

## SUITS, SUITS AND MORE SUITS

I would be surprised if anyone on our team has not heard or read about the entire fiasco over the past year with the new high tech suits. Up until 2000 the most advanced suit was the Speedo Aquablade but in that year the FS2 was unveiled and followed soon by the FS Pro. A few of the coaches back then tried to stop these high tech advances, having seen what it has done in sports like cycling where the equipment at times is more important than the rider, but failed. The battle cry was what would the next generation bring, how much will it cost and when will we follow our rules [from FINA] that does not allow anything to help buoyancy nor improve speed.

That first generation of high tech suits definitely crossed the line but it took the current cycle of suits and the future outlook of Biomed companies getting into the suit manufacturing business that completely obliterated any line at all. With the prodding from ASCA [the American Swim Coaches Assoc.] and full support of American Swimming, at times alone against the world swimming community, FINA [the international swimming federation] finally began a process which first step has culminated this week. Standards have been set and a scientist and research facility hired to carry out tests on these suits. There are one set of standards for this summer, focused mainly on buoyancy, a second stricter set for January 2010 [limiting types of materials] and discussions for 2011 that could limit the coverage back to previous standards [knees to naval for males, hips to shoulders for females]. Arms have already been taken out as permissible for coverage.

The first set of tests have been completed, two things have happened, more suits than expected were put in for evaluation. Over 400 suits from 22 different companies. Second, more suits failed than expected, around 125, more than 25%. Two of the major suits that affect us both negatively and positively. None of the Blue 70 suits passed, which in itself was a surprise. Possibly the most prolific of the High Tech suits used by Americans. The reality is that it is nothing less than a wetsuit which helps everyone float better. Second was that the two higher end 'Jaked' suits failed as well. Only the cheaper suit passed. Most of you might not have heard this name before, it is a suit out of Italy and was instrumental in Auburn University winning the NCAA this year. They had five of these suits which none of the other schools had at the time. Also, this summer has seen another rash of new world records and not by the current world record holders. Almost all have been set in these Jaked suits. The swimmers aren't any better, just the equipment. Internationally this bodes well for our Americans as we prepare for the World Championships this summer.

What does all this mean for the Sarasota Y Sharks, well it makes our job of being the best all the more easier. We have never put any store in the suit, we focus on making each and every swimmer better. We won JO's with the majority of our swimmers in plain Endurance Speedo's and with no one in any type of body suit. We won Y Nationals with only 25% of our swimmers using a Speedo LZR [which passed the tests], but most of our swimmers wearing 2<sup>nd</sup> generation technology with first generation attitude and training. For most coaches and swimmers they will have to go back to 'Old School' and will find the transition difficult. They put too much store in everything but themselves. For the Sharks, we will just keep doing what we have been doing, but even better. Remember; it is not the suit that makes the swimmer, it is the swimmer that makes the suit.