

# A&F

The ultimate active lifestyle magazine

ATION & FITNESS MAGAZINE

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**THE PROS  
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**101**

WE TAKE YOU  
TO MORE THAN  
A DOZEN COOL  
PLACES TO GO  
TO THIS SUMMER

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ANGELICA PANGANIBAN ON HOW TO BE SEXY, ACTIVE, AND FIT

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THE SPECTACULAR SCENERY OF  
**SAGADA**



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**THE LOWDOWN ON**  
NORDIC WALKING,  
KENDO, CIRCUS YOGA,  
ARCHERY, AND  
(BY POPULAR DEMAND)  
POLE DANCING

**PLUS:** ROAD TRIP HEALTH TIPS, TRAVELING ON A BUDGET, AND WHAT WE ALL NEED—BELLY FLATTENERS



# IN THE SADDLE

BY ANDY LEUTERIO

## How we learned to swim

I think that for most people, at least those who weren't born with a talent for swimming, the water can be both terrifying and liberating. Fear of drowning, fear of sharks, counter-weighted by the surreal nature of flying through a liquid medium, the underwater world an artist's palette of colors and textures.

I was not born a natural swimmer. I took numerous classes when I was a kid, in high school, and even in college PE, but I was never more than mediocre.

When I first took on the challenge of a triathlon with its 1.5-kilometer swim, it seemed like an eternity for me to finish 30 laps in a 50-meter pool. My first attempt took all of an hour and fifteen minutes, not counting pee and puke breaks. Since I knew that most age-group triathletes finish the job between 25 to 35 minutes, I knew I needed some help, and that's how I turned to Coach Ria.

Ria Mackay is the classic example of the athlete who made her sport into a profession. A varsity swimmer from grade school all through college, Ria tried her hand at corporate life for several years before deciding she was happiest in the water. She invested in a Total Immersion workshop in New York, then a Baby Swimming Workshop in Florida, before coming home with the Philippine franchise. Today she heads Aqua Logic Swim Co., the only Philippine-based swim school with Total Immersion-licensed instructors.

Total Immersion, or TI, is something of a phenomenon in the sports and recreation world. Before I'd even met Ria, I'd been

Googling tips on swimming efficiency and found dozens of helpful articles by Terry Laughlin, TI's head guru.

So I had something of a head start when I showed up for class at the Manila Polo Club, already understanding the principles of buoyancy by floating on my chest, and of streamlining the body by lengthening my stroke. After several weeks of truly helpful (and relaxing) classes, my stroke efficiency had improved by 30%. Instead of numerous, painful, frenetic laps (the old-school muscle approach), we did lots and lots of slow drills that isolated the various movements in freestyle: the hand entry, the rotation of the torso, the pull.

After finishing the class, I could now swim 1.5k in 35 minutes easy (in fact, I could also pull off 3k swims now, unimaginable before I took the classes). My best ever swim was 27 minutes; still not superfast, but nothing that can't be improved with race-specific intervals and more pool time. More importantly, I was at home in the water. My previous floundering and splashing was gone. A few leisurely laps are now so effortless I often feel like I could fall asleep. In race mode, I'm more attuned with how I'm moving through the water, working with it rather than fighting it.

And I'm not alone. Via word-of-mouth and the vibrant multisport community, Ria's TI tribe has grown to include both competitive adults and those who'd simply like to be comfortable with and in the water.

Paolo Sitaca, who works for Microsoft Philippines, says, "I know how to swim but I easily get

tired. My objective for signing up was to learn how to relax swimming freestyle. Having learned many sports when I was younger, I always believed in having the right fundamentals. I searched the 'Net for swim training and discovered Total Immersion. I first got a DVD, then the book. It didn't take me long to figure out I needed a live coach to do the drills correctly. I decided to enrol. After my first session I knew I'd come to the right place."

Wowie Wong, a channel account manager for Intel Philippines, concurs: "Swimming was one of my most feared activities since I was a child. I was traumatized by the fact that I had drowned twice in my younger years. Since I joined Aqualogic's program, my fears had gradually gone down to literally zero. I will never forget the greatest leap I had on my first session—I floated!"

There are many more adults and peers who have been convinced of Total Immersion's "new school" of swimming, but for lack of space I'll close this with Dondi Gaston, a lawyer: "TI is not a pill for all that ails the water-challenged. It is an awakening to what should properly be done and practiced to achieve a personal best. You leave the class with knowledge of what it feels like to glide through water and a clear idea of what to constantly work on to improve. TI gives you that direction that most athletes look for when training." ♦

Aqualogic Swim Co. can be reached at [www.aqualogicswimco.com](http://www.aqualogicswimco.com) and 0917-858-AQUA (2782) and [aqualogicswimco@gmail.com](mailto:aqualogicswimco@gmail.com).

