



**OLYMPIC MEDALS, p 32**

*“It’s not about winning at the Olympic Games. For me, it’s never about getting ribbons or medals; It’s about trying to win and pursue greatness. The Olympic motto is faster, higher, stronger, not fastest, highest, strongest. Sometimes it’s the trying that matters.”*

-Bronte Barratt  
 2008 Gold Medalist  
 4x200m Free Relay, Australia

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| EDITORIAL |

## “Coaching Parents?”

There is an old joke in almost every youth sports activity that the best place to coach is an orphanage. I first heard it from my college coach when I was getting started in this profession. There is probably no coach in history who has not had a fair share of problems with parents. Some parents will act in certain ways because it is just their personality, ego, or overzealousness. But for the large majority, it could also be that they have not been educated about the interconnectedness of the roles played by coach, athlete, and parent. But who and how to educate them?

The sheer amount of articles and publications citing problems with parents in youth sports is staggering: *“The Overbearing Role of Parents in Youth Sports”*; *“Getting Bad Sports Parents to Behave”*; *“The real reason high school sports drive parents crazy”*; *“Are Parents Ruining Youth Sports?”*; *“How Parents are Ruining Youth Sports”*; *“5 Destructive Things Sports Parents Often Do”*; and so on.

Sit with fellow coaches longer than it takes to down a cup of coffee and you will undoubtedly wind up with a comment about a parent-athlete-coach problem. When longtime friend and collaborator Chuck Warner and I were spending time together at his lakeside home in New Jersey between trips to

(please turn to page 4)



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## Quote of the Night

Popcorn is prepared in  
the same pot, in the same  
heat, in the same oil and  
yet... the kernels  
do not **POP** at the  
same time. Don't compare  
your child to others.

**Their** turn to  
**is coming!**

**POP**



**FROM THE EDITOR, continued from front cover**

Manhattan to record the audiobook version of our popular book about retired University of Texas Coach Eddie Reese (*Eddie Reese: Coaching Swimming, Teaching Life*), we batted around the idea of writing a series of shorter books about the many topics a beginning or new coach should know to get a strong foundation and foothold in the coaching profession. We came up with a long list, and then considered which one should be first. We both blurted out at the same time: **"Parents!"**

It turned out that Chuck already had a head start, although he didn't plan it that way. For twenty-four years he had been conducting a swim camp in the summer, and on the first evening of each camp he would give a parent-only presentation aptly titled "How To Be A Great Swim Parent." His goal in giving those talks to the parents was not to tell them what to do or what *not* to do to stay out of his hair, but to help them have a better experience with their child in and outside of the sport of swimming.

The book starts out with the reasons WHY the swimming experience is so good for the child physically, mentally, and socially, giving them great life lessons along the way.

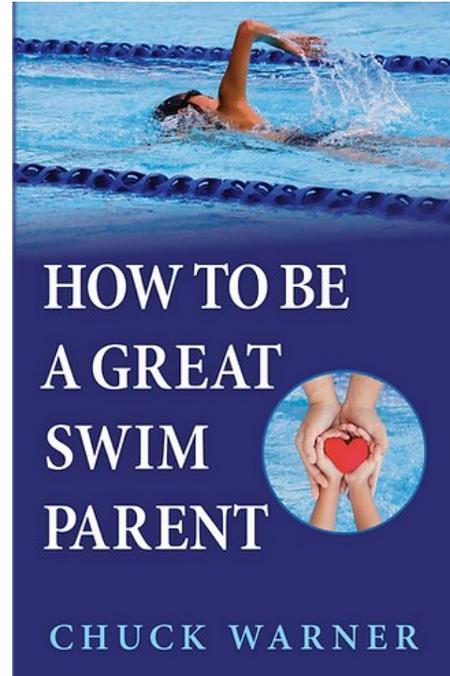
Full of ideas and anecdotes, the book is "[sage] advice distilled from a Hall of Fame swim coach's years of interactions and astute observations... [a] straight-to-the-point guidebook for parents of young athletes...[describing] how to support [their] child's journey to their dreams and capture their heart."

Widely lauded and enthusiastically supported and recommended by leaders in the competitive swimming community, the book is also available in audiobook format.

It covers so many topics so well that I bought a copy of the book for every parent whose younger kids I coach in high school, AAU, and summer team. It is not just for swimming parents, but

is a good resource and tool for parents with children in any sport, and more than that, it's invaluable to provide key insights that even some of **us** may not have discovered yet.

I highly recommend it, and suggest you may want to buy a few dozen copies yourself to share with parents on your teams. It really is that good!



Available at [chuckwarnerbooks.com](http://chuckwarnerbooks.com)



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San Antonio TX

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**Charlie Hoolhan**

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**Dr. Don Walker**

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## National Interscholastic Swimming Coaches Association of America

*To Educate... To Promote... To Honor.*

Coaches,

I hope you had an amazing holiday season and were able to enjoy the time with family. Recently, I have been re-watching the race recaps from the World Championships. It's amazing how many World Records fell in that week. One thing that continues to strike a chord with me is how important underwater kicking truly is to getting kids to go fast along with understanding that getting deep off the turns is crucial for maximizing performance.

As we head into this new year, many of your seniors will, if they haven't done so already, select a college for next year. Some already may have committed and started acquiring team apparel for next year. Others are still uncertain about whether they will or even *can* swim in college. Please assure your swimmers that even with the changes coming to roster limits from the NIL lawsuit, there will be opportunities for any swimmer or diver who really wants to compete at the collegiate level. That opportunity just may not be at their dream school.

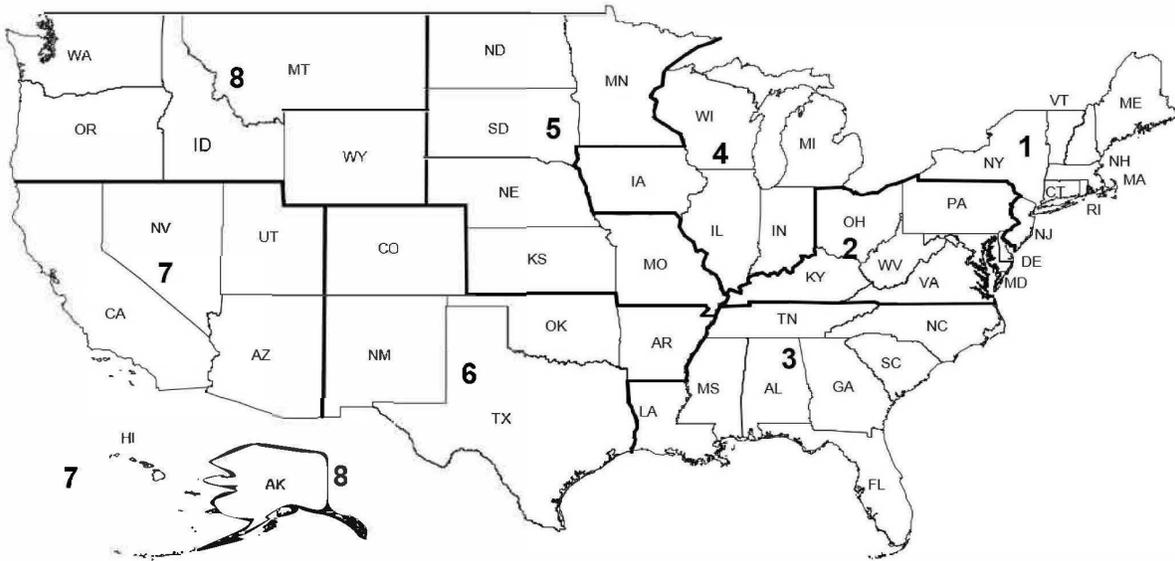
Encourage your athletes to reach out to schools or, if a program reaches out to them, remind them to reply to the coach when contacted. In some discussions I have had with collegiate coaches, they are surprised at how many students just don't respond back when contacted by phone or email. Coaches, when you have a moment, talk with your athletes about the importance of responding to others in a timely manner. Even if they have no interest, a simple reply of *"Thank you for taking an interest in my swimming/diving career. I appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to reach out to me. Currently I am reviewing several schools that meet my academic and swimming/diving interests and I'll reach back out if I have any questions about your program"* is a responsible and respectful reply. This simple reply doesn't commit your athlete to anything and allows them some flexibility if collegiate plans change. I have recently seen social media posts where athletes have been told they no longer have a roster spot at a school they were committing to as a result of the NIL changes. **Keeping the door open with other programs can be quite important if this happens to one of your athletes.**

Lastly, a reminder that the NISCA Conference will be held in San Antonio in June (*see information on previous page*). We have an excellent group of speakers lined up including some poolside sessions and would love to see you there.

Mark Jedow  
NISCA President

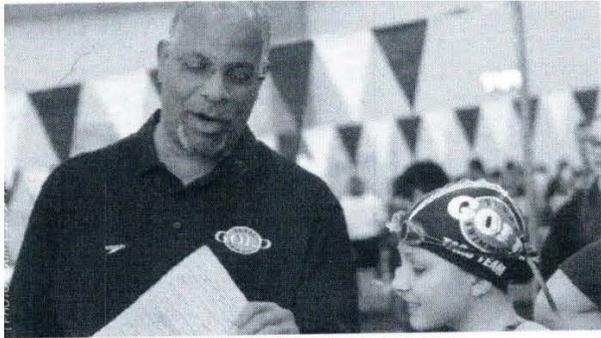
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## COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SUCCESSFUL TRAINING PROGRAMS

*BV SERGEI BELIAEV PH.D IN METHODOLOGY OF SPORTS TRAINING*

### THE DRIVERS OF PERFORMANCE

The coaching profession is all about helping swimmers develop their critical skills and abilities and achieve peak performances when they count most. This suggests that among many important skills, coaches should be knowledgeable in

1. teaching critical skills at different levels of an athlete's maturation,
2. developing critical physical abilities necessary to support performances at desired levels of competition, and
3. designing and managing training programs so as to guide athletes to their best performances at the most important events.

All of these categories, with the possible exception of skill building components, fall under the purview of Methodology of Sports Training - a science that studies the effects of different training exercises and defines the most effective methods for their application at different times or periods of preparation.

Methodology of sports training science has been around since the mid-1960s and has accumulated abundant knowledge about the patterns of human reactions to physical exercise, swimming included. Actually, the sport of swimming is considered to be the most advanced and "scientific" among other sports due to its unique nature and standard physical environment, forcing coaches to make every effort very specific.

And yet, in spite of an enormous amount of accumulated knowledge in this field, there remain a lot of misconceptions and myths in the coaching community when it comes to training methods and their perceived effectiveness. We are starting this series with a discussion regarding selection of the most effective training sets.

### MISCONCEPTION #1 THE VALUE OF "KILLER TRAINING SETS"

It is widely observed that when coaches are asked what they most want to learn from their senior peers or sport scientists,

one answer always comes up first. By a large margin the first answer is almost always about most effective or "killer" sets and workouts. It follows that the majority of coaches must believe that some combination of distances and strokes on a particular rest or repeat interval (send-off time) must have a greater influence on their swimmers' performance than others. Could it be true that access to a particular "golden" set or even to an "ultimate library" of sets may improve your chances of success? Consider the following facts.

### DEFINING TRAINING PROCESS

Sports scientists, individually or grouped by a particular sport organization or even a nation, have been attempting to develop a systematic approach to sports training based on research and science since the early 1960s. The elements leading to successful performances are now quite developed and defined, but intelligent management of the training process still remains the central issue of this line of research.

Since we recognize and understand that training is a process, we should also recognize the fact that this process should be managed in order to achieve desired results. By management we mean following a plan with the freedom to tweak, fine-tune, and adjust the specific elements and training parameters as needed to achieve a personal record or target performance. To do this, we need to define the managing parameters of the process and the methods of influencing them. Under managing parameters in training we usually understand the key ergometric, physiological or biomechanical factors that define the athlete's performance. In endurance sports, swimming included, performance is typically associated with the level of development of aerobic and anaerobic energy production mechanisms, often defined as aerobic and anaerobic power and capacity (J. Olbrecht, 2000). One of the main goals of the training process is to improve said individual characteristics in particular sequence and relation to each other.

To accomplish this goal we use different training strategies, approaches and specific exercises. Our goal is to receive a desired training effect in the form of progression achieved in each element of preparedness and in overall performance on specific distance and stroke. Unlike the generic term "improvement" used by most coaches to evaluate progress, we want to use actual individual progression rates since this parameter is much more objective and measurable. To achieve some level of precision and consistency, we also want to test an athlete's abilities by using standard training test exercises which are "standard" because their key parameters are kept constant and connected with weekly targets as required by the plan we adopted.

Weekly and seasonal progression rates can be also used to compare the effectiveness of strategies applied, short and long-term. This approach may eliminate some of the "training systems" trending on the market, such as USRPT, "high intensity" or "race pace" training. The truth is that no training method or strategy can "over perform" the individual adaptation threshold. The

goal of any training process (any "training system" in this case as well) is to optimize training means to match optimum individual level of adaptation at any given time. And "optimization" means full control over training elements and their proper management which no "training system" usually provides.

To achieve some level of optimization (read "control" and "management"), we usually need to identify the initial athlete's preparedness level and establish the possible improvement rate. The rate of progression or improvement usually depends on a number of factors, where prior training experience and preparedness level, level of maturation, and "adaptability" are among the most important. Preparedness level in sport is usually associated with the level of development of specific physiological mechanisms responsible for the production of energy for whatever duration of time is necessary to cover a specific distance and stroke of competition. It is also a well-known fact that any individual energy paths do not function in isolation but are always interconnected with others. In simple terms - you can be only as strong as the weakest link (or energy system in our case). Sequential development of energy producing mechanisms is then defined as a training strategy where each energy path is improved in coordination with others and in time and sequence necessary to secure total maximum energy release at the time of the most important event. It is important to note that since different training strategies produce different end results, analyses of performances by the progression of results alone, without knowing specific strategies applied in each case, is pointless. This is something to remember when you attend clinics where analyses of a particular athlete's performance are presented, which is unfortunately quite a common approach to lure coaches to conventions and clinics.

In theory, the training process management task is not that different from managing any production, engineering or money management process. If it is agreed that coaches are responsible for the management of the training processes for their swimmers and teams, then they should be evaluated on the process's efficiency and group outcome which can be measured in relation to expected goals or target results, not just one or two highly successful athletes whose performances could actually just be anomalies, not necessarily linked or directly the result of the specific training process in use.

#### IN SUMMARY

To be successful, we need to be in a position to control and manage the training process of our athletes on their way to an expected or record performance. And if this is our goal, then we need to prepare the following elements:

Well-defined and detailed training plans (in terms of a selected periodization model and strategy, at least seasonal but better annual)

Specific criteria which will be used to evaluate athletes' progress (managing parameters we want to control and test sets that we use to control them)

- Established expectations of how key performance parameters should change under selected training strategy (this is usually achieved by comparing actual rates of change in critical parameters with a model. The goal is to stay close to the optimum development pattern under specific circumstances). If and when we have all these elements in place, we can then easily drive and manage the actual progress of our athletes using the rate of change in general performance and its elements in time.

*" IF IT IS AGREED THAT COACHES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE TRAINING PROCESSES FOR THEIR SWIMMERS AND TEAMS, THEN THEY SHOULD BE EVALUATED ON THE PROCESS'S EFFICIENCY AND GROUP OUTCOME WHICH CAN BE MEASURED IN RELATION TO EXPECTED GOALS OR TARGET RESULTS, NOT JUST ONE OR TWO HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL ATHLETES WHOSE PERFORMANCES COULD ACTUALLY JUST BE ANOMALIES, NOT NECESSARILY LINKED OR DIRECTLY THE RESULT OF THE SPECIFIC TRAINING PROCESS IN USE. "*

You may still be wondering, "Where do specific training sets or workouts fit into this scheme of things?" Logically, if you follow this discussion, training exercises (sets) should be chosen based on their effectiveness in achieving a specific training effect in a specific energy production mechanism. Considering the fact that athletes' needs are different even within one group of athletes training for the same event due to individual differences, each set then has to be evaluated by duration and intensity and fit in with other sets with different objectives. Take any set out of its order in the seasonal or training phase equation and all you receive is just that - a training set without a direction, goal or purpose. Insert it randomly into any workout for any group and you most surely will achieve a "monkey wrench" effect.

Are you still convinced that a "killer set" is what you are looking for?

#### CONCLUSION

Training sets are just a tool to achieve a specific goal in an athlete's development process. As such, process logic and design should govern training set selection and their application on different days and in different training phases. It is very important to note that adoption of somebody else's training sets is not appropriate in most cases unless they are based on the same or well defined criteria defining their targets and adjusted to the needs of specific level or age group. Each and every training set is ALWAYS a solution to a specific task that coach is trying to achieve. So, you need to know the basis which is used to identify your training zones (and we highly recommend that you look at energy production mechanisms as your main criteria for development specific abilities) and always connect training sets by modality and design with specific goals you are trying to achieve. <



[PHOTO COURTESY: SOOBUM JW-USA TODAY SPORTS]

## GETTING READY TO RACE

BY MICHAEL J. STOTT

**T**aper time. Is ushering swimmers through this period art or science? Experienced coaches aver it is both though the most successful seem to have a magical touch. Disappointed athletes at championship meets would do well to remember Jon Urbancheck's prescient observation. "Swimmers don't miss tapers, just the training."

Below are two taper programs that have produced outstanding results. The first comes from Peter Verhoef, Senior 1 Lead Coach at SwimMAC Carolina and associate head coach at Queens University. An NCAA All-American at Georgia Verhoef implements a taper program, called "meet preparation," that is directed by David Marsh and adapted for individual training groups.

### PETER VERHOEF

"At SwimMAC, tapering is not a separate part of the season - it is the culmination of a season's worth of preparation to race at an athlete's physical, emotional, and technical peak. All three areas are addressed and practiced during the lead up to a championship meet (or in many cases multiple championship meets). It is important for athletes to value working through taper time as they strive each day to perfect their strokes, build confidence in their race plan and skills, and recover from racing efforts quickly and efficiently. Overall, recovery becomes a huge priority during this time of year and is mostly addressed away from the pool with sleep, great nutrition, and

emotional organization. Athletes who have great meets are often the most prepared athletes in terms of the confidence they have in their abilities, the amount of practice they have done at or close to their race speeds and how much they have let their bodies and minds rebuild for a three-to-five-day meet. It is great to add in FUN during this time of year - a joke of the day or a fun story to start practice or a meet session is an important part of making the preparation for the big meets exciting and enjoyable.

"We generally start a three-day cycle of meet preparation practice two-to-three weeks prior to a meet. The daily pattern is simple and helps keep athletes and coaches focused on the most important parts of preparation. It is important to 'de-clutter' these practices and let the main focus be first and foremost. The three day pattern is **SPEED - PACE - AEROBIC (SPA)**. The day before the meet starts is typically an 'Aerobic Day' and the pattern builds back out from there. Double practices get shorter and then are dropped a week out to promote sleeping. Sundays are off and the pattern is adjusted slightly each week so there may be a hybrid or a repeat of the speed or Aerobic days. The pattern usually starts around 80 percent of the training volume of the previous cycle and slowly decreases down to about 60 percent of the volume - really not much lower as most athletes are preparing for three-to-four day prelim/final meets with a healthy number of swims!

“**SPEED** days start with an engaging warm-up focused on technical skills and turns. The main sets of the practice focus on developing and refining the swimmers ability to swim fast! Often this involves equipment like fins and paddles or Resisted/Assisted stretch cords. The total distances swum fast are broken down into short enough chunks that the athlete can maintain best form and high speed throughout. The other purpose of the SPEED day is to prepare the athletes bodies for racing components the following day. Descending sets help the athlete dial in to race speeds, especially for longer distance swimmers. This is also a great day to work on starts and include some explosive dryland exercises.

“**PACE** days are all about race focus, starting with a rehearsal of a meet warm-up, from dryland activation to in-water patterns. Often the athletes are given 30-to-40 minutes to direct warm-up on their own once we have practiced this as a group a few times. The main sets of the day will be broken swims, pace repeats, and in some cases sprints beyond race speed. Practice will include cooling down properly and for some athletes a short aerobic set with great technique to finish may help recover them for the next cycle. If incorporating dryland, following this practice is a great place to include it.

“**AEROBIC** days are more likely called an ‘Active Regeneration’ day. The two main focuses are emotional relaxation and physically rebuilding the body by staying away from maximum effort exertions. On these days swimming steady and with great form is the key. Breath control patterns, kick-out counts and other drills can be used to keep it interesting. Athletes should leave feeling rejuvenated and excited for the next cycle. For some athletes more is better, just staying away from swimming ‘hard.’ It is also a good idea not to add in extra dryland on these days unless it is a stretching or short core routine the swimmers frequently do. These are great days to get out of practice a little early to get ahead on school work!”

### SOME SAMPLE SWIMMAC TAPER SETS

“SwimMAC athletes, early in the meet preparation phase or sometimes earlier, do sets David Marsh used with his Auburn and SwimMAC Elite athletes:

-Long Course 100s broken at the 50: Number of rounds is determined by distance away from the meet.

-First 50 is from a dive, swimmer starts only focusing on best form with a very smooth effort.

-Second 50 is from a push with a goal to go 2nd 50 of 100 pace. For some top level sprinters this can be unrealistic and can be adjusted to +1 second or similar says Verhoef.

-If the swimmer makes the goal time on the first round, they ‘earn’ the right to go faster on the first 50, progressing to as close as they can to a full broken 100 at goal speed.”

“For more distance type athletes, we have found that it is important to develop a feel for pace after swimming through a turn or coming off of a build effort. It is often misleading for distance swimmers to swim repeat 50s at 1000 or 1650 pace as this pace is relatively easy to hit if given enough rest. A better version of pace is to do the following (for 1650 or 100 pace). On a great day some athletes can swim well faster than pace; it is important to stick to the pace and stroke rates they plan to use on their championship day.

*300: 200 steady build and the last 100 at pace*

*3 x 50 to the foot @ 10-15 seconds rest, all at pace*

*200: 100 steady build and the last 100 at pace*

*1 x 150 hold pace*

“For IMers breaking down the race to create speed within the strokes works well. To prepare for a 200 IM for example, DII NCAA Champion Matthew Josa really felt this set prepared his breaststroke and freestyle tempos and strokes for how they would feel in a race.

*75 Fly @ 1:15 make -- each 25 faster (dive or push is fine)*

*3 x 50 Backstroke @ :50 negative split each one and also descend to 200 goal pace*

*6 x 25 Breaststroke @ :25 all Fast!*

*75 Free – Use Race turns and kickouts you plan to use when racing.* “Matthew could swim the fly 75 in under 40 seconds from a push, descending down to 24 on backstroke, and holding 13+ seconds in breast with his ideal race tempo and stroke count. He finished with a 75 free at 37 seconds, with the last kickout to 12.5 meters. At DII Championships he set the NCAA record with a 1:41.92, splitting 22.11, 24.92, 29.84, 25.07,” says Verhoef.

### BRIDGER BELL

Bridger Bell is the head age group and assistant national team group coach at Team Santa Monica (CA). He was previously an assistant at Johns Hopkins University while head-coaching the St. Paul’s Schools in Brooklandville, Md. and previously he coached at The Westminster Schools in Atlanta.

“Our last two years at The Westminster Schools developing this taper program our swimmers first had 44 lifetime best times out of 48 swims at State, and then 43 of 51 when our girls won the state meet. I have carried this program forward to other teams and seen swimmers succeed at similar rates. For a double taper, our swimmers hit near peak season yardage/intensity again the day after the first taper meet before coming back down leading into the second taper meet. *continued >>>*”



For each taper program, if time allows, we implement a two-week (cycle (occasionally longer for a few individuals) featuring the following key sets:

#### **TAPER MONITORING SET**

“The taper monitoring set we got from Bill Smyth at Boston University. We do it every three weeks early in the season, accelerating to every week the last two weeks before meet week.

4 x 50 @ 3:00 or 4 x 100 @ 3:00 (400/500+ swimmers do 100s)

“We record all times on this set throughout the season. During our taper, we expect times to come down significantly and also expect a better hold across the four repeats. Some swimmers, especially our purest sprinters, aren’t expected to hold perfectly. There is a degree of art and intuition/knowledge of our swimmers that comes into play; we do not try to make it an exact science. We watch each swimmer’s times on the set through the season and learn how training, fatigue and rest affect set performance to help us know how to individualize the taper for that swimmer. If an individual swimmer’s times aren’t coming down or aren’t holding after we’ve dropped yardage, then we have that swimmer come down more steeply.

#### **RACE REHEARSAL**

“Swimmers rehearse the stroke counts, breathing habits and underwater distances planned for the race.

100’s: odds with fins, swimming smoothly (no splash). Evens no equipment broken @ 80 percent of race pace (75-25, 25-50-25, 100-50-50).

200s with no equipment, broken (150-50, 50-100-50, 100-50-50) at 80 percent of race pace.

Early the week before meet: 8 x 100 @ 2:30 or 4 x 200 @ 3:00 Race Rehearsal. (400/500+ swimmers do 200s)

Late the week before meet: 6 x 100 @ 2:30 or 3 x 200 @ 3:00 Race Rehearsal

Early the week of meet: 4 x 100 @ 2:30 or 2 x 200 @ 3:00 Race Rehearsal

Late the week of meet: 2 x 100 @ 2:30 or 1 x 200 @ 3:00 Race Rehearsal

#### **DESCENDING STROKE COUNTS, BREATH COUNTS, LENGTHENED UNDERWATERS**

“All of our swimmers – sprint, mid-distance and distance – do extended swims (repeats of 500 to 1200) freestyle or alternating free and stroke (in varying patterns) with individualized equipment targeting points of stroke emphasis for that swimmer. Swimmer aids include ankle bands, pull buoy between the feet, sticks (for catch-up stroke) and snorkels. During these swims, swimmers extend/lengthen underwaters, cut strokes and cut breaths each 100 or each 200. We believe this has helped our swimmers hone stroke efficiency leading into championship meets without the coaches cluttering swimmers’ minds and confusing their strokes with frequent stroke feedback cues (unlike earlier in the season, when we strive to give all swimmers frequent feedback).

#### **GOAL TIME WITH FINS**

“A few days before meet: 1 x 100 or 1 x 200 with fins @ goal time with same underwater distances the swimmer will use in the race (without equipment).” <

## Accountability

Andrew Sheaff - [www.coachandrewsheaff.com](http://www.coachandrewsheaff.com)

Accountability is critically important in any high-performance environment. While it is challenging for any one individual to meet or exceed the high expectations that come with high-performance, external sources of accountability help facilitate the process of maintaining standards of excellence.

This is intuitively recognized by most athletes who often set team goals of 'hold each other accountable', or the equivalent. Yet these same intentions are often associated with no real change. It seems that cultures of accountability are often discussed and never really implemented, at least with any sort of effectiveness or consistency.

The obvious exception is the programs, athletes, and coaches that are perennial champions. They have mastered the art of accountability. By definition, they are exceptional.

In this post, I'd like to take a look at why accountability is important, as well as some strategies that coaches can use to best hold teams and individuals accountable. Coaches who are able to consistently create high standards of behavior, and consistently create a culture of accountability to those standards, will be rewarded with consistently great performances.

Some questions to consider-

- ◆ What are the long-term consequences of short-term failures to maintain accountability?
- ◆ How can otherwise strong cultures slowly erode, leaving coaches wondering, 'how did we get here?'
- ◆ What does it really mean to hold someone accountable?
- ◆ Most people view accountability as brutal honesty, tough love, or a license to essentially insult others. Is this the best way to create accountability?
- ◆ Why is it so difficult to hold others accountable? How can we overcome this challenge?

I'll explore these questions below.

### Cultural Erosion

The team culture is ultimately about what people do, or don't do. While it is influenced by thoughts and perceptions, it is action that expresses what the culture is really about it. Culture is about what's expected and what's acceptable, and this is manifested in day-to-day behavior.

Accountability is so important because it is the means by which cultural norms are enforced, or allowed to erode. It is a choice between the two. For every action or behavior misaligned with the established culture that goes unaddressed, the culture be-

comes weaker. Over time, these behaviors become acceptable and more individuals will act in this manner. Every time these behaviors are addressed, it becomes more and more evident that these behaviors are unacceptable. Individuals will stop acting in this manner.

Cultural erosion occurs every time someone looks the other way. Culture changes through small choices to uphold the vision, or not. It is in this manner that great programs and teams slide back toward norm. It is the almost invisible choice to let one more behavior go and inconsequential behaviors suddenly become consequential behaviors. Because of this dynamic, coaches have to realize that everything matters.

*'You're either coaching it, or you're allowing it to happen.'*

This football coaches' saying encapsulates the role of the coach in creating accountability for the team culture. The behaviors expressed as a result of the accepted cultural norms are the result of your choices as a coach.

The quote is about a lack of personal accountability and a failure to hold others accountable to high standards. As coaches, we must hold ourselves and others accountable to performance. It comes down to the facilitation of improvement. If we externalize blame to the swimmer, we give up the opportunity to improve ourselves as coaches. If we allow for mediocrity to happen, we are depriving our swimmers of the opportunity to improve themselves.

Of course, the opposite is true as well. Every time someone is held accountable to the cultural norms of the team, these norms are strengthened. Everyone is watching for what is acceptable. The more often the line between acceptable and unacceptable is clearly defined, the powerful these behavioral codes become.

As coaches, it starts and ends with us.

### Creating Accountability

One of the assumptions about accountability is that most people don't want to be held accountable. In my experience, most individuals DO want to be held accountable. Most swimmers want to improve. They want to get better and they want to know what they need to do to improve. However, most individuals do want to be held in a particular manner. They want to be held accountable in a manner that is explicit, fair, and consistent.

### *Explicitly*

Tell people exactly what the problem is, and exactly what they can/should do about it. Be totally unambiguous. To make sure there are no misunderstandings, let individuals communicate back what they have received. The more explicit your message, the less room for error. If you want change, describe it specifically. If someone doesn't know exactly what they are doing wrong, they can't change it. If they don't know what they can do about it, they won't make any effective changes.

As a coach, it is your job to help facilitate the process. You don't have to have, and probably shouldn't always give, the answers to the swimmer. However, you need to be able to get them in the right direction. It's called *coaching*.

This can be really uncomfortable. Get over it. If you want to be a leader, you have to do uncomfortable things. While it never really gets any easier to tell someone their effort/execution wasn't good enough, it does get easier to remove the hesitation to act. It is a habit to see something wrong and immediately intervene. Develop the habit.

When faced with providing an individual with uncomfortable feedback, it can be helpful to remember the following. ***By failing to provide feedback, you are depriving someone of an opportunity to improve.*** Any failure to do so is due solely to your own discomfort. So, because of your own struggles, someone else suffers the consequences. Is that the type of coach you'd really like to be?

The worst strategy is a passive aggressive approach that utilizes subtle, vague offhand comments that allude to a specific issue. If there is a problem, lay it out directly and explicitly, leaving no room for misinterpretation. 'Softening the blow' will make the problem worse, not better.

Everyone wants to know the limits of what is acceptable. Be clear about where that line stands. By being explicit, that line becomes more and more defined.

### *Fairly*

Is your feedback fair? Is your feedback honest? Are you accurately describing the situation? Are you nitpicking, or providing real feedback that will make a positive difference? If the feedback is about a real performance problem, the swimmer will be receptive. Upon consistently receiving negative feedback that's just fluff, swimmers start to tune it out. They become resentful. At the same time, providing unwarranted positive feedback can be just as problematic. Swimmers know the difference between praise and BS.

Fair can also be in the context of the nature of feedback. A simple heuristic is to provide feedback about the action, not about the person. There is a big difference between 'that was a lazy effort' and 'you are a lazy person'. In the former case, you are providing feedback about a specific action. In the latter case, you are making a value judgment about an inalterable aspect of who someone is. How do you expect these two forms of feedback will be received? How will each statement leave the swimmer feeling? Which will better get the change YOU want? Swimmers are people. Remember it.

### *Consistently*

As problematic as a lack of accountability, inconsistent accountability is potentially even more damaging because swimmers learn they don't have to listen. If you are going to require a specific behavior, skill, etc, you need to require it all the time. If you are inconsistent with what you require, individuals will interpret that to mean that the standards aren't absolute. Consciously or not, they'll test what they can get away with. Eventually, when a swimmer doesn't feel like doing something, they won't. The more often this happens, the harder it will be to actually create real change.

Swimmers want to know what's expected and they want to know it's expected all the time. When standards are inconsistent, swimmers have to use their own willpower to reach those standards because they have to hold themselves accountable. When they KNOW what's expected, they can just execute because there is no ambiguity.

If you can't be consistent with creating accountability around certain behaviors, don't require them in the first place.

Consistently is not only important for specific behaviors. Consistency is important across individuals as well. It takes no time at all for swimmers to realize that standards are not being enforced consistently. Once that happens, even the most accurate feedback will not be received well. Consistency is critical.

### **Improving Receptivity**

No matter how well we provide accountability feedback, it's effectiveness will ultimately be dictated by how that feedback is received and perceived by the swimmer.

How can we improve how feedback is received? In this case, it's not what we do in the moment, but how we behave over time that will improve how feedback is received.

*'No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.'*

Trite, over-used, and completely true. Everything you say and everything you do is demonstrating your ability to relate to and care about your swimmers.

What is your track record of caring about people, both as a team and for specific individuals?

This track record will dictate how your messages are received. If people don't think you care or don't take the time to relate to them as people, your message will be met with suspicion and hesitancy. In contrast, individuals are willing to hear the uncomfortable truth, when they KNOW it is well-intentioned because they know you care.

There are many ways to show that you care. Rather than identifying those strategies here, I'd like offer a simple suggestion. Try to **actually** care about your swimmers. If you actually care, this will come across in your words, your behavior, and your interactions.

Coaches are in the difficult position of requiring swimmers to perform necessarily unpleasant tasks to achieve goals weeks, months, and even years in the future. This is particularly difficult

in times where swimmers REALLY don't want to perform a particular training task to a designated standard, yet the coach realizes the task is required to accomplish long-term goals.

This dynamic creates tension between coaches and swimmers when it appears that goals are misaligned. This tension can be defused by the same processes of caring and relating to the swimmers as people. The more swimmers know that coaches actually care about them as people and understand that the coach has their best interest in mind, the more receptive they will be to challenges and frank feedback. They KNOW it is well-intentioned and aimed at HELPING the swimmer.

### Moving Forward

To be an effective coach, you must directly challenge swimmers and require high standards of performance, especially at times when it is most difficult for swimmers to be held accountable. At the same time, coaches must be able to relate to their swimmers as people, and truly care about who they are and what they are working to accomplish. Many coaches are proficient at either of these skills. However, very few have mastered both.

Those that have are the master coaches we all look up to.

*\*All of the above applies to providing feedback and accountability to ANYONE.*

### \*References

Many of the ideas described here were originally described in or inspired by the following books. They are well worth the time and effort to read.

2-R Manager <https://www.amazon.com/2R-Manager-Relate-Require-Effectively/dp/078795893X>

Radical Candor <https://www.amazon.com/Radical-Candor-Kim-Scott/dp/B01KTIEFEE>

Crucial Accountability <https://www.amazon.com/Crucial-Accountability-Resolving-Expectations-Commitments/dp/0071829318>



## Mind Games Forever

Michael J. Stott



Christophe Simon/AFP/Getty Images

How often have we witnessed personal and team rituals as a prelude to competition? Think Michael Phelps and those flapping arms or Virginia Tech entering Sandman then sliding on the deck followed by a diver parachuting from the 10m with team flag.

Some rituals are just business as usual. Standard warm-up routines, water carried from a home pool, precision stretching (Cal men), cacophonous cheering (Holton-Arms girls in Bethesda, Md.) and pre-meet music are prime examples.



Photo courtesy Championship Productions

Warm-up music at New Trier under Mark Onstott was country and God Bless Texas not unlike the Johnny Cash tunes played during the Dave Robertson days. National Anthem? The Trevians march in clapping, line the deck and, like The Collegiate School in Richmond, Va., sing it often giving voice to a natatorium whose sound system failed. Swimming? New Trier swims most of their dual meets in drag suits. "When I got there I noticed the best teams did it and we wanted to be the best," says Onstott.

At championship meet time traditions really come to the fore. Themed T-shirts, caps and garb change. At Auburn "it became standard that we were going to be the best dressed team as we arrived at NCAAs. Part of it was the Pygmalion Effect. If you dress people like champions they tend to perform like champions," says David Marsh. "That included whatever detail to make the experience first rate -- from being picked up at the airport (limos within compliance guidelines) to getting rooms. Coaches set up rooms in advance with waters, names on the doors and so on making things really special." Seniors spoke before first day meals to get "people a little more emotionally connected," says Marsh.



In New Mexico Albuquerque Academy swimmers have a first day luncheon, walk to the library, hear from coach Dave Barney and watch videos of great moments at past state meets. Before the meet AA team members enjoy three humorous rituals. One tradition is the reading of a poem about rabbits and their procreating habits. Written by a former Barney student the poem has been recited in English, Spanish, Italian, German, Russian and as a rap by captains and/or coaches.

And the memories remain. Meaghan Stern, 2005 AA graduate says "I still puzzle over how a dramatic reading of a poem about rabbits 'frolicking' in the clover ever became an enduring pre-state meet team routine. We also never failed to gather both boys and girls teams around a large mixing bowl filled with water and floating rubber ducks to scream for a minute before the first day of the state meet. No idea why we did that," she says.

And there is more. "One year after a particularly energetic taper practice, Justine Schluntz (Rhodes Scholar, NCAA Woman of the

Year at Arizona), Celeste Bower and I gathered our teammates into one shower stall," says Stern. "All 20+ of us smushed in tightly and laughed, yelled and cheered all at once. One year later my sister Kendra (10-time national champion at Amherst) called to tell me that they had fit even more people." The "Shower Stuff" continues as an annual rite.

As does a season-ending custom where captains bestow paper plate awards aimed at swimmer foibles. One year swimmer Will Lokke won a "stop talking about my sister in the locker room award." Meaghan Stern "LOVED writing the paper plate awards as a way to celebrate and laugh. I have most of mine," she says.

"Most of this sounds silly, but I've found that easing the mood tends to relax the swimmers," says Barney.



The team shave. At Albuquerque swimmers are on their own. At Woodberry Forest in Virginia it is done together. Afterward the team attends an all-school dinner sporting their new haircuts. At New Trier team members don't wear caps and shaving is optional. "We called it the Ultimate Sacrifice and/or Skin to Win," says Onstott. "Shaving your head puts a little more skin in the game and was one of those things that separated us from the other guys," he says.

"Shaving for the big meet was a big deal and a serious ritual," says former Auburn All-American Dean Hutchinson. "I kept my room hot and took my time like my life depended on this shave. It was spiritual, exciting and the culmination of a lot of hard work. There was an order and meaning to EVERYTHING we did the night before. All orchestrated and all important," he says.



"Wake up swims. Funny how we hated them when we were not good and thought they were punishment," says Hutchinson. "As we became better athletes, we saw the value and counted on them. We loved wake up swims that were Auburn only. We were always early. I don't remember many days where we were doing it with other teams. One time at Olympic Trials David arranged for a few of us to swim in some small local pool. The building had the locker room where Hoosiers was filmed. Kind of cool."



At the Virginia Independent School state meet Norfolk Academy coach Jay Leach always requests the earliest possible session to get his Bulldogs up and focused for the business at hand.

First impressions. "The teams that walked in together to begin a competition seemed to be the ones that performed the best through the entire meet," says Marsh. "I recall Skip Kenney taking the 1996 Olympic team into the aquatic center in Atlanta at sunset where we got the full effect of the excitement about how grand and unique the facility was. Being together can add to the confidence in a brotherhood kind of way," he says.



Athlete rubdowns are *de rigeur* at college and championship meets. At high school not so much. Though previous Illinois State Meet venues at both New Trier and Evanston had specific gyms set up for rubdown tables that was not always the case. New to Onstott was the starting block rubdown performed by Hinsdale Central coach Corky King prompting host Onstott to ask meet officials to intervene. "I didn't think that anyone should be allowed to come up and spray the blocks with who knows what," he says. (King used water.)

Receiving awards. On the medal stand college athletes are always in full warmups as are New Trier and AA swimmers. In Illinois Fenwick High School athletes wear their monk robes, Evanston carries a big stick and Loyola a large Santa Claus.



Photo Swimming World Magazine

Personal rituals can range from the ridiculous to the sublime. Early on Amanda Beard took her teddy bear to the blocks. Later on Dara Torres took her daughter to the awards stand. For Meaghan Stern race prep was a series of stretches, shakes, circles and an obsessive goggle check as a result of an early career goggle mishap.



Photo Ezra Shaw/Getty Images

Sister Kendra would not sleep well the night before big meets. *"A couple of times I barely slept at all,"* she says. *"Many of my pre-race rituals were focused on managing my nerves and calming/centering myself so that I didn't waste any adrenaline. I would always get behind the blocks with my goggles already on...but whether it was to intimidate my competitors or to hide the fact that I was anxious and panicked out of my mind, I'll never tell!"*

Then there is the ready room. While Hutchinson and Bill Pilczuk preferred the seclusion of the outdoors for prerace visualization they invariably found themselves in the ready room. *"For me,"* says Hutchinson, *"it was headphones on, stare at people and don't talk. Some guys kept it light. Bill Pilczuk and I didn't. It's funny. I think of Amy Van Dyken. She was like us. All business. No friendly faces in a ready room. Now I would consider all those guys friends. Gary Hall was definitely someone I wouldn't want to talk to at all. He WAS the competition. I spent a lot of time training thinking about beating him. Not many people did. Jon Olsen, Gary Hall, Pilczuk and I were in ready rooms together a lot. I hated them in that room. Now I miss them. Thank God for Facebook! They are friends. Ready Rooms are great memories. Gamesmanship. We ALL loved it."*



Photo NBC OLYMPICS



Michael J. Stott is an ASCA Level 5 coach whose Collegiate School (Richmond, Va.) teams won nine state high school championships in 15 years. A member of that school's Athletic Hall of Fame, he is also a recipient of NISCA's Outstanding Service Award.



## STRENGTH TRAINING

# Taper From Strength and Power

Charlie Hoolihan

*ASCA Swimming Strength and Conditioning Specialist Coordinator*

Strength and power training in the weight room can be an effective training stimulus for top times at a championship swimming meet if proper planning and program design are in place.

Understanding the process of strength and power development, combined with pre- and post-meet tests in both, are key elements in their transfer to swimming events. Coaches also need to consider that there will be a wide range of responses to different training elements and use each taper to improve the next.

There are five primary objectives during the strength and power taper. These are...

- Maintaining peak strength from the previous training.
- Increase and then maintain power during the lead-up to the meet.
- Doing both while minimizing muscle damage.
- Increasing psychological and physiological energy.
- Increasing the context of training transfer.

Various techniques can be used to maintain strength and power during a taper while minimizing muscle damage. Additionally, multiple research reviews have found that they *increase* strength as effectively as traditional strength programming.

The "**Repetitions in Reserve**" (RIR) strategy is the easiest and most familiar because the athletes merely avoid maxing out at least eight weeks before their championship meet. The athlete should have a good sense of their efforts during a familiar workout and recognize when they are close to their maximum effort at least one to three repetitions prior.

Avoiding maximum effort in this manner reduces muscle damage while maintaining strength.

**Velocity or Tempo Training** is a similar technique that uses lift speed as the guideline for the number of repetitions rather than a specific target number.

This method establishes a minimum speed for the repetition. Once the workload causes the speed to drop, the set ends. This method requires practice throughout the season to develop a feel for speed.

Coaches can use a metronome app or music in the weight room to establish basic tempos for the athletes to follow. In the lowering and lifting phases, each exercise should be completed by the time a beat is struck, but the speed of the lifting or phase is the most important. Lowering should be done in a controlled and technical manner.

Upper-body exercises can typically follow a 120-beats-per-minute (BPM) pattern, and lower-body exercises, 60-90 BPM.

Like RIR, tempo training reduces muscle damage.

**Accommodated Training (AT)** using bands during lifting is another way to enhance strength and power.

During strength training, a band can be placed strategically during a lift to increase the resistance where the body mechanics are at their strongest and decrease resistance when they are at their weakest.

An example is during the bench press. A band placed underneath the bench and attaching it to both ends of the barbell decreases resistance during the lowering phase and increases it during the lifting. This makes the bottom part of the lift, where the shoulders are the prime movers, safer on the joint and the top part more challenging when the pecs and triceps become involved.

**Assisted lifts** are like AT and are mostly used in power training to ease a power move's loading or deceleration phases. Power training differs from strength training in that the goal is to move a lighter weight as fast as possible, while strength training's goal is to lift as much as possible at moderate to slow speeds.

An example of a power exercise is a plyometric push-up, in which the athlete performs a push-up as fast as possible to "jump" off the ground as high as possible. This is a great exercise, but the deceleration phase occurs upon landing when most muscle damage occurs.

An assisted lift version of this exercise uses a band attached to two ends of a weight rack. The athlete then assumes the fully lowered phase of a push-up position with the band underneath the sternum. The band should fully support this position. The athlete then explodes upward in the lift phase and leaves the ground. As they descend to the floor, the band decelerates the movement for a soft landing.

A lower-body-assisted power lift can be performed by starting the exercise seated while holding a pair of light dumbbells. The athlete swings the dumbbells back and forward while shifting body weight into the standing and jumping movements.

This technique minimizes the loading portion of the pre-jump countermovement.

Hey what do you do for exercise?  
I lift weights.  
Yeah, but what about cardio?  
I lift weights, faster.



## Programming Eight weeks out from the championship meet



Before discussing specific programming, it's essential to understand the caveat that each athlete will have different optimal tapering needs. Thus, keeping strength and power performance records before the meet is critical.

Developing post-meet strength and power tests is important to understand each athletic component's role in the competition results.

Strength post-tests are easy. Take an upper and lower body exercise and see how the athlete performs on a set at their 5 to 10 repetitions peak. If the repetitions are within two or three of their peak, strength is maintained.

Box jump peak height and the distance of horizontal and vertical medicine ball throws can measure power maintenance. Like strength, good power development occurs if the distances are within 10-20% of pre-meet performance.

The results of these tests can help the athlete prepare for a more accurate taper during the next year or cycle. If all went well in the pool, the strength and power tests indicate the correct taper in this area.

A poor pool performance coupled with a significant drop off of these exercises indicates the athlete needed a shorter taper from power and strength; conversely, being just as strong and powerful might indicate the need for a longer taper.

The charts above and below indicate a general taper structure eight weeks out of the championship meet.

An assumption here is that strength has been emphasized during the lead-up, and power has mainly been technical instruction. This would mean strength sets would be a dominant focus—three to four sets of strength coupled with one power set.

Eight weeks away from the meet, a gradual shift from strength to power begins with two to three sets of strength paired with two sets of power.

Six weeks out, power development receives priority, and strength maintenance is used for two to four weeks using the low-impact methods mentioned above.

Once the athletes are two weeks away from the meet, individual needs should be accommodated, especially for athletes who have been through at least one taper. Their post-tests from previous tapers are the guideline. Those going through a taper for the first time can follow general protocols with particular attention paid to their event and experience.

Note: Videos of the above-mentioned exercises can be found on the ASCA Swimming Strength and Conditioning page, and a complimentary mini-course on tapering is available by emailing:

[charliehoolihan@gmail.com](mailto:charliehoolihan@gmail.com).

## 6 STRENGTH/6 POWER EXAMPLES

Power	8 wks	4-8 wks.	2-4 wks	Strength	8 wks.	4-8 wks.	2-4wks.
<b>Horizontal Med ball</b>	1 set of 2-4	2 sets of 2-4	3 sets of 2	<b>Squats</b>	3-4 sets 5-10	2-3 sets 5-10 Band or tempo	1-2 sets 5-10 Band or tempo
<b>Vertical Medball</b>	1 set of 2-4	2 sets of 2-4	3 sets of 2	<b>Chest press</b>	3-4 sets 5-10	2-3 sets 5-10 Band or tempo	1-2 sets 5-10 Band or tempo
<b>Box jump</b>	1 set of 2-4	2 sets of 2-4	3 sets of 2 DB assist	<b>Shoulder press</b>	3-4 sets 5-10	2-3 sets 5-10 Band or tempo	1-2 sets 5-10 Band or tempo
<b>Split box jump</b>	1 set of 2-4	2 sets of 2-4	3 sets of 2 DB assist	<b>Hex bar Deadlift</b>	3-4 sets 5-10	2-3 sets 5-10 Band or tempo	1-2 sets 5-10 Band or tempo
<b>Plyo pushup</b>	1 set of 2-4	2 sets of 2-4	3 sets of 2 Band assist	<b>DB row</b>	3-4 sets 5-10	2-3 sets 5-10 Band or tempo	1-2 sets 5-10 Band or tempo
<b>Jumping Medball</b>	1 set of 2-4	2 sets of 2-4	3 sets of 2	<b>Triceps extension</b>	3-4 sets 5-10	2-3 sets 5-10 Band or tempo	1-2 sets 5-10 Band or tempo
<b>Rapid band Hip Ext</b>	1 set of 2-4	2 sets of 2-4	3 sets of 2	<b>Hip Extension</b>	3-4 sets 5-10	2-3 sets 5-10 Band or tempo	1-2 sets 5-10 Band or tempo
<b>Rapid MB</b>	1 set of 2-4	2 sets of 2-4	3 sets of 2	<b>Pull-up</b>	3-4 sets 5-10	2-3 sets 5-10 Band or tempo	1-2 sets 5-10 Band or tempo
<b>KB swing Power</b>	1 set of 6-10*	2 sets 6-10*	2 sets 6-10*	<b>KB swing strength</b>	2 sets 15-20 At tempo	2 x 15-20 At tempo	1 x 15-20 At tempo
	*half rhythm /half power	*half rhythm /half power	*half rhythm /half power				

# Fuel For Competition

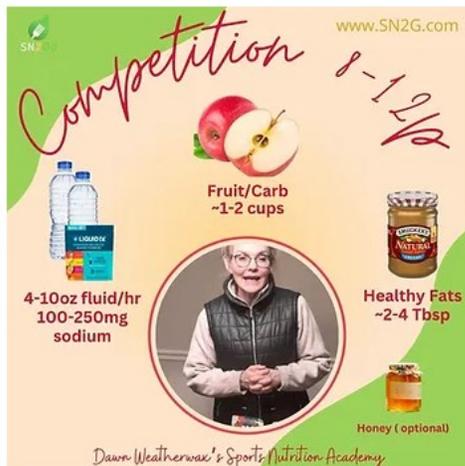
## What Athletes Should Eat

By Dawn Weatherwax, RD, LD, ATC, CSCS

**When it comes to athletic performance, what you eat and drink can make all the difference. Fueling your body properly is essential to smash your goals and reach peak performance levels. Here are some vital nutrition tips tailored for athletes, inspired by Dawn Weatherwax's Sports Nutrition Academy.**

### Start Strong with Breakfast (6-8 am) 🌞:

Breakfast sets the tone for your day. Opt for lean protein and complex carbs to kickstart your metabolism. Include healthy fats and fruits or carbs to provide sustained energy. Don't forget your fluids—aim for 16-32 oz with 500-1000 mg of sodium to stay hydrated. 💧



### Mid-Morning Competition Fuel (8-12 pm) 🍏:

As you approach competition or training, focus on fruits and carbs to keep your energy levels high. Continue hydrating with 4-20 oz of fluid per hour, supplemented with 100-250 mg of sodium. Healthy fats provide essential energy, and a touch of honey can be an optional sweet boost. 🍯

### Lunchtime Energy (11 am-1 pm) 🍗🥗:

A balanced lunch fuels afternoon activities. Incorporate lean protein like chicken (3-4 oz) and cheese (1 oz), alongside complex carbs (2-4 slices). Maintain fluid intake of 16-32 oz with 500-1000 mg of sodium. Healthy fats (1/4-1/2 cups) and your choice of fruits or carbs (2-4 each) round out this meal. 🍌🍌





## Afternoon Competition Nutrition (2-7 pm) ⚡🍌:

For afternoon competitions, maintain energy with fruits and carbs (1-2 cups). Lean protein (20-30 g) supports muscle function, while 4-10 oz of fluid per hour with 100-250 mg of sodium keeps you hydrated. Healthy fats (2-4 Tbsp) and optional honey can enhance endurance.

## Dinner Replenishment (6-8 pm) 🍽️🌟:

After a full day, dinner is crucial for recovery. Lean protein (3-4 oz) combined with complex carbs (1-2 cups) helps repair muscles. Continue hydration with 16-32 oz of fluid and 500-1000 mg sodium. Add healthy fats (1-3 Tbs) and veggies (1-4 cups) for a balanced finish. 🥦🍅



## Evening Snack (8-11 pm) 🍌🍓



End your day with a light snack. Opt for fruits or carbs (1-2 cups) and lean protein (20-30 g) to keep your metabolism active. Stay hydrated with 4-20 oz of fluid per hour and 500-1000 mg of sodium. Healthy fats (1/4-1/2 cup) and optional tart cherry can aid recovery. 🍌🍓

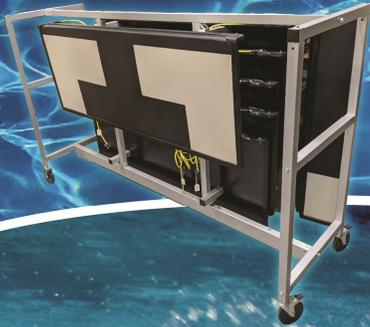


## Optimize Your Nutrition:

Tailor your nutrition plan to your specific needs and goals. For more personalized guidance, consider consulting with experts like Dawn Weatherwax's Sports Nutrition Academy. Remember, fueling your body is key to achieving your personal best! 🌟🏆



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IST	BK GR, #4	50 BK, #5	50 BRST GR, #6	IST
1	CIRCLE SWIM*****NO DIVING			1
2	FEET FIRST ENTRY* * *CIRCLE SWIM			2
3	CIRCLE SWIM*****NO DIVING			3
4	TREVANS			4
5	CIRCLE SWIM*****NO DIVING			5
6	FEET FIRST ENTRY* * *CIRCLE SWIM			6
7	CIRCLE SWIM*****NO DIVING			7
8	FEET FIRST ENTRY* * *CIRCLE SWIM			8



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## Lessons From Derek Jeter, A LEADER

By Kevin Pierce, NISCA Education Chair

As coaches, we strive to help young athletes and leaders alike build a strong foundation to make an impact on and off the field. In this essay, we're diving into the leadership skills of one of the greatest captains in sports history, Derek Jeter.

Derek Jeter, or the captain as he is affectionately known, spent 20 years with the New York Yankees and is celebrated not just for his skills on the diamond, but for his legendary leadership. Today, we'll break down how Jeter's leadership transcended baseball and explore the lessons every athlete, student, and leader can learn from him. When you think about Derek Jeter, the image that likely comes to mind is someone who was always hustling, whether it was running out to first base on a routine ground ball or giving 100% in practice. But what truly set him apart as a leader was the consistency of his effort.

Jeter was often one of the first players to arrive at the stadium and one of the last to leave. That relentless work ethic wasn't just for his personal gain. It was a signal to everyone around him that he took the game seriously and that his team came first.

Jeter never demanded from his teammates anything he wasn't willing to do himself. He set the standards by action, not just his words. He didn't need to give motivational speeches every day because the way he carried himself spoke volumes.

Imagine, what does that do for a culture, our team, or an organization? When people see their leader pushing boundaries, setting high expectations for themselves, and doing the little things right, they are naturally inspired to follow suit. Think about this in the context of being a student athlete, a coach, or even in the workplace. If you want your team to give their best effort, you need to show them what it looks like.

If you want them to be punctual, you need to be the first one there. Jeter's leadership reminds us that leadership isn't about what you say. It's about what you do consistently, day in and day out. Jeter's ability to stay calm under pressure is also one of his most iconic aspects of his leadership.

Whether it's the bottom of the ninth inning in a critical playoff game or the seventh game of the World Series, Jeter approached each moment with a level of calm and focus that made him a reliable force for his team. He knew that in high-pressure situations, emotion can run high, but his ability to stay cool and make calculated decisions often determined success. Let's take a moment to talk about pressure. It's something we all face, whether it's an exam, a big game, or a looming deadline. What set Jeter apart was his preparation. He didn't just rely on talent.

He prepared for those pressure-filled moments through countless hours of practice and mental conditioning. His calmness wasn't an accident. It was a result of his preparation and ability to stay present in the moment. He understood that panicking wouldn't help him or his teammates. His famous flip play in the 2001 ALDS against the Oakland A's is a perfect example.

The Yankees were on the verge of elimination, but Jeter's ability to process the situation and execute an extraordinary, unexpected play to get an out shows that pressure can be an opportunity for greatness if you approach it with a calm mindset. For young leaders, staying composed under pressure is one of the most critical traits you can develop.

The next time you face a tough situation, remember to breathe, rely on your preparation, and make a decision on what's best for the group. Whether it's in sports, in school, or in life, people will look to you during these tense moments, and how you handle those situations will set the tone for everyone else.

Leadership is often thought of as glamorous, but Derek Jeter's leadership was all about putting his team first, even when it meant sacrificing his own accolades or comfort. Throughout his career, Jeter never put his personal statistics or individual recognition above the success of the Yankees. That mentality made him the kind of leader people respected, trusted, and wanted to follow.

Jeter's selflessness wasn't just about saying the right things. It was about taking action and making the team better. One of those most telling moments was in 2004 when Alex Rodriguez, a superstar shortstop in his own right, joined the Yankees. Instead of causing a rift or making a scene about his position, Jeter smoothly transitioned to accommodate Rodriguez at third base without a hint of drama. This was a huge sacrifice for Jeter, but he did it because it was what was best for the team. This isn't just something we often associate with leadership, but true leaders make sacrifices.

They are willing to adjust their roles or take on responsibilities that might not always be glamorous or even fair because they understand the ultimate goal is the success of the team. Leaders in any context, whether it's in sports, business, or school, will sometimes need to make sacrifices for the greater good.

Maybe you pass up on taking the winning shot because a teammate is in a better position, or you take on extra work so you can help your team meet the deadline. Selflessness creates a culture where people trust you because they know you're not just in it for yourself; you're in it for the team.

Throughout his career, Jeter earned respect from teammates, coaches, fans, and even his opponents. That respect wasn't simply because of his talent. It was because he consistently showed respect for the game, his teammates, and his opponents. He played the game the right way without cutting corners or taking shortcuts, and he expected the same from those around him.

One of the most underrated aspects of leadership is how you treat people. Jeter never let his ego get in the way of doing what was right. Whether it was making time for younger players, respecting the authority of his coaches, or treating every opponent with dignity, Jeter's leadership was built on the foundation of respect.

Respect also means playing with integrity, even when no one was watching. Jeter played every game with the same level of effort, whether it was Game 7 of the World Series or a meaningless game in the first month of April. He believed that respecting the game itself was as important as winning.

For young leaders, respect is earned, not demanded. It comes from how you conduct yourself in every situation, when people are watching and when they're not. Whether you're a team captain, a student leader, or someone trying to make a positive impact in your community, remember that how you treat others and how you approach your work defines the kind of leader you will become.

Jeter's leadership was rooted in accountability, too. After every game, whether he had a great performance or struggled, he would face the media and own his actions. He never shot away from taking responsibility for his mistakes, and he never threw his teammates under the bus. Jeter understood that accountability starts with the leader, and when you take that ownership, others will follow. Accountability is one of the most difficult aspects of leadership because it requires humility. Jeter wasn't perfect, and he didn't expect perfection from his teammates. But he always expected everyone, including himself, to own their performance.

After a loss, you wouldn't hear Jeter make excuses about injuries or blame the umpire for a bad call. He simply acknowledged what went wrong and focused on how to fix it. This type of leadership creates a culture of trust. When people know that their leader will take responsibility when things go wrong, it allows them to focus and feel safe making mistakes. It also encourages others to take accountability for their own actions, creating a culture where growth and improvement becomes the focus, not finger pointing. As a leader, taking ownership is one of the most powerful things you can do.

When things go wrong, the first thing you do is ask yourself, what could I have done better? This kind of accountability and reflection doesn't just make you a better leader, it makes your team stronger. Accountability is contagious. When others see you owning your actions, they will become more likely to do the same.

One of the most powerful aspects of Jeter's leadership journey is his commitment to giving back and developing the next generation of leaders. Back in 1996, Jeter founded the Turn 2 Foundation, and one of its flagship initiatives is the Jeter's Leaders Program. This program is a leadership development initiative for high school students aimed at empowering young people to make positive decisions, excel academically, and serve as role models in their communities. The Jeter's Leaders Program is a testament to Derek Jeter's belief that leadership isn't just about what you do in the field. It's about how you make an impact in the world. Throughout the program, students are provided with mentorship, leadership training, and opportunities to give back to the community through service projects. These students are held to high standards both academically and in their personal lives, much like Jeter was during his baseball career. Jeter recognized that while not everyone would go on to be a professional athlete, everyone had the potential to be a leader in their own right.

The program didn't just focus on leadership in sports, but in life, teaching young people how to be resilient, make sound decisions, and positively influence others. As leaders, we should always be thinking about how we can use our platform to help others. Jeter's work with young people through his foundation shows that leadership isn't just about personal success.

It's about helping others rise. Whether it's mentoring young athletes, volunteering in your community, or creating opportunities for the next generation, leaders must invest in the future. True leadership is about leaving a legacy. It's not about what you accomplish during your career. It's about how you lift others up and create opportunities for them to succeed.

Here's what we can all learn from Derek Jeter's leadership.

- ◆ One, lead by example. Show your team what hard work and commitment looks like.
- ◆ Two, stay composed under pressure. Prepare for adversity and use it as an opportunity to grow.
- ◆ Three, be selfless. Always put your team first.
- ◆ Four, show respect for the game, your teammates, and your opponents.
- ◆ Five, take accountability, own your actions, and inspire others to do the same.
- ◆ And six, develop future leaders. Consider how you can use your platform to help the next generation succeed.

Whether you're a student athlete, a team captain, or a leader in your community, Jeter's Leadership Playbook is one that can guide you to success. Keep striving to be the best leader you can be. And remember, leadership is about action, not position.

# The 7 Principles of Leadership Every High School Student Should Know

By Kevin Pierce, NISCA Education Chair

## How to Lead with Integrity, Resilience, and Purpose in School and Beyond

Leadership is often viewed as something for adults in high positions, but it's a skill you can start building while you're still in high school. Whether you're a student-athlete, club president, or simply someone others look up to, these skills can have a huge impact now and in the future. The following seven principles offer a roadmap to developing strong, effective leadership in high school and beyond.

### 1. Be the First to Serve

True leadership is about service, not authority. The concept of servant leadership teaches that great leaders prioritize the needs of their team over their own. This principle is especially important in high school because many students may associate leadership with being in charge rather than helping others succeed.

#### *Practical Example:*

Imagine you're the captain of your sports team. Instead of barking orders or standing on the sidelines, you're the one setting up the field, picking up equipment after practice, and encouraging others to get involved. In the classroom, this could mean stepping in to help a classmate who's struggling with an assignment, even when you have other responsibilities. By being the first to serve, you show that leadership is about commitment to the success of others, not just yourself.

#### *Why It Matters:*

When leaders serve first, they create a culture of collaboration and trust. It breaks down barriers between "leaders" and "followers," making everyone feel valued and motivated. Others are more likely to respect and follow someone who leads by action rather than words.

### 2. Lead by Example

Actions speak louder than words, and nothing is more powerful in leadership than setting the standard through your own behavior. This principle is especially relevant in high school when peer pressure and social dynamics can challenge students to act against their values.

#### *Practical Example:*

Let's say you're a club president. If you expect others to stay late to help with an event, you should be the first one to arrive and the last one to leave. If you're asking your team to give 100% effort during practice, you should be working just as hard, if not harder. Leading by example also means upholding academic standards, showing respect to teachers, and being inclusive with classmates.

#### *Why It Matters:*

People are more likely to follow someone who consistently practices what they preach. Leading by example builds credibility, and in high school, credibility is crucial for gaining the respect of your peers. It's about demonstrating that you hold yourself to the same standards you expect from others.

### 3. Be a Lifeline of Communication

Strong communication is the backbone of leadership. As a student leader, you're often the middleman between your peers and authority figures like teachers or coaches. Being the lifeline of communication means ensuring that everyone is informed, misunderstandings are minimized, and conflicts are resolved constructively.

#### *Practical Example:*

If you're the captain of your team and your coach announces a change in practice times, it's your job to make sure everyone knows—early and clearly. It also means being approachable so your teammates feel comfortable coming to you with concerns or feedback. In school, being a good communicator means clarifying tasks, listening to others' ideas, and ensuring that everyone's voice is heard in group projects or discussions.

#### *Why It Matters:*

Good communication keeps things running smoothly and prevents problems from escalating. It also builds trust, as people feel more comfortable when they know they're in the loop. As a leader, your ability to be an effective communicator can be the difference between a team that functions well and one that falls apart under pressure.

### 4. Be the First to Praise Others

Recognizing others' efforts and successes is a key part of leadership. Acknowledging hard work and celebrating wins, no matter how small, boosts morale and encourages everyone to keep pushing toward their goals. This principle fosters an atmosphere where people feel valued and appreciated.

#### *Practical Example:*

As a student leader, make it a point to highlight someone's contribution during a group meeting or after a game. If a classmate had a great presentation, congratulate them in front of the group. In a team setting, you might lead by acknowledging a player who has shown improvement, even if they're not a starter. These small gestures show that you recognize everyone's efforts, not just your own.



# THE DAILY COACH

- ◆ If life continues to teach us anything, it's that life is precious — and can be here one day and gone the next.
- ◆ We don't have to wait for special occasions to convey to people around us that we're grateful for their presence in our lives.
- ◆ Realize our greatest discoveries do not always come from speeding up and doing more but from mindfully slowing down and taking on less.
- ◆ We choose courage over comfort when we decide to remain present in the face of the unknown, the unexpected, and the uncontrollable.
- ◆ As leaders, one of the most important things we can do for ourselves is to be intentional in cultivating moments of solitude, reflection, and positive self-talk.
- ◆ Disconnect to reconnect with your spirit and lean more bravely into the stillness of your transformation.

Challenges, setbacks, and obstacles are often hidden opportunities for:

- ◆ stillness
- ◆ discovery
- ◆ transformation
- ◆ and asking what's next.

- ◆ Understand that using “no” is a complete sentence.
- ◆ Realize our time is limited, and the art of managing our energy is more important than ever.
- ◆ In a world of instant connectivity, we must never forget that people are at the heart of leadership — people with real stories, feelings and emotions.
- ◆ We should not overlook or dehumanize the fact that we are all carrying and going through something that another person can't see.
- ◆ There is nothing wrong with having a negative thought. We just have to remain mindful not to allow it to turn into a lingering negative conversation.
- ◆ Don't let your mind bully your body into believing it must carry the burden of its worries.

## 11 unforgettable truths 2024 taught me:

1. Don't force anything
2. Solitude is rejuvenating
3. Busy does not equal success
4. Joy is in the present moment
5. Calmness makes your mind clear
6. Your intuition gives the best advice
7. Saying yes all the time is exhausting
8. Don't make any assumptions, just ask
9. Being kind supports your inner peace
10. Gratitude makes your energy attractive
11. Happiness comes from your perception

Source: Yung Pueblo, *The Way Forward*

*Sending love to everyone who is just...tired. Life is a lot, and sometimes the answer to it all is to just be still and silent for a while. Give yourself space and grace.*

Whether it's:

*decision fatigue,  
information fatigue,  
anxiety fatigue,  
routine fatigue,  
getting-your-life-back-together fatigue,  
career fatigue,  
social fatigue,  
financial fatigue,  
or physical fatigue,*

*Take a moment to breathe and recharge. You deserve it.*

Source: We the Urban

## Surrender Isn't Giving Up

Often, we think that the harder we push or the more we struggle, the closer we get to our desires. But in reality, manifestation doesn't work through force or resistance—it works through alignment and surrender.

Surrender isn't about giving up; it's about giving up our need to control and figure out every detail.

It's a beautiful act of trust—trusting in something far more divine, intelligent, and rooted in unconditional love.

When we let go of the need to micromanage the outcome, we create space for magic to unfold.

Struggle is resistance, and resistance blocks the flow of energy. Surrender, however, is expansive. It aligns us with the frequency of our desires, and that's when the universe meets us—not when we're fighting against it, but when we're flowing with it.

Source: Matt Cooke, *Manifestation Coach*

The challenges you face today are preparing you for a testimony of strength tomorrow—embrace the journey with trust and courage.

Transitions are not happening to us but for us, offering moments for introspection, stillness, and self-discovery.

Living uncommonly requires courage—a step into the unknown, a challenge to the status quo, and a defiance of societal expectations.

Resilience is the courage to move forward, even when the path ahead is uncertain and unclear.

Your presence is beyond appreciated—thank you for being here.

Life is a continuous journey of transitions, with each moment, experience, and change moving us forward on our unique path.

Transitions often bring feelings of loss or confusion, yet they contribute to our growth, understanding, and deeper capacity to lead and love.

Mistakes are inevitable and valuable parts of the human experience, offering opportunities for growth and learning.

By accepting and celebrating imperfections, we unlock the door to a more meaningful, fulfilling, and authentic life.

It's natural to feel tested by life's challenges, but it's essential to reframe these challenges as opportunities for growth.

### Reframing Our Self Talk

Self-talk strategies:

- ◆ If you need confidence, talk to yourself the way you would talk to a friend.
- ◆ If you need persistence, talk to yourself the way you would talk to a student.
- ◆ If you need patience, talk to yourself the way you would talk to a child.

*Source: James Clear, The 3-2-1 Newsletter*

- ◆ *Stop worrying about what other people think of you and focus on yourself instead.*
- ◆ *Focus on what makes you happy; focus on what makes your soul feel at peace.*
- ◆ *You are your biggest commitment, so start loving your flaws, your awkwardness, your weirdness, your intensity, and your vulnerability.*

*Life becomes so much more fulfilling when you are simply yourself.*

### Every Day Choices

Be great

Be good

Be average

- ◆ Asking what the right thing to do presupposes that there is a single right thing to do.
- ◆ A smart person knows what to say. A wise person knows whether or not to say it.
- ◆ If you're not managing your thoughts, you're leaving a lot of happiness and success on the table.
- ◆ You don't need to attend every argument you're invited to.
- ◆ Every great success requires some type of worthy struggle to get there.
- ◆ You don't need luck, but take it if it comes along.
- ◆ Nothing pains people more than having to think.

### Gentle Reminders

If it costs you your peace, it's too expensive.

You can do anything, but not everything. Focus.

We do not see things as they are. We see things as we are.

"No." is a complete sentence. You don't have to justify yourself.

### Do You Have a Moment?

- ◆ Let's talk about your comeback. All the times you fell and got back up.
- ◆ Let's talk about the lessons. All the hurt you turned into healing.
- ◆ Let's talk about the version of you that you haven't met yet, and all the versions of you that helped you get to where you are now.
- ◆ Let's talk about your survival, all the things that were sent to break you, and you barely even flinched.
- ◆ Let's talk about how beautiful it is that the ugliest parts of your story are what taught you grace.
- ◆ Let's talk about all of the times you doubted yourself, how you used the pieces of those moments to build yourself back up into the most certain thing you've ever known.
- ◆ You didn't break. Let's talk about how far you've come and how you're still standing.

*Source: James Polynice*

### The Daily Coach

A daily hands-on approach to becoming a better leader. With the help of some unique wisdom as well as an action plan to tackle your day, **The Daily Coach** aims to be an inspiration in your email inbox each morning. Plus, it's **FREE**. Sign up for **The Daily Coach**: [www.thedaily.coach/subscribe](http://www.thedaily.coach/subscribe)

## **BRAIN FOOD: Ideas, Thoughts, Insights, and Links To Get You Thinking** (<http://fs.blog>)



### **Tiny Thoughts**

Copying others doesn't work because success without substance doesn't last.

The path to differentiated results looks like madness to the masses. As the adage goes, if you do what everyone else does, you'll get the same results everyone else gets. Extraordinary success requires misunderstood choices.

Bill Gates once had the radio removed from his car. When asked why, he said he didn't want any distractions from thinking about Microsoft. This level of single-minded focus is what builds empires.

Distractions are the assassins of great work. You don't need more time; you need more focus.

Time expands when we eliminate interruptions—our attention, not the clock, ultimately limits what we can achieve.



Don't curse the obstacle; find a way around it.

Elite special forces don't complain about defenses—they adapt their tactics or create new ones. When a primary route is compromised, they don't waste time lamenting. They quickly shift to another approach. Elite athletes don't complain about defenses—they find the gap or create one.

Face the obstacle. Find the gap. Or make one.



**Attention isn't free. It's the most valuable thing you spend.**

**Flashy gets attention. Boring gets results.**

**While most chase the views, the greats obsess over the basics.**



**Agatha Christie on love:**

*"It is a curious thought, but it is only when you see people looking ridiculous that you realize just how much you love them."*

**Alexander Graham Bell on looking for the opportunity:**

*"When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the ones which open for us."*

**Sam Altman on avoiding regrets:**

*"If you think you're going to regret not doing something, you should probably do it. Regret is the worst, and most people regret far more things they didn't do than things they did do."*

*The truth is whispered while opinions are shouted.*

**\*\***

*The world's greatest works weren't commissioned; they were created by people who couldn't bear their absence.*

**\*\*\***

*Going all in on something for a month gets better results than dabbling in it for a decade.*

*The dabbler spreads their energy over many things. The focused person concentrates their effort on one.*

*The most dangerous competitor is the one with a single goal.*



**C.S. Lewis on the value of starting where you are:**

*"You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending."*



*The lazy lose to the average.*

*The average lose to the focused.*

*The focused lose to the obsessed.*

**=====**

*Champions obsess over fundamentals, not trophies.*

*While others chase revenue and fancy titles, outliers focus on what they can control today: reading one more book, making one more phone call, and reviewing that email one final time. They know that excellence comes from perfecting the basics.*

*Stop worrying about where the arrow lands. Master the art of drawing the bow.*

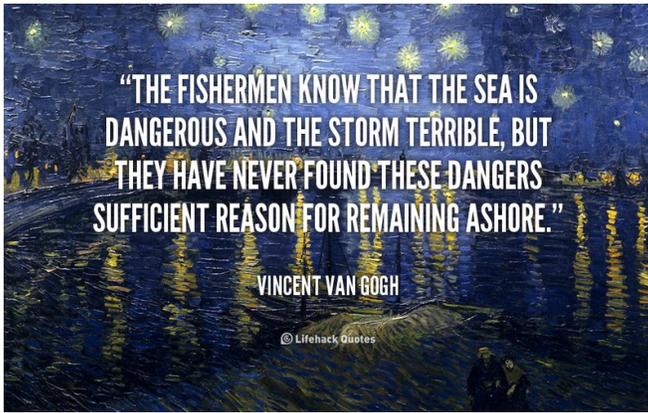
**=====**

*Frustration is bargaining with reality, hoping it will change.*

*Yelling at traffic doesn't make it move faster. Rehearsing the same complaints about your spouse doesn't change their behavior. Getting angry at the delayed flight doesn't make it take off sooner.*

*While you're busy fighting what is, you're blind to what could be.*

*All the energy you put into arguing with reality comes at the expense of improving your situation. The mountain doesn't care how much you yell at it, but you'll find a path around it if you stop and look.*



Stop fighting your nature. Start winning with it.

You're born with certain core traits. Fighting them is like being a sprinter forced to run marathons – exhausting and futile. But these "limitations" can become your biggest advantage.

Your instincts, personality, and preferences aren't flaws - they're features.

When something seems to be holding you back that you can't change, the key is to change your environment. What's a headwind in one situation is a tailwind in another.

The introvert's edge in sales: Don't fake extrovert energy. Win through deep research and lasting relationships. While others work the room searching for a transaction, you can build long-term relationships.

Not a morning person? Embrace it: That 5 AM workout routine you keep missing? Stop punishing yourself. Build your peak performance hours into your schedule.

Are you obsessive about the details? Use it to your advantage. While others skim the surface, your thoroughness spots opportunities they miss and avoids costly mistakes they make. What others see as obsessiveness becomes an uncopyable competitive edge.

The most successful people don't fight their nature. They architect their environment to amplify it.

Stop asking: "How do I fix myself?" Start asking: "How do I position myself where my natural traits are assets?"

The greats don't wait.

Every major innovation started with someone doing something small. YouTube began with a few friends posting grainy videos. Amazon started by selling books from a garage. Google began as a grad school project.

What separates dreamers from doers isn't talent or luck—it's the willingness to start before feeling ready. The perfect moment is a myth. The right time is now.

But here's the key: Start small and learn fast. Your first move doesn't need to be perfect; it just needs to teach you something. Focus more on the next small step that moves you closer to the goal.

Motion creates momentum, and momentum reveals opportunities that standing still never could.

#### **Napoleon Hill on not doing what the majority of people do when faced with temporary defeat:**

*"Before success comes in any person's life, he is sure to meet with much temporary defeat, and, perhaps, some failure. When defeat overtakes a person, the easiest and most logical thing to do is to quit. That is exactly what the majority of people do."*

The difference between greatness and mediocrity isn't in the spectacular moments but rather in avoiding critical errors.

Warren Buffett's first rule of investing? Never lose money. His second rule? Never forget rule one. This isn't clever wordplay - it's the mathematics of success. A 50% loss demands a 100% gain to break even. Or look at elite athletes: while average quarterbacks mix brilliant throws with costly interceptions, Tom Brady and Patrick Mahomes protect the ball first.

#### **Excellence isn't about occasional brilliance - it's about consistent execution.**

#### **Michael Jordan's response when asked if a fear of failure motivated him:**

*"I never feared about my skills because I put in the work. Work ethic eliminates fear. So you if you do the work, what are you fearing? You know what you're capable of and what you're not."*

Stop trying to be spectacular. Start being consistent.

Your reputation isn't built on your best day. It's built on your worst. Warren Buffett's fortune was built on avoiding losses. Tom Brady became the GOAT not because of his highlight-reel throws, but because he rarely made a bad play.

Anyone can occasionally go to the gym, eat a healthy meal, and have a productive day. Doing it once in a while is common and doesn't mean much.

Moments don't make legends. Consistency does. And the hardest consistency isn't in doing brilliant things but avoiding stupid ones. Every mistake puts you in hard mode, forcing you to make up lost ground.

Anyone can do it once. The outliers do it often.

## It's Not About The Medals

*By Mike Murray, former ASCA President*

***"It's not about winning at the Olympic Games. For me, it's never about getting ribbons or medals; It's about trying to win and pursue greatness. The Olympic motto is faster, higher, stronger, not fastest, highest, strongest. Sometimes it's the trying that matters."***

***-Bronte Barratt, Australian Olympic Gold Medalist (2008, 4x200m Free Relay)***



Medals, while often seen as symbols of achievement and recognition, are not necessarily important in the grand scheme. In a world where competition and winning are frequently emphasized, getting caught up in pursuing medals and accolades is easy. A few years back, my family moved to a new house, and I was assigned to fix the lighting in our basement. The place was cluttered with boxes and other items from our recent move. While climbing down a ladder, I had used to repair a light fixture, I accidentally stubbed my toe on something.

Without thinking twice, I reached into my pocket to turn on my iPhone flashlight, illuminating a 2019 World University Games gold medal on the floor. I immediately picked up the medal and returned it to its plastic case. I had to ensure the award was safe and didn't take any chances.

Amid my worry about possibly damaging the real Gold trophy, a wave of pride, respect, and sincere awe flowed through me like an epiphany. In a rare moment of parental clarity, I became astonished by the humble nature of my stepdaughter, Makayla.

How could this tangible, meaningful trinket not be proudly displayed in her new apartment? The performance was the 11th fastest time in the world heading into the 2020 Olympic Trials. Yet, she had no desire to display, as she felt the performance and memories were most valuable to her.

Not many twenty-somethings have that sense of humility. I certainly didn't, and maybe I still don't! I have been fortunate to meet many of the greatest athletes throughout my journey in our sport. Most of them feel like Makayla did about awards. It's widely known that sometimes, Michael Phelps can't remember where his Olympic medals are!

Our performances don't define who we are. We talk to your swimmers about this thought process regularly. Their best

swimming performance won't define the person they will become. Most importantly, we teach our athletes that the real reward is the journey.

While ribbons, medals, and trophies motivate young swimmers, it will never be what they remember about their participation in swimming. There is no doubt that recognition is a significant factor in development; however, it is critical to teach our athletes that tangible reminders of success inaccurately illustrate the value of participation.

The value of awards is subjective and can vary from person to person. While some may see a medal as a significant accomplishment, others may place less importance on it. It is crucial to remember that the worth of an individual is not determined by the number of medals they have won.

Relying on medals for validation can be detrimental to one's self-worth. It is essential to cultivate intrinsic motivation and derive satisfaction from personal accomplishments, growth, and progress rather than seeking external validation through medals.

Success should not be solely defined by the number of medals one has won. Success can be measured in various ways, such as personal growth, resilience, determination, and the impact one has on others. These aspects of success go beyond the tangible symbol of a medal.

In conclusion, while medals may hold significance in specific contexts, it is essential to remember that they are not the ultimate measure of success or worth. Instead, focusing on personal growth, participation, intrinsic motivation, enjoyment, and a broader definition of success can lead to a more fulfilling and meaningful journey. Medals may come and go, but the experiences, lessons learned, and personal growth attained along the way are what truly matter in the end.

FAVORITE SETS: Sprint Set

## Pyramid Sprint Set, My Version

*By Jeff Mace, Edina (MN) HS*

I started coaching high school swimming in fall of 1982. In the years since, I have created thousands of sets tailored to many different ability groups. I have also pilfered and/or altered sets from many of my colleagues. The set below is an example of the latter. While reading the December 2018 issue of the NISCA Journal, Dana Abbott of Katy, Texas shared a set that he uses. I looked at it and something just popped in my brain. I loved the concept, and being a user of patterns for our interval training, I *really* loved it. I immediately added sendoff times to it, eliminated a couple of rows of his grid from the center to shorten it up a bit, and used it the very next day. It was fantastic. The athletes loved it. They put extreme effort into the sprints!

The Girls' and Boys' teams will do this for two or sometimes three workouts per season. We start the day with around 30 minutes of swimming (warmup, maybe a small preliminary set, etc). Each round lasts 17:40. We usually start another round at the 20 minute mark. Typically, we do 4 rounds. In essence, all the stuff in regular print is ALWAYS easy free, while the **BOLD** is **All Out** by whatever we do for the round.

Typically: Round 1 = Sprint Free, Round 2 = Sprint Best Non-Free, Round 3 = Choice, Round 4 = Free

We used to put the grid on the white board (actually all 4 white boards) in the pool area for kids to follow, writing the Sprint in Hornet Green (Green = Go Fast!), and the EZ free in Red. Now that we have a video board for meets, we made a slide with color and put it on our video board for use.

For athletes not able to make the send offs, we just modify to 25's instead of 50's, and 50's instead of 75's. This allows our entire team to train together. At Edina, we have always put a high priority on training together.

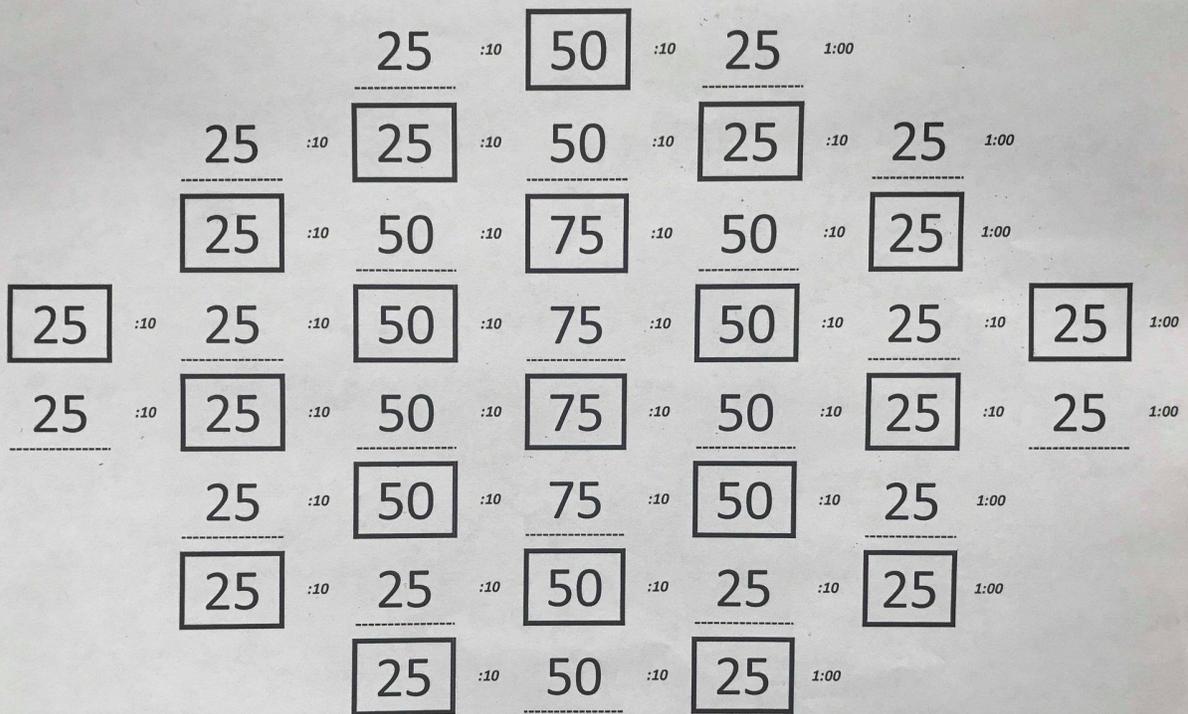
I hope you find value in the set, and your athletes have the same enjoyment as ours.

Jeff Mace, Edina (MN) High School

	60 <b>25</b>	30 <b>50</b>	20 <b>25</b>	
60 <b>25</b>	30 <b>25</b>	60 <b>50</b>	50 <b>25</b>	20 <b>25</b>
60 <b>25</b>	30 <b>50</b>	20 <b>75</b>	30 <b>50</b>	20 <b>25</b>
60 <b>25</b>	30 <b>50</b>	20 <b>75</b>	30 <b>50</b>	20 <b>25</b>
60 <b>25</b>	30 <b>25</b>	60 <b>50</b>	50 <b>25</b>	20 <b>25</b>
	60 <b>25</b>	30 <b>50</b>	20 <b>25</b>	

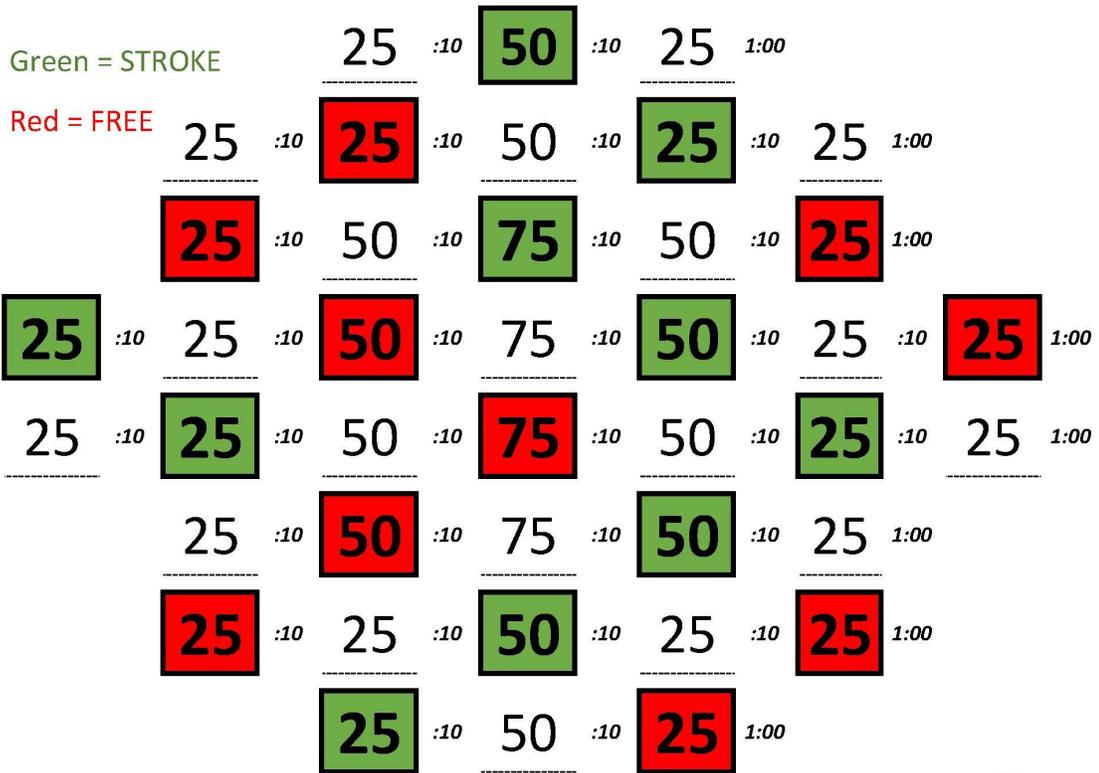
(The original "Abbott Pyramid Sprint Set" referred to by Coach Mace, and another variation by Coach Mike Waldmann of Andrews (TX) HS is on the following page.)

# ABBOTT PYRAMID SET



**:10 REST AFTER EACH SWIM**      = RECOVERY SPEED nice and SMOOTH  
**1:00 REST AFTER EACH LINE**      = MAX. EFFORT RACE PACE  
 ALL FINISHES ON THE FAST SPRINTS ARE RACE FINISHES      NO BREATHING INSIDE THE FLAGS --> WALL  
 PROPER FINISH AT WALL

# ABBOTT PYRAMID SET

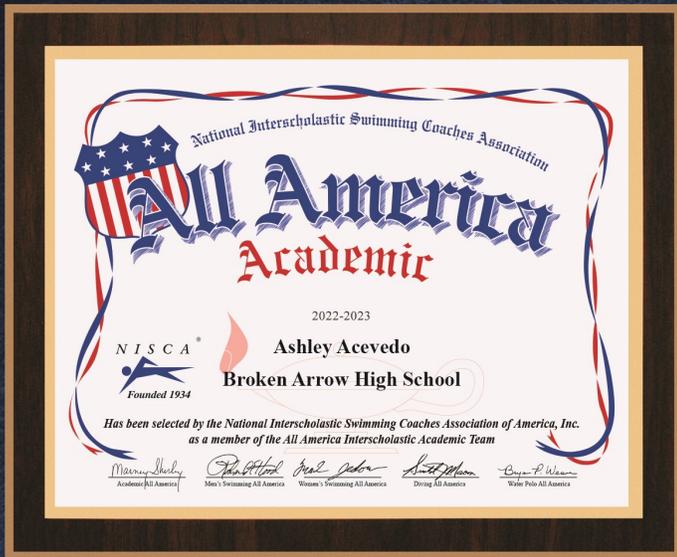


**:10 REST AFTER EACH SWIM**      = RECOVERY SPEED nice and SMOOTH      1500 yds.  
**1:00 REST AFTER EACH LINE**      = MAX. EFFORT RACE PACE      NO BREATHING INSIDE THE FLAGS --> WALL  
 ALL FINISHES ON THE FAST SPRINTS ARE RACE FINISHES      PROPER FINISH AT WALL

# PLAQUES

**\$49.95 / PQ-NISFAC**

Wood plaque displays the All-American certificate printed on a clear acrylic overlay so it's waterproof. It measures 10½" x 13" and comes individually boxed for presentation. Available in Water Polo, Diving, Academic, Team Scholar Award and Swimming.



**\$79.95 / PQ-NISLAM**

Laminated certificate plaque displays actual All-American certificate laminated on a wood plaque. It measures 10½" x 13" and comes individually boxed for presentation. Available in Water Polo, Diving, Academic, Team Scholar Award and Swimming.

**\$54.95 / PQ-NISFDE**

Engraved certificate plaque depicts the All-American certificate laser engraved directly into a black brass plate. It measures 10½" x 13" and comes individually boxed for presentation. Available in Water Polo, Diving, Academic, Team Scholar Award and Swimming.



**\$79.95 / PQ-NISACR**

Acrylic plaque with stand-off displays the All-American certificate printed directly on the acrylic. It measures 10½" x 13" and comes individually boxed for presentation. Available in Water Polo, Diving, Academic, Team Scholar Award and Swimming.

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***Nancy donates a portion of all sales from these prints to NISCA!***

**"IT'S VERY HARD IN THE  
BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND  
THAT THE WHOLE IDEA IS  
NOT TO BEAT THE OTHER  
RUNNERS.**

**EVENTUALLY YOU LEARN  
THAT THE COMPETITION IS  
AGAINST THE LITTLE VOICE  
INSIDE YOU THAT WANTS  
YOU TO QUIT."**

