

## Michael Phelps Didn't Show The Difference

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When multiple world record holder, Michael Phelps, announced that he would be wearing the old textile suit in the recently swum European competition, many believed that they would get some indication of the performance difference between the old textile suits, and the plastic and rubber suits responsible for all the world records in Beijing and thereafter.

Phelps did swim in the textile suit but unfortunately he was reported as being 'hugely unfit', so there could be no valid comparison of the times that were swum.

I don't believe that swimmers will find an easy way to forecast the time and competitive difference they are going to experience with the suit change, as the suit does not affect everyone in the same way; thin swimmers did not benefit from the banned plastic and rubber suits as much as overweight swimmers. So the fabric suit which will be used as from 2010 should not only show a difference in the individual's time but also a changed position between individuals.

At the congress in Rome FINA (the international governing body of swimming) in an unprecedented move, banned the use of all non-textile materials for suits from the beginning of 2010. 168 nations voted in favour of this move, against 6 in opposition.

The description of the suit to be worn, limits the body area that the suit may cover; for men, from the knees to the navel, and for women, from the knees to the shoulder straps. As the suit is of the same material as that worn before the introduction of the plastic/rubber suits, my guess is that swimmers will go back to the cut that they previously chose to wear. They were as skimpy as allowed for both sexes and it is going to be quite difficult for the suit manufactures to come up with something new.

So now that the body is not covered as much as possible we will have to get back to shaving; Dr David Costill, director of the Human Performance Laboratory at Ball State University, Muncie, USA has gone as far as anyone can go comparing the effects of shaving the hair off the skin on water drag resistance. The answer is shave. Water forms tiny little bubbles on the skin, the result is, that as you go through the water the friction/drag is water on water, which is minimal.