



## I'm Addicted to Swim Tools

The first step to recovery is admitting you have a problem.

The real problem, however, is that my addiction isn't a problem.

Is that the first sign of denial?

*Written By Glenn Mills*

**DISCLAIMER:** *While this may seem like an advertisement for FINIS, it's not meant as one. We've been working on assignment with FINIS for a couple months and, in that time, we've tried just about every product they make. So now, when I head to the pool for my own personal training, I have a huge pile of equipment from which to choose. It's when I started packing a second and even a third bag of swim tools that I realized I had a problem. I absolutely love swimming with equipment. In fact, I am addicted to swim tools.*

Stevensville, MD. August 7, 2008 – The degree to which I've been hooked became very evident last week, when I was swimming a practice by myself. While I've spent years and years swimming, I've really not done much training on my own. In fact, swimming on my own is pretty much torture for me. I'm really not that motivated to swim for any reason on my own. Instead, I've been motivated by my association with friends, my relationship with a few young fast swimmers, and my attempt to not be so LARGE anymore. Hey... I guess those are reasons of my own, just not "performance" reasons.

In this practice, I wanted to do some stroke work. I also wanted to get my heart rate up, and to just feel good in the water. Feeling good to me means the water is moving past my body at a certain rate. Feeling good doesn't mean floating in a balanced position, or trying to figure out how to place my fingers into the water. Feeling good is simple: I want to go fast without killing myself to do so.

The main set of the practice was 9 X 200, and at this point in my swimming life, I honestly couldn't imagine doing 9 X 200 straight without pulling my hair out. So I emptied my three bags of swim tools onto the deck, and started thinking up something fun to do.



I admit that before I looked for ANY other equipment, I pulled out the new **Swimp3** player by FINIS. I put on some really hard-edged songs (so hard edged that I'm withholding the names so readers won't think I'm strange, but it helps me stay mean while I train... so it works).

I decided that to work my lungs a bit more, I'd use the **FINIS Center Mount Snorkel** with the additional Cardio Cap. This was going to challenge me, limit my oxygen a bit, and demand that I stay efficient or... well... not make the set. Swimming almost 2000 yards with it was going to be a challenge, so that made things sorta interesting from the beginning.

So, prior to even starting, I was wearing two pieces of equipment. They did, however, encourage me to keep my head down the entire time... which meant I couldn't see people pointing and laughing at me. But with my face buried in the water, how was I going to see the clock? Yep... you guessed it. The **FINIS Underwater Pace Clock**. Now I could do my entire practice without

once lifting my head and eyes to breathe, and while listening to my own choice of music. No talking or distractions. I felt like an Internet swimmer.

FINALLY... the set. I decided to break up the set into 3 rounds of 3 X 200. The first 200 of each round would be freestyle so I could get my bearings. The second 200 would be breaststroke kick with my **FINIS Alignment Board**, and the third 200 would be breaststroke scull with dolphin kick. From what I hear, I need to work on my dolphin motion... this would be a good opportunity.

The second round of 200s would be the same order, but now with fins. Of course, picking through my FINIS box, I grabbed the new **Z2 fins**. They help me work on my flutter kick and are a good fin to go alongside my standard Alpha fin. Of course, I couldn't kick breaststroke kick with them on, but again... I need to work on the dolphin movement, so dolphin kick it was. The breaststroke scull now was much faster, which made me feel good.

The third round of 200s was in honor of our friend Roland Schoeman. He taught me how much fun it is to swim with paddles and fins (and snorkel, and Swimp3, and underwater clock...). So, the equipment for the final round is as follows: Swimp3, Centermount Snorkel, Underwater Pace Clock, Z2 fins, and paddles (I'll keep this generic so it seems more unbiased... too late?)... OH... goggles, cap and don't forget... suit.

By the 3rd round of 200s, I had a nice line on my forehead from the snorkel digging in at speed (thicker cap is a good idea), I had the ring around my fingers from the paddles hanging on, a rub mark on top of my feet from the fins, I was gasping for air, could feel myself sweating, was trying to keep up with my angry music, and I was getting a great workout.



I was swimming under the influence of a lot of equipment, but each piece served a purpose and was totally useful to how I wanted to feel...so I didn't worry about how silly I may have looked.

While there are those in our tiny community of swimming who believe that tools are crutches for people who can't dig deep enough into their own strokes... all I can say is that I LOVE tools, toys, and distractions when I swim. I work with people who also enjoy them, and for whom tools and toys actually make them feel better (and faster) in the water.

Whether we like it or not, we live in a high-tech world that will continue to produce technologically advanced, performance-enhancing equipment. (Hey, has anyone read about some new suits coming out this year?) Maybe we have to stop talking about equipment as a crutch and start to embrace it -- or maybe just try to UNDERSTAND it. If we try to understand how new equipment, when used correctly, can ENHANCE our swimming experience, then we're keeping pace with the spirit of our high-tech world.

Remember, don't overuse ANY piece of equipment. You want to stay safe and avoid injury. Heck, even wackos like me stop using things when we recognize "bad" pain. You should too.

\* For More Information visit [www.goswim.tv](http://www.goswim.tv) ; Source: GoSwim!

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