



Sweaty She Monday (7/13/09):

Attention Swimmer Dudes: WE DON'T NEED YOUR STINKIN HELP!

By Susan Farago

Weekly Sweaty She postings can be found on "Sweaty She" on Facebook.com.

Most of us at one point in time or another have had this experience:

You're in the pool trying to perfect your swim stroke by doing swim drills or you just finishing up a killer set of swim intervals and you're hanging out at the end of the lane trying to catch your breath. You feel a presence...then you hear a voice – “You know, if you moved your arms like this you would swim a lot faster.” You look over and there “he” is – the guy in your lane (or the lane next to you) giving you unsolicited swim advice.

In his mind, he is Mister Wonderful helping a Little Lady with her cute little swim stroke. In your mind he is some idiot who needs to shut up and/or go away. I've heard the story again and again. And I've even experienced it first hand.

To the guys who do this: STOP IT!!!!

To the guys who are even thinking of doing it: DON'T YOU DARE!!!!

Who are these (typically older) guys? And why do they think we care about what they have to say? And what is it about being in a pool or lake that makes this happen? I can honestly say I have never had a guy run up alongside me on the road or trail and say, “Hey, you know if you lift your knees more and lean forward, it will improve your running form.” Then again, maybe the guy would be afraid of getting maced. Do we need to start carrying mace in the pool?

My friend Danny once explained to me that guys have a “super hero” complex and they want to feel needed. So following that line of logic, we (women) have to deal with men's insecurities of feeling needed by putting up with unsolicited “helpfulness”? What about us women who are perfectly capable of doing things for ourselves because of course we are our own super heroes: Wonder Woman or Cat Woman to name a few? Maybe it all boils down to a clash of super heroes?

Then there is the other alternative – the basic premise that men are just looking for an excuse to hit on women. My friend Lindsay and Debbie have recently experienced this. Debbie even said the guy went as far as grabbing her foot as she swam away, explaining to her in a very French accent, “Non...non...zees is how you should sweem.”

In light of these incidents, I have come up with a list of helpful tips for the next time (and there will be a next time) this happens:

1. Ignore the guy and keep your back to him.

If this doesn't work...

2. Keep swimming – this is a great opportunity to use your kickboard to keep moving but get in some rest or recovery.

If this doesn't work and he starts talking to you...

3. Pretend he is an Amway representative and put your hand up and say, “Thank you but I am not interested.”

If this doesn't work and he proceeds to keep talking...

4. Just go under water.

If this doesn't work and he stands there waiting for you to reemerge...

5. Ask him if he is in any way related to Michael Phelps or Ian Flemming. If the answer is “no” (which it will be), respond with, “I didn't think so” and swim away.

If this doesn't work and he just keeps trying to bug you...

6. Explain to him that while you agree that you ARE really attractive and DO look hot in a bathing suit and that you CAN understand why he would want to talk to you, you are in a relationship and not interested. And you will try to turn down your tractor beam of hotness so as not to further distract him.

If this doesn't work and you've finally had enough...

7. Start screaming at him to get the “F” out of your lane and to leave you alone (as in the case of one woman who started shrieking this at the top of her lungs at a guy who jumped into our lane to start circle swimming. I actually laughed out loud. You go girl!)

It seems unfair that we women have to do all the work in deflecting these unsolicited advances. Maybe there is something we can do up front that would warn would-be offenders. Swim caps can help. I have noticed a direct correlation between the type of swim cap I wear and reactions I get in the pool. When I wear a race swim cap, it provides an easy ice breaker – “Hey, which race did you do?” When I wear my “Girl Power” swim cap, this emits a feminist, equal rights vibe which men usually translate into my either being a lesbian or a bitch. And while I am neither, I'll go with the illusion that I am either or both if it wards off male offenders.

So keep swimming my female aquatic super hero friends and know that you are not alone in the ongoing battle of good versus idiots in the pool.

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