

AQUA FITNESS

NETWORK

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CONTENTS

- 1 Hydro BLITZ...stepping back so you can leap forward!
Laura Rogers
- 4 Becoming an aqua personal trainer
Ken Baldwin
- 7 In praise of the humble dumbbell
Marietta Mehanni



Hydro BLITZ... stepping back so you can leap forward!

Aquatic fitness is an exciting and growing area in the fitness industry. Baby Boomers are ageing and are seeking 'joint-friendly' exercise options. As a result more people are headed to the liquid gym for their workouts. As an aquatics group fitness director, I've learnt a very valuable secret to choreographing a superior class: bring it back to the basics! Simpler is better. The properties of the water are crucial and should never be overlooked when programming an aquatic class. I have integrated these properties into the BLITZ technique of instruction. BLITZ classes appropriately challenge every fitness level; they are simple to create and, most importantly, are fun to participate in!

BLITZ classes can be integrated into any existing aquatic program. Teaching styles vary and all methods of instruction can smoothly incorporate BLITZ. Close observation of each participant is imperative. Body

alignment is continually challenged in the aquatic environment and attentive monitoring of alignment will ensure exercise safety and effectiveness. Intensity options should be given throughout every class and force versus speed should be emphasised. Speed often causes a shortened range of motion and many instructors make the mistake of cueing it. Velocity emphasises an increase in speed with a full range of motion, which is preferable.

Understanding BLITZ

B = Body alignment/ buoyancy and stability. The centre of gravity and the centre of buoyancy must be vertically aligned to provide stability, ensure proper spinal alignment and to decrease the risk of musculoskeletal injury.

continued on page 2

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Hydro BLITZ... stepping back so you can leap forward!

continued from page 1

The effectiveness of the exercises increases when a participant is vertically aligned. When they come out of vertical alignment, the body will roll or turn until balance is achieved, thus decreasing the move's effectiveness. Body alignment is really challenged once moves become submerged or suspended. Stability can be further challenged by the use of turbulence and inertia. The core can be strengthened, stability and spinal alignment improved, and the intensity greatly increased all by implementing this one technique!

L = Lever length, and lever direction. Levers can be lengthened and shortened to vary intensity levels. The direction of the lever can also be changed. Kicks to the front can become kicks to the side and to the rear. This technique challenges the instructor's inventiveness. How many different ways can a rocking horse be performed? How about a cross country ski? This component of BLITZ should excite the creative in all of us!

I = Intensity and inertia. Use force to increase intensity. By accelerating a move, force can be applied in two ways. One option is to accelerate a move off on the pool floor by adding more force to the rebound. Another option is to apply more force to the water when the body/limbs are moving through the water. Inertia is another great way to vary intensity levels. An object remains at rest or in continuous motion unless acted upon by a force. Inertia is used when we cue the participant to jog, and it's used a second time when the participant is cued to jog forward. It's used a third and fourth time when the participant jogs backwards and when they stop jogging. How many times can inertia be applied to a particular move? The use of inertia has no limit if instructors remember this simple rule: keep them moving and use the entire pool to do so!

T = Travel. Travelling allows us to use several properties. By having the class travel in one direction, inertia is applied to the water (in addition to the move).



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Once a streamline flow is established it can be broken by travelling in the opposite direction. By cueing the class to travel in different directions (as opposed to in a nice neat row), turbulent flow will be established. Lever length has a direct impact on intensity when travelling. The frontal surface of the move and hand positioning will also directly affect how intense a travelling move becomes. Action/reaction is also important to consider. Do you want your arm movements to assist in the travel, or to impede it? Why not mix it up and do a bit of both? Offering these choices will not only add interest and variety to the class, but will educate the participants on how to self-regulate their intensity level.

Z = Zeal and zest of teaching style. In much the same way that lemon zest packs concentrated flavour into a dish, we as fitness professionals must strive to create that flavourful class that ‘packs a punch’ and separates our classes from the rest. In a one hour time frame, we are trying to sell fitness in the most concentrated, effective and palatable way possible. Each ingredient in a BLITZ class must be present, equally measured and delivered with flavour. Flavour can be added in the form of music, professional attire and voice amplification. When something ‘tastes good’, you go back for seconds! Whether instruction takes place from the deck or in the pool, cueing techniques must be mastered. While on my own personal journey I’ve learnt that when I demonstrate an intensity level less (such as cueing a move to be ‘bigger’, ‘stronger’, or ‘faster’), my motivational skills sharpen. The results are that the pool turns into a sea of hardworking fitness enthusiasts who are all successfully working out to their self regulated maximum. Demonstrate less, and motivate more! Exceptional instructors who perfect their teaching techniques will enhance their class experience and the participants will keep coming back for more!

Evaluate the aquatic group fitness programs at your facility this week. How full are the classes? Are the participants smiling and enjoying the class? Are they working the water versus merely working in the water? Instructors who are willing to step back to review the basics will leap forward into more productive and effective teaching. BLITZ classes are simple to create, fun to implement and are an uplifting and positive experience for all who participate! ♦

This article reprinted with permission from the Aquatic Exercise Association (AEA), www.aeawave.com



Laura Rogers

As a Group Fitness Manager of New Life Fitness World in South Carolina, Laura is responsible for the development and programming of the land and aquatic group fitness classes. Laura holds AEA, AFAA and The Physicalmind Institute certifications. As an AFAA CEU approved provider, she currently offers Pilates workshops in the South Carolina area. This year she is adding the HydroBLITZ workshop, which will equip land instructors to take the plunge into aquatic fitness and at the same time, sharpen the skills of even the most seasoned aquatic professionals. You can contact Laura by e-mail at LauraARogers@aol.com



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