



Train and Teach the Fish Out of Water

By Kari Woodall

You use the TRX to train. But have you mastered the art of using it to coach? Get your fish out of the water and in suspension. In doing so, you'll amp up your value as a coach and open up a whole new world of dryland training. Seasoned swimmers require ample cross training, or dryland training as we call it. In addition to providing an alternative to the monotonous 'down and back' in the pool, dryland training allows swimmers to work a multitude of movements essential to fast swimming, but in a different medium.

While many competitive swimmers have a good feel for the water and can make adjustments based on verbal feedback, some lack that proprioception and changes get lost in the translation. As a coach, I sometimes need to physically move the swimmer the right way or demonstrate, which necessitates getting in the water. This is not always appealing or even feasible for most coaching staffs since the coach to swimmer ratio is typically very high. TRX training helps one coach effectively teach large groups swimming specific movements without getting in the water.

So many TRX exercises correlate directly to a teaching concept, stroke, streamline, start, or turn. Coaches can demonstrate and/or physically move the swimmer into the right position and give verbal cues throughout the movement. The following 4 exercises are just a few of my favorites for swimmers **and** coaches:

1) **TRX Plank**

This exercise reinforces the most basic element in swimming: maintaining a neutral spine through core stability. This translates into "floating" correctly in the water and thus moving efficiently from stroke to stroke without losing velocity and distance per stroke from a poor body position. By adding a **Pike-up**, we train for the power needed in our short-axis strokes, and by making it a **Side Plank with Rotations**, we train the obliques to drive our long-axis strokes. Plank progressions cover a lot!

2) **TRX Postural Squat**

This is the same movement we use when we push off the wall and streamline and also what we do upon entering the water from our standing starts. Maintaining good alignment and body tone from the fingers all the way down through the core, legs, and toes is exactly what we focus on while streamlining. I like to add a **Calf Raise** after extending and even a **Jump** to mimic the plyometric movement off the start and turn.

3) **TRX Single Arm Power Pull**

This is my favorite exercise for freestylers. Freestyle is now taught with a much more open shoulder and arm swing into the recovery. The Power Pull trains swimmers to 'preload' the pecs by rotating and opening up the shoulder and torso. The single handle enables swimmers to rotate fluidly as a single unit while working acceleration from the core to 'load' into the catch.

4) **TRX Swimmer's Pull**

This exercise really applies to all four strokes. While seemingly obvious as a swimming exercise of choice, it's not my favorite because of the name, or the fact that you are 'swimming' by moving your arms front to back. In fact, one of the most difficult concepts I teach younger swimmers is how to "**Connect the Catch to the Core,**" and how to find something solid in the water to hold while you're pulling. We don't, in fact, pull our arms through the water at all, just like we really aren't moving our arms on the TRX. We anchor our catch and move our bodies past our hands. In TRX terms, we anchor by maintaining tension on the TRX handles and straps, and we move our bodies by applying force to the handles (best achieved with an open grip), which we ultimately feel throughout the core. We learn to accelerate by connecting our limbs to our core.