“Technique is the most important feature of competitive swimming. Even at the highest level of performance in the sport, technique is the most significant factor that differentiates performers” (Brent Rushall, 2011).

Over the last 30-40 years competitive swimmers have trained much of the time by doing large volumes of swimming and doing drills to attempt to isolate portions of the stroke and using lots of different equipment like snorkels and fins to do likewise. Whilst this has led to many successes in the pool, it has also led to many young swimmers leaving the sport due to over-training at too young an age and just being plain bored with miles upon miles of swimming. Ultra-Short Race Pace Training or USRPT is a relatively new style of competitive swimming training developed in the last 10-15 years by an Australian sports Psychologist and Swimming Coach called Professor Brent Rushall. He became convinced that swimming coaching could be improved if the “Principal of Specificity” were followed more closely in competitive swimming training.

USRPT is all about getting the swimmers to practice their races as often as possible using the Principal of Specificity. This is done by breaking down the race into smaller sections (25m or 50m) and getting the swimmers to swim those short distances at their personal best speed with a short rest of about 20 seconds between each length. They do this as often as they can over a period of weeks and months, so that the body becomes accustomed to the stress and exertion that a race requires. The swimmers learn to run their own training sets giving them responsibility for their own training, freeing up the coaches to focus on correcting technique flaws and introducing technique enhancements. Physical fitness comes as a by-product of this interval-based training at high intensity, but it is technical excellence that is the key goal. This is particularly true when working with adolescents who have yet to fully develop both physically and mentally.

The information above has been taken from Dave McMahon’s book *Ultra-Short Race Pace Training (USRPT) in a Local Swimming Club Environment: A practical guide on how to make USPRT work in a Community Swimming Club*. If you wish to gain more insight into this training method and how it works in our club, I strongly recommend you read this extremely insightful book.