

by Coach Emmett Hines

Assume the Position!

"Hand over hand, wrist over wrist, head squeezed firmly between your upper arms, pinch your butt together and point your toes!"

You've heard this a million times. Yet you still push off the wall with your arms more or less in front of you, hands separated, head up so you can see where you are going, toes pointed at the bottom of the pool. We call this the "Superman" position.

"Wait just a minute!" you say, "I have my hands together - I don't do that Superman thing!" OK, maybe you do have your hands together, barely - "fingers over fingers" maybe. But your wrists are floating out to the sides, your elbows are bent at 60 degrees or more, you're still looking out over the top of your hands and there is enough daylight between your arms and your ears to give a grouper fish a wide berth. We affectionately refer to this as "Scud" position.

I know that each and every one of you knows how to get your body into a full streamline position. Without exception every one of you has been able to demonstrate a good streamline position while standing in one place.

So what's so hard about demonstrating it every single time you push off from a wall? Two things:

First of all, it takes physical effort. If you are not very flexible you will find that you really have to stretch to assume The Position. But, as with all stretching exercises, the more time you spend in The Position the easier it becomes. Ideally if you spend enough time in The Position it will eventually become a relaxed position for you. Suffice it to say that the harder it is for you to assume The Position the more important it is for you to do it often and for extended periods of time.

Second, it takes concentration. Until your autonomic system is conditioned to snap the body into The Position instantly as the legs are driving you off the wall, you must apply a bit of brain power every 25 yards to satisfy your coach's fantasies.

You know, an excellent opportunity to get in some "streamline time" is when you are doing kicking drills without a kickboard. Use this work as a streamline stretching drill as well as a kicking drill. You will go faster during the kick drill and make significant strides toward improving your streamline position flexibility. (Hint: If you have a hard time breathing properly while kicking in The Position, this is an indication that you need to do lots of this kind of work.)

"What do I get out of all this Coach?" you ask, still looking for a way out.

Let's see, you will glide further when you push off the wall. This will allow you to take fewer strokes per length (which, I hope, we have already conditioned you to perceive as a worthwhile goal).

How about energy savings? Gliding a long distance from a pushoff takes less energy than gliding a short distance and swimming the rest of the way.

And greater speed. You will move faster through the water after your pushoff which translates to faster times.

But, most importantly, you will look more like a "swimmer" in the elitist, highly accomplished, truly professional sense of the word. After all, isn't this the real reason for trying to do most things correctly in the pool? In my book, it's as good a reason as any.

Emmett Hines, head coach of H2Ouston Swims, was the USMS "Coach of-the-Year" in 1993. A version of this article first appeared in SchwimmVergnugen, the monthly newsletter of H2Ouston Swims.

[News](#) | [Calendar](#) | [Calendar](#) | [Articles](#) | [Training & Technique](#) | [Mail](#) |
[Results & Records](#) | [Hall of Fame](#) | [Swim Shop](#)

[[Subscribe Today](#)] [[Swim Info Website](#)] Copyright © 1997 Sports Publications, Inc.

Website constructed and maintained by UniqueNet , LLC.