



**Effortless**swimming Podcast

# **The One About Epic Races (with Trent Grimsey)**

**Podcast 14**

## The Effortless Swimming Podcast



Welcome to another episode of the [Effortless Swimming podcast](#). This episode we have Trent Grimsey on a video call. Trent is an open water swimmer, he is an Australian team member and most notably he has recently broken the English Channel world record. He went 6 hours 55 minutes, breaking the old record by 2 minutes and 50 seconds. We are going to chat to Trent about the Channel swim but also about his training,

technique, how he avoids injury doing so many km's in the pool. We are going to talk about diet and wet suits and open water swimming in general so welcome to the call Trent.

Thank-you very much and thanks for having me on the show.

**Let's get into it by starting with how you transitioned from pool [swimming](#) into open water swimming how you made that move?**

I was a pool swimmer pretty much all my life since 2008 and I swam the Olympic trials for the 1500m in 2008 and placed third behind Grant Hackett and Craig Stevens in the 1500m I actually swam under the qualifying time but they only took the top two there so that was quite frustrating for me. I guess after that I had a little bit of break maybe a month off and re-assessed things, marathon swimming had just become an Olympic sport so I was toying with the idea of making the switch from pool to open water swimming then. I thought **hey I have nothing to lose I will try it for 12 months if I don't like it I can easily go back or if I like it I can just stay doing open water and marathon swimming.** In 2009 was my first year of really swimming serious open water and got some really good results. I won some really big races overseas and I won a silver medal at world champs in the 25km so I think it was probably after that I decided that marathon swimming was for me.

**If you look at your achievements in races over the last couple of years it goes on for pages the amount of races you have placed in.**



## **What is your motivation behind doing so many races when they are such big distances?**

I just hate not being the best at something, I figure if I am going to do something why not give it 100% and give it my all so that I can my best. I guess what motivates me is wanting to be the best and knowing that I have people chasing me wanting to try and knock me off.

## **You have definitely got that now with the English Channel world record. Can you tell us a little bit about how that came about and what inspired you to set that goal of setting the channel record?**

I think it was... back in 2009 I won my silver medal at world championships and it was the first time I had even swum that distance 25km and I was probably on the plane on the way home I remember thinking wow... the ultra marathons are probably my thing now. I guess it was just the next step like every marathon swimmers dream is not only to swim the English Channel but to hold this record. When I got home I didn't really know much about the English Channel so I googled as much information as I could about it. I found out you have to book it a long time in advance if you want a good tide, a good pilot, and a good spot in the tide. I remember booked in 2009 then I booked it for September 2012 so only a couple of months ago. I just continued on with all my normal races and probably 12 months out from when I was meant to swim the channel that was when I really started to knuckle down and swim longer kilometres, change my diet a little bit and tweak the small things that I needed to tweak to swim a fast English Channel.

## **You set it three years out and then you got sick in 2010**

Yeah

## **Then you came back from being sick and is that when you started to focus on it or was it twelve months out? When did you start to train for the Channel?**

Solely for the English Channel was probably after the world championships in 2011 every race I did or everything I did, I did knowing I was going to swim the English Channel in September. I actually left Australia two months before I swam the English Channel and I did a different marathon every weekend in a different country for the eight weeks leading up to when I swam the channel. I did this to prepare my body; because swimming fast marathons is not like running you can't swim a one off and expect to swim fast. With swimming marathons you



need to do quite a few so your body adjusts and adapts to them. These marathons I did most of them were in cold water specifically to get my body ready for the channel.

**Your training schedule leading up to the channel, how many sessions in the pool were you doing in a week or in the open water as well.**

Six months out from the Channel I took it up to 11 sessions a week, three gym sessions and a hell of a lot of dry land. It's all about fitness really, the English Channel, you need to be as fit as you can and hope for a good day.

**With your sessions were they all aerobic based? How many km's were you getting up to a week?**

I was doing probably anywhere between 80-90km a week leading up to the Channel. I few probably bigger than 90km but most of it was aerobic based we took quite a few of the sprint sessions out because we obviously don't need when I am swimming a 7 hour race I don't need those sprint sessions so we took them out and changed them with some aerobic sessions.

**You are now training for World Championships next year?**

Yeah that's my big goal for next year, world champs. I obviously have a few races before then. I have the Australian trials in February where they pick the team so obviously I want to swim well there to swim the 5km, the 10km and the 25km. So we qualify in February for the events we want to swim in June.

**With your training now is that training for the 10km or 25km?**

[Swimming Australia](#) doesn't actually have a 25km at a national so it is a little bit ridiculous. I have changed my training to swim a fast 10km. Since I got back from the Channel I had a little bit of a break and everything we have done now is to swim a fast 10km. So we have put those sprint sessions back in, we have added another gym session a week and I am starting to trim down a lot more too. At our Australian Nationals we swim the 5km and 10km and out of those people that make the team you need a top two for both of those races and then out of the four people that are in that team they give the 25km spot to those swimmers.



**Ok, so it is all for the 10km. You are doing so many km's in the pool how do you avoid injury?**



I just have a really good physiotherapist I think. I see him every week and get a massage every week too so physio every week and a massage every week. I have a personal training and at the moment we are going through a strength phase but he is really good. He makes sure I do all the machines, all my weight properly with proper technique. To be honest I have never had any bad shoulders that have

kept me from not swimming or anything like, I have been really fortunate with injuries to date to hopefully I can keep it that way.

**With your technique what are the things that you focus on when you are in the pool or water?**

With my technique, obviously doing marathon swimming it's good to be efficient but to a lot of people that have seen me swim I am not super efficient. I have a pretty high stroke rate; I think it's **all about rhythm** to be honest. I am a rhythmic swimmer I swim fast when I am in good rhythm so that is something I really work on. It's not so much stroke it is more just rhythm.

**How do you go about finding a good rhythm for yourself?**

Again it is just practice and training. You obviously have different rhythm for different speeds that you are doing and just working those different speeds in training.

**With your kick do you focus much on your kick being a marathon swimmer or do you focus more on the pool?**

We do a little bit of kick in training, we don't do too much. I am not a great kicker I am ok I can kick 135 cycles are probably the fastest I can kick per 100. We do a little bit we do enough that if I ever come down to a sprint finish I have my kick there but at the end of the day I don't think kicks is one of the most important things to a marathon swimmer.

**Absolutely. With your training sets what would you say one of the toughest sets that you have done in training is?**



I remember it was leading up to the Channel probably four months before I swam the Channel I did 100 x 150m on 145 cycle so 1500m at 110 pace. That was pretty rough.

**That tops off the toughest session we have had on this podcast that's for sure. Speaking to Ollie Wilkinson who has also done the Channel and the Manhattan swim he often does 10 x 1000m which is probably pretty common for marathon swimmers. That's a quick pace so that awesome.**

**In terms of race strategy for the longer distance stuff so anything over 20km, how do you pace one of those races?**

Look all those races, the longer races are all just tactics to be honest. If you are swimming a 20km race the first 2/3 of the race is just swimming easy pretty much just staying in the pack and seeing what the pack is going to do. Seeing who is trying to break away. Then the last third of the race is just go balls out and give it everything and hope no-one else can keep up with you. The longer races they are all tactic; if someone breaks away you try to see who it is if it is someone who you **think is not going to be a threat you don't bother chasing them because you know the pack will catch them.** If it is someone who is going to be a threat you obviously have to work hard to get them. Every race is different but most of the time 2/3 of the race is probably easy and I could back stroke or breast stroke and still be in the pack and it's the last third of the race that's really fast.



**So you look to draft a lot of the time or just take it in turns if there is a big enough pack.**

It depends if the people in the pack if they are your mates and they want to work with you and work together yeah we will take turns but if it is **people you don't know and no-one else is willing to pull their weight I am not going to pull my weight I will just sit at the back of the pack and let someone else do all the work.**

**So it is a bit like cycling...**

Exactly like cycling yeah.

**What about the shorter stuff if you are doing 2-3km races how do you go about pacing those do you do a similar thing or just go for it from the start?**

It depends on the course and the conditions those little races, they are probably my favourite. I love swimming those 2-3km races they are kind of my bread and butter up here in Queensland that's how I make most of my money on the weekends doing those types of races. Every race is different it depends what competitors are in the race, if you know you have a competitor in the race you know his weaknesses you kind of swim to exploit his weaknesses.

**One of those competitors is your brother, you come from a pretty amazing swimming family so you obviously know your brother's back to front when you are racing those guys.**

Definitely, but if I never win a race I want my brothers to win a race. While were competitors I still get really excited when he swims well too so it's not overly competitive with my brothers and I.

**So you work as a team, that is pretty awesome. With your diet what does your diet look like each day? What kind of foods do you avoid? What do you like to eat?**

Honestly the amount of kilometres I swim I can pretty much get away with eating anything but to be honest from Monday – Friday I try and eat as healthy as I can and then on the weekends I just eat whatever I want normally it's a lot of takeaway on the weekends but Monday – Friday pretty healthy. Lots of vegetables, lots of fruit no real take away from Monday – Friday but on the weekends I can eat whatever I want. That is pretty much what I stick to.

**Eat well during the week and then reward yourself on the weekend.**

**With wetsuits do you wear sleeveless or sleeved and what sort of things do you need in a wet suit for it to be comfortable for you.**

I honestly don't do many races in a wetsuit but ever since the series I have been doing they are all wetsuit races. I have had to start wearing a wetsuit for these races and while I prefer to swim in a sleeveless wetsuit I think it is a lot faster to swim with sleeves. With a wetsuit I think the



more often you wear one the comfortable you are going to be in one. I absolutely hate wearing them I know I don't wear them enough but in training leading up to a race I wear maybe one or two times a couple of days before I race. If I had my way no one would wear a wetsuit.

**Especially coming from Queensland not like down here in Melbourne where every race is pretty much with a wetsuit.**

No races in Queensland you are allowed to wear a wetsuit.

**It would be much too hot. Do you change your technique at all when you are wearing a wetsuit?**

I try not to, obviously you are a lot higher in the water and it makes me kick a little bit more because my legs aren't down so much. I haven't really noticed too much of a change to be honest.

**Your are a professional marathon swimmer so you have a number of sponsors that help you out so you can continue to train full time and do those sorts of things. Who are the sponsors that help you out with that?**

Definitely. It is Finis is my main swimsuit sponsor they have been great to me the last twelve months. Straphine Sport and Physio Care, the College of health and fitness, Premax...

**Putting you under the pump now**

Yeah, it's going to be awkward if I do forget any. They are my main ones anyway.

**Where can people find out more about you and keep track of your progress with your swimming.**

I have a website, [www.trentgrimsey.com](http://www.trentgrimsey.com) I put all my race results I keep a blog I have links to my Facebook and Twitter on that website as well. So log onto my website and you will find everything.

**When people go on there they will see the huge amount of races that you have done and it just keeps getting updated weekly so it is awesome the amount of races that you are doing. So people that are listening to this jump onto Trentgrimsey.com because there is a lot of good stuff on there.**



**Thanks for being on the podcast this week and best of luck in February for the national championships in June with the world champs.**

Thanks so much and thanks for taking the time to talk to me.

**My pleasure, thanks again.**

