

SWIMMING FOR BOYS

With Hints on Life-Saving
By SID G. HEDGES

(Hon. Instructor and Silver Medallist of the Royal Life-Saving Society.)

SPEED swimming has rarely any practical value; and the many boys who spend all their time at swimming baths in taking headers and doing ten or twenty-yard sprints, have little chance of ever becoming real swimmers.

Overarm, trudgeon, crawl—these strokes should never be attempted until the learner has a thorough familiarity with breast- and back-stroke swimming, and with all the recognised methods of life-saving.

The good swimmer is he who feels perfectly at ease in the water; who can rest without clambering ashore; who is never disturbed by chance collisions or rough water, and who moves with the least expenditure of energy, allowing the water to do its full share in keeping him afloat.

Breast-stroke must first be thoroughly mastered by the learner. The great secret of this stroke is to remember that the arm and leg movements consist each of three parts.

The hands, to begin, are drawn up under the chin, back to back, so that the thumbs are touching. Palms must be cupped, and fingers held together. On *one* they are thrust forward until the arms are straight in front of the head, and the width of the shoulders apart. For *two* the arms are swept round, parallel with the surface of the water, until they are in line with each other, at right-angles to the sides of the body. The third movement brings them again to the preliminary position.

The legs are drawn up under the body, knees spread flatly apart. On *one* the feet are kicked out,

until the legs resemble the blades of a pair of scissors—as wide open as possible. On *two* the “scissor-blades” are swept in together, keeping, of course, quite straight. On *three* the legs are once more drawn up.

The proper combining of arms and legs is rather difficult. At the point where the arms are straight and together they should pause a moment to allow the body to glide. Similarly, when the legs are together, they too should remain a moment. Legs and arms are drawn up and kicked out together, but the remaining movements do not coincide.

Of all styles, back-swimming is most important. It is the necessary preliminary to most life-saving methods, and is the foundation of very much fancy and scientific swimming—which is the field of the swimming expert.

The one unpardonable sin in back-swimming is a “sitting position,” that is, with the middle of the body dropped, and the head raised. It is absolutely essential that the body be always straight and as near the surface of the water as possible. Fig. 1 illustrates this correct position.

It is an advantage to be able to float, but it is not a necessary preliminary to back-swimming. The arms, in most life-saving methods, are not used for swimming, so that the learner needs chiefly to study swimming by legs only.

In this style the hands may be kept at the sides, as in the illustration; folded across the chest; or held on the hips. The head must be kept back so that the ears are immersed; the chest should protrude above the surface;



Fig. 1.—Here is shown the correct position for “back-swimming.”

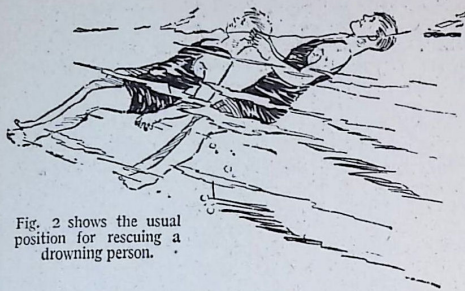


Fig. 2 shows the usual position for rescuing a drowning person.

and the middle of the body be almost awash.

The kick is exactly the same as that of breast-stroke, the other way up. The importance of flattening the knees will now be obvious. Unless they are spread apart they will come right out of the water and so sink the hips.

The three parts of the kick must never be blurred; it is the sweeping together of the straight limbs that is the chief propelling movement.

When a hundred yards can be swum comfortably, on breast or back, life-saving practice may be commenced.

In the most common type of rescue the rescuer swims on his back, holds the drowning person in a similar position, and thus tows him. Fig. 2 illustrates this.

There are various modes of towing suitable for special circumstances.

A drowning person may be unconscious and so passive; he may be struggling and difficult to manage; or he may be calm and completely obedient.

In the case of an unconscious person the method shown in Fig. 2 should be used: the palms of the hands should cover the subject's ears; one's elbows be pressed closely to one's sides; and the elbows should be bent.

The rescuer, obviously, will not be able to swim in an ideal position, as in Fig. 1,

but he should keep as near to it as possible.

In performing a rescue the drowning person's head must, at all costs, be held clear of the water.

If the drowning one be struggling, he must be seized by the arms just above the elbows, and towed as in the former style. His arms will be dragged up in line with his shoulders and, if held firmly, he will be quite powerless.

Should the arms be difficult to hold, the rescuer should thrust his hands beneath the armpits of the other, and bring his hands up until he can place his thumbs on the drowning person's shoulders, with fingers spread on his chest. The rescuer's elbows must then be lifted outwards, raising the other's arms.

In each of these three styles the positions are about as in Fig. 2, but in the second and third method the drowning person is drawn up closer, so as to be almost on top of the rescuer—in the third method his shoulders are actually held against the rescuer's chest, whose leg kick may consequently be hampered by the drowning one's feet.

Shorter, quicker kicks than for ordinary back-swimming are necessary.

Should the person to be rescued be quite calm and obedient—as an experienced swimmer with cramp may often be—a much simpler style of rescue may be adopted.

This is shown in Fig. 3.

The subject floats on his back, forcing himself upward by pressing downwards on his rescuer's shoulders. His arms are kept quite rigid—this is most important—his head



Fig. 3. Here is illustrated an alternative position for rescue work.

held back; his chest awash, and his feet together.

The rescuer is thus able to swim an ordinary breast-stroke, pushing the drowning person before him.

To be clutched by a drowning person may be a serious thing, unless one is familiar with the proper manner of releasing oneself. The young swimmer is advised to study the method taught by the Royal Life Saving Society. This society hold examinations for various grades of proficiency, and every boy should aim at securing their world-famous certificates. Full particulars can be obtained from 8, Bayley Street, Bedford Square, London, W.

Often a drowning person sinks to the bottom of the water and the rescuer is faced with the problem of getting him from a depth of perhaps six or ten feet.

Unless one is proficient in surface-diving this is almost impossible.

Fig. 4 illustrates a correct surface-dive, by which a depth of ten feet may be reached with ease.

One should swim along by breast-stroke, taking a few deep breaths to clear and fill the lungs. Then the head is depressed, and a downward breast-stroke pull is taken with the arms, until the top part of the body points downwards, as nearly vertical as necessary, as in the illustration. Next, the legs, together, are raised out of the water until the body is again straight—as shown by the dotted lines. The weight of the limbs out of the water will cause the body to dart downwards, without any splash.

The hands are held beyond the head, thumbs hooked, as in an ordinary dive. On coming to the surface it is only necessary to tilt the hands upwards, and throw the head back. A couple of breast-stroke

kicks will help one, however, to come up more quickly.

Surface diving for tin plates, towels, or stones should be much practised. Eyes, of course, should always be open under water.

In bringing up an unconscious person from the bottom, his shoulders should be firmly gripped. The rescuer will then bring his feet down, and push off from the bottom, bringing up his burden in a position ready to be towed ashore.

The competent life-saver must know something of artificial respiration—the Schafer method, as taught by the Royal Life-Saving Society, is best.

No one should ever bathe until at least two hours have elapsed since the last meal.

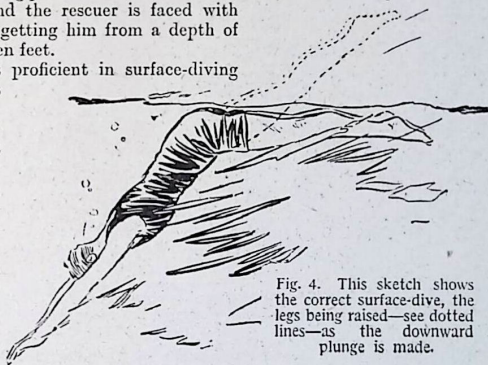


Fig. 4. This sketch shows the correct surface-dive, the legs being raised—see dotted lines—as the downward plunge is made.

The proper time to leave the water is just when one feels in a healthy glow; to wait until one gets chilly spoils all the benefits of the bathe, and puts one in danger of an attack of cramp.

It is never safe to bathe from unfamiliar, unfrequented spots, for un-

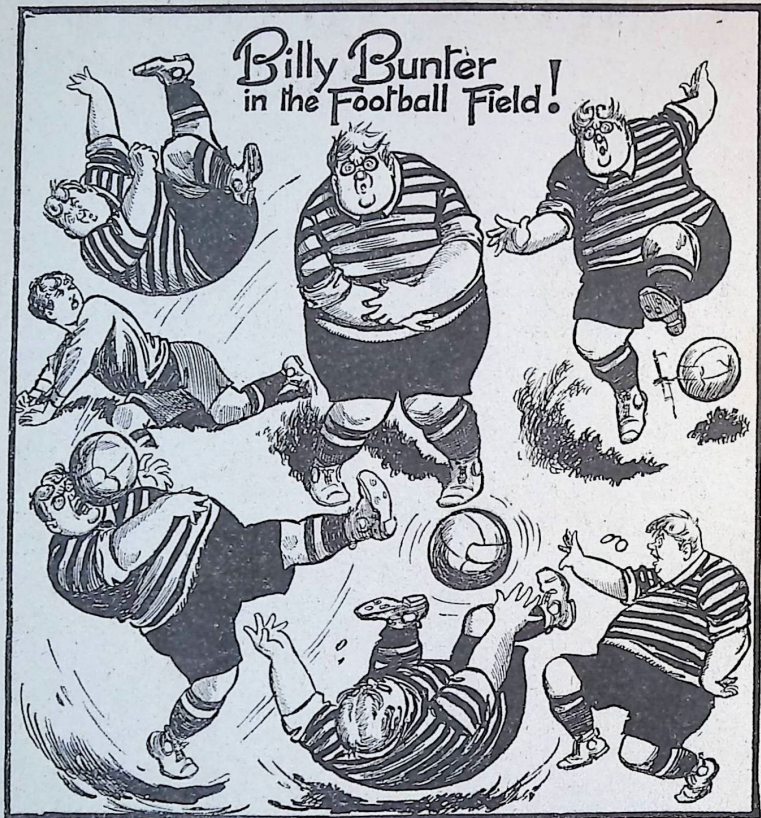
known, dangerous currents may exist. And the wise swimmer, if bathing alone, will not swim far unless someone else is at hand, in case of emergency.

This applies in particular to sea-bathing, where currents may carry a swimmer very swiftly out to sea, carrying him beyond help before he realises that he is in danger.

Nothing will so help the learner to become a competent, all-round swimmer as constant practice of the life-saving methods. And no other exercise offers so much delight and scope for skill and art as swimming.

THE END

THE GREAT WILLIAM GEORGE AT PLAY!



When Billy Bunter, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, takes the field, the spectators are treated to "football extraordinary"! He has a style of play that is all his own, and at times is inclined to throw his weight about—bowling over friend and foe with great impartiality! It is perhaps fortunate for the other players that Billy Bunter suffers from shortness of breath, and in consequence is usually removed from the field in a state of collapse long before half-time!