

# Functional Progression for Returning to Swimming

## Developed by Tim Beagan, PTA, BS, ATC-L

### Compliments of Richard Bader Physical Therapy

This protocol is intended as an aid in progressing competitive swimmers into their normal routine following rotator cuff tendonitis or impingement.

#### Goals:

- Keep swimmers in the water.
- Maintain aerobic and anaerobic condition.
- Keep heart rate around 140-160 beats per minute during aerobic workouts.  
( $220 - \text{age} \times 65-75\%$ )
- Return swimmers to regular workouts and competition safely, as soon as possible.

#### Additional Information:

Not all shoulder conditions are the same. Please consult your physician, physical therapist or athletic trainer and work with your coach.

This progression is based on an average competitive swimming workout for advanced high school age swimmers of 4500 Yards (180 lengths of a 25 yd. pool) per day, 5 days a week.

Start with phase I. Swimmers must complete the phase they are in without pain before progressing to the next phase. Phase progression should be monitored by a physician, physical therapist or athletic trainer.

#### Phase I

No swimming phase, but in water as long as other swimmers doing the following:

- Kick 1500 yards (mix distance and intervals)
- No kick board or keep kick board close to the body to decrease stress on the shoulders.
- Avoid extending kick board in front of you.
- Vary kicking drills; under water, side, front, back etc.
- May use water shoes, fins, or zoomers for kicks if no knee conditions.
- If swimmer has a knee condition or develops knee pain, report to coach and/or athletic trainer and consider a medical consult.
- Practice turns.
- No starts, no pulls, no single arm drills with involved shoulder, no swimming.

#### Phase II

2000 yards total

- 1500 kick (As above) Broken up or some before and some after swims. Vary drills.
- 500 swim (Breaststroke only) Broken swims. Start with repeat 25 yds at moderate speed and rest. Progress distances and speed as tolerated.

#### Phase III

3000 yards total

- 1500 kick Broken up or some before and some after swims.
- 1500 swim (1000 breaststroke, 500 crawl with maximum body rotation and breathing bilaterally (every 3 strokes)). Broken up. Start with repeat 25's at moderate speed and rest. Progress distances and speed as tolerated. Retro swimming drills ok if tolerated.

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### **Phase IV**

#### 3500 yards total

1500 kick Broken up or some before and some after swims.

2000 swim (1000 breaststroke, 1000 crawl with maximum body rotation and continue bilateral breathing). Broken swims. Speed and distance as tolerated.

### **Phase V**

#### 4000 yards total

1500 kick Some before and some after swim.

2500 swim (1000 breaststroke, 500 crawl with maximum body rotation, 500 crawl with normal rotation, 500 backstroke with maximum body rotation).

### **Phase VI**

#### 4500 yards total

1500 kick Some before and some after swim.

3000 swim (1000 breaststroke, 1000 crawl with normal rotation, 500 backstroke with maximum body rotation, 500 backstroke with normal body rotation).

### **Phase VII**

#### 4500 yards total

1000 kick Some before and some after swim.

3500 swim (1000 breaststroke, 1000 crawl with normal rotation, 1000 backstroke with normal rotation, 500 butterfly).

After completion of all 7 phases, swimmers should be ready to return to normal workouts. It would not be advisable to take part in single arm involved arm drills or pulling drills until pain free for a considerable time. Continue bilateral breathing as much as possible to even out the stress on shoulders. Swimmers may be able to compete in meets prior to completing this progression depending on stroke, and due to the total distance swam being shorter in a meet.

This protocol was developed by Tim Beagan, PTA, BS, ATC-L Portland, Maine Copyright 2008

Email: [tim@rbpt.com](mailto:tim@rbpt.com)

### **Thanks for contributions and/or reviewing:**

Kerry Kertes - Head Coach of Cape Elizabeth High School Swim Teams, Cape Elizabeth High School Boys and Girls Swim Teams, Rocco Aceto - Head Coach at Trinity Prep School, Florida, Gabriel Mazurkiewicz - former Head Coach of Coastal Maine Aquatics Swim Teams, Kaitlin Kelley - Catherine McAuley High School Swim Team

William Heinz, MD, Vincent Oliviero, MD, Kevin Broderick, DO, Thomas Murray, MD, Donald Endrizzi, MD, Bernadette Shaw, PA-C (former Brown University and Cape swimmer), Shireen Rahman ATC, Exercise Physiologist, Jim Varnecke, MS, PT