swim bag: goggles

**Product Review Is Here**
Welcome to the new Swim Bag. In the past, we have dedicated this department to an array of products, accompanied by information from the manufacturers. While we hope this has been helpful, we think we can do better. *SWIMMER* has arranged to receive product samples from manufacturers of swim gear and products, which will be field-tested by Masters swimmers.

Since goggles are something most Masters swimmers use every day, we decided to kick off 2010 with a review of some of the models currently available. We found that all the goggles we tested were of good quality and performed as described by the manufacturer. However, goggles are probably the most difficult piece of swim gear to get just right. No single model will fit everyone comfortably, so if a set of goggles did not fit a tester properly, it was given to another tester to ensure that all goggles were given a fair test.

Additionally, many swimmers have strong preferences. Those who swim outdoors want dark tint. Those who swim at inside facilities often prefer light or no tint. Some swimmers want a goggles strictly for comfort; others want a sleek profile for racing; and many have more than one pair for different applications. Still others prefer to train and race in the same pair for consistency.

Our goggle testers were matched up with goggles that fit their current swimming needs. Swimmers who race regularly tested the racing models. Open water swimmers and triathletes tested the open water models. And those expressing a preference for a large, comfortable practice model tested the higher volume models.

**Racing Goggles**
These models are classified as racing goggles because of their small profiles, or because the manufacturer has presented them as part of its racing goggle lineup. All were tested in race conditions: off the blocks, fast swimming and fast turns.

1. **Barracuda Hydrobat** $15
According to the manufacturer, the flat extension of Hydrobat’s lens streamlines the eye socket area, resulting in less drag. The patented flutes channel water and create pressure to keep the goggles on snugly. One tester found that the lower extension prevented a comfortable fit. Overall, the Hydrobat goggles received excellent marks. They were secure off the blocks and several testers stated that the peripheral vision, allowing them to see competitors on either side, was the best they have seen in any goggle. [skylinenw.com](http://skylinenw.com)

2. **Finis Lightning** $14
Finis’s newest model received rave reviews in all categories from our testers. The flat profile, which means less drag, puts the lens close for anyone with larger eyes or long lashes, so careful adjustment is needed. Testers found the Lightning to be comfortable and leak-free for a typical one and a half to two-hour practice, and one tester noted that these were the only racing goggles she had tried that did not leave deep groove marks. [finisinc.com](http://finisinc.com)

3. **Kiefer Swedish Racer Deluxe** $4
Kiefer scores in the value department. At just $3.95, the Swedish Racer Deluxe comes with silicone head and nose straps and an alternative string and tube attachment for the nose. This model, tested by people who prefer these minimal-style racing goggles, performed excellently under all conditions. [kiefer.com](http://kiefer.com)

4. **Speedo Speed Socket Mirrored** $30
These racing goggles performed well off the blocks and for fast turns. Testers noticed that although they have a very low profile, visibility – including peripheral – was excellent. Testers agreed that these goggles were great for competition, but some found them not comfortable enough for prolonged use in practice. The inverted “V” nosepiece on this model garnered rave reviews, as it never pressed down on the bridge of the nose like other nosepieces can when fitted tightly. [speedousa.com](http://speedousa.com)

5. **Speedo Aqua Socket Mirror** $35
Like Speedo’s Speed Socket model, these racing goggles were excellent in race conditions, but not rated comfortable enough to wear for an extended period. The Aqua Socket required some attention to initial fit, as the eyecups are designed to collapse when fitted tightly. This model had excellent visibility and stability when hitting the water at the start. [speedousa.com](http://speedousa.com)

6. **TYR Tracer Ti** $20
The Tracer Ti is TYR’s most recent addition to its low-profile racing goggles. Like other racing goggles tested, once adjusted properly, the Tracer Ti performed well in racing conditions. One tester found them to be comfortable enough for long swims as well, and completed the 6000 Yard Championships while wearing them. [tyr.com](http://tyr.com)

7. **Speedo Vanquisher 2.0 Plus** $20
Testers really liked these goggles. One tester said the tinting was the best he had tried in bright sunny conditions. Others added that the straps were easy to adjust. One tester had to swap out the nosepiece and found that a bit challenging, but gave the goggle high marks otherwise. These goggles performed well off the blocks and were marked well for comfort, making them good for swimmers who like to train and race in the same goggles. [speedousa.com](http://speedousa.com)
All-Purpose/Performance Goggles
Most of the all-purpose or performance models make excellent practice goggles and are likely to fit well on many faces, which make them a great place to start when searching for a first pair of goggles. These models can also be used in race conditions successfully; however, due to the slightly larger profile than racing goggles, they may need to be tightened when diving or executing fast turns.

1. **Kiefer Performer** $12
The Performer was given excellent marks in almost all categories for those who prefer a slightly larger, but not oversized frame. Testers found them to be comfortable, with excellent visibility, clarity and adjustability. [kiefer.com](http://kiefer.com)

2. **Kiefer UFO** $9
These basic goggles performed well under normal practice conditions. One tester commented that the goggles, straight from the package, were clear and did not fog up at all during several weeks of testing. [kiefer.com](http://kiefer.com)

3. **Speedo HydrospeX2** $18
Most testers really liked Speedo’s strap/buckle system that allows for easy and quick adjustments. Swimmers looking for goggles that fit outside the eye sockets found the fit to be comfortable, and once adjusted properly, leakproof. One of the test pairs was blue and the tinting, on that pair only, obscured the red lights of the digital clock at that tester’s pool. Overall, these goggles elicited excellent marks. [speedousa.com](http://speedousa.com)

4. **TYR Nest Pro and Nest Pro Nano** $20
The unusual frame design of these goggles, according to TYR, is inspired by the bird’s nest architectural design of the main stadium in Beijing, home of the 2008 Olympic games. Some testers looked askance at the design, but once they wore the goggles, they gave them high marks. The Nest scored high in fit, visibility and overall reliability. Testers also liked the simple strap adjustment in the rear, and the sizing chart TYR provided on the packaging. [tyr.com](http://tyr.com)

5. **TYR Technoflex 4.0** $16
Some testers initially had trouble with the strap adjustment mechanism, but once adjusted and seated properly, the strap performed perfectly in practice conditions for most. What testers liked most about this model was the soft gaskets, making them quite comfortable to wear. [tyr.com](http://tyr.com)
Open Water Goggles

Our testers, avid open water swimmers and triathletes, were thrilled with the current crop of open water goggles, which mark a departure from the large profile open water goggles and small face masks that were available in the past. Most of our testers had resorted to using regular pool goggles in open water, and they appreciated the added comfort and visibility the new open water goggles afforded, without the overly large frame.

1. blueseventy Hydra-Vision $22
   The Hydra-Vision is billed by blueseventy as a cross-purpose model, large enough for open water but a small enough profile for pool training, however it was tested only in open water. Testers loved the sleek, low profile, but slightly larger than pool goggles volume that rated high in comfort and visibility. One swimmer who tested this model is accomplished in both pool and open water swimming. He felt so confident that after one short test run, he used them in a 5K open water race and reported that they were comfortable and did not fog or leak during the entire race. blueseventy.com/store/us/

2. blueseventy Siren $18
   The Siren, according to the manufacturer, is designed specifically for women’s smaller facial features. The women who tested these goggles loved them. They reported excellent comfort and visibility, even in rough water. One tester commented that the degree of tinting was perfect for bright conditions, but not limiting in lower light. Another tester, who has had problems with skin irritation from goggles when swimming in open water, found that she experienced no irritation with the Siren. blueseventy.com/store/us/

3. blueseventy Vision $20
   We put the Vision model to the test with a few of our hard-core triathletes and they performed beautifully. Testers loved the “huge visual field” coupled with a hydrodynamic shape. Several commented that these goggles would definitely be replacing previously purchased larger volume open water goggles. blueseventy.com/store/us/

4. Speedo Air Seal Tri Mirror $25
   Speedo’s foray into open water goggles is off to a good start with the Air Seal Tri Mirror model. Testers rated it stylish and cool in the looks department; one tester said she received comments that it looked like she was wearing sunglasses instead of goggles. Performance-wise, these received excellent marks for comfort, visibility, tinting, and overall function as open water goggles. speedousa.com

wait, there’s more...
**Comfort/Specialty Goggles**

Swimmers looking for comfort above all else tested these larger volume goggles. Not designed for racing, they were not tested under race conditions. All the large volume models offered excellent comfort, visibility and greatly reduced goggle rings around the eyes after practice. Due to the larger volume, it is critical these goggles be fitted accurately, as some faces are too narrow to accommodate the larger frames. These goggles don’t usually fare well when executing fast turns with strong push-offs, so they are likely to appeal more to swimmers who are not focused on speed.

1. **Barracuda Predator $21**
   Like all of Barracuda’s large volume models, testers rated the Predator as supremely comfortable. However, what reviewers liked most about Predator was the amber lenses that made vision crystal clear. Due to their high volume, strong push-offs sometimes brought in water, but the swimmers who tested these goggles were so enamored with the comfort and clarity of the Predator that they did not consider that a large flaw. [skylinenw.com](http://www.skylinenw.com).

2. **Barracuda Ultimate $19**
   Testers found this model quite comfortable, even when tightened to prevent leakage that can sometimes occur with a larger profile model. One tester, a backstroker, reported that the tinting on the pair he tested was not dark enough for bright, sunny conditions. The Ultimate was given excellent marks for visibility and clarity. [skylinenw.com](http://www.skylinenw.com).

3. **Finis Shockwave $17**
   The large field of vision with the Shockwave was a hit with testers. Visibility to the front and sides was excellent, and one tester remarked that her depth perception under water was much better than other goggles she had tried. As with all the larger volume goggles, the comfort and fit were excellent. [finisinc.com](http://www.finisinc.com).

4. **TYR Femme Crystalflex $18**
   These female-specific goggles were a big hit with testers looking for comfort, good visibility and no goggle marks after practice. They loved the elongated shape, which gave them greater peripheral vision. The Femme Crystalflex was rated excellent in all categories. One tester stated that the visibility was the best she had experienced in any goggles. [tyr.com](http://www.tyr.com).

**Getting a Good Fit**

- Press goggles gently onto your face without the strap. If they seal briefly before falling off, it is likely that they will perform well. If they fall off right away, they are probably not compatible with the shape of your face and you may experience leakage.
- Arrive at the pool early so you can make necessary adjustments before your workout. If you wear a cap, have it on when fitting your goggles.
- Place the goggles on your face; slip the strap over your head. Strap should be tight enough to keep the goggles in place, but not so tight that you experience pain. If the strap is a double strap, small adjustments can be made by splitting the strap high and low at the back of the head. Experiment.