

12-WEEK GYM PROGRAMME

MASTERS BUTTERFLY DRYLAND STRENGTH

A 12-week gym programme for masters swimmers tackling the hardest stroke — posterior-chain power, core undulation and shoulder resilience for a stronger, more sustainable butterfly.

WHY BUTTERFLY TRAINS DIFFERENTLY

Butterfly is the most physically demanding stroke. Speed comes from a powerful, whole-body undulation — a dolphin kick driven by the hips, low back and core — paired with an explosive double-arm pull. It asks more of the posterior chain, the core and the shoulders than any other stroke, and it fatigues fast. So the gym priorities are hip drive, a strong and mobile core, and shoulders built to last.

- POSTERIOR-CHAIN & HIP DRIVE

The dolphin undulation — powered by glutes, hamstrings and low back.

- CORE UNDULATION

A strong, controlled trunk that produces and holds the body wave.

- EXPLOSIVE DOUBLE-ARM PULL

Lat- and chest-driven power through the simultaneous pull.

- SHOULDER STABILITY & MOBILITY

Durable, mobile shoulders for the over-water recovery.

- WORK CAPACITY

Core and shoulder endurance to hold form as fly fatigues fast.

HOW TO RUN THE PLAN

Two gym sessions per week, sitting alongside your pool training.

Work through the three phases in order — four weeks each, twelve in total.

Each phase earns the next: build the posterior chain and shoulders before you load the undulation, then add speed last.

FOUNDATION

1

Build the posterior chain and bulletproof the shoulders before loading.

EXERCISE	SETS × REPS	FOCUS
Romanian deadlift Hamstrings, glutes and low back — the engine of the undulation.	3 × 8	POSTERIOR CHAIN
Glute bridge / hip thrust Explosive hip extension that powers the dolphin kick.	3 × 12	HIP DRIVE
Prone superman hold Extensor endurance for the over-water recovery.	3 × 20s	BACK ENDURANCE
Inverted row Horizontal pulling base and mid-back strength.	3 × 10	PULL
Face pull / band pull-apart Rear-delt and scap health — protects a high-load shoulder.	3 × 15	SHOULDER
Dead bug Anti-extension control — the base of a connected body wave.	3 × 8 / side	CORE
Pallof press Anti-rotation — a stable trunk to undulate around.	3 × 10 / side	CORE

PHASE GOAL

Earn the right to load. Posterior chain and shoulders strong before any speed.

STRENGTH & POWER

Heavier strength and the first loaded hip drive and pulling power.

2

EXERCISE	SETS × REPS	FOCUS
Trap-bar deadlift Whole-body strength base behind a powerful undulation.	4 × 5	MAX STRENGTH
Loaded hip thrust Heavier hip drive for a stronger dolphin kick.	3 × 8	HIP POWER
Pull-up or lat pulldown Top-end pulling strength for the double-arm pull.	4 × 6	MAX PULL
Dumbbell row Loads the lats that drive the pull-through.	3 × 8	PULL
Straight-arm pulldown Trains the catch-to-pull path of the butterfly pull.	3 × 10	LAT
Overhead or landmine press Strength to support the over-water recovery.	3 × 8	SHOULDER
Hollow hold The connected body line of an undulating stroke.	3 × 20-30s	STATIC CORE

PHASE GOAL

Bridge strength to speed. Heavy pulls and hip drive, then express the undulation.

POWER & PLYOMETRICS

Express the strength explosively — low volume, high quality.

3

EXERCISE	SETS × REPS	FOCUS
Kettlebell swing Explosive hip extension — the dolphin kick's gym match.	4 × 6	HIP DRIVE
Broad jump Triple extension for explosive, whole-body hip drive.	4 × 3	POWER
Med ball overhead slam Fast, lat-driven action for the double-arm pull.	4 × 5	EXPLOSIVE PULL
Med ball throw-down Explosive trunk flexion — the body wave at speed.	3 × 6	CORE POWER
Plyo press-up Explosive pressing for a powerful recovery.	3 × 5	UPPER PLYO
Hollow rock Dynamic core control for sustained undulation.	3 × 15	CORE
Weighted streamline hold Strength in the long streamline off every wall.	3 × 20s	STATIC HOLD

PHASE GOAL

Be fast, not tired. Express the power explosively — stop the moment speed drops.

THE MASTERS RULES

Butterfly is uniquely demanding, so adult swimmers need to respect recovery, the shoulder and the low back more than in any other stroke. These five rules keep the plan working for the long haul.

01

WARM UP, EVERY TIME

Five to ten minutes of thoracic mobility, shoulder activation and hip openers before you load. Cold tissue under butterfly's demands is how masters get hurt.

02

SEPARATE HARD FROM HARD

Keep explosive and heavy sessions at least a day from your hardest fly sets. Butterfly already taxes the same shoulders, back and core — don't stack the load.

03

MIND THE SHOULDER AND LOW BACK

Fly loads both heavily. If either niggles, drop overhead pressing and ballistic back work, keep the mobility and scap and core work, and never train through pain.

04

PROGRESS ONE THING AT A TIME

Add load before speed or volume. Chasing both at once is the fastest route to a niggle that costs you weeks in the water.

05

RECOVERY IS TRAINING

Sleep, protein and a day between sessions are doing real work. With butterfly's demands, recovery is not optional for adult swimmers.

HERTS SWIM COACH

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