The Importance of Technique - Natalie Coughlin

This Speedo Tip of the Week is an excerpt from the July-August 2005 issue of *Splash*, in which special correspondent Bonnie Moss takes a look into Natalie Coughlin's training. Here, Coughlin offers some advice on the importance of technique.

The Tip: Coughlin considers her build small for a swimmer and focuses heavily on technique to make up for what she lacks in size. "I never take a stroke without thinking about it," she says.

Coughlin favors balancing drills to develop her fly, back and free. A good balance drill is kicking on your stomach with your arms at your side. Coughlin suggests "gluing" your arms at your side so you're thrown off balance. It should feel awkward, but it will force your body to rotate and maintain a sleek body motion. "I focus on my body moving as one single unit." Coughlin says.

She also credits her coach at Cal Aquatics, Teri McKeever, for providing a much-needed emphasis on technique. Coughlin's training includes up to 50 percent technical work, combining drilling, kicking and pulling, all done with quality effort. Coughlin says McKeever's training philosophy focuses more on body awareness and positioning in the water, and much less emphasis on pumping out yardage. It has worked wonders not only for Coughlin, but for her teammates as well. "Counting meters or pool time is an irrelevant measure of training," Coughlin says.

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Technique Work with Erik Vendt

This Speedo Tip of the Week is an excerpt from the May-June 2005 issue of *Splash*, in which special correspondent Bonnie Moss writes about training with two-time Olympic medalist Erik Vendt. Here, Moss writes about some of Vendt's technique work.

The Tip: For Erik Vendt, technique is perhaps the most important aspect of training.
At 5-10, he might be smaller than most of his competitors, but he's found other avenues of success, mainly by keeping good technique. Ever since he was about 12 years old, Vendt began to focus on technique, having a good kick, a strong pull and good hip rotation. He basically learned how to extend his stroke. "Even at a young age, I remember thinking I may not be tall, but I can sure swim like it," Vendt says.

Vendt's favorite and most effective drill is swimming one-arm with the opposite arm at his side. This drill develops great hip rotation and a high elbow catch. Having a high elbow catch below the water helps incorporate the lat muscles (the muscles on the sides of the back) in the stroke cycle and saves energy in the arm muscles. The lats are a bigger muscle group than the arms and therefore have more endurance.