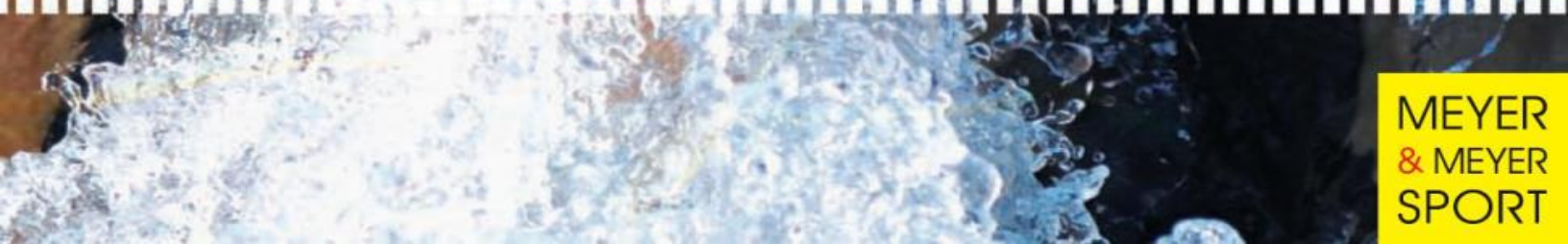
shape up!

Blythe Lucero

100 Conditioning Swim Workouts



MEYER
& MEYER
SPORT

Shape Up! 100 Conditioning Swim Workouts

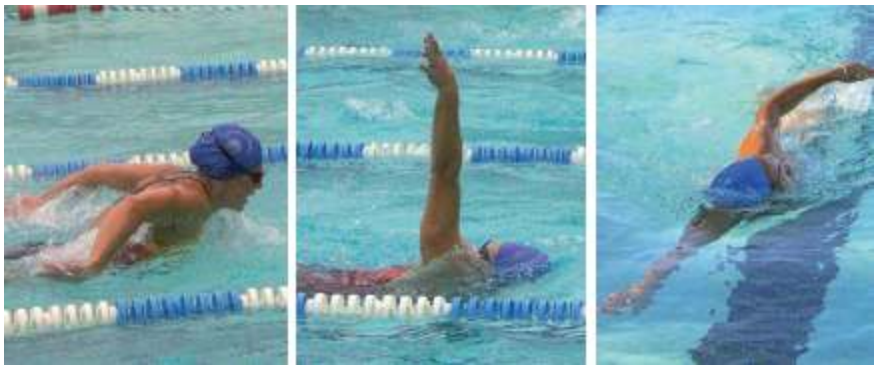
DEDICATION

Dedicated to Elise Blumenfeld

whose grace and strength in and out of the water inspired everyone around her

SHAPE UP!
100 CONDITIONING SWIM WORKOUTS

Blythe Lucero



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INTRODUCTION

I have always looked at writing a workout like cooking a good dinner. As I plan the menu, I think about whom I am preparing it for. I am aware that what I serve will be experienced as it is consumed. I know that ultimately what I cook will help healthy growth and development. So, when I cook a meal, or write a workout, my goal is to make it appetizing, filling and full of nutrition. Like a meal, if a workout isn't interesting, chances are it will not be met with enthusiasm, or even finished. The same old menu day after day gets boring. Spicing things up with interesting presentations, combinations and tasty treats makes it more exciting and palatable. Further, just as with dinner, a workout must be served in the right portion sizes. Too little, and it is unsatisfying, and won't supply the body with what it needs. Too much, and it is overwhelming, leading to either excessive consumption or waste. Finally, just as a well-balanced meal contains a variety of food groups, rich in vitamins and minerals, a good workout must contain a blend of elements that together fuel the body, mind and spirit.

When I cook and when I prepare workouts, I use skill, creativity and love! In the kitchen, I deliberately blend certain ingredients, which I have learned from other recipes taste good together. Likewise, when I write workouts, I assemble specific elements together that I know from experience produce positive results. When I am cooking, I use color, texture, aroma and taste to create the richest sensory experience possible. Similarly, when I plan a workout, I strive to design a composition that is engaging, stimulating and meaningful to the athlete. Finally, when I cook, and when I write workouts, it is a labor of love. I am passionate about the process, and I am passionate about the results. It is my constant hope that this comes through in every meal, and every workout I prepare.

This is the second in a three book series called “Coach Blythe’s Swim Workouts.” This book contains conditioning-based workouts designed to help swimmers shape up by building swimming capacity and accessible power. The first book in the series contains technique-based workouts, designed to help swimmers improve swimming efficiency by improving swimming mechanics. The third book in the series contains challenging workouts, designed for advanced level training. Swimmers may use the material in these books to build their fitness, or to train for competitive swimming or triathlon on their own, when their coach is not present. These books can also be useful to coaches looking for workout content to use in the training programs they design for their swimmers.

Without the intent of discouraging anyone taking up the wonderful sport of swimming, this book is neither a ‘Learn to Swim’ manual, nor a ‘Swimming Technique’ guide. Users of this book are expected to have the ability to move safely through the water, and have an understanding, both in theory and practice of swimming mechanics. Always consult a doctor before beginning a fitness routine such as this.

The 100 workouts in this book focus on shaping up with swimming, using a strategy that builds endurance, strength and versatility over time. This collection of workouts is presented in a sequence that when done regularly, will encourage gradual adaptation, and progress towards one’s fitness goals. The workouts range from 2,200 to 3,500 yards/meters. Specific workouts are included for each of the competitive swimming strokes. Each workout is designed as a balanced practice session unto itself, but also as a part of a long-term program of physical conditioning.

So, if you are ready, dig in! Bon Appetit.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK

Swimming to Shape Up

What does the term “Shape Up” mean to you? Beyond improved fitness, this term might bring to mind more specific goals such as weight loss, lower body fat, toning, more strength, improved cardiovascular health or stress reduction. Swimming can be an excellent method to achieve any of these goals. It can be also be totally ineffective.

Experts commonly agree that swimming is one of the best fitness activities a person can engage in to achieve full body fitness. However, it takes ongoing activity to make a difference. One or two swims will just not do it. Further, how and what one swims is also an important factor in the quality of result. Health professionals disagree about the effectiveness of swimming as a way shed weight, for example. Why? Because, it is possible for two swimmers, both swimming for one hour, to burn vastly different numbers of calories, simply due to what and how they swim. Finally, the mechanics of swimming plays a very important role in an individual’s ability to benefit from a swimming fitness routine. Good swimming technique will allow a swimmer to expend less energy, and therefore be able to continue to swim for a longer period of time. On the other hand, poor technique will make a swimmer too exhausted to maintain the activity long enough to achieve fitness benefits.

This collection of workouts uses established training methods of swimming to build fitness. As you gain physical conditioning, and begin to shape up, I hope you find swimming to be as rewarding as I have, and stick with it. Over time, as you use this book to work

toward your particular goals, you might just find that you achieve additional results serendipitously along the way.

Make the Commitment

Like any effective fitness routine, swimming requires personal dedication to get results. Think of personal dedication as a mindset, which includes characteristics such as patience, perseverance and commitment. In order to get the most out of this book to Shape Up effectively with swimming, you must be ready to put in the time and effort, and be prepared to keep working at it, even though it will take time. You must maintain your motivation to achieve results, slowly but surely. You must believe in what you are doing.

To shape up with swimming, you must make a three-part commitment:

Commitment to swim regularly over time

To shape up with swimming, you will need to swim frequently. Plan a routine that makes time for three to four swims per week, expecting to be in the water for an hour at minimum each time. It will take some time to adjust to this routine. At first you might feel pretty tired. But after you establish a base, your routine will become much more enjoyable, and rewarding. As everyone is different, there is no exact answer to how long it will take to get to this point, but plan on several weeks of base work. When you do begin to see results, this is not a cue to ease up, but a sign that what you are doing is starting to work. Keep it up!

Commitment to follow the workouts

The workouts in this book are designed to build well-rounded fitness, with a comprehensive and balanced program of progressive, diversified swims. You have to be willing to follow the workouts... even when no one is looking! It is easy to skip and edit workouts. It is

exactly like leaving the vegetables uneaten on your dinner plate. You will not get all the elements you need to develop fully if you leave something out. Certain activities will be more challenging than others. These are the very activities that you should focus your energy on. By building your weak areas, in addition to your strong areas, you will develop more balanced conditioning and well-rounded fitness.

Commitment to maintain good technique

Good swimming technique is the foundation of good swimming. Without constant attention to this issue, even the efforts of an experienced, refined swimmer can be derailed. When swimming workouts, especially without a coach present, it is easy to fall into bad habits. If not noticed and corrected early, stroke errors can become reinforced as they are repeated, stroke after stroke, leading to slower progress and potential injury. While stroke problems can be frustrating, and it is tempting to simply ignore them, and muscle your way through your workout, take time to analyze and identify them. Maintaining stroke quality is a must!

Once you have decided to make the commitment, and hold on to the mindset of personal dedication to your goals, you are ready to embark on an effective “Shape Up” swimming program.

Shape Up Strategy

The workouts in this book are neither random, nor generic. Each is part of a strategy designed to result in better physical fitness, conditioning and swimming capacity when done frequently and progressively, and over time. The Shape Up Strategy employed in this book is based on three key principles that are the core of this coaches’ training philosophy:

1. Full body fitness requires full body training

Successful development of full body fitness comes from building strength, as well as endurance. Training one without the other only produces limited success. Because swimming, by nature, requires both strength and endurance, it is an excellent method to train full body fitness. When we do the repetitive action, resistance-based activity of swimming, our muscles require an increased supply of oxygen to exert and to keep working. The lungs have to build capacity to meet the demand of exchanging more new and used air. As more new oxygen is be drawn into the lungs, and carried through the bloodstream to the heart, the heart muscle also has to increase its pumping capacity, to supply new oxygen-rich blood to the muscles at work, and, to carry depleted blood away from the muscles. As this chain of systems adapts to the demands of exercise, fitness level rises. Working interdependently, these systems build capacity for increased workload and therefore potential results.

2. Fitness develops in stages

To swim for any length of time, you must possess both strength and endurance. Yet, to develop the strength to perform the activity, you must have the endurance to practice it, and, to develop the endurance to practice the activity, you must have the strength to perform it. So, if the development of each is dependent on the other, how can it ever be achieved or improved upon? The answer is: in stages. We must build our capacity for strength and endurance gradually. It is a process of building one's tolerance for work, through progressions of specific and structured stress and recovery. The process involves pushing the body's tolerance for work beyond what it is used to, then allowing the body to rest. As it recovers, the body adapts to that level of work. Then, the workload can be increased, with the goal of further adaptation. How quickly one adapts is a very individual matter. A number of factors contribute the rate of adaptation, including the state of one's fitness at the start of a program, age, and coordination, among others. While these factors are, for the most part, beyond

our control, we can actively affect how often we exercise, and the quality of our fitness program. Frequency is one of the most important factors in developing fitness, and, the quality and structure of the exercise is important in successfully adapting to a progressive exercise routine.

3. Versatility encourages well-rounded fitness

The ability to apply endurance and strength to different situations is often overlooked as a measure of fitness. In reality, one's ability to use strength and endurance "in action," in situations beyond training, is the ultimate measure of fitness. This is versatility, and in swimming it is developed by including a variety distances, speeds and strokes in the training content. As an example, we all have a pre-disposition to either be sprinters or distance swimmers, by the amount of fast or slow twitch muscle fibers we naturally possess. However, in fact, one's natural ability to sprint or endure only accounts for about 20% of the body's muscle fibers. The rest– that is, most of our muscle fiber- is "convertible" or trainable for speed or endurance. So, a natural sprinter can gain endurance through training, and a person with natural endurance can gain speed through training. Further, as the unique path of each different stroke works slightly different parts of the muscles, by diversifying strokes we can achieve more well-rounded muscle development. The result of training variety is a more complete and balanced development of applicable strength and endurance.

So, the Shape Up Strategy at the heart of this collection of workouts is about building. Building increased swimming capacity, building applicable power, and, building well-rounded fitness. It is a strategy that calls for a multi-dimensional approach to training with swimming. With the goal of targeting both the cardiovascular and muscular systems to progressively adapt to a variety of demands, each workout is constructed with activities and combinations of activities that build endurance, strength and versatility.

BUILDING ENDURANCE

Endurance refers to the body's ability to keep going. Examples include the ability to swim continuously, the ability to hold a pace, and the ability to accomplish more yardage. Several training techniques will be used in this workout collection to build endurance. These include:

- **Interval Training**
  Multiple short swims with a minor rest between each
- **Speed Play**
  Alternating fast and easy periods of effort during a continuous swim
- **Timed Distance Swims**
  Swimming as far as possible in a set time
- **Increasing Yardage**
  Progressively building the distance accomplished at a workout

BUILDING STRENGTH

Strength refers to the body's ability to apply power. Examples include the ability to sprint, the ability to use fewer strokes to cross the pool, and the ability to swim with intensity. Several training techniques will be used in his workout collection to build strength. These include:

- **Benchmark Swims**
  100% effort timed swims
- **Sprint Sets**
  Velocity repeats at high speed with long rest
- **Leg Burners**
  All out speed kicking sets
- **Efficiency Drills**
  Exercises that reinforce using the largest muscles possible to move farther per stroke

BUILDING VERSATILITY

Versatility refers to the body's ability to successfully perform under a variety of circumstances. Examples include the ability to effectively swim different distances at different speeds, and with different strokes. Several training techniques will be used in this workout collection to build versatility. These include:

- **Training all distances**
  Practicing distances from 25 yards to one mile
- **Training all speeds**
  Swimming at various exertion levels
- **Training all strokes**
  Including butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle in the content of the workouts

Achieving Results

There are two ways to look at achieving results. The first way is to focus on the end result, when you have reached the goal you made when you began your fitness routine. The second way is to look at your progress along the road toward that goal. Both are important.

What a wonderful day it will be when you accomplish your goal! But even for the most determined person, keeping a long-term goal constantly in focus is sometimes difficult. Because shaping up is a process, and doesn't happen all at once, at times the ultimate goal can seem far away, even unattainable. By also looking at each step of progress along the way to the goal as an achievement itself, the goal remains more real. Seeing clear evidence that you are making progress also makes it a wonderful day.

Keeping Track of Your Swimming Progress

In order to keep track of your progress, you must measure your swimming along the way. This collection of workouts includes a number of opportunities to compare your efforts to previous efforts of the same swimming content. At the end of Chapter 2, you will find a

section called “Swimmer’s Progress Log,” in which you can record your swimming times and other indications of progress. You will have the opportunity to establish your swimming times early on, then, about every fifth workout, opportunities for comparison will be provided. These include:

Benchmark Swims

Opportunities to time yourself for distances of 50, 100 and 200 are included for all strokes, in addition to 500 and a mile in freestyle.

Timed Distance Swims

You will be asked to swim for 5, 10 and 15 minutes, using freestyle, with the goal of swimming as far as possible within the time.

Interval Sets

You will compare both your average swim time and your rest interval for a set of 10 x 50, and 5 x 100 of freestyle, backstroke and breaststroke, as well as 8 x 25 and 8 x 50 of butterfly.

Workouts

You will track your total workout yardage, and the length of time each workout took.

INDICATIONS OF PROGRESS

You can also track your progress in terms of physical changes, including:

Heart Rate

Tracking your heart rate is an excellent indicator of conditioning progress. You can measure:

RESTING HEART RATE

Before you get out of bed in the morning, take your pulse for 15 seconds. Multiply that number by 4 to give you your resting heart rate. As conditioning increases, your resting heart rate should go down a bit.

TARGET HEART RATE RANGE

Your optimal range of heart rate during training should be about 65% of your maximum heart rate. You can easily calculate your target heart rate (THR) with the following formula:

$$(220 - \text{Your Age}) \times 0.65 = \text{THR}$$

You can check your THR after a set by placing two fingers either on the arteries on the palm side of your wrist, or at the side of your neck, just under the jaw. Count your pulse for 6 seconds then multiply by 10. This will give you your heart rate for one minute. This formula allows you to measure your heart rate quickly. This is important because your heart rate will go down soon after you stop swimming. As you gain conditioning, you will find that you will be able to swim faster and farther while staying in your target heart rate range.

RECOVERY RATE

Periodically, retake your heart rate, using the six-second method, 30 seconds after you stop swimming, then again one minute after you stop. This will tell you how quickly your heart rate returns to normal. Rate of recovery is another indication of conditioning.

Weight, Size and Body Composition

Body weight can be an indication of improved fitness, if the swimmer has excess weight. However, for many swimmers, their body weight can actually increase slightly as they gain conditioning! This is not a cause for alarm. Rather, it is an indication that muscle is being built. As muscle is denser than fat, it weighs more. Once muscle is built,

and used, you will actually burn more calories, as working muscles require more fuel.

But, instead of focusing only on body weight, focus on body size. The long muscles developed by swimmers tend to make the body and limbs more slender. For many people, it may be more satisfying to measure waist, hip and chest size rather than stand on a scale.

Probably the best body measurement to indicate fitness is a body composition test. This is a measurement of the body's fat content. While the ideal body fat content for the average adult male is considered to be 15%, and the average adult female is 22%, factors including age, frame, activity level and heredity must be taken into account. A health professional with a good understanding of your personal history is a good resource for this test. He or she will use one of several methods of measuring body fat index, including a skin caliper test, water displacement or electrical impedance. It should be noted that athletes with higher than normal muscle content must be measured carefully to get accurate results. While there are many gadgets available on the market to measure body fat, a visit to your health professional is advised for this purpose.

Cholesterol Balance

Many people who take up swimming achieve significant and quick results in terms of better cholesterol balance. Decreased bad cholesterol, increased good cholesterol level, as well as improved triglyceride levels have been recorded in as few as six weeks. Healthy cholesterol levels are a significant indication of fitness, and overall health, as they relate to risk factors for heart attack, stroke and cardiovascular disease. Measured through a blood test, healthy levels are defined as:

LDL (Bad Cholesterol): Less than 200
HDL (Good Cholesterol): More than 50
Triglycerides (Fat): Less than 150

RECOVERY AND ADAPTATION

A Crucial Element of Success

An important and often overlooked element of achieving results in a fitness program is recovery between workouts. Resting is difficult for some of us! It is easy to get into the frame of mind that "more is better." To a certain extent, this is true. Pushing our bodies beyond the comfort level is necessary for improvement. This philosophy is bolstered by the rapid improvement some swimmers see when beginning a fitness routine. But for the most continuous results, both work and rest must be part of the training program. Finding the correct balance of work and rest is a not always easy. One size does not fit all. Coaches and swimmers who work together spend a great deal of time and energy designing the right balance of work and rest that enables the swimmer to achieve the best results.

As important as the quality, quantity and interval of the swimming one does, is the quality, quantity and interval of recovery periods. Rest between workouts is essential to allow the body to recover from the work it has done. This is the only way that improvement, or adaptation to a workload can be expected to occur over time. Without rest, the body can become fatigued, and further work only makes it more tired, instead of more fit.

If you are swimming on your own, advance planning of workout and recovery days is necessary. As a general rule, schedule at least two days off per week. As each person is different, your personal routine might include more rest days. You might design a weekly routine such as:

SWIM SWIM REST SWIM SWIM REST SWIM...

or

SWIM REST SWIM REST SWIM REST SWIM...

It is worth noting that when training multiple sports, that when a rest day from swimming is used as a workday for another sport, true rest is not really achieved. This has to be considered if the rate of adaptation and progress in swimming is not as swift as expected.

In order to continue a trend of improvement, rest is an essential ingredient of a fitness program.

SIGNS OF NON-ADAPTATION

It is important to be aware of the signs that you are not adapting to training. In a situation where a coach is not present to observe the swimmer's workouts, it is crucial that the swimmer remain alert to signs of non-adaptation, and actively make changes to stop this trend. Signs include:

FATIGUE EVEN AFTER REST

Being tired, especially in the early stages of a conditioning program is expected. However, if after several weeks of training that includes at least two days off per week, you are experiencing constant fatigue, that makes it difficult to enjoy or complete the workouts, or leaves you without the energy to carry on with your regular daily activities, then you need to make changes.

- Take additional rest days between workouts for a while
- Reduce the yardage of the workouts
- Work on stroke efficiency with swimming drills

CONSISTENT LACK OF IMPROVEMENT IN BENCHMARK SWIMS

During the course of doing the workouts in this collection, Benchmark Swims are called for periodically throughout the workouts. If you experience no improvement for three Benchmark Swims in a row, it can be an indication that you are too tired to exert. It can also point to a pattern of practicing swimming all of your workouts at medium

speed, and never practicing going fast. If you are not seeing improvement in Benchmark Swims, you need to make changes.

- Take additional rest days between workouts for a while.
- Rest enough between sets, so you can do some 100% effort swimming at each workout.
- Reduce the yardage of the workouts.

SHOULDER PAIN

Any shoulder pain that is experienced during swimming should not be ignored! Shoulder pain can be an indication of "over use syndrome," or a technique problem. In either case, continuing the same training could very well worsen your condition, and you could find yourself unable to swim for an extended period of time. Shoulder pain means you need to make changes.

- Take several days off from swimming, or just kick your workouts.
- Have a coach check your stroke technique before resuming your training program.
- See a doctor if pain persists.
- Reduce the yardage of the workouts.

VALUING THE PROCESS

Observing improvements in your fitness is clearly rewarding, yet it may not happen every single time you measure your progress. This is natural. It is not the end of the world, and it is certainly not any indication that you should give up your pursuit of better swimming. Consider that swimming in and of itself is a rewarding experience. It is good for you on all levels: physically, mentally and emotionally. Give yourself credit for maintaining your swimming routine. Value the time you have to work things out in your head while you are swimming. Notice the smile on your face after you swim. Your swimming is time well spent. Enjoy every minute of it.

GETTING BACK ON THE HORSE