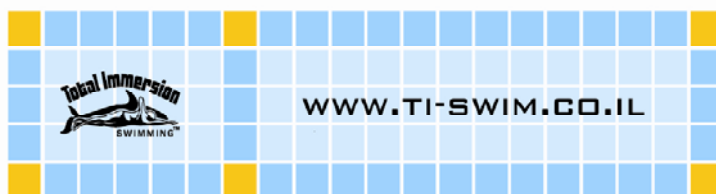


Splash and the XXLg Jockstrap

There used to be a guy that swam daily during the recreation period at UH. We called him "Splash." He was one of those spindly little guys — about 5'2" with zero body fat. He would come into the pool area wearing the size 42 swimsuit he checked out from the locker room (Splash had a rather irritating demeanor so the guys working in the locker room were always having some fun at his expense – every day it just so happened that size 42 was the only size they had left when Splash came in). He would walk to the starting block end of the pool, put down his towel and, to his credit, begin about 20 minutes of stretching and calisthenics. Then he would mount the starting block and spend 2 or 3 minutes carefully studying the lane as if mentally rehearsing his upcoming swim. Suddenly, as if startled awake by a fire alarm, Splash would launch himself out over the water assuming a position much like a skydiver in free-fall — chest and hips thrust toward the water, hands and feet pointing nearly toward the ceiling. Upon hitting the water surface there was the expected crashing sound of water being thrown everywhere by his violent entry.

Instantly, Splash's arms, legs and head began to pump and thrash furiously in all directions. The resulting eruption of water produced what appeared to be a small haystack of water that began to move, ever so slowly, down the lane. Peering intently into the wall of falling water you could just make out Splash's form as he pitched and writhed, slinging water and anything else that got near him into the air. Damn, this boy was a hard worker. This drenching blur of activity continued till the haystack of water reached the other end of the pool at which point the eruption ceased. Splash grabbed hold of the gutter, planted his feet firmly on the bottom of the pool and proceeded to suck in huge quantities of air, his chest heaving and straining for every milliliter of precious oxygen (musta been a no-breather). Once his eyes stopped bugging out and his color returned to normal he hopped out of the water, walked back to the starting end of the pool, grabbed his towel and headed for the locker room, his workout complete.

This was back before my days of incessant stroke counting so I don't have a hard number to throw at you. But, if we multiply the 45 seconds or so it took this clown to go 25 yards by the average gallonage of agua that stayed aloft continuously, my estimate looms in the two to three hundred strokes range. That's conservative. Let me express things positively — Splash had a full and intimate understanding of the term "turnover rate."



In pondering the physics that allowed Splash to achieve what he did, I came to the conclusion that it was the XXLg jockstrap (Those guys in the locker room — always having a bit of fun!). Perhaps one of the straps hanging down through the leg holes of the size 42 suit got caught on the starting block when he launched himself at the water. After that it was just like swimming tethered on surgical tubing. Yeah, that had to be it.

On the other hand, it's just possible that Splash's acquaintance with that other swimming term "distance per stroke" was neither as intimate nor as full as it could have been. I'll leave it to you to decide.

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