



LONG COURSE vs. SHORT COURSE

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

As we approach Long Course season, we wanted to take time to share some information with you and help answer any of your questions about the seasons, their differences, and what can be expected.

For most of the year, from the end of August to the end of March, it is Short Course season. Competitions are held in a 25-yard pool. After Spring Break, Long Course season officially begins. Those competitions are held in a 50-meter (164 feet) pool. That's over a 50% increase in pool distance! This is the size pool you see when you watch the Olympics!

In terms of training, both Short Course and Long Course swimming have their advantages.

Short Course:

- Swimmers make more turns to swim the same length in a short course race
- Short course races are perceived to be exciting, intense, and fast paced
- Short course swimming is great for building speed, as the turns require bursts of power and agility

Long Course:

- Long course races give swimmers more opportunities to build up speed and maintain momentum, as they have fewer turns
- Long course swimming is great for building endurance and improving stroke technique, as swimmers have more time to focus on their strokes and maintain a consistent pace
- Long course training helps our bodies become accustomed to sprinting with higher heart rate and muscle fatigue through longer continuous distances
- Long course training improves your cells' ability to regulate the acidity in your muscles, decreasing the amount of muscle burning and fatigue you feel

Is One Better Than the Other?

There's no answer to which format is better. The differences show that based on swimmers' strengths and weaknesses, some often perform better in one course versus the other.

As we train to adjust to the new pool length, you will see A LOT of kicking. Our kick is our motor; so for us to have an efficient and exciting Long Course season, we must train our legs appropriately. You will also see more glides and length in the swimmers' strokes. Covering as much distance as possible is extremely helpful when you must swim across a pool the width of a football field.

Competition Times

To avoid confusion, Short Course times and Long Course times are kept separately. Short Course times, often seen as "SCY," do not convert over for Long Course. Long Course times, often seen as "LCM," do not convert over for Short Course.

Long Course competition times will seem slow because they are swimming more than double the distance that they are used to; and they have fewer walls to push from.

For example: A swimmer has a 50 Freestyle time of :35 seconds during Short Course. After they swim the 50 Freestyle Long Course, they have a time of :44 seconds. These two times coexist; so if you were to look up your swimmer's fastest times, they will both be listed.

Does training in a 25-yard pool have an adverse impact on swimmers during the long course competition?

Unfortunately, long course pools are very limited. Many of our practice groups will continue practice at our short course facilities in March, April, & May until we are able to fit everyone into our long course facilities.

However, the simple answer to the above question is NO! While we begin the Long Course season training in Short Course pools, training in a 25-yard pool is not a disadvantage for our swimmers. Our FCST coaches design their practices to best train the swimmers for the meter length swims. The swimmers may notice the set intervals have changed or that they are training unusual distances in order to prepare them for the longer pool.

Please keep in mind that Long Course training is an adjustment, and it will take time. Some swimmers will take to it faster than others; but by the end of July, everyone will have adjusted and will have conquered Long Course!

If you have any additional questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to your swimmer's coach. We are excited to continue this journey with your athletes and are looking forward to their continued success!

Is your swimmer leaving for the summer and returning in the fall?

If you are planning on leaving FCST for the summer, please connect with your coach to understand this process and to get your swimmer's group placement for the coming fall.