

## **The Split Eggbeater by Terry Schroeder, Head Coach, Men's National Team**

The split eggbeater is an interesting concept. Most age groupers learn to do the egg beater kick by having both legs down below them. When I was learning I was told to get myself in a position like I was sitting in a chair. I think that this was OK as far as learning the basic concept of using an “eggbeater” (one leg at a time manner) kick to keep your head above the water. However, as a player and now as a coach it has become very clear that this position of sitting in a chair, rarely, if ever happens in an actual game. **Therefore, I believe that it is very important for us as coaches to teach our players the proper body positioning for the eggbeater kick.** In my opinion, this would be what I call the “split eggbeater” position.

So what do I actually mean by the “split eggbeater”? In this position one leg is down below your body (the support leg) creating energy to keep you up in the water. The other leg (the driving leg) is either out in front of you or behind you depending on what you are doing in the water. This driving leg is creating energy to drive you forward (penetrate) or drive you back into a defender

**For example**, if I am right handed player penetrating forward with the ball as a shooter or as a passer - my left leg would be below me performing an eggbeater kick (this is my support leg). This leg is going to be responsible for keeping me up in the water - think about the physics – if I am doing an eggbeater kick properly the leg below me will be propelling me up in the water. My other leg, the right one will be behind me (this is my driving leg) driving me forward. Once again, think about the physics involved, this leg behind me will be creating energy to drive me forward in the water.

**A second example**, would be if I am playing the center position (on offense). With the guard on my left shoulder, I will be sealing him off with my left arm. My left leg will be down below me (the support leg) and my right leg will be out in front of me (the driving leg). Now I have one leg that is keeping me up as the guard tries to push me down and one leg that is driving me back trying to make sure that I am holding my position as close to the 2 meter line as I can. If the defender were to jump to the other side – I would roll over my hips and get into the split eggbeater on the other side with my right arm sealing the guard off and my right leg would drop down below me (the support leg) to keep me up in the water while my left leg will be out in front of me (the driving leg) driving me back into the guard.

**A third example** of where the split eggbeater is used would be on the perimeter. If I am on the perimeter with the ball and the defender leaning on me I will also end up in this split eggbeater position. Basically, I will always have one leg up (the driving leg) and one leg down (the support leg) and I can roll over my hips and switch at any time. Even on defense on the perimeter I should always be in this split eggbeater position. On defense in a “hips up” position I would not recommend that both legs are up equally near the surface of the water. One leg will almost always be down lower in the water while

the other leg is up closer to the surface of the water once again utilizing a split eggbeater. This will create a more balanced position in the water.

As a player becomes more skilled he/she can adjust their legs accordingly and get higher in the water by bringing the driving leg down a bit while the support leg keeps doing what it was already doing. You should be able to adjust without ever missing a beat. A player may also adjust the support leg up more to create more energy driving them forward or back into the defender.

### **Putting the skill into action**

Here are the options on the perimeter.

1. **Get higher in the water** by dropping your driving leg slightly and letting that leg also participate in the support process. This leg does not drop straight below you or you will no longer be driving (penetrating or driving the defender back). Think about when you are shooting the ball. The driving leg will be working hard to provide energy to create a more powerful shot.
2. **Go faster as you penetrate** by bringing the support leg up behind you slightly and using both legs to drive you forward. Once again, you are not bringing that support leg up as high as the back leg because then you would not have any support (energy) keeping you up in the water.

Here are the options at the center position.

1. **If the defender is playing very heavy** and pushing you down you can bring your driving leg down under you more so that both legs are participating in keeping you up higher in the water. This driving leg still should be out in front of you slightly to help you maintain your position on the 2 meter line.
2. **If the defender is really pushing you out** then you can bring your support leg up into a position to where it is helping to drive you back in the water. Once again, you need this leg to be lower in the water so that you have some support to keep you up in the water.

Here are some drills to help players develop and understand the “split eggbeater”.

Performed correctly, these drills will help your players learn how to use their legs and body position better in the water.

1. Practice penetrating with the ball going across the pool (10 - 15 meters) keeping the ball high with the elbow out of the water on all these drills)
  1. Do some laps working on keeping the ball higher (more support energy)
  2. Do some laps trying to penetrate with the ball quickly (more driving energy)
  3. Add angles - so that you have to learn to use your legs to drive you forward at an angle (simulating moving away from the defender as you penetrate)

2. Centers match up with a center defender and push them across the pool (10 – 15 meters).
  1. Do some laps where the defender is really pushing down and the center has to drop his/her driving leg and use both legs to keep him/her up in the water. You will see how if one leg is not used to drive the defender back the players will stay in one place. The object of this drill is to be able to push the defender back even when you are being pushed down hard by the defender.
  2. Do some laps where the defender is pushing hard against the centers back and the center has to bring up the support leg and really drive the defender backwards.
  3. Do some laps where the defender mixes it up and now the center has to adjust to driving the defender back or keeping the defender up.
  
3. Perimeter drills
  1. Have the perimeter player with the ball ready to step out and make the pass to the center. This is also a very important part of the split eggbeater. When the legs are in the proper position you will have a leg to step out on to and separate from your defender.
  2. Have the defender really pushing down on the offensive player so that the perimeter player is forced to adjust his/her leg position to hold up the defender more. In this scenario the offensive player still has to be able to get one leg out in front of him/her more so that he/she can step out over that leg to make the pass with proper support.

**The split eggbeater is a very important skill that every player should learn.** Each and every player in this game needs to learn how to use body positioning and leg support to their advantage during the game. The bottom line is that learning how to perform the split eggbeater can help you to become a better water polo player. If you have any questions regarding this skill feel free to email me at [tschroeder@usawaterpolo.org](mailto:tschroeder@usawaterpolo.org) .