potentially powerful way to relieve stress quickly.

Potential benefits of the seawater are:

- Seawater cleans your skin

The mineral salts team up with the sun to regenerate skin. As a result, ulcers, lupus, acne, and psoriasis are some of the diseases that can be easily cured with seawater.

- Seawater strengthens the immune system

The number of red blood cells increases between five to 20 percent after a swim or bath in the sea. The number of white blood cells increases even more. Seawater is fantastic medicine for people with a weakened immune system, anemia, and high blood sugar levels.

- Seawater slows down the development of rheumatism

Seawater combined with exercise is a great medication for bone and muscle pain, arthritis, circulatory, and post-surgical issues.

- Seawater reduces and eliminates anxiety

Because it contains magnesium, seawater will calm the swimmer down. People who live a stressful life are advised to go to the beach, not only for its relaxing atmosphere but also because of the soothing medicinal properties of seawater.

- Seawater has cicatrisation properties

Because it is rich in mineral salts such as sodium and iodine, ocean water has antiseptic and cicatrizing actions on you the skin.

- Seawater improves breathing

People who suffer from asthma, severe cough, phlegm and other respiratory problems should go to the beach to breathe the breeze and swim in the sea. Saltwater helps eliminate toxins and other elements that attack the lungs.

- Seawater cleans out the large intestine

RECRUITMENT IN OPEN WATER SWIMMING

THE HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDERS AND SWIMMERS

The ingestion of small amounts of seawater facilitates the cleansing of the colon, detoxifies the body and renews the body's energies, especially in children.

- Seawater helps fight liver and kidney problems

Ocean water accelerates the process of cell regeneration, especially for those damaged by diseases such as cirrhosis. It also helps eliminate the excess water accumulated in the abdomen that occurs because of the disease.

- Seawater prevents insomnia and reduces depressive symptoms

Because it helps normalize blood pressure and treats nervousness, it will help the swimmer to sleep better and will naturally boost the swimmer's mood.

References:

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0070119>

<https://www.samsarahealthyholidays.com/en/sports-all-ages/>

<http://www.scienceblog.com/community>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5221345/>

FOR ELITE POOL SWIMMERS

A) THOSE WHO ARE AT THE END OF THEIR CAREERS OR ARE FED UP WITH POOL SWIMMING

The transition to a post sport career or sports retirement is the only inevitable transition for athletes that mixes the sporting context (e.g. reasons for quitting sports, satisfaction with a sports career) with a non-athletic context relevant for the beginning of a new life after sport. Retired athletes must accept a pension and adapt to the status of a former athlete, start/continue their studies or work, rethink their identity, and rebuild their lifestyle and social networks.

Several factors are "weighted" in the decision-making process and become responsible for the athlete's decision to end their sports career. Some of these factors relate to sports (e.g. selection, stagnation, injuries), and others to future life (e.g. job offer, desire to start a family).

In addition to more predictable transitions, athletes also face abnormal transitions such as serious long-term injuries, change of coach, interruptions due to altered priorities such as pregnancy or the consequences of a positive doping test, as well as transitions that were hoped for but did not materialize, such as going to the Olympics.

The more an athlete focuses solely on sports (e.g., working on a professional contract), the more vulnerable are they in transitioning to a post sport career. These findings confirm the need for dual career programs to empower athletes during their sports careers in preparation for post sports careers, making it easier for them to adapt to a life after sports, and helping them avoid transition scenarios in a crisis.

1.- Prolong your swimming in OPEN WATER SWIMMING

For swimmers, it is very important to prolong their sports activity after a professional career. And in this situation, swimming in open waters is the activity that can be the most relevant for any swimmer even if you have never swum in the open sea during your active career. In this situation, local communities have their

RECRUITMENT IN OPEN WATER SWIMMING

THE HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDERS AND SWIMMERS

swimming clubs near the open waters (seas, rivers or lakes) where they can get all the important information about swimming in the open waters.

2.- Swimming in open waters as more interesting than swimming in the pool

Teenage swimmers who complete their swimming activity, due to high school commitments or simply because of over-intensive training, would provide an opportunity to continue swimming in the OWS. This option gives you a new sports activity that can provide you with everything, from meeting new friends, visiting new places, seeing beautiful areas near tourist resorts and practicing healing activities all year round. Open water swimming can be a starting point for a wide range of meetings, leagues, swimming classes or just swimming for fun and leisure.

3.- Career transfer – pool swimming turns to open waters swimming

With this change, you can extend your sports career and activity by at least a decade. Since you know how to swim, you have trained more than enough in your active pool career: with OWS you can easily discover new ways to swim and only minor changes in technique will lead you to new ways of your sporting activity.

B) FOR ELITE SWIMMERS WHO WOULD LIKE TO ACHIEVE EVEN BETTER RESULTS IN POOL SWIMMING OR ARE LOOKING FOR OTHER OPTIONS WHERE THEY COULD FULLY EXPRESS THEIR ABILITIES

1. Achieving better results in pool swimming

In the past, only a few swimmers were competing in the pool and open water, because coaches didn't want their swimmers to attend those long races. But when in 2008 the 10km race was held for the first time at the Olympics, more and more swimmers started to compete in pool and OWS. At the Olympics in London, Ossama Mellouli was the first swimmer who won a 1500m race in pool swimming and the 10km race in OWS. Nowadays, there are more and more coaches who let their swimmers compete in both pool and OWS. All of these cases show how open water and pool swimming go hand in hand, and where swimmers can improve their swimming in the pool by practicing open water swimming.

2. Greater successes in OWS than existing in pool swimming

All the best swimmers who perform long-distance pool disciplines (800m and 1500m) do not compete as OW swimmers, while all OW swimmers also compete in pool swimming, as a result of which there is less competition in OWS, i.e. easier to achieve successful results.

3. Unused natural predispositions of individual pool swimmers

In pool swimming, the longest event is 1500 m, in which top swimmers swim under 15 minutes. It can be compared to athletics, in which 5000m is run under 15 minutes for example. However, in athletics, there is still 10km and a marathon of 42 km. The best runners at 5k, most often are not the best at 10k, and they certainly do not compete at 42k. Conversely, marathon runners at 42km do not compete or rarely compete at

5k. Why not allow swimmers who have endurance predispositions to do better than 15min, e.g. in 1 or 2 hours, or 5 hours. Similarly, OWS allows those pool swimmers who are not the best in the 1500m to be the best in OWS at 5km, 10k or 25k respectively.

FOR COACHES

One of the most important things to keep in mind about OW swimming is that it presents several challenges which are not present in the pool. There are several guidelines to follow for all OW newcomers to make their first race in the open waters a stress-free experience. Coaches can be, and most often are the main reason for swimmers to specialize in open water. They have a huge impact on swimmers in general. Also, the coach is the one who can give the swimmer another opportunity when the swimmers are struggling when reaching a plateau. With a proper approach to the swimmer, they can prolong the swimmers' career by continuing swimming in open waters.

1 – It does not end, but it begins with a new activity

Coaches can encourage this during the swimmers' careers if they find beautiful scenery (tourist spots) and organizers who pay the cost of accommodation and travel. By doing this, they show swimmers a new way of spending a few more years in (OW) swimming. The coaches must give them the opportunity for a short swim, which is no more than 5 km in the beginning, at least when they are trying to "save" some swimmers for life activity.

2. - Last chance before ending the career

Coaches can prepare their swimmers before the end of their careers, by letting them know that before completely ceasing with swimming, they can try something different they had never done before.

3 - Cooperation with OWS clubs

If you don't have any experience in OW as a coach, you can send swimmers for their OWS part of swimming to OWS clubs. Why? Because this is crucial for swimmers who are new to this style. Gaining knowledge of mass starts, adjusting your stroke, swimming around a buoy and orienteering can help you perform better in an open water swimming competition. Ideally, you should participate in private or group training with an experienced open water swimming instructor.

4. – Open water prepares you for life

OWS is a great opportunity for everyone for an easier step from a sports career to a "normal" life where you will have to take care of yourself.

For the circumstances of the race on the high seas, you can prepare by practicing swimming in different conditions, but also in cold water

FOR SWIMMING FEDERATIONS, CLUBS AND THEIR STAKEHOLDERS

1. Extending the swimming career of pool swimmers

National federations and swimming clubs must provide resources to help athletes prolong their swimming careers and transition to a post-sport career.

Open water swimming as a high endurance sport, as opposed to pool sprinting in events up to 200m and even 400m, can prolong swimmers' active sports careers by combining sports lifestyle balance to reduce stress and improve wellbeing. The goal is for athletes to see their sporting career as part of a life career and that they see OW swimming as a life sport, a job, or just a chance to get better. A support system for the retirement process of athletes can be developed, in which sports organizations will support athletes by providing a role in the activities of organizations.

2. Popularizing OWS by including swimmers from an early age, as well as recreational swimmers who are not active swimmers

It should be emphasized here that masses are a way to attract the elite pool swimmers to OWS. Namely, masses are a factor of interest for marketing, i.e. sponsorships, which contribute to a larger pool of prizes in the competition, but also to the direct engagement of swimmers with sponsors. «. This means more finance in OWS, and money not only raises conditions but increases pool prizes for OWS competitions, which certainly attracts swimmers, as well as the possibility of direct arrangements of swimmers with sponsors.

Another factor that can popularize a sport is the so-called adrenaline component of the sport. Namely, more and more audiences, as well as the athletes themselves, expect the adrenaline component from the sport. It is known that for example Formula One by improving competition security, lost out on ratings. Audiences are increasingly looking for sporting events where "something unexpected can be expected." A modern lifestyle requires speed and "adrenaline." The stars of pool swimming are sprinters, long-distancers are interesting, but "boring."

OWS does not of course offer sprinting attractiveness to long-distance swimmers, but it certainly offers adrenaline. OWS is not only a fight among swimmers with a stopwatch, it includes navigation and sea currents, but also what is "adrenaline-efficient", sea conditions of waves and wind, which can sometimes interrupt the competition, but unfortunately also contribute to the suffering of swimmers.

3. Attracting coaches and their specialization in OWS

It is mass and adrenaline, or ultimately the money of sponsors that raises the quality of a sport. One of the most important conditions of increased quality are quality coaches. Just as the task of clubs and national federations is to attract quality pool swimmers and pool swimmers in general to the OWS, so it is equally important to attract pool coaches to OWS. The paradigm that OWS can negatively affect the results in the pool has been successfully challenged and denied by top pool swimmers such as Mellouli, Paltrinieri, Wellbrock, Kristof, Olivier... Pool trainers no longer have the argument to oppose OWS, but for OWS it is not enough just to be a good pool swimmer or a good pool coach. In addition to water, which is unlike the one

RECRUITMENT IN OPEN WATER SWIMMING

THE HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDERS AND SWIMMERS

found in swimming pools, OWS challenges the athletes with currents, waves, and wind, but also navigation i.e. choosing the most favorable course for swimming from the orientation buoy to the turn buoy onto the finish gate. It is this choice of which course to choose and the waves that require the swimmers to adapt and change their technique concerning pool swimming, and for such a technique they can only be prepared by trained coaches.

4. OWS events

Just as the specialization of pool swimmers and pool coaches for OWS is essential, so it is crucial that also the stakeholders of pool swimming clubs specialize in the organization of competitions in OWS.

Here it is especially important to emphasize for future stakeholders or those who are just embarking on the "adventure" of organizing OWS event, that the greatest attention must be paid to the safety component of the competition. (Recommendation Manual: Safety in OWS, which is available for download on www.safety-ows.eu, as part of the Erasmus Sport + project: Safety in open water swimming).

In conclusion: Let's popularize OWS, it is a sport that:

- Enables lifelong sporting activity
- Just as swimming can be seen as the most appropriate sport regarding health, so is OWS, adding to its benefits in most cases the sea, which with its thalassotherapy effect contributes to the health component of this sport
- Allows you to practice sports in nature
- Concerning pool swimming, it has an almost negligible footprint, saving the energy necessary to swim in the pool
- In addition to the technique itself, swimming requires additional skills