16-WEEK SWIM TRAINING PLAN

ADAM HODGES, PH.D.

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16-WEEK SWIM TRAINING PLAN

Thank you for purchasing this swim training plan created by Adam Hodges!

Included:

✓ How to monitor your training intensity
✓ Protocol to determine your swimming pace zones using a time trial test
✓ Protocol to determine your swimming pace zones using a graded swim test
✓ Description of swimming drills
✓ Full 16-week training plan with three workouts per week

***

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MEDICAL RISK FACTORS

If you have any risk factors for coronary artery disease—e.g. family history, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, sedentary lifestyle—you should consult with a doctor before beginning this program. Regular medical checkups are always a good idea for anyone, even experienced athletes.
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Initial Base Week 2: 12,050 yards

Initial Base Week 2, Workout 1: 4100 yards

Initial Base Week 2, Workout 2: 3950 yards

Initial Base Week 2, Workout 3: 4000 yards

Initial Base Week 3: 12,300 yards

Initial Base Week 3, Workout 1: 4300 yards

Initial Base Week 3, Workout 2: 4000 yards

Initial Base Week 3, Workout 3: 4000 yards

Initial Base Week 4: 10,200 yards

Initial Base Week 4, Workout 1: 4200 yards

Initial Base Week 4, Workout 2: 3000 yards

Initial Base Week 4, Time Trial: 3000 yards

EXTENDED BASE PHASE

Extended Base Week 1: 12,400 yards

Extended Base Week 1, Workout 1: 4400 yards

Extended Base Week 1, Workout 2: 4000 yards

Extended Base Week 1, Workout 3: 4000 yards

Extended Base Week 2: 13,050 yards

Extended Base Week 2, Workout 1: 4700 yards

Extended Base Week 2, Workout 2: 4050 yards

Extended Base Week 2, Workout 3: 4300 yards

Extended Base Week 3: 13,300 yards

Extended Base Week 3, Workout 1: 5000 yards

Extended Base Week 3, Workout 2: 4100 yards

Extended Base Week 3, Workout 3: 4200 yards

Extended Base Week 4: 10,400 yards

Extended Base Week 4, Workout 1: 4400 yards

Extended Base Week 4, Workout 2: 3000 yards

Extended Base Week 4, Time Trial: 3000 yards

BUILD PHASE

Build Week 1: 12,000 yards

Build Week 1, Workout 1: 4600 yards

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Build Week</th>
<th>Workouts</th>
<th>Yards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2, Workout 3</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>11,500 yards</td>
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<td>2, Time Trial</td>
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ABOUT THE COACH

Adam Hodges, PhD, has over two decades of experience as a multisport athlete. He has achieved USAT All-American status as an elite amateur and has competed in the ITU World Triathlon Championships, the ITU World Duathlon Championships, and the Ironman World Championships in Hawaii.

He studied biology and kinesiology as an undergraduate, and earned advanced degrees in linguistics from the University of Colorado. As a university lecturer, he has taught at Stanford University, the University of Colorado, and Colorado State University.

He began coaching youth swimmers in 1991, and started working with Masters swimmers at the University of Colorado in 1993. As a coach and personal trainer, he has worked with a variety of endurance athletes over the years, including runners, swimmers, cyclists and triathletes new to endurance sports and middle school distance runners.

ABOUT THE WORKOUTS

These workouts are modeled after the Masters program coached by Adam Hodges at the University of Colorado in Boulder. They are ideal for Masters swimmers, triathletes, and fitness swimmers accustomed to swimming three times per week with weekly yardage ranging from 8,000-13,000 yards.

The 16-week plan consists of three workouts per week. The program begins with a focus on aerobic development and gradually shifts towards higher intensity training. Time trials are scheduled at the end of each phase. The training is designed to peak an athlete for a final time trial or race at the end of the 16 weeks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Training Phase</th>
<th>Time Trials</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prep/Beginning Base Week 1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Prep/Beginning Base Week 2</td>
<td>TT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Initial Base Week 1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Initial Base Week 2</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Initial Base Week 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Initial Base Week 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Extended Base Week 1</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Extended Base Week 2</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Extended Base Week 4</td>
<td>TT</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
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<td>TT</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Peak</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Peak</td>
<td>TT</td>
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MONITORING TRAINING INTENSITY

Any swimmer with limited time understands the value of making every workout count. This means monitoring not just training volume, but training intensity. Although many multisport athletes use heart rate monitors while running and/or power meters while cycling, this same equipment is impractical while swimming. So how can you effectively monitor your training intensity in the pool? The simplest answer is to turn to the tried and true pace clock or stopwatch. But effective use of the pace clock first requires determining your training pace zones.

To determine your pace zones, we first need to find your lactate threshold pace—i.e., what is commonly called your “T-pace.” Think of the lactate threshold as the dividing line between aerobic and anaerobic effort. Importantly, this is your “race pace” for sprint distance triathlons and (for experienced racers) Olympic distance events.

DETERMINING YOUR SWIMMING PACE ZONES

The easiest way to find your T-pace is to swim a 1,000-yd or 1,000-m time trial (TT) at a race-level effort. This means you should go into the TT well rested and ready to give it your all. Record your time for the TT and then divide that time by ten to find your pace per 100. Write this number in the table where it says “T-pace.” From there, calculate your pace in the other cells of the right column by adding or subtracting the number of seconds indicated.

### Training Intensity Zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intensity Zone</th>
<th>Swim Pace (time per 100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ZONE 1 Recovery</td>
<td>Very easy effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*pace for warm up, cool down, recovery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZONE 2 Extensive Endurance</td>
<td>T-pace + 10 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*aerobic base pace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZONE 3 Intensive Endurance / Tempo</td>
<td>T-pace + 5 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*aerobic tempo pace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZONE 4 Sub-Threshold / Muscular Endurance</td>
<td>T-Pace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*sub-LT threshold pace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZONE 5A Super-Threshold / Lactate Threshold Endurance</td>
<td>T-Pace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*super-LT threshold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZONE 5B Anaerobic Endurance</td>
<td>T-pace – 5 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZONE 5C Anaerobic Capacity / Power</td>
<td>All out effort</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The column on the left features the seven point scale and nomenclature typically used to monitor heart rate while running or cycling—i.e. Zone 1 through Zone 5c. The column on the right provides the equivalent swimming pace zone.
For example, let’s say John swims a 1,000-yd TT in 15 minutes. This translates into a pace per 100 yards of 1:30. This would be the pace he would swim for sets targeting Zones 4-5a. For sets targeting Zone 3, his pace would be 1:35 per 100. His pace would be 1:40 for Zone 2, and 1:25 for Zone 5b.

Note that Zone 1 doesn’t have a specific pace. Zone 1 is an easy effort and is used for warming up/cooling down and recovery between harder sets. Zone 5c also doesn’t have a specific pace. Zone 5c corresponds to all out sprinting efforts of short distances where pace is irrelevant.

Keep in mind that for the calculations of your swimming pace zones to be accurate, the results of the TT need to represent a race-level effort. In my experience coaching swimmers of different levels, I have found that a 500 TT often works better for those swimmers who are unaccustomed to “racing” longer distances. In such cases, you can find your pace per 100 based on the results of a 500 TT.

Once you’ve determined your training zones, then you will have a way to gauge the intensity level at which you’re swimming. This will allow you to better pinpoint your workouts to achieve particular training effects.

**Using and Adjusting your Pace Zones**

The workout instructions in this training program will refer to intensity levels by zone, e.g. Zone 2, Zone 3, etc.

The training plan designates periodic time trials. Record your time for these (e.g. in a chart like the one below) and adjust training pace zones as needed based on the results.

**Time Trial Log**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use the comments section of the log to indicate your warm up and other pertinent factors (e.g. amount of sleep, meals, etc.).
**Graded Swim Test**

Instead of a time trial, another (and often more accurate) way to determine your pace zones is to use a graded swim test. This protocol is more involved and requires that you have someone poolside who can record the data and time your sendoffs. You may choose to substitute this for any of the time trials indicated in the training plan.

Protocol:

1. Warm up thoroughly before beginning the test.

2. The test consists of 100 yd/m repeats with 20 seconds in between.

3. Swim the first 100 at a very easy pace.

4. At the end of each 100, count your pulse at your carotid artery for 10 seconds.

5. The assistant records:
   a. heart rate
   b. rating of perceived exertion (see Borg scale below)
   c. time it took you to swim the 100

   *(See chart for recording data on next page.)*

6. Leave for the next 100 yd swim at the end of your 20 second rest period.

7. Increase your speed on each 100 so that your time decreases by 2-3 seconds.

8. Repeat until you can no longer continue.

9. Cool down when finished.

**Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>No exertion at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Very, very light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Very light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Somewhat hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Very hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Extremely hard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LT generally occurs in the range of 15-17 for the fit athlete.
Swim Graded Exercise Test in Pool

Athlete:

Date:

* Note ventilatory threshold (VT) next to the minute at which it occurs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>100</th>
<th>Time (seconds)</th>
<th>Heart Rate (BPM)</th>
<th>Exertion (RPE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</table>

Comments:
SWIMMING DRILLS

CATCH-UP DRILL
Have you ever noticed how the faster boats are the longer boats (think a rowing team’s racing shell versus a fisherman’s rowboat)?

The same physics that apply to building a fast racing boat apply to the human body moving through the water. The catch-up drill will help you focus on maintaining a long body in the water.

To do the drill, maintain your non-stroking arm in front of you in its initial extended position. Then wait until the stroking arm “catches up” with your extended arm before taking your next stroke.

This effectively slows down your swimming, and allows you to focus on stroking with one arm at a time. But more importantly, it shifts your center of gravity forward a bit to give you a more balanced body position. In addition, it gives you a longer profile more like a racing shell than a barge.

For swimmers who have a tendency to rush through the initial extension phase, aim for a ¼ catch-up while swimming at your aerobic base pace to ingrain this longer body position into your new habits.

FISTS DRILL
Instead of swimming with paddles, the fists drill is more like swimming with anti-paddles. Just as the name implies, close up your hands into fists and swim.

If you feel like you aren’t getting very far, remember to keep your elbow high during the pull phase of the stroke. Let your arm seek out the optimal position that grips the water and provides the most power.

If you have a tendency to drop your elbow and let your arm slip through the water, this drill will provide the feedback you need to develop a better ‘feel’ for proper arm positioning during your stroke.

FINGER-TIP DRAG
This drill allows you to work on the recovery portion of the stroke.

As you lift your arm out of the water for the recovery, imagine a string tied to your elbow. Keep your arm relaxed and let this imaginary string lift your arm by your elbow and carry it around to the entry of your next stroke. This is the basic idea of how the bent-arm recovery should feel.

The finger-tip drag drill provides you with more kinesthetic feedback. To do the drill, let your fingertips skim across the surface of the water during the recovery phase. This will help you gain a better feel for the correct positioning of the bent-arm during recovery.
THUMB TO THIGH BRUSH
The last third of the stroke generates the most power and propulsion. Thus, a good follow-through is crucial to a powerful stroke. This drill helps reinforce full extension of your arm at the end of the stroke.

Simply brush your thumb against the side of your thigh as you finish; this will give you a target for where your hand should be finishing—namely, by your thigh with arm extended (rather than pulling out earlier by your hip).

ROTATING, OR SIDE-TO-SIDE KICK
Freestyle and backstroke are both “side to side” strokes in that the swimmer rotates along the spine of the body. This kick also doubles as a type of drill insofar as it develops body roll along this axis.

The kick is done without a board; fins are encouraged. Start off lying on one side with your bottom arm extended above your head and your top arm at your side. Kick about six times; then take a stroke and rotate to the other side. Repeat.

With this kick, you are effectively freezing your stroke—bottom arm in extended entry position, top arm in extended follow-through position—while you kick. As you take a stroke to rotate to the other side, focus on gradually accelerating from the beginning to end of that stroke. Finish with a nice snap of the hips as you roll the body.

When you are comfortable with the basic rotating kick, then add a sculling motion with your bottom arm (i.e. the arm extended in the entry position). Scull by medially and laterally rotating the forearm. Sculpt the water with your hand. After six kicks, move from the sculling motion into your stroke to roll onto the other side.

FASHION MODEL BACKSTROKE KICK
An effective body roll can also be achieved by practicing backstroke. For this drill, you are kicking on your back with both arms down at your side. Use fins if you have them. While kicking, move one shoulder to your chin, allowing your body to roll to the side. Then do the same to the other side, rotating from side to side along your spinal axis.
PREPARATION/BEGINNING BASE PHASE

TWO WEEKS
PREPARATION/BEGINNING BASE PHASE

This two-week period is designed to reintroduce the swimmer to structured workouts after a transition or active off-season period. Emphasis in the workouts is placed on form and endurance.
PREP/BASE WEEK 1: 9100 YARDS

PREP/BASE WEEK 1, WORKOUT 1: 3000 YARDS

- **Warm up**: 200 free, 200 non-free, 200 kick
- **Rotating kick/swim**: 8 x 50* with 15 seconds rest interval (*25 rotating kick, 25 free). Focus on long body and body roll; stretch out the stroke.
- **Aerobic base 100s**: 12 x 100 free in Zone 2 with 15 seconds rest interval. Focus on a steady base pace. 100 easy backstroke when finished.
- **Quick kicks**: 12 x 25 fast freestyle kick with 30 seconds rest interval. Focus on quick turnover of kick to recruit fast-twitch muscle fibers.
- **Aerobic base pull**: 300 pull in Zone 2 with 25 seconds rest interval. Focus on body roll and breathing to alternate sides. If you feel comfortable breathing every three strokes; then try to extend it to every five strokes. Optional: Do backstroke pull every fourth 25.
- **Cool down**: 200 easy

PREP/BASE WEEK 1, WORKOUT 2: 3100 YARDS

- **Warm up**: 300 free, 200 non-free, 100 kick
- **Rotating kick with sculling**: 5 x 50 rotating kick with 30 seconds rest interval. Focus on sculling (i.e. forearm rotation) with extended arm while on that side kicking.
- **Aerobic base divided 250s**: 5 x 250* with 30 seconds rest interval (*100 free in Zone 2, 50 backstroke in Zone 1-2, 100 free in Zone 2).
- **Aerobic base kick/pull**: 200 kick alternate fast/easy by 25; 200 pull in Zone 2 with bilateral breathing (paddles optional); 30 seconds rest interval. Repeat.
- **Cool down**: 200 easy

PREP/BASE WEEK 1, WORKOUT 3: 3000 YARDS

- **Warm up**: 150 free, 150 non-free, 150 free, 150 kick
- **Aerobic base descending ladder**: 400 in Zone 2; 50 catch-up drill; 300 in Zone 2; 50 catch-up drill; 200 in Zone 2; 50 catch-up drill; 100 in Zone 2; 50 catch-up drill. All with 15 seconds rest interval.
- **Aerobic base 100 kicks with fins**: 5 x 100 kick in Zone 2 with 20 seconds rest interval. Use fins without a board, and keep a long, streamlined positioned while kicking on your back.
- **Base pull with backstroke**: 200 pull in Zone 2 with bilateral breathing; 15 seconds rest; 100 backstroke at recovery pace (i.e. Zone 1).
- **Form counts**: 8 x 25 free for form not speed with rest interval as needed (15-30 seconds). Count your strokes on each 25. See how low you can get that count. Focus on being more streamlined (off the wall and while swimming). Glide and stretch out your stroke.
- **Cool down**: 200 easy

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PREP/BASE WEEK 2: 8600 YARDS

PREP/BASE WEEK 2, WORKOUT 1: 3200 YARDS
- Warm up: 300 free, 100 back, 100 breast, 100 kick
- Long swim fartlek: Swim 1,500 continuously, repeating the following pattern for the duration of the swim: 25 easy free, 25 moderate free, 25 fast free, 25 easy backstroke.
- Quick kicks: 12 x 25 fast freestyle kick with 30 seconds rest interval. Focus on quick turnover of kick to recruit fast-twitch muscle fibers.
- Cool down: 200 easy

PREP/BASE WEEK 2, WORKOUT 2: 3000 YARDS
- Warm up: 300 free, 100 back, 100 breast, 100 kick
- Fist drill 50s: 8 x 50* with 20 seconds rest interval. (*Swim with hands closed in fist during the first 25 of each 50. Focus on keeping the elbow high and finding the most effective position for your arm during the pull phase of your stroke. Open up fist and swim normally for second 25 of each 50. Focus on keeping elbow high and building upon the position you found during the fists drill.)
- Mixed stroke descending ladder: 150 free in Zone 2; 25 seconds rest; 100 backstroke in Zone 2; 20 seconds rest; 50 breaststroke in Zone 2; 15 seconds rest. Repeat 4 times.
- Fast/easy kick 50s: 8 x 50 kick* with 15 seconds rest interval. (*Alternate fast/easy by 25.)
- Aerobic base pull: 200 pull* in Zone 2. Focus on body roll and breathing to alternate sides. If you feel comfortable breathing every three strokes; then try to extend it to every five strokes. (*Optional: Do backstroke pull every fourth 25.)
- Cool down: 200 easy

PREP/BASE WEEK 2, TIME TRIAL: 2400 YARDS
- TT #1: Record your time and use to determine your pace zones (see instructions provided earlier).
- Warm up: 200 swim, 200 kick, 200 pull
- 1,000 Time Trial: 8 x 50 (25 drill, 25 build) with 15 seconds rest interval, 100 backstroke to stretch out. 1,000 TT - Give this your maximum effort! Record time. 100 easy.
- Cool down: 200 easy
INITIAL BASE PHASE

FOUR WEEKS
INITIAL BASE PHASE

This four-week period focuses on building the aerobic foundation for later training. Emphasis in the workouts is placed on endurance and speed skills.
INITIAL BASE WEEK 1: 11,700 YARDS

INITIAL BASE WEEK 1, WORKOUT 1: 3700 YARDS

- **Warm up:** 300 free, 200 non-free, 100 kick
- **Aerobic base 300s:** 6 x 300 free in Zone 2 with 30 seconds rest interval. Focus on a steady base pace. 100 easy backstroke when finished.
- **Rotating kick/swim:** 12 x 50* with 15 seconds rest interval (*25 rotating kick, 25 free). Focus on long body and body roll; stretch out the stroke.
- **Aerobic base pull/kick:** 200 pull in Zone 2 with bilateral breathing (paddles optional), 15 seconds rest interval, 100 kick in Zone 2, 15 seconds rest interval. Repeat 3 times.
- **Cool down:** 100 easy

INITIAL BASE WEEK 1, WORKOUT 2: 4100 YARDS

- **Warm up:** 300 free, 200 non-free, 100 kick
- **Backstroke body roll drills:** 8 x 25* with 20 seconds rest interval. *Odd 25s are backstroke kick with “fashion model drill” – while kicking, keep arms down to side, move shoulder to chin as body rotates along center axis. Use fins, if you have them. *Even 25s are normal backstroke swim.
- **Aerobic base mock IM 100s:** 16 x 100* in Zone 2 with 20 seconds rest interval (*25 free, 25 back, 25 breast, 25 free).
- **Aerobic base kick:** 400 kick in Zone 2. Fins are useful for developing ankle flexibility.
- **Catch-up drill 50s:** 12 x 50* with 20 seconds rest interval. (*Catch-up drill for first 25 of each 50. Fast freestyle without breaking form for last 25 of each 50.) Focus on gliding and stretching out stroke.
- **Long base pull:** 500 pull in Zone 2 with bilateral breathing. Focus on body roll and breathing to alternate sides. If you feel comfortable breathing every three strokes; then try to extend it to every five strokes.
- **Cool down:** 200 easy

INITIAL BASE WEEK 1, WORKOUT 3: 3900 YARDS

- **Streamline 25s:** 12 x 25 free with rest interval as needed (15-30 seconds). Focus on streamlining off the wall. Kick in streamline position to get as much distance as you can underwater before coming up and starting to swim. Focus on gliding and stretching out your swim. Optional: Substitute other strokes as you focus on streamlining off the wall.
- **Base tempo 75s:** 75 free in Zone 3, 10 seconds rest interval, 25 easy non-free for recovery, 20 seconds rest interval. Repeat 16 times.
- **Aerobic base pulls (300s):** 4 x 300 pull in Zone 2 with 25 seconds rest interval. Focus on body roll and breathing to alternate sides. If you feel comfortable breathing every three strokes; then try to extend it to every five strokes. Optional: Do backstroke pull every fourth 25.
- **Cool down:** 200 easy
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