



SWIMMING AS ONE

TEXT BY KRISS HENDY
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Swimming involves full body synchronisation, with our upper body and lower body working together joined by our core.

When we first learn to swim, especially as children, we tend to separate our arm stroke, our leg kick and breathing before putting them all back together. This is the classic whole-part-whole method of learning.

Perfecting elements of our performance in isolation like this can be highly effective but it must always be followed by the complete action. By “connecting the dots” like this we can train our body to become more efficient as a whole.

“Train the whole and not just the part”

PROBLEM:
ISOLATION EXERCISES WON'T IMPROVE OUR PERFORMANCE

When we talk about strength training for swimming we are looking to develop strength throughout the whole body. It is obviously important to consider the main areas of weakness and focus our attention on developing these until they become strengths. However, many can fall into the trap of focusing too much on developing the strength of these specific

areas, forgetting to relate it back to whole body performance.

For example, working on developing our shoulder strength is great but if you don't train it in a conjunction with your core and lower body you won't get the full benefit in the water. But why not, you ask?

For our strength training to be effective, there is one mechanism that we need to be aware of, especially when developing strength for swimming.

THE 'SLING SYSTEM'

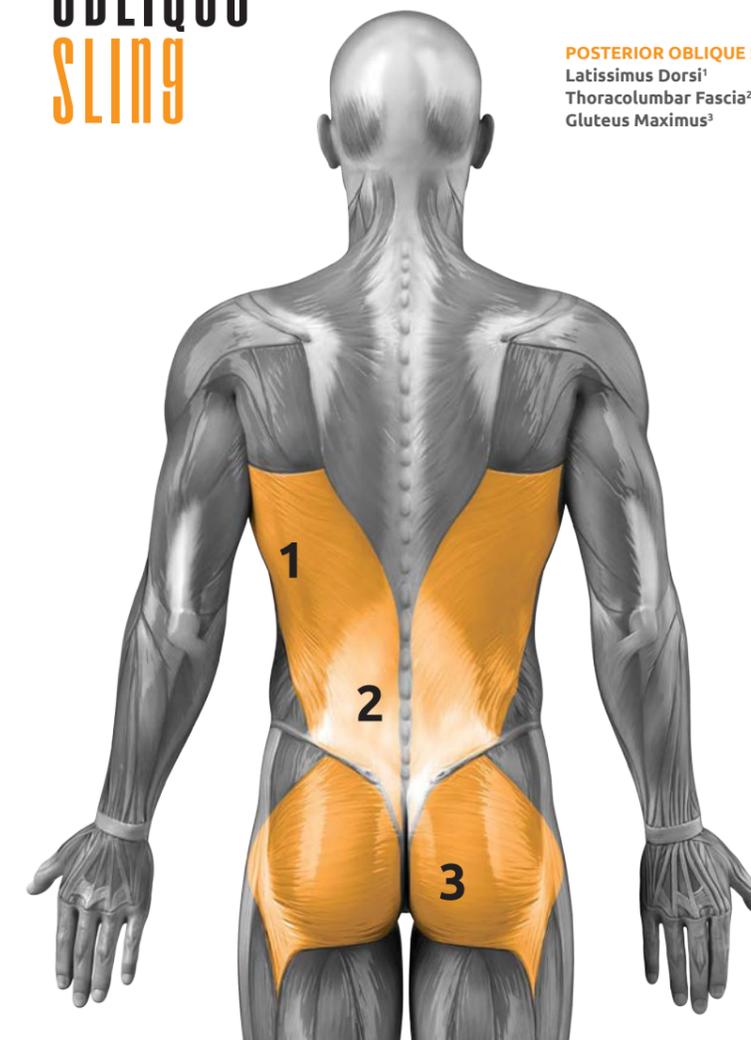
A 'sling' is a group of opposing muscles that work in a diagonal fashion. There are a number of these 'slings' or systems throughout the body, but for the purpose of this article we will be focusing on the one that affects our swimming the most: the 'Posterior Oblique Sling'.

Now before you start to think this is a bit too confusing and 'science-y', all you need to be able to do is picture where the sling lies and how taking it into consideration during your training will help improve performance and reduce the risk of injury.

As you can see in the diagram (right) it shows that the muscles involved in this mechanism are the Gluteus Maximus, Latissimus Dorsi and Thoracolumbar Fascia. When the opposing Glute Max and Lats are forced to contract during movement, the tension that builds up along this 'sling' stabilises the hip joint, in turn enhancing the transfer of energy (e.g. more power).

POSTERIOR OBLIQUE SLING

POSTERIOR OBLIQUE SLING:
Latissimus Dorsi¹
Thoracolumbar Fascia²
Gluteus Maximus³



“ A 'sling' is a group of opposing muscles that work in a diagonal fashion. ” — Kriss Hendy

In a practical situation, the sling is the key contributor to rotational forces such as swinging a golf club, throwing a ball or more relevant to us - during our front crawl swim stroke.

Its primary function is to stabilise the pelvis and spine during movement. So, in swimming, this means a strong sling will help keep our body streamlined, control the rotation of our midsection and pelvis - all enhancing the efficiency of our swim.

The sling is also the reason we can perform the action of arm and hip extension together at the same time. Along with other surrounding muscles, it ensures that we have an adequate amount of core stabilisation during all of our movements.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Other than losing the efficiency of your swim stroke i.e. slowing you down, when someone has Glutes or Lats that aren't working optimally, the tension created through movement is transferred into surrounding muscles such as the shoulder, lower back or hamstrings and increases the likelihood of injury or pain.

SO HOW DO I APPLY THIS TO MY TRAINING?

The following exercises are a few examples of how you can train your Posterior Oblique Sling. They all require a controlled degree of movement or rotation. **AT**



TIP: If your Glutes and Lats aren't working optimally, you may find yourself with pain or even injury in other areas such as the shoulder, lower back or hamstring.

Key Exercises to train your Posterior Oblique Sling:



PALLOF PRESS



STANDING PALLOF PRESS: Standing tall and side on to band, clasp band at centre of chest, take a breath, engage your core and press band away. Draw band back towards chest, avoiding the rotational pull of the band throughout. Complete 3 x 10 on each side.



CABLE/BANDED WOODCHOP



BANDED WOOD CHOP: Kneeling side on, hold band with extended arms and draw across body from high to low position, look to keep arms straight and rotate with your shoulders and not your hips then control return to start and repeat. Complete 3 x 10 on each side.

PLANK WITH LEG LEFT /AND OR ARM LIFT



PLANK: With single leg or arm lift, in front plank position on elbows or hands, lift one foot off the ground trying to keep your body position level at all times. When confident add an additional arm lift (opposite side) trying to remain in a stable position. Aim for 60 seconds alternating between 10 second lifts.

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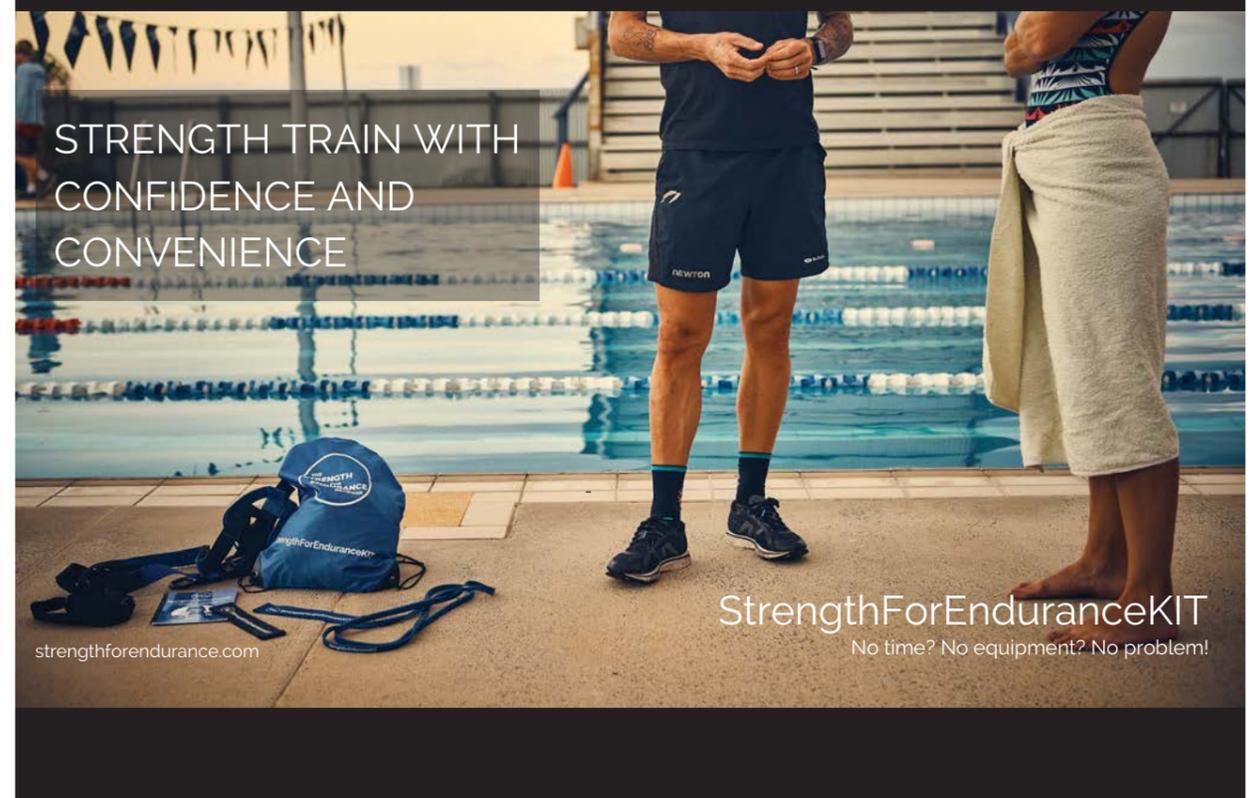


Seeing the need for better athlete education and understanding

with regards to Strength and Conditioning for the Endurance Athlete. Kriss works with a variety of athletes from Age Groupers to Professionals, developing programs that support and heighten their endurance performance. Kriss is based in Byron Bay with his wife, professional triathlete Polly Hendy. He has both a local and international client base that use his online Strength Training Packages.

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