



## ANXIOUS SWIMMER LESSON PLANS

### Lesson #6

THIS IS THE LAST IN THE SERIES OF LESSONS TO PREPARE YOU FOR DOING THE 2.1K ACROSS THE LAKE SWIM. IT IS INTENDED TO GET YOU EVENT/RACE READY MENTALLY, AND TO HAVE A GREAT DAY!

First, good news: There are no new open water swim techniques left to learn. If you have followed all the previous lessons, you have already learned lots! But there is much to mentally prepare for and digest about the event itself.

#### I) MENTAL PREPARATION

But you do need to consider some mental preparation strategy, and some common sense planning. The more you know about the event, the relaxed you will be.

The week leading up to the big event:

Keep doing your usual lake swims up to Thursday and if you need to go for a short swim on Friday, that is OK too. Focus on staying comfortable in what you know you can do, and especially relaxed breathing cadence. Don't push too long or hard—the fitness you have now will not change much in the next week.

To improve familiarity, consider visiting or even swimming near the jetty at the start line area on the west side of the lake this week.

Do your best to clear of your mind of any major work, duties, and life stresses in the coming days.

Be nice to yourself with healthy eating and sleep patterns, and avoiding alcohol, as much as possible. Your best night's sleep will likely be Thursday, not Friday. Although Friday night will likely be more fitful, plan everything out the night before, so there is less to think about.

Package pickup days are Thursday and Friday—get all the info you need (most is supplied in your package), and bring your supporters with you, including your paddler if you have one. Enjoy the great vibe of swimmers like you on the same quest.

Have all of your swim gear packed and ready early Friday evening, along with your plan of when you will leave, who is coming with you, where you will store your valuables, and where you hope to park. Read all of the instructions provided to you in your race package. You don't want to be doing this at 11 pm—you should be sound asleep by then.

The morning of the event:

Get up early enough to do your normal morning routine— bathroom, breakfast etc.—and in time to get to City Park early. You don't need much or even any breakfast, gels, or electrolyte drinks, but I suggest you eat what you normally do prior to exercising (race days are not a time to change your routine). If you are a coffee hound, you can have a bit of coffee as well to wake you up—that may be all you need. You



don't want to be in caffeine withdrawal half way across the lake! But remember that the more you eat and drink (especially coffee), the more likely you will need to hit the porta-potties at either end of the swim course. There will be lots of food and drink at the finish line.

Once you have arrived at City Park, you can put your wetsuit on but don't pull it all the way up unless it is cold.

Make yourself aware of where important things are—the gear tent, the finish line corral, the washrooms, and the bus pickup point.

Catch an early bus if you can—the lineups for the start line portapotties are shortest earlier on. Listen to and ask questions to the ATLS ambassador on the bus for any updated info.

Know when your wave starts. There is a board explaining the waves and the timing, and there are wave cap leaders (holding up placards with your wave cap color) to ask if needed. Join your group by 7:45AM.

Once on the jetty, have a good look at where you will be going—look for the finish line arch, the sighting points above it (like the line of trees above it, and the notches and peaks of the mountains behind them), and even the things you can see to the left or the right of your swim course (things you should not be sighting toward!). Also notice where the local swim buoys are, the platforms, and the support kayakers.

Get a warm-up swim in if you can, to loosen up your shoulders in the suit. Getting some water in your suit warms it up, so that the shock of cold water won't affect you at the beginning of the race. Find your support paddler if you have one, and make sure they know what wave you are in.

Swim start:

Once everyone has joined their like-colored swim caps, WFN elder Grouse Barnes will bless the swim with two important messages: a) We are all friends out there, sharing a unique experience together, so be supportive and if necessary provide assistance to anyone in distress. b) Give reverence to the beauty of your surroundings and especially to the lake, which has supported all cultures living near it for millennia.

Once in the water, enjoy the process. It is okay to be a little nervous, but this is a little like getting married...the event will transcend you.

Swim easily to the start corral, and find some space to call your own. Line up ("self-seed") where you feel most comfortable—in the front if you feel you are going to be faster than everyone else, on the sides if you want to stay out of the way, or in the back if you want minimal traffic to deal with.

Once underway, the most important strategy is to develop a reliable, sustainable breathing cadence, that you can comfortably integrate with sighting.

It is a unique experience being out in the middle of our beautiful lake as it carries you over to the finish line. The lake is your friend—it does not want to swallow you up, it wants to keep you on the surface!



It does not matter what your swim time is. It is what it is. You will be out there for a while. Perhaps 40 minutes, perhaps 60. Just keep plugging along. Stay within yourself, and do not compare yourself to others. This is your swim. Rely on a recovery stroke if you need to, work on sighting to swim straight, and remember that there is tons of support on the lake keeping an eye on you.

Once you are across and can see the bottom, keep swimming until your hands touch bottom before you stand up to cross the finish line. Since many people are dizzy when they first stand up after a long swim, keep your head down for several steps before running to the finish line timing mat.

Suck up the positive energy on the beach when you arrive. You've got this! Visualize every part of your successful crossing, and you will have a great day!

## II) YOUR LAST TRAINING WORKOUT

If you are ready to do two loops of the course, see if you can do each loop (800m) without standing.

Experiment with different breathing cadences. For example, once you have warmed up for 300 meters, try breathing every 4 strokes for 50 m, then every 3 strokes for 50m, and then every 2 strokes for 50 meters. Then try to vary your breathing cadence to develop confidence staying relaxed and flexible in your breathing. And work on sighting, and even drafting if you have the opportunity. Get used to swimming with other people.

If you have any lingering questions ahead of the big event, please ask!!