

Times

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New bathing suit technology has increased swimmers' speed as well. Franklin has a sponsorship with TYR Sport, and the team went to an outlet store last month to pick out new lightweight, tight-fitting suits designed to repel water.

Indian Creek coach Brad Smith says new suits can make a big difference.

"We have seen that it makes a huge impact on the swim. We're usually talking two or three seconds per 100 yards," he said.

"The suits are water-resistant with high-tech fiber that repels water pretty much like another layer of skin instead of just an article of apparel, and there is a bit of a buoyancy factor that helps keep the swimmers on top of the water."

"They love it until two weeks later when the hair starts to grow back. Then they are sitting there itching."

Brad Smith

Indian Creek boys swimming coach on swimmers shaving their bodies

All hair must go

While improved suits shave seconds off swimmers' times, there's another type of shaving that completes the tapering puzzle: All hair must go.

That means heads, chests, arms, legs, armpits, and even toes and fingers.

Some swimmers go the extra mile and remove their eyebrows.

"I don't suggest or recommend that," Findley said.

Many swimmers shaving for the first time are a bit apprehensive.

"It's one of those things that guys in high school have to get over the first time," Findley said. "Once they do it, it's not a big deal. It's just getting all the dead cells off and gets you mentally ready for the race."

For most young men, shaving their legs, arms and armpits aren't rites passed down from father to son. Many have to learn through trial and error, which means plenty of nicks and cuts.

"I'll give them a few tips, or I'll tell them to get help from their mom if they need it," Greenwood coach Doug O'Neill said.

Many times freshmen learn the skill from upperclassmen.

"My seniors and juniors know what it takes to be careful, and they will go through and guide the younger guys," Smith said.

"Altogether, it turns out to be a pretty safe environment, but I've had to go in there and teach a few the finer points, like how to shave behind the knees."

Findley, who graduated from Franklin in 2000, remembers his shaving days. He has a mole on top of his head and repeatedly warned teammates to be careful when shaving his head. On most occasions, they didn't heed his warning.

"They shaved my mole off every time," he said. "I bled like a pig."

Franklin junior Ben Cottongim had no idea shaving his entire body would take as long as it did.

He first had to use clippers to shorten his leg hair before taking a razor to it. But once he was finished and he jumped in the water, it was worth the work.

"When you get in the water the first time after you shave, it feels awesome," he said. "You feel like you're gliding through the water."

Being de-haired takes some adjustment.

Smith said many of his swimmers talk about how it feels like they are lying in silk sheets on their beds and how weird their

hairless legs feel in their jeans.

"They love it until two weeks later when the hair starts to grow back. Then they are sitting there itching," Smith said.

To get ready for tonight's sectional preliminaries, Franklin's swimmers met at a teammate's house to get "shaved down."

With the swimming and diving finals scheduled for Saturday, another shaving get-together will occur either Friday evening or early Saturday morning.

Tapering won't cut 10 seconds off a swimmer's time, but it provides more than a physical edge, area coaches say.

"There is a huge mental aspect of tapering," Smith said.

"The shaving aspect of it might be a couple of tenths of a second, but I think there is a huge mental aspect of it too, just feeling that you're faster."

O'Neill said a number of his athletes shave their heads, but

some opt to keep their hair and wear a swim cap instead.

Greenwood's top swimmers take the plunge and remove all body hair, but it hasn't caught on with the entire team like at other area schools.

"As far as our program is concerned, some of the kids are a little apprehensive at first," O'Neill said. "Swimming doesn't permeate through the student population at Greenwood as it may at other well-established programs. But once they do it and feel the kind of difference it makes in the water, most kids are sold on it."

Cottongim said classmates rub his freshly shaved head in the hallways and crack jokes about his new, smoother look.

"I think some of my friends at school who aren't swimmers think it's kind of weird," Cottongim said. "But it's one of the things that swimmers do, and everybody kind of accepts it."

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- * Grizzly Club Special, a cheeseburger, French fries and cola, for \$5, which includes tax. This is available daily from 3 to 8 p.m.
- * House Special, \$5.95 meatloaf, available Monday through Friday.
- * All You Can Eat Fish, \$6.99 on Fridays.
- * Senior citizens always get a 10 percent discount

The Checkered Flag has an extensive breakfast menu. You can get a variety of breakfasts that include two eggs and your choice of bacon, sausage patties, ham, smoked sausage, 8-ounce chopped steak or corned beef hash. Omelets, all under \$5, can be made with cheese, bacon, sausage or ham, as well as Western, Veggie or Country style. Or try the hot biscuits and gravy to ward off the autumn chill. The little ones will enjoy the

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