

# Glass mosaic tiling in pools – part III

In the last issue **Edward Lowe** covered the tiling of the waterline band and sheets of mosaic down from the waterline band. Edward formerly occupied the position of technical manager at Bisazza. To download a free copy of this article and part 4 as it becomes available, register as a member of [www.infotile.com](http://www.infotile.com). Membership is free.

**A**t this stage (**Image 1**) we are now ready to determine where to place the 'cutting line' or the seam of the pool where the wall and floor tiling meet. The majority of swimming pools are freeform, in that they have sloping floors from the shallow to deep ends and the coves between the walls and floor will have radius's that vary. The reason for this is that pools are essentially shaped by hand: The concrete is sprayed onto and over the steel, and cut and shaped by hand. Similarly the cement rendering of the pool is applied and shaped by hand, with the use of straight edges where possible. The coves however always have a degree of variation in them, which combined with the sloping floor means that unlike in a bathroom the wall and floor tiling will not 'catch' at every joint. The irregular shape of pools and the sloping floor also means that there will be many cut mosaics to be placed at the seam, hence the term we will use here of 'cutting line'.

The fastest and neatest way to cut the mosaics at the cutting line is with a mosaic diamond blade mounted on a variable speed angle grinder. To effectively achieve this the mosaics at the cutting

line should be grouted. When the mosaics are 'locked in' with grout even the smallest cut mosaics will remain in place.

To achieve this we must lay the mosaics to be cut past the intended cutting line.

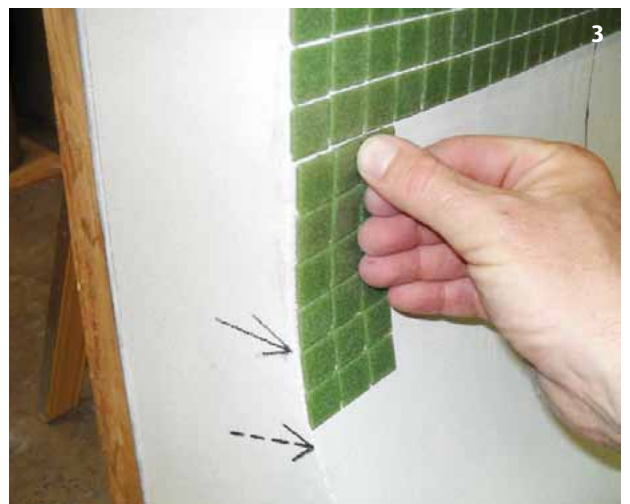
The position of the cutting line in the cove is extremely important for two reasons. First, when the pool is filled with water the mosaics will be subject to the refraction of light through the water. This means that the mosaics at the waterline will appear to be a third of their original size, the mosaics between the waterline and the cove will appear to be half their original size and the mosaics on the floor of the pool will appear full size. It stands to reason then, that if the cutting line is placed below the cove that the seam will be seen clearly in full size. However when the cutting line is located towards the top of the cove the seam will appear to be half size. In this way by using the refraction of light through water to our advantage, we can effectively hide the cutting line from view. The pool will then appear to have been tiled seamlessly without any obvious joint between the wall and floor. Second, by positioning the cutting line high in the cove the pool will seem to be larger than if the cutting line was on the floor because the floor tiling will flow into the cove rather than being delineated in full size on the floor, for all to see.

So, ideally the cutting line will be positioned high in the cove and run as one continuous seam around the pool.

The dotted arrow (**Image 2**) indicates the lowest recommended location for the cutting line, approximately two thirds up the cove.

The process for achieving this is as follows:

Find the mosaic joint nearest to the centre of the shallow end wall, measuring at the coping, follow the joint to the bottom of the last sheet laid and make a 'mark'. Repeat this in the deep end. Use a string line to join these two centre marks and plumb down to make 'marks' on the floor. The shape of the floor will dictate how often these plumbed marks are made, having in mind that the marks need to be joined with a chalk line. This chalk line is





the centre line of the pool and a starting point from which to lay the floor.

To determine the location of the cutting line in the cove, at the shallow end hold a mosaic sheet up dry to the already laid mosaics (2 sheets down) and the centre line.

The mosaic nearest the point approximately two thirds up the cove, erring on the high side, now dictates the position of the cutting line. Image 3 confirms that a strip of six mosaics is the determinant.

A strip of six mosaics is now taken to a side wall, approximately one mosaic sheet from the corner and mosaic sheets laid dry from the centre line towards that point. What we are looking for here is a point where the strip of six mosaics aligns with the dry laid floor sheets. In **Image 4** we can see that a strip of seven mosaics on the floor will coincide with the strip of six on the wall.

At this point make a mark and measure from the centre line to the mark. (**Image 4,5**) This measurement is now transferred at



regular points down the length of the pool. Again, the shape of the pool will dictate how often these marks are made. Join the marks with a chalk line. As this chalked line progresses towards the deep end it will fall away from the bottom of the already laid mosaics (two sheets down). At the deep end lay mosaic sheets dry from the centre line, up to a point approximately one sheet from the deep end corner. As with the shallow end, what we are looking for here is a point where a strip of full mosaics aligns with the dry laid floor sheets. In this instance the strip we require is nine mosaics as in the image.

From this point (**Image 6**) use the nine mosaic strip to mark around the corner cove and across the wall of the deep end, similarly at the shallow end use the six mosaic strip to mark around the corner cove and the wall.

This line we have created is the cutting line. As previously mentioned we need to tile past this line in order to grout and machine cut the mosaics effectively. Therefore for the lines determined by the six and nine strips of mosaics, at the shallow and deep ends and corners, chalk a new line two mosaics **above** the line. For the lines determined by the measurement from the centre line, on the side walls, chalk a new line two mosaics **below** the line. These new lines are where we now tile to: The side wall tiling proceeds from the '2 sheets down' and to, or past, the new line. And the floor tiling is laid to, or past, the new lines on the shallow and deep end walls and into the corners. The starting point for the floor tiling is at the shallow end, at the centre line. First lay one row of mosaics down the centre line and then another row down the other side of the centre line. It is very important that the centre line is followed and the mosaic sheets are not allowed to 'wander'; any variation from the centre line will be exaggerated with each row laid thereafter. Once either side of the centre line has been tiled to, work in bays of two mosaic sheets down the pool. Leave a space in the floor approximately two mosaic sheets from the cutting line on the length walls. When this procedure has been completed the pool will look like **Image 7**.



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The floor and approximately 100mm of the side walls can now be grouted.

### Marking the cutting line

Once grouting of the side walls is complete lay the required sheets, or parts of, dry, over the grouted mosaics. With a fine felt tipped pen mark each end of the sheet on the wall tiles. **(Image 8)** Repeat the process the length of the pool. Next hold the six and nine strips of mosaics in place and mark on the grouted floor tiling and in the corners. Join the marks with a flexible strip of aluminium. You should now have a continuous seam marked around the pool. Using the diamond cutting disc, score and cut the marked seam. A lightweight hammer drill will quickly remove the surplus mosaics before using a masonry grinding disc or 'Zac pad' to feather any remaining adhesive to the pool substrate, sweep and sponge clean **(Image 9)**. The remaining areas can now be tiled with strips of six mosaics at the shallow end and corners, strips of nine mosaics at the deep end and corners, and the floor with full sheets plus a strip of seven mosaics. Take care to brick bond the corners beneath the already bonded areas with consideration to the form of the pool **(Image 10)**. Performing the cutting line in this way has meant that all cuts were carried out mechanically and full mosaics laid up

to those cuts. Therefore at any point around the cutting line there will be a full mosaic on at least one side of the cutting line. This method further facilitates the blending of this seam with the body of the mosaic work **(Images 11,12)**. 

In the next issue of *Tile Today* we will cover steps, pipes and main drains. If you have any questions or comments please contact me by email at [ejdlowe@hotmail.com](mailto:ejdlowe@hotmail.com)