



Backstroke Starts: Pay Attention To Your Posture

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Many of the best backstrokers are having better posture on their backstroke starts. Their backs are vertical – straight up-and-down – and their heads are either neutral or tilted back. The best backstroke start position will vary by individual, but this is something that all backstrokers should try and play around with.

You can change your posture by bringing your hips closer to the wall and/or by pulling in less with your arms. One advantage of starting with a straight back is that you are in a better position to jump off and extend your body from the wall. Another benefit that some people say is that you are less likely to have your feet slip on the wall.

There are still some backstrokers with great starts that maintain a more traditional start position – with the hips sticking out and the back angled toward the wall. Among those are Matt Grevers, Emily Seebohm, and co-World Champion Jeremy Stravius from France, who is the fastest person to 15m in 2011.

Check out the start positions of these great backstrokers. Notice the position of the back, head, and hips:



(a) Matt Grevers, (b) Peter Marshall, (c) Ryan Lochte, (d) Nick Thoman, (e) Elizabeth Pelton, (f) Aya Terakawa, (g) Emily Seebohm, (h) Natalie Coughlin

For the rest of the start, here are some video observations of the best backstrokers:

- There is some head movement, but most do not throw their head all the way back.
- Everyone's arms go over the top, not around to the side.
- The arms do not push away from the block. In fact, many of the best backstrokers can be seen pulling themselves upward slightly.
- Foot position varies. If there is no gutter or ledge, some backstrokers put their feet above the surface. Other backstrokers stagger their feet (put one foot higher than the other) to help them from not slipping.