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IN THIS ISSUE

COMMENTARY Cover, 4

PRESIDENT'S LETTER.....6

MOTIVATION
Re-light Your Fire, D. Abbott.....8

TRAINING
Prepared For Next Season?, S. Beliaev9

FOUNDATIONS OF COACHING
Principles vs Philosophy I/II, A. Sheaff11

COMMENTARY
Optimistic Leadership, T. Rozenberg16

NUTRITION
Why Coffee Makes You Poop17

STRENGTH and CONDITIONING
Changing the Angles, C. Hoolihan18

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS.....20-21

COMMENTARY
How To Win A State Meet, M. Stott22

COACHES EDUCATION
The Unexpected Mentor, T. Rozenberg ...28

CURRENT EVENTS
The House vs NCAA Lawsuit, K. Pierce 30

Daily Coach32

Brain Food.....33

FILM AND MEDIA
“When Everyone Swims”34

COMMENTARY
The Pool vs the Classroom, K. Pierce36

POSTERS..... 3, 27, 29, 38, 40, Back Cover



**INTERNATIONAL
SPORTS TIMING**

COMMENTARY - Graceful Wisdom

A History Lesson About Computers...and Leadership

Grace Hopper wasn't just a pioneer in computer science—she was a force of nature whose legacy continues to pulse through every line of modern code. A brilliant mathematician, a fearless leader, and a woman decades ahead of her time, Hopper broke barriers not only in technology but in mindset, shattering conventions in an era when computers—and leadership positions—were overwhelmingly male-dominated domains.

Born in 1906, Hopper carved an unconventional path that led her from teaching mathematics at Vassar College to joining the U.S. Navy Reserve during World War II. It was there that she encountered the Mark I computer at Harvard, one of the earliest electromechanical computers, and discovered what would become her life's calling: programming. But to say she merely “programmed” understates her role. Hopper didn't just write code—she translated machine logic into a language humans could understand, and vice versa. She helped invent the very concept of programming languages, paving the way for nearly everything we now take for granted in computing.

Hopper's most influential work came in the 1950s, when she was instrumental in developing COBOL (Common Business-Oriented Language), a programming language that allowed computers to process words and numbers in an English-like syntax. At the time, this was a revolutionary idea. Most believed that programming had to be done in dense, inscrutable machine code. Hopper, with characteristic defiance, saw things differently. “The most dangerous phrase in the language is, ‘We've always done it this way,’” she famously said. Her insistence on making computing more accessible didn't just open the field to non-engineers—it arguably helped launch the modern software industry.

But it wasn't just her intellect that set her apart; it was her **leadership**. **Hopper wasn't interested in titles or tradition. She was interested in results.** She led with a rare blend of rigor and irreverence, always willing to question norms, challenge superiors, and mentor the next generation. She encouraged those around her to think independently, to experiment, to break things in the name of progress. She famously carried around a piece of nanosecond-long wire to demonstrate the speed of light—and the consequences of inefficient code.

(please turn to page 4)



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A photograph of a building facade with a motivational quote painted on the wall. The wall is a light beige color. There are two windows with dark green shutters. A black pipe runs vertically down the wall. A black mailbox is mounted on the wall. The ground is paved with large, dark grey stones. The quote is written in large, bold, black capital letters.

**SIX MONTHS FROM
NOW YOU WILL EITHER
HAVE SIX MONTHS
OF EXCUSES OR
SIX MONTHS OF
PROGRESS.**

FROM THE EDITOR, *continued from front cover*

It was her way of making abstract concepts real, tangible, and urgent.

Hopper also had a legendary sense of humor, often using storytelling to cut through the complexity of her work. She's credited with popularizing the term "debugging," inspired by the removal of an actual moth from a computer relay. For her, problems weren't obstacles—they were puzzles to be solved with creativity and tenacity. She once said, "A ship in port is safe, but that's not what ships are built for." The same could be said of her approach to work and life: push boundaries, take risks, and sail into the unknown.

Despite her technical accomplishments, Hopper remained deeply committed to teaching and mentoring. She spent the latter part of her career traveling and speaking, tirelessly advocating for computer literacy and encouraging young people—especially women—to enter the field. Her charisma and clarity made her not just a great scientist, but a great communicator, bridging the gap between technology and society.

When she retired as a rear admiral at age 79—after multiple attempts by the Navy to do so—she was one of the longest-serving officers in U.S. history. Yet even then, she continued working in the private sector, refusing to slow down until her passing in 1992.

Grace Hopper wasn't merely a programmer. She was a trailblazer who saw the future and had the audacity—and the genius—to write the code for it.

Cara Hutto, writing at www.inhersight.com, says of Hopper:

"Her unwavering commitment to pushing the boundaries of what was possible in computing, coupled with her trailblazing spirit, serves as a beacon of inspiration for those who dare to dream and defy convention. In a field where her presence was initially met with skepticism and resistance, she not only excelled, but left an indelible mark that continues to shape the landscape of technology today."

"Grace Hopper's legacy reminds us that with courage, perseverance, and ingenuity, we can break barriers and change the world."

A wise person any way you look at it. These quotes from Admiral Hopper are good advice even we coaches can learn and grow from.

1. "Humans are allergic to change. They love to say, 'We've always done it this way.' I try to fight that. That's why I have a clock on my wall that runs counter-clockwise."

2. "A ship in port is safe, but that's not what ships are built for. Sail out to sea and do new things."

3. "The glass is neither half empty nor half full. It's simply larger than it needs to be. It is easier to get forgiveness than permission."

4. "I've always been more interested in the future than in the past."

5. "The most dangerous phrase in the language is, 'We've always done it this way.'"

6. "Leadership is a two-way street, loyalty up and loyalty down. Respect for one's superiors; care for one's crew."

7. "If it's a good idea, go ahead and do it. It is much easier to apologize than it is to get permission."

8. "Don't try to manage people; you manage things; you lead people."

9. "One accurate measurement is worth a thousand expert opinions."

10. "You don't teach people how to be curious. You give them the tools through which they can express their curiosity."

11. "The difficulty lies, not in the new ideas, but in escaping from the old ones."

12. "You don't have to know everything. You just need to know where to find it."

13. "A dream is just a dream. A goal is a dream with a plan and a deadline."

14. "The ladder of success is best climbed by stepping on the rungs of opportunity."

15. "The most important thing I've accomplished, other than building the compiler, is training young people."



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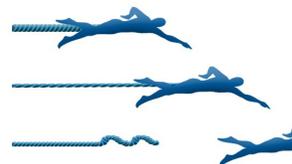


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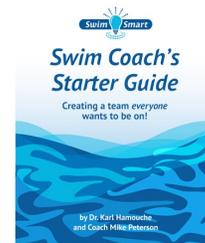
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Reflections on the 92nd NISCA Conference – San Antonio, June 2025

From the Desk of President Kyle Bedalov

The 92nd NISCA Conference concluded on June 26th in San Antonio—and what a week it was. With the highest attendance in recent memory, this year’s event brought together coaches and leaders from across the country for one of our most dynamic gatherings yet.

A standout three-hour pool session highlighted key topics, including the use of backstroke ledges, diving instruction, and best practices for running an effective water polo session. We capped off the event with a memorable banquet, paying tribute to the rich tradition and proud legacy of our association.

We also celebrated the service of two outstanding leaders:

Tim Sirois, our outgoing Treasurer, has left the organization in excellent financial shape. His diligence and precision have set a high bar.

Mark Jedow, the outgoing President, proudly hosted the event in his home state and showcased the strength of NISCA and Texas coaches nationwide.

Looking ahead, Grand Rapids, Michigan, is up next. Our Michigan team is already hard at work preparing to raise the bar even higher. With the lessons learned from this year’s transition away from the traditional NCAA Meet alignment, we’re confident that next year’s conference will be even stronger.

As your new President, I’m excited to work alongside President-Elect Brad Jones and Treasurer Kris Jones. While we’re new to national leadership, we bring over 75 years of combined experience from our home states—Wisconsin, Texas, and Michigan. That experience will help ensure a seamless transition and a strong future.

To say I’m excited about what’s ahead would be an understatement. We are committed to honoring the past and embracing the future, but we need your help. There are several open positions on our board and committees, and we’re looking for passionate, committed members to step up.

If you’re interested in getting more involved with NISCA, I encourage you to contact me directly. There’s important work ahead—and it’s better when we do it together.

Let’s keep building.

—
Kyle Bedalov

President, NISCA

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Finding Your Center and Reigniting Your Drive

Dana Abbott

Rather than waiting until you're feeling the tank empty, it might be a good idea to confront what many of us sometimes face BEFORE it hits.

After more than five decades of coaching competitive swimmers—from nervous beginners to Olympians—I've come to know burnout intimately. It doesn't knock politely. It barges in, wearing exhaustion like armor and dragging doubt in its wake. And whether it stems from physical fatigue, emotional strain, or both, one truth remains constant: everyone hits that wall. What separates the good from the great—whether athlete or coach—is knowing how to find your center and reignite your drive.

It begins by recognizing that being "spent" is not a weakness. It's feedback. It's your body or your mind raising a hand and saying, "I need a moment." Ignoring it doesn't make you tough—it makes you brittle. And brittle doesn't last.

When I feel that creeping numbness—the kind that makes you question your purpose, your value, or whether you've got another season in you—I take a step back. Literally. I step away from the stopwatch, the clipboard, and the noise. I breathe. I reflect not on what's draining me, but on *-why-* I started this journey in the first place.

Ask yourself: What drove you to commit your life to this? Was it the joy of pushing past limits? The thrill of competition? The quiet moments of breakthrough? Go back to that *-why-*. It's still there, buried under layers of fatigue and daily grind. You just need to dig for it.

Finding your center means quieting the external chaos. It doesn't require a retreat to the mountains. Sometimes, it's as simple as sitting in your car after practice with the radio off. Re-

center through stillness. Journaling, walking, meditating—whatever slows the spin—do it regularly. I've found some of my most clarifying insights not at the pool, but on my back deck with a cup of coffee or a cold adult beverage and no agenda.

And then, once centered, you reignite.

Not with fireworks. With a spark.

Start small. Reignite through connection. Watch one of your athletes have a breakthrough. See the pride in their eyes. Let that remind you why you do what you do. Or call a fellow coach who knows the road you're on—someone who can listen, challenge, and uplift. Isolation dims the flame; connection fuels it.

You also reignite by setting fresh goals—not for your team, but for *yourself*. Learn something new. Visit another program. Coach a different age group. Shake up the routine. Growth creates energy. When you stop growing, you stop glowing.

Lastly, remember that drive isn't constant. It ebbs and flows like tidewater. That's human. But you're not a machine—you're a leader. And when you find your center and your fire again, you not only rediscover your own strength—you become a living example for those you lead.

They're watching. Not just how you win, but how you respond when the tank is empty.

So take the pause. Find the stillness. Remember the why. Then step forward—centered, clear, and burning bright.

Light the fire again.



Are You Prepared For The Next Season?

By Sergei Beliaev, Ph.D.

Super Sport Systems

Contact Sergei Beliaev at 3S: support@3ssite.com, 1-804-519-1201

Although the next season may appear far off, coaches need to have their training plans ready by late August because it will be here sooner than they expect.

Recent events and presentations have consistently highlighted the significance of season planning, covering several standard methods and techniques. However, several featured presentations on periodization and season planning techniques were sending very conflicting, if not misleading, messages to the audience.

For the past twenty years, the **3S-Sport Sport Systems** platform has delivered over 500,000 training season plans for both individuals and groups, building extensive expertise in planning workouts. In this article we want to share the core principles that have driven our achievements.

The Elements of a Successful Season Plan

A well-prepared season plan is a crucial tool for coaches. Think of it as a sequence of workout blocks, each carefully arranged to enhance training and optimize performance by season's end. Each daily session also features targeted training loads to ensure maximum weekly effectiveness. That is exactly what the 3S training design tool delivers!

For careful planning and accuracy, it's important to clearly define the main elements of a plan and set out rules for how they interact over time. This approach takes the periodization concept further by making it possible to define training components in measurable, quantitative terms.

When you grasp this mindset, classic periodization seems lacking compared to modern methods, as it doesn't explain how training components connect or interact.

The professional seasonal plan should clearly guide all three decision-making levels.

Strategic: Define the seasonal strategy and milestones.

Intermediate: Set weekly load distribution for each day.

Tactical: Specify daily loads and means in every session.

Many coaches pay attention solely to the third level of planning, often forgetting that this stage relies on the higher levels and lacks significance without considering the complete context.

Developing a comprehensive seasonal plan typically requires an understanding of sports training methodology. 3S-Super Sport Systems' training design tools offer a platform that provides customizable planning for various levels within a short timeframe. The 3S training design platform is accessible to users **without requiring prior expertise**.

This was made possible by the contemporary periodization theory. Let's examine what makes this process precise.

1. Reevaluating the purpose of the season plan: To achieve better results by the end of the season, it's crucial to have a well-structured plan that helps each swimmer improve. In this context, the season plan serves as a guide aligned with your goals, laying out specific steps to reach the desired performance level.

2. Define the units of planning: To achieve the desired results, we must teach our bodies skills and the ability to deliver the necessary amount of energy to support maximum effort during competition.

Although internal bioenergy mechanisms are well-researched, physiology schools differ in defining training zones, leading to uncertainty in linking training sets to target energy systems. Accurate identification of training stimuli is crucial for aligning with specific energy production mechanisms, but not all systems are clearly defined. Regardless, volume in designated energy zones remains the core unit for seasonal planning.

3. Strategy: Seasonal planning involves arranging your training volume for each zone in a specific sequence. The scheduling and emphasis of these phases establish your overall approach to training. As you develop your season plan, remember to consider multiple essential factors:

- a. Seasonal training approaches may revolve around competitive specialization (such as sprinting or distance events) or emphasize building particular skills like maximal speed or endurance, all of which reflect the individual preparedness model and its modifications. Focusing too intensely on one area, however, might hinder development in others.
- b. Training priorities change throughout the different phases of the season, so it's important to carefully plan both the objectives and duration of each phase.
- c. Using a range of training strategies over time produces unique adaptations and limitations. In actual practice, most training plans combine several principles but focus on those most appropriate for the current phase. Research from Parametric Training Studies demonstrates which strategy combinations best enhance individual performance potential.

4. Season Progressions Planning: Training strategies are designed to enhance specific physical qualities, which together determine performance in major events. These qualities should be developed throughout the season in a deliberate sequence.

5. Respect Adaptation Laws: Seasonal improvement is governed by universal natural adaptation laws that cannot be bypassed. Changes in abilities during the season follow a non-linear Progression Curve, matching the optimum adaptation curve.

Using adaptation principles and rules in sports planning has key advantages over Classic Periodization:

- a. Targeted training loads can drive ongoing, optimal adaptation.
- b. Adaptation and performance changes can be monitored in real time without maximal effort tests.
- c. Modern periodization focuses on maximizing adaptation each season according to the athlete's development.

Using these rules and methods greatly enhances season planning by providing clear insights into appropriate training volume and intensity for any zone or set. Although modern periodization requires some background knowledge, the Super Sport Systems platform makes it straightforward for any coach to use, regardless of experience or education.

Final Thoughts: A New Era in Sports Training

If you're a coach, athlete, or performance specialist looking for a more scientific, results-oriented training method, the Ergometric Concept represents the future of sports science. It respects and welcomes the art of coaching, but arms it with real science and practical tools for everyday use.

In a world where milliseconds matter, training decisions should not be based on guesswork. The Ergometric Training Concept provides coaches and athletes with a model-driven, adaptable, and forward-looking framework that has proven itself at the highest levels of sport.

This approach turns theory into practice and application into podiums by aligning training with an athlete's energy profile and structuring progressions based on individual adaptation needs.

Ready to train smarter?

Visit SuperSportSystems.com to explore how the Ergometric model can change your approach — and your results.

For more information, Dr. Beliaev is happy to share his direct line, 804-519-1201. Call with your questions on how YOU can best use 3S to make YOUR season more successful with less confusion

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GROUP SETTINGS

Principles versus Philosophy

Andrew Sheaff - www.coachandrewsheaff.com

Coaches are often asked about their coaching philosophy. In essence, they're asked what they believe about training and getting faster. While it's certainly critical to have belief in what you're doing as little will be accomplished without conviction, I suppose I'd rather base my coaching on what must be true, and then building my decisions upon those ideas.

The concept of first principles, or basic foundational assumptions, is useful for working towards and understanding what is required for fast swimming, and what is required in training to improve performance. These first principles can help expand our understanding, guide our decisions, and help coaches stay focused on what REALLY matters, as opposed to getting distracted by irrelevant arguments.

From these principles, we can start to develop strategies to improve performance. An understanding of these principles can help coaches appreciate how different training styles can result in similar results, providing they are addressing the foundational principles of fast swimming. As importantly, applying first principles can allow coaches the flexibility to develop alternate strategies as the situation requires. When coaches are wed to specific strategies, it can limit their effectiveness across a broad spectrum of swimmers.

Before we get into arguments about volume and intensity, quality and quantity, or specificity, it's worth examining what is foundational to fast swimming. With these principles in mind, we can begin to determine not which approaches are right, but rather which approaches are appropriate for which context.

Coaching swimming is so challenging because there are so many factors that affect performance, and thus so many different contexts that we will face on a daily basis, with each of these contexts requiring slightly different performance solutions.

Technique limits performance.

Fast swimmers are better swimmers. There are many swimmers who significantly lack attributes of physical fitness and can still swim fast. Any swimmer (or human being!) should be able to do a legitimate pull-up. I've coached Olympic Trials qualifiers and NCAA qualifiers that could not. I've also coached individuals that were able to do 20+ pull-ups and were nowhere near these performance levels. Clearly, fast swimming is possible without incredible physical fitness.

It is a skill sport supported by physical abilities. The physical abilities are critical, especially as performances rise. Those same individuals would have been faster if they possessed basic strength. However, at a fundamental level, differences in technical skill separate different performance levels. WITHIN those performance levels, physical capacities matter, and they matter a lot.

There is a close relationship between physical capacities and the ability execute technical skills.

Technical possibilities are determined by the ability to position joints in a manner that minimizes drag, force production capabilities, and the available range of motion through which force can be created. If the required range of motion is not possible, specific skills cannot be performed. If the required strength and power cannot be created, specific skills cannot be executed. This is foundational.

The range of motion, and the strength required to maintain that range of motion, must be in place if swimmers are going to achieve effective swimming positions. To move through those positions with the required power, swimmers must possess the necessary force attributes to create that power. To achieve body positions and alignments that minimize drag, swimmers must have the required range of motion and the ability to maintain those ranges of motion under duress.

If the desired skills cannot be executed at the desired level, there must be a concerted effort to develop the physical abilities to the required level. Failure to do so will prevent the expression of the desired technique. You must be able to do something once, before you can do something twice. This requires a directed approach to physical training.

Once a swimmer can demonstrate the desired skills, they must develop the physical capacities to sustain those skills at the appropriate intensity for the duration of the desired race. Training is about developing the physical ability to execute skills, while also developing the physical ability to sustain those skills at the desired speed for the duration of a race.

Fundamentally, this is what training should be centered around. We should be striving to accomplish this goal as effectively and efficiently as possible. All discussions about volume, intensity, etc., come back to need to develop the ability to execute and sustain skills. It is then about which strategies are most effective. All decisions should be made with this end goal in mind.

Swimming fast is about the optimizing the relationship between propulsion and drag.

Going fast is a simple equation. The more propulsion you can create, and the less drag you can create, the faster you will go. We can tackle speed through either side of this equation. Increases in propulsion are facilitated by improving the surface area that interacts with the water, prolonging the duration of force application, increasing the magnitude of the force application, and improving the direction of the force application.

Reducing drag is about shape, not strength and power, and it is the most effective way to swim faster. Importantly, the ability to reduce drag does NOT require large physical resources, which is why 'unfit' swimmers can swim quite fast. While reducing drag does require the physical ability to orient the body in particular positions, and this ability can be trained, it is a process distinct from what it traditionally considered fitness development.

There is more opportunity to decrease drag than increase propulsion, yet it is easier to learn how to increase propulsion than reduce drag. For optimal performance, both aspects of improving speed must be addressed over time. Some individuals may need to spend more time in one area as opposed to the other. Big, strong swimmers may need to focus on optimizing drag reduction whereas weaker swimmers may need to spend more time improving propulsion. A swimmer's relative strengths can be examined by comparing performances in resisted swimming to performance in regular swimming.

Importantly, the more propulsion you create, the more drag you must overcome. As you get faster, the elimination of drag becomes more and more of an obstacle to improving performance. The process of improving propulsion is more about 'training', and the process of drag reduction is more about 'learning'.

When teaching and observing skills, these are the fundamental goals. All movement must be judged against the capacity to reduce drag or improve propulsion. This is what defines effective swimming, nothing else.

Rhythm and timing are as important as creating propulsion and minimizing drag.

Great swimming looks EASY. This is the result of great rhythm. Rhythm is about the correct timing and coordination of all the separate actions during a stroke. Performing the correct movements at the wrong time will not result in fast swimming. In contrast, there are some really fast swimmers with major technical issues that swim fast because of their rhythm.

Rhythm comes from effective timing and the use of the momentum of the limbs to easily transition between stroke phases. It's about doing the right thing at the RIGHT TIME. Whenever technical changes are being implemented, they must be made while considering the impact on rhythm. It's that important. Any technical change that negatively impacts rhythm, even if it's 'right', should be implemented with significant caution.

Most technical work is focused on specific movements as opposed to the timing of those movements. This is a mistake. Rhythm is foundational and opportunities for learning must be provided if swimmers are going to continue to improve.

If we expect, skills to show up in races, they must be challenged by physical and psychological stress.

Technical skills must be trained under psychological and physical pressure if they're going to show up in competition. In many cases, these skills are better LEARNED under pressure. Working on skills in contexts that are distinct from stressful situations can

be useful at certain times. However, due to the intricate relationship between technique and physical capacities, these attributes must be developed in sequence. In many respects, they are best developed in conjunction because they are really two sides of the same coin.

If skills cannot withstand the pressure of competition, they are effectively useless. If skills are not trained with competition demands in mind, they will be unable to withstand the pressure of competition. A targeted approach must be implemented to ensure that not only physical capacities are developed, but that technical skills become hardened with a variety of stressors.

Confidence and focus are the foundational psychological skills required.

If the physical abilities are in place, and the required technical skills have been developed, competition performances can still be lacking. Potential does not equal performance. Performances must be executed under pressure and the ability to do so is dependent on psychological skill. Once the performance potential has been developed, swimmers must learn to express that potential.

The foundational psychological skills are confidence and focus. When swimmers are confident, they are free from worry and immune from distractions. They are free to execute their skills. Confidence also enhances focus, which is the second foundational psychological trait. Swimmers must be able to focus on what they need to do, and nothing else. There are many distractions in competition. Those individuals that can ignore these distractions and focus on the task at hand are best able to execute that task.

Therefore, developing confidence and the ability to focus are foundational requirements of the training process. There must be an active intent to develop these qualities. Doing so will ensure that swimmers consistently achieve a higher percentage of their current potential in competition.

Simple

- Swimming fast is simple.
- Swimming fast is all about great technique.
- Great technique only becomes possible when the required physical attributes have been developed.
- Great technique must reduce drag and increase propulsion, while optimizing the trade-offs between the two.
- These movements must be organized in a way that optimizes rhythm, which will further enhance propulsion and reduce drag.
- These skills must be challenged in a way that makes them robust to the stressors of competition.
- The entire process must develop confidence and the ability to focus.

That's it.

If the training process, regardless of content, accomplishes these objectives, swimmers will swim fast more often than not.

As coaches, we're focused on improving performance. We want results. With an appreciation of the foundational principles of

swimming, what are the implications? There are tasks that need to be accomplished if we want swimmers to swim fast and improve over time. We HAVE to accomplish these tasks. There is little room for argument.

*In part II, we explore **HOW**.*

Coach Andrew Sheaff's new book, *A Constraints-Led Approach to Swim Coaching*, should not be on your bookshelf. It should be IN YOUR HANDS, ON YOUR DESK/NIGHTSTAND, well-worn and dog-eared. It's that good! Andrew Sheaff says:

It's extremely challenging to help swimmers develop skills that win races.

It's overwhelming trying to teach skills to each and every athlete, particularly when it seems like no one is listening. And everything that's learned seems to disappear once it's time to start training, or when it really counts in championship races that matter. The solution isn't to get better at what you're doing. You don't need new drills, you don't need new cues, and you don't need an expensive video system.

You need a different approach.

I've coached in the US collegiate system for over 15 years, struggling with these same challenges. The reality is that faster swimmers are better swimmers, and skill development provides all swimmers with the best opportunity to achieve their goals.

The challenge is consistently developing those goals, and the typical approach of adding some drills at the beginning of a training session and a training season doesn't get the job done.

Fortunately, there's an alternative. There's a way to develop

skills without relying on constantly providing instructions, feedback, and reminders. And there's a way to seamlessly integrate these skills into your training program.

In this book, you'll learn exactly how to make it happen. You'll learn the strategies and the tactics, and to make it practical, there are approximately 100 sets that demonstrate the key principles. The book provides you with the concepts and the tools to take your skill development skills to the next level. Not just by making what you already do better, but by providing an entirely new framework to coach with.

This approach works. It can be implemented by anyone. It doesn't require any special education, skill, or equipment.

BUY THE BOOK It's on Amazon, of course. But WAIT, there's MORE! <https://www.coachandrewsheaff.com/the-book>

I want to make sure you're successful. So, as a bonus, if you buy the book, I'll send you two videos that walk you through exactly how to design your own sets using constraints, as well as how to modify existing sets to integrate the use of constraints and skill development.

As with the book, there are plenty of practical examples to help you understand exactly what to do, and how to do it.

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A GUIDE WITH PRACTICAL WAYS TO ENHANCE SWIMMING SKILL DEVELOPMENT.

Provides a practical framework for coaches to understand constraints, enhance skill development, and improve athlete satisfaction by manipulating the environment and movement variability in swimming.

For coaches, athletes, sport scientists, and parents interested in athlete development and programming.



Andrew Sheaff - Principles versus Philosophy, Part II

PART II

In part I, we explored the concept of foundational principles of fast swimming, and came to the following conclusion.

Swimming fast is simple.

Swimming fast is all about great technique.

Great technique only becomes possible when the required physical attributes have been developed.

Great technique must reduce drag and increase propulsion, while optimizing the trade-offs between the two.

These movements must be organized in a way that optimizes rhythm, which will further enhance propulsion and reduce drag.

These skills must be challenged in a way that makes them robust to the stressors of competition.

The entire process must develop confidence and the ability to focus.

This is what must be accomplished if swimmers are to improve and perform to their potential. HOW we accomplish these tasks is a very different question. Here we have options. 'Traditional' training can work really well. USRPT type training can work really well. It's all about how you design and execute the tasks, matching what training you provide swimmers with the training that they need. As long as these fundamental tasks are addressed, swimmers will swim fast.

1. There must be a focus on technical development.

From the start, all decisions must be geared towards improving technique. To swim faster, swimmers must swim with a better combination of stroke rate and stroke length. This requires achieving body positions that reduce drag and allow for the limbs to be positioned to for the effective creation of higher forces.

The specific skills we choose to teach, and HOW we choose to teach these skills is up to our discretion, provided we respect basic biomechanical principles. The nature of these specific skills is a separate article. However, there must be a focus on reducing drag and improving propulsion, while organizing all movements with effective timing.

2. Technical development is primarily limited by the ability to achieve positions that minimize drag.

Better swimmers don't necessarily produce greater forces, they create body positions that minimize resistance in the water (granted, the best of the best perform both. See below.). A lot of these skills are dictated by the ability to manage air through floating effectively and breathing without losing body position. Swimming performance is initially influenced by the ability to get into the right positions. Skilled youth are not creating a lot of propulsion; they are swimming fast due to their ability to manage flotation and achieve effective

body positions. It is later that they become more effective at creating force.

Swimmers must be able to position the spine as straight as possible to minimize drag, while also retaining the ability to articulate the spine in a manner that allows for the effective application of force by the limbs. At the same time, there must possess the necessary mobility in the extremities to articulate the limbs to create force without compromising spinal position. Both the spine and the limbs must be mobile enough to accomplish the dual tasks of minimizing resistance and applying force. If the necessary mobility is not present, swimmers will not be able to execute these skills as effectively as possible.

Assuming the required mobility is in place, the main technical task is minimizing drag while moving through the water. Beyond creating a long body position typically associated with 'streamline', swimmers must learn to manage their moment to moment drag profile that occurs throughout the shifting positions of each stroke cycle. It is the ability to manage these positions that will greatly influence this profile, and ultimately swimming speed.

3. Training is mostly about improving force production, the ability to sustain force, and the ability to maintain body position.

As performance levels rise, the ability to create higher and higher forces, and sustain those forces for the duration of the race. It is not about energy systems or anything else. It's about FORCE production. THAT'S IT. Although force production is supported by energetic and muscular capacities, it is force that we ultimately need.

Developing aerobic capacity, anaerobic capacity, anaerobic threshold, etc., is all about providing the energy required to sustain force production. Same with improving the fitness of the heart, creating capillaries in the vascular beds, improving hormonal output, etc. Same with muscular strength, muscular endurance, strength endurance, etc. ALL of it is centered around improving the ability to create and sustain higher forces for the duration of the race.

4. Technical skills must be put under pressure in race-like situations.

While the physical training required to increase force production capabilities likely includes some race-relevant training, it doesn't necessarily do so. For skills to show up in competition, and to be sustained for the duration of the race, they need to be exposed to race contexts. These exposures need to be consistent enough for the skills to be stabilized under pressure. There's not necessarily a 'right' amount of work in this area.

If swimmers are sustaining their skills at a really high level with consistency, those skills are likely robust enough to withstand the pressure of racing. The other obvious test is compe-

tion itself. How are swimmers finishing their races? Beyond the impact of making skills robust against the stress of racing, race-like training can also be a potent stimulus for effectively enhancing physical capacities, a strategy some coaches have chosen to use.

5. Psychological skills

There must be an active attempt to help swimmers learn task specific focus in practice. There must be an active attempt to design training sessions that serve to build swimmers confidence over time. These two traits are foundational to swimming success. Some ideas for how to do so have been outlined previously LINK SIMPLIFY. Psychology should not be an afterthought. It must be a designed into the training process and coached every day if we are to expect swimmers to achieve their potential in training and competition. It has to happen in the moment, not on a couch, and it is the coach's responsibility to make it happen.

Making Choices

In spite of this simplicity, we are now left with deciding what to do. While the goals we must accomplish are straightforward, our options for accomplishing those goals are essentially unlimited. When making training decisions, we can come back to these simple ideas, and ask some simple questions.

- ◆ Are effective technical changes being made?
- ◆ Are those technical changes increasing propulsion, reducing drag, or improving rhythm?
- ◆ Are the technical changes limited by restricted physical abilities, and if so, how are those physical limitations being addressed?
- ◆ Is training being performed that will improve race relevant force production, as well as the ability to maintain that force production?
- ◆ Are the technical skills being learned exposed to race-relevant training situations that allow for these skills to be solidified under pressure?
- ◆ Are swimmers growing in their confidence and ability to focus on the tasks they need to achieve, regardless of the situation?

If we can answer in the affirmative for reach of these questions, our swimmers are likely on their way to faster swimming in the future. If not, then there are gaps in the performance program that may be hindering the progress of the swimmers you coach. Fortunately, the tasks that need to be accomplished are straightforward and outlined above.

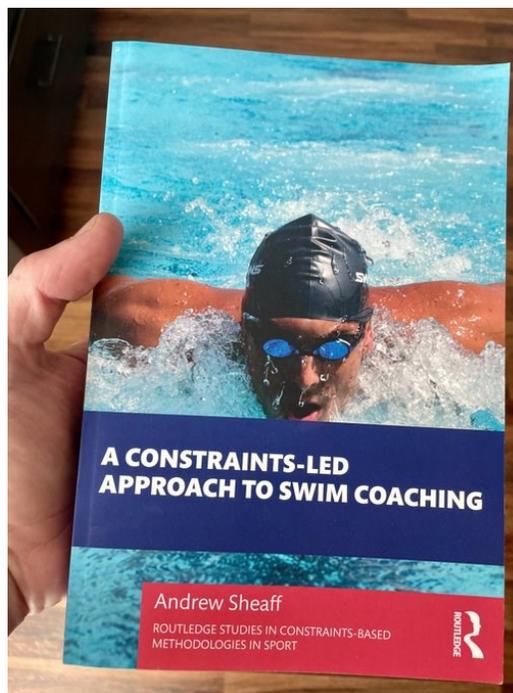
Conclusion

The required tasks of fast swimming are simple and direct. These tasks must be accomplished, and these guidelines do not leave much room for argumentation. In terms of the strategies we choose to implement to achieve these goals, we are governed by nothing beyond the results that these strategies achieve.

As demonstrated by the many coaching approaches currently practice and practiced in the past, there are many different options that can be effective. When looking to decide how to improve performance, coaches can look to history to understand the approaches that have been used. By understanding the foundational principles of fast swimming, coaches can see why these approaches were successful, as well as the short comings of these approaches.

Beyond understanding what has happened in the past, we can use these principles to innovate new strategies that satisfy the requirements of these tasks. Whether these approaches are implemented due to unique constraints (injury, illness, etc.), or simply because they are more effective, we can use our understanding of how swimming works to develop strategies to help swimmers go fast.

Through an understanding of what really matters, and what is foundational to swimming fast, we can better make choices about how to facilitate the process of performance improvement for all of the swimmers we are charged with helping to improve.



Optimistic Leadership

Steering the Ship with a Smile

By Tomer Rozenberg, Author of *“New Day, My Way, Your Life”*

In the vast ocean of leadership styles, optimistic leadership stands out like a lighthouse, guiding teams through foggy doubts and stormy challenges with a beacon of hope.

This style of leadership doesn't just illuminate the path to success; it makes the journey enjoyable for everyone on board.

Optimistic leadership is your boss smiling at you in the hallway for no special reason, or the politician who inspires you with a belief in a better future for all instead of badmouthing his opponent.

Today I want to delve into the impact of optimistic leadership in work and community, with a side of humor to highlight the stark contrast between optimistic and pessimistic leaders.

The Ripple Effect of Optimistic Leadership

Optimistic leaders are like human sunbeams, radiating positivity that warms the entire workplace or community. You want this leader in the room. Their outlook isn't just about seeing the glass as half full; it's about believing the glass can be refilled, no matter how parched the situation.

This belief isn't just inspirational fluff; it has tangible effects. Teams led by optimists tend to be more resilient, creative, and willing to take calculated risks. It's as if optimism is the secret sauce that turns a group of individuals into a cohesive, unstoppable force.

Optimism also encapsulates a certain understanding of reality. As I have written many times before, **realists have a tendency of overconfidence** which leads them to believe that can predict somehow future events. On the contrary, optimists understand that the future is unclear and make the choice to approach it with a positive attitude.

Optimistic vs. Pessimistic Leaders: A Humorous Comparison

Imagine two captains steering their ships through a treacherous sea. Captain Optimist is at the helm of the S.S. Positivity, while Captain Pessimist commands the S.S. Doom and Gloom.

- **Facing the Storm:** Captain Optimist sees a looming storm and rallies the crew with, “What a great chance to test our new rain gear and improve our sailing skills!” Meanwhile, Captain Pessimist looks at the same storm and moans, “Well, that’s it. We might as well start writing our wills now.”
- **Navigating Challenges:** When faced with a critical navigation decision, Captain Optimist says, “This challenge is our chance to make history as the most agile ship to ever sail these waters!” On the other deck, Captain Pessimist declares, “Knowing our luck, we’ll probably discover an uncharted island the hard way.”

- **Motivating the Crew:** Captain Optimist boosts morale by announcing, “For every problem we solve today, I’ll add a song to our ‘Victory at Sea’ playlist!” Captain Pessimist, on the other hand, tries to motivate the crew with, “Remember, if we don’t make it, the company’s life insurance will make you all legends.”

The Impact on Teams and Communities

Teams led by optimistic leaders are like well-oiled machines, not because they never encounter friction, but because they're lubricated with hope and positivity.

These teams are more engaged, report higher job satisfaction, and are generally more productive. It's the difference between waking up excited for a treasure hunt and dragging oneself to what feels like a never-ending series of unfortunate events.

In community settings, optimistic leaders can turn a neighborhood of strangers into a cohesive, supportive village. They're the ones organizing community clean-ups with the promise of a block party afterward, turning civic duty into a celebration.

Leading with Light

Optimistic leadership proves that the attitude at the top can set the tone for the entire journey, transforming challenges into adventures and setbacks into opportunities for growth.

It's about leading not just with directives and strategies but with a vision of what's possible, peppered with enough humor to keep spirits high even when the waters get rough.

So, whether you're captaining a corporate team or navigating community initiatives, remember that your optimism is your compass. With it, you can chart a course that not only reaches the destination but ensures the journey is one of joy, collaboration, and shared success.

After all, a leader who can laugh in the face of adversity is one who can inspire their crew to sail through anything.



The Daily Grind - Why Coffee Makes You Poop

Source: An Experiment Using ChatGPT

(Editor's note: For many of us running early morning practices, we often feel a need for a "kick-start" to help us get moving. That often includes coffee. But sometimes the java-jolt gets more than our brain moving. Want to know more?)

Why Does Coffee Make You Poop?

If your morning coffee often leads to an urgent trip to the bathroom, you're not imagining things. Many people experience the same thing, and there's actual science behind it.

So why does coffee make you poop? The answer involves a mix of your body's natural rhythms, a few digestive hormones, and some surprising coffee chemistry.

Let's break it down in plain English.

1. Coffee Gets Your Gut Moving

One of the biggest reasons coffee has this effect is that it gets your colon—the end part of your digestive system—moving. This is called colon motility, and in simple terms, it means coffee helps push things along in your gut.

Researchers have found that coffee can make your colon up to 60% more active than water, and even about 23% more than decaf. That means regular coffee is especially good at getting things going.

And it works fast—*some people feel the urge within just a few minutes of drinking it.*

2. It Triggers a Built-In Reflex

Your body has something called the gastrocolic reflex. It's a natural response where your colon gets the signal to make room when your stomach receives food or drink.

Coffee strongly triggers this reflex by increasing hormones like gastrin and CCK (cholecystokinin), which help move your digestive system into gear.

And interestingly, this happens even if you drink decaf, which shows that it's not just the caffeine doing the work.

3. Mornings Are Prime Time

There's a reason this effect often hits in the morning. Your body follows a daily rhythm (called the circadian rhythm), and your digestive system tends to be more active after you wake up.

So when you drink coffee early in the day, it combines your body's natural timing with a digestive stimulant—making it more likely you'll need a trip to the bathroom.

4. It's Not Just the Caffeine

Sure, caffeine plays a role. But coffee contains hundreds of natural compounds—like antioxidants and acids—that also affect the gut.

That's why even decaf coffee can have a laxative effect, though it may be milder.

Also, the warm temperature of the drink might help. Warm liquids can relax your digestive system and promote movement,

especially when paired with those chemical signals from the coffee itself.

5. Not Everyone Reacts the Same

Everyone's body is different. People with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) or sensitive stomachs might notice stronger or more uncomfortable reactions.

Also, if you're lactose intolerant and add milk or cream, that could be a trigger—not the coffee itself. And some sugar substitutes can upset your stomach too.

If you notice discomfort, try tweaking your coffee habits—smaller servings, less milk, or switching to decaf.

6. Is This Healthy?

For most people, yes. About 30% of coffee drinkers report that it makes them poop, and for many, it's a natural, helpful part of their routine.

Coffee may even help relieve occasional constipation by speeding things along gently. But if it causes cramps, diarrhea, or urgency, try:

- Switching to decaf
- Using less milk or cream
- Drinking coffee later in the day
- Cutting back on the amount

The Bottom Line (no pun intended)

Coffee makes you poop because it stimulates your digestive system in a few different ways. It activates your colon, triggers helpful hormones, and works especially well in the morning when your body is already more active.

It's not just about caffeine—other compounds in coffee and even its warmth can contribute. And for most people, it's totally normal.

If it's too intense for you, a few small changes can help you enjoy your coffee without the mad dash.

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STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

Changing the Angles Changes the Exercise

Charlie Hoolihan

ASCA Swimming Strength and Conditioning Specialist Coordinator

Changing muscle work by changing positions during pushups

Sometimes, selecting the proper exercise for swimming strength training can seem daunting due to the plethora of available options. Ironically, those choices are simply variations of four basic movement patterns – squatting, hip-hinging, pushing, and pulling.

The variations of these patterns are what change muscle stimulation and contribute to successful programming that's healthier for tendons and ligaments.

Because most overhead athletes – swimmers, field throwers, and baseball pitchers rely on repetitive use of the same motion, varying their strength training movements can help develop stronger support called joint couplings – the surrounding muscles, tendons, ligaments, and cartilage that hold the joint in place.

In the gym setting, variables are altered through the use of different angled benches, barbells and dumbbells, cables, and exercise machines.

Something as simple as a pushup can be modified to vary the stimulus and strengthen the shoulder joint coupling.

(Note: all of these movements can and should be developed by starting with hands on elevated surfaces like a starting block, countertop, bench or even a wall for developing athletes. Once the athlete masters 5-10 repetitions at one height, they can drop down to a lower elevation.)

In the traditional pushup below, the hands are placed slightly below the shoulders and closer to the body. This position enables the athlete to work some of the prime movers in swimming – shoulders, pectorals, and triceps – to their most significant



mechanical advantage.

Changing the position to a wider stance, more in line with the shoulder joint increases tension in the shoulder region compared to the traditional pushup. The intensity of this demand requires monitoring for technique and strength availability.



Even more advanced is a lateral shift position, where the athlete performs the pushup by shifting towards one side during the lowering phase, pushing back up to the center position, and then lowering to the opposite side to stimulate each shoulder joint coupling more individually and laterally.



Another way to shift muscle activity during a pushup is to leave one hand in the traditional position and move the opposite hand forward to position even with the head.

This gives the traditional side more work while changing the angle of the forward side to work the forward shoulder in an entirely different manner than presented so far in this discussion.



A final position to consider is a dive-bomber or yoga-style pushup, where the hips are raised, and the distance between the feet and hands is shortened by a foot or more.

The athlete sets up the hip raise and holds it before performing a pushup movement towards the hands. The goal is to maintain the downward angle of the movement while descending and ascending.



Pushups are not the only bodyweight exercise where the muscle and joint stimuli can be changed for a more well-rounded development. ***The next issue will examine several lower-body exercises.***



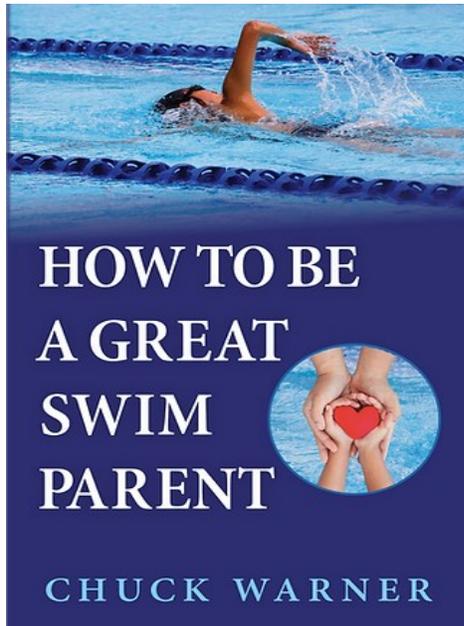
Charlie Hoolihan is the Swimming Strength and Conditioning Specialist Certification Coordinator for the American Swim Coaches Association and has been strength training swimmers since 1990. He's also a presenter and writer for numerous national fitness organizations and publications.

Contact Charlie to set up a complimentary team-specific dryland training analysis of your resources and programming at

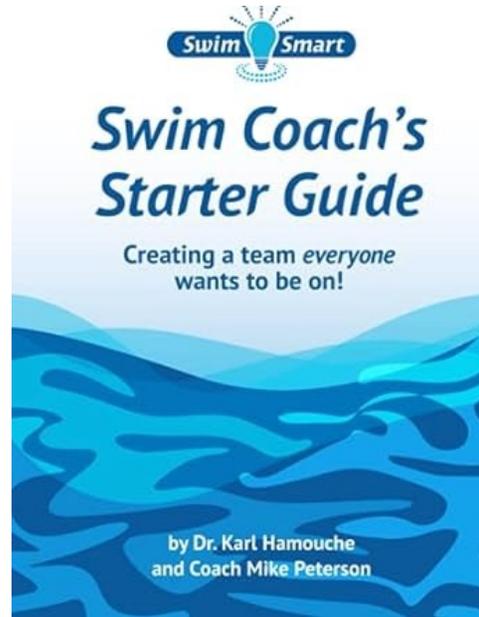
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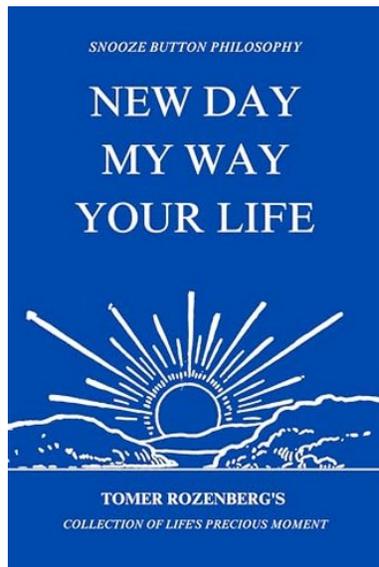
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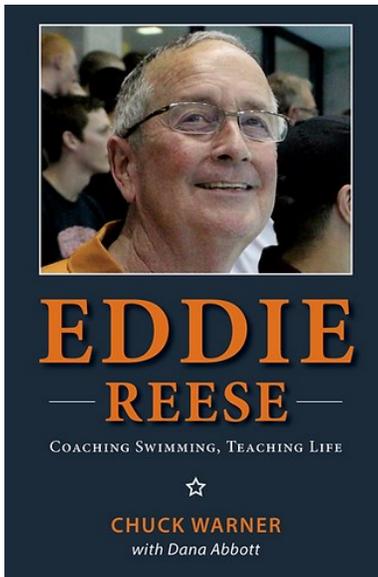
- In this refreshing take on life management, you'll discover:
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 - Strategies to defeat the dreaded alarm clock and start your mornings with purpose
 - The art of turning your commute into a personal growth opportunity
 - Ways to navigate the afternoon slump and maintain energy throughout the day
 - The surprising benefits of well-crafted complaints
 - How to find balance in a world of endless choices



This insightful book offers a step-by-step guide to help you develop the essential skills, habits, and mindset needed to live a strategic life. From setting clear goals and mastering time management to cultivating meaningful relationships and embracing change, this comprehensive resource covers every aspect of personal growth and development.

Both books by Tomer Rozenberg are available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

BOOKS WE RECOMMEND



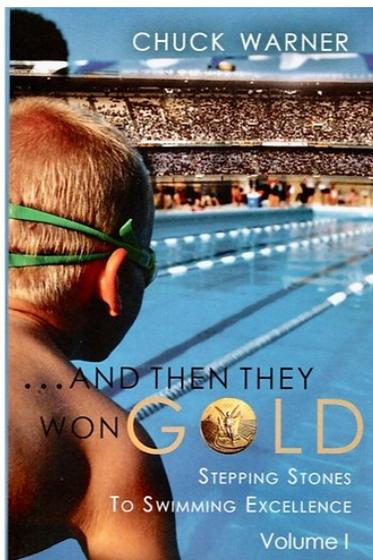
Eddie Reese is one of the most successful and effective coaches in sports history. His method of building his swimmers' character first has resulted in unprecedented success at The University of Texas including:

- 15 DI Men's Team Titles - a record
- 25 D1 Men's Team Top 2 Finishes - a record
- 39 Olympic Gold Medals.

The book contains:

- 130 "Eddie-isms" that provide in his own words some of his wit and wisdom.
- Over 50 stories from past swimmers and coaching colleagues.

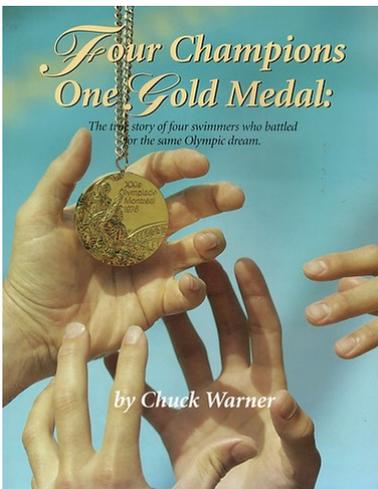
Technique tips.



Learn how eight of the greatest male swimmers in recent swimming history progressed from summer league swimming to collectively win 28 Olympic Gold Medals.

Included are technique tips from the swimmers themselves and practice samples from each stage of their development. The legendary swimmers included are:

- Matt Biondi - Olympics 84, 88, 92
- Dave Berkoff - Olympics 88, 92
- Mike Barrowman - Olympics 88, 92
- Josh Davis - Olympics 96, 2000
- Lenny Krayzelburg - Olympics 2000, 2004
- Ian Crocker - Olympics 2000, 04, 08
- Grant Hackett - Olympics 2000, 04, 08
- Aaron Peirsol - Olympics 2000, 04, 08



Four Champions, One Gold Medal, is a monumental achievement! Descriptive, prescriptive and inspirational, it recounts--step-by-step--the road taken by four world-class athletes in quest of Olympic gold: Americans Tim Shaw, Brian Goodell and Bobby Hackett, and Australian Steve Holland.

All four were extraordinary athletes--incredibly hard-working, and totally focused on their common goal of winning the 1500 meters at the 1976 Olympic Games. All four were champions in every sense of the word. Yet only three made it to the blocks at the start of the 1500 in Montreal.

And, of course, only one emerged as Olympic champion.

How to Win a State Meet - Revisited

By Michael J. Stott

Michael J. Stott is an ASCA Level 5 coach, and a prodigious golf and swimming writer. His critically acclaimed coming-of-age golf novel, "Too Much Loft", is in its third printing, and is available from Amazon, B&N, bookbaby.com, and all those other bookstores you can find in mainstream and out of the way places.



Some 15 years ago I penned an article entitled "How to Win a State Meet." For it I collected thoughts from venerable high school coaches listing highlights from their impressive careers and how they prepared their rosters for high level competition. Those coaches were:

Dave Robertson, one of the very few high school coaches in the International Swimming Hall of Fame and, at the time, the only swimming coach to be admitted to the National Federation of State Athletic Association Hall of Fame. From 1946 to 1976 he led New Trier Township High School (Winnetka, Ill.) to 14 state swimming crowns, 12 seconds and four thirds.

Dick Guyer, for 40 years the head coach at York Suburban High School (York, Pa.). Boys Pennsylvania State Champions AA in 2006, 2007 and second in 1982, 1991 and 1998. Coach of the Year 2003.

Bill Bartle, North Penn High School (Lansdale, Pa.) 1995-2000. Eighty-seven and 0 in boys dual meets, second in state meet (1996), state champions (1997-2000), Bartle previously coached at Reading High where he won a girls state championship.

Rod Montrie, The Madeira School in McLean, Va. Virginia Swimming Independent Schools champion for girls (2001-2003, 2005-2006). VSIS coach of the year four times.

Below are their responses to my questions.

Then...

Do you do any research or scouting on state meet opponents?

Bartle: "We check results from current and previous years and from USA and YMCA meets. The internet has been a great resource."

Guyer: "We have contacts across the state and regularly trade meet results which tell us what it may take to make finals or consolations. We do not physically go and watch other meets. We rely on our network of coaches to trade information."

Montrie: "Only teams we swim against. I'll note the condition of their top swimmers and ID any up-and-comers. If we are going up against a good team in a dual meet and their prior results are available, I'll review those and look for weaknesses. Before the state meet I'll look through league meet results to see the top times around the state. I'll also look at last year's results to see what seniors are gone and try to maximize our scoring. I try to trust my gut about a kid and when she is ready to swim fast."

Robertson: "I basically ignored the rest of the state. My philosophy was to find absolutely the best place to put my swimmers."

Any specific in-season prep you do other than training?

Bartle: "We provide swimmers with information regarding opponents and have swimmers review individual and team goals. We work daily and weekly motivating individuals, constantly developing team morale and spirit."

Guyer: "We do something every day concentrating on the little things, i.e. streamlining, going strong into turns, using the feet to get off the walls and on starts and specific swimmer relay exchanges. We'll even do repeats with goggles in our mouths or filled with water so there is no panic if it happens in a race."

Montrie: "The seniors are the morale police and are charged with keeping everything upbeat and positive."

Mental components, how you get the team ready upstairs?

Bartle: "Each individual is different so you try and find what technique motivates that person best."

Guyer: "We work hard with only a four lane pool, going 11,000 yards a day and with weight room work three days per week. We visualize as much as we can teaching swimmers to relax and see themselves being successful. When it comes to the state meet we have already won in our minds."

Montrie: "If you take care of the physical then the mental preparation is easy. I think confidence comes from a daily dose of positive feedback."

Robertson: "I did a lot of talking one-on-one."

How do you take the temperature of your team?

Bartle: "Not tell them it was a test set but yet run them through one; look at the how they interact with one another and how they react to a swim. We may not get psyched for a meet, but if all swims are 100 percent, results will tell you a

great deal. Body language, demeanor when speaking with staff and even daily work effort are also keys."

Guyer: "We measure that by the intensity that goes into hard sets. Everyone understands that you have to put in the work to have a great taper."

Montrie: "I just sit and listen. The deck chatter and mannerisms can tell you a lot. Performance in any given meet can be deceiving."

How do you take the temperature of your opponents?

Bartle: "I think after a certain amount of years, you develop a pattern and your opponent does as well. You know what to expect during the season and during championship time."

Guyer: "We don't. We only concentrate on being in charge of our results!"

Do you do scheduling to battle-harden your troops?

Bartle: "USA meets in the off season. Sectionals, Zones, Jr. Nationals, Nationals have always kept swimmers motivated. Our high school schedule is consistent year after year with 12 meets and an invitational or two. One or two big meets are on the schedule to target good swims at certain times."

Guyer: "We have a 10-meet league season and go to relay meets with schools larger than ours. We compete as hard as we can when tired."

Robertson: "I wanted to swim against the best. In addition to Illinois, we went to Wisconsin, Indiana and Iowa."

Anything you do special at the state meet or is the "hay in the barn" by then?

Bartle: "Work on mental preparation."

Guyer: "We stay relaxed. It is no time for last minute instructions. The more I talk to swimmers, the tighter they get. I'm the cheerleader and have fun."

Montrie: "At the end of the season I like to whip them up into a frenzy. At the state meet, we burn the barn down."

Do you focus on a specific event at the meet?

Guyer: "This is very important! The first swim of the meet triggers the positive atmosphere of 'I can't wait until it is my turn,' knowing that the taper has worked."

Montrie: "Only if it is a 'coin toss' event choice for the swimmer. I like to spread out the scoring at championships, but not enough to change a swimmer's logical events. I would rather win one relay and take fifth in another, as opposed to take two second places if it did not affect the final team score/place."

Robertson: "I always wanted a good medley relay. If you set the meet up and put people back on their heels, especially in a dual meet, they know they are in for a long afternoon. For the state meet we were great resters."

True story

Years ago a newbie Middle Atlantic coach, not yet well-schooled in the methods described above, wanted information

on an upcoming opponent. Know the opposing team only showed its best lineup against a heated rival he drove 100 miles (one way) to scout the competition. Armed with stopwatch and notepad he sat unnoticed until the call for timers whereupon he volunteered to time his soon-to-be opponent's fastest lane.

As the meet progressed he captured times on all swimmers. And being a social sort and long on chutzpah he chatted up the best swimmer as to her potential state meet events. To his surprise she gave an answer different from what he had assumed. Bottom line – it was an afternoon well spent.

Now...

As we've moved into the digital age, such sought after competitive information is at coach fingertips. The internet, Meet Mobile, Swimcloud, Hy-Tek and other digital platforms save hours of research and any cagey sleuthing.

Older methods still have a place and coaches still must work their magic, but in many ways it is a brave new world. Below are some examples of what high school coaches are doing these days to give athletes and teams their best chances to showcase their skills -- and bring home championships.

Eagle Eyes

Ron Blanc and brother Rich are co-head coaches of the Santa Margarita Catholic High School. In recent years the Santa Margarita girls have won seven CIF California Girls State Swimming and Diving championships. They were named Swimming World's girls' national high school champions in 2018, 2022, 2023 and 2024. In 2025 they were the NISCA's girls National Dual Meet Ranking high point team. The Santa Margarita boys won championships in 2021 and 2022 and 2024 and the last five Southern Section CIF titles. Both coaches were honored as NISCA Outstanding Service Award winners in 2017.

California, like some other states (i.e. Texas, Illinois, etc.) has a tiered qualifying process for state meet participation. For Santa Margarita the strategy for winning a state meet begins the year before. Says Ron Blanc "we take a look at the rosters of the top teams and see who returns underclassmen that scored in the championship finals. We compile a list of potential state championship caliber teams based on their returning talent, then monitor their swimming in the new swim season via online results, Meet Mobile, etc.

"We keep an eye on who is swimming well and do so up through the CIF section meets. Most swimmers have to be somewhat-to-fully rested for their section meets since the competition at section meets is so intense. At the end of the section meets, we have an idea about which teams are swimming well and who will contend for the state title," he says.

"For our own team, and since state entries are based on the lineup you have for your section meet, we set up our section lineup based on who has the potential to qualify and score at the state meet. To win state, a team needs to get all three relays to score and as many swims in the championship finals as possible. As a result, our section lineup is based on who we think will score points at state finals.

"All the preparation and planning is key, but what ultimately determines a state championship is getting your team's talent to swim their best when it counts. Getting your swimmers to goal-set for state and think about making state is critical. Hyping up the fun aspect of taking an overnight trip to state and building team spirit encourages swimmers to do their best at the end of the season," he says.

Skippers

Minnetonka (Minn.) High School has a proud aquatic heritage. Head coach John Bradley added to the team's legacy by winning the 2024 Class AA state championship, the girls fourth overall. The boys squad has garnered 11 titles.

Answering questions posed in the earlier article Bradley shared his thought on how he directs his athletes toward superior performance.

Do you do any research or scouting on state meet opponents?

"The short answer is no. We try to have to enough meets so that we pretty much see everyone by the end of the season. A big issue is in-season suiting. We suit up boys and girls each season for one big invitational, our high school sectional and our state meet. I'm a big believer in meet preparation, and learning to swim fast with the new technology is important to me. We will periodically suit in practice for standups with the team on Saturday mornings when we are not competing."

Any specific in-season prep you do other than training?

"In addition to suiting, we also really stress strength coaching. We have a state-of-the-art weight room and more importantly, a superlative strength coach and staff. Coach Taylor Moon trains our 75 girls and 50 boys in a way that is additive in terms of skills, knowledge and strength gained. He also keeps them healthy by understanding the athletes and their needs. He attends our swim meets and has a network of collegiate swim strength coaches. We are very fortunate to have him. He is a critical additional set of eyes that helps monitor athlete conditioning. The strength training program has been critical to our success!

"Over the last 10 years I have really changed my approach to yardage and quality. I think it is important to have fit athletes, but there are a lot of people who have figured out that you don't have to train a kid who is aces in the 50 the same way you would train a great IMer or 500 athlete. Also sprint training aids athletes who swim events 200 yards and up. I have learned there are a lot of benefits in learning to sprint, not only in speed, but also in coordination and one's ability to race. We like to sprint and it shows in our results."

Mental components, how you get the team ready upstairs?

"We do a lot of work on trust. I don't think that a team can really be competitive unless they are all on the same page in trust with each other and in the coaches trying to help them be their best. We also do a lot of work on our culture. For Minnetonka, we want to be successful in the pool and also in creating a team environment which encourages athletes to be the best they can be as leaders and participants. Our athletes know that even if

their season ends in week 10 at the JV conference meet, for the next 4 weeks they are essential to our success through their support, cheering and their positive attitudes toward one another. We all have a part to play in a championship campaign!"

How do you take the temperature of your team?

"I am always listening to the in-practice lane talk and the pre and post meet and practice interactions. If I hear something I don't like, I speak up and encourage others to do the same. We have to be active and honest in our intention and communication!"

Do you do scheduling to battle-harden your troops?

"We swim in the Lake Conference in Minnesota. It's comprised of schools in the suburbs of the Twin Cities. Our high school has about 3600 students. The next largest has 3500, followed by 3300 and 3200 for the next two largest. The conference is very competitive and, for girls and boys, it has been dominant for the last 20-30 years in Minnesota state swimming and diving. If you aren't ready to get it on after a dual meet season in the Lake, I'm not sure you'll ever be ready to get it going during the postseason in Minnesota!"

Anything you do special at the state meet or is the "hay in the barn" by then?

"I really try to keep the highs from getting too high and the lows from getting too low. A number of things keep us competitive, i.e.: keeping things positive, offering multiple taper plans, allowing autonomy in how athletes are rested are just three. Having clear expectations of what needs to be done by all parties involved – coaches, athletes and parents – also helps us be successful. Proper taper planning is one of the best things I can do for the athletes. I believe that most are pretty darn good at what they do and are very good at knowing what works for them on a regular basis. I'm just here to help!"

The Seton School

Jim Koehr has been the head coach at the Seton School in Manassas, Va. since 2002. He has twice been named the Virginia Independent School Swimming Association coach of the year and his teams have won ten Division II state championships. As an entrepreneur and VISSA executive secretary (2005-2019) he has utilized his vision, organization and modern business skills to elevate both the VISSA and Seton School aquatic experiences.

Below, in outline form, are some of the methods Koehr uses in analyzing his competition to best place his swimmers. Note the heavy use of technology and the inordinate effort/time he employs to chart a winning course. In part he offers a tutorial on how to use the finer points of Hy-Tek for maximum competitive advantage. Many aspects will be obvious to veteran coaches, but for the less experienced his perspective is a playbook on how utilize readily available digital tools.

According to Koehr:

Swimcloud is a gamechanger because everyone's times are completely transparent

- You can even see their USA times
 - One of the most critical tools is the Swimcloud Top Times Report
 - Go to the page for your state organization and click on the Times menu
 - To the right, filter on the event you want to see. It will show you the top times swum in your state organization so far that season.
- B. Hy-Tek Team Manager is still my go-to tool. Here are a few ways that I use Hy-Tek that many coaches may not:
- Relay Splits: One key thing to understand about Hy-Tek Team Manager is how to extract Relay Splits
 - From the home page, click on Teams
 - Click on your team and then select the Results menu
 - Then click on "Split Out Relay Legs"
 - ◇ Often, the touch pads give bad splits so you may have to clean up the data by deleting some splits.
 - ◇ Once you've gone to that trouble, you don't want to recreate the problem, so I generally put in a "Use Since Date" to only get the new splits from the most recent meet.
 - Once that is done, when you run a Top Times report by event, you can toggle "Include Relay non-leadoff Legs" and get a report of your top relays splits, i.e. 50 Breaststroke, etc.
 - This feature is particularly useful for the freestyle relays where I use every swimmer's top 50 and 100 Free split rather than their PR.

Results from Other Teams:

Team Manager can handle any number of teams, so why not track results for all of the swimmers from the other teams in your conference too?

I have many years of results from every swimmer from every team in our conference – including their best relay splits.

It is a lot of work because, like your own team, you have to set up the current rosters for all of the other teams, including previous year rosters.

In preparing entries for the State Meet, the process I use is:

Individual entries

I build a spreadsheet with all of my individual qualifiers and for every event in which they qualified. I fill in:

- Their current VISSA-related time on the Swimcloud Top Times Report .
- Where their season-best time would have placed in Prelims from the prior year's State Meet, excluding last year's sen-

iors.

With that information, it is generally pretty clear where most of the swimmers can score best individually.

For the very top swimmers, where it is unclear, the process goes to the next level.

- Who are they swimming against and what are their best USA times?
- What events do they most frequently swim, particularly in their conference championship meet?
- What are the downside possibilities? Are there several swimmers that would be seeded very close behind them?
- What are the upside possibilities? How easily can they move up with a good swim?
- And most importantly, when the choice is close, where does the swimmer feel like they have their best chance to pop a great performance?

Relay Events

With double points and the ability to put swimmers in three relays, I spend most of my time here.

We annually host 11 meets, so that gives me tremendous opportunities to give different kids a chance to improve their relay splits, not just their PRs. I track those meticulously.

Then I build an elaborate spreadsheet where I line up several options for all three relays for both boys and girls:

- The absolute fastest combination I can put in the water.
- The fastest relay combinations without my #1 swimmer.
- The fastest relay combinations with my #2 swimmer.
- The fastest combination without either my #1 or #2 swimmers.

Sometimes, I have to build combinations that account for my #3 and #4 swimmers too.

The final step is to project a score for that relay using the Swimcloud Top Times Report and last year's Meet Results

- How many points did we lose by not using one of our top swimmers on a relay?
- If they can score more points than that individually, then they will swim two individual events and two relays.
- If they cannot, they will swim one individual event and three relays.

This exercise might take me several hours and several iterations so I generally start the process after our last regular season meet and update throughout the post season.

I make very clear to all the swimmers that:

- ⇒ The State Championship is a team event, so if you want to swim two individual events but you can score more points in three relays, you'll be swimming three relays.

⇒ To compensate for that, I make sure we have other championship meets, such as National Catholics. At that meet winning is not really a consideration and I'll give swimmers more freedom to influence the events in which they are entered.

But in the end, all swimmers understand that the team is first.

In preparing entries for the conference championship meet, here is the process I use:

- With twelve places scored and only seven or eight "A" Relays, using your top swimmers in three relays is almost never a good idea since they can always score more points in two individual events.
- Despite this, I still do the "A" relays first since they are the only ones that score.
- The key information that I gather from Hy-Tek Team Manager is (since I have every other team's results stored in my database):
- The Top Times Report for each relay that includes every team in my database and their splits
- The Top Times Report for 50 of every stroke and 100 Free, with "Include Relay non-leadoff Legs" toggled and no team selected. That gives me a report for the entire conference.

With that information, I create an elaborate spreadsheet from which I build multiple combinations of every relay for my own team including:

- The absolute fastest relays I can put in the water.
- The fastest relay I can put in the water without my #1 swimmer, without my #1 and #2 swimmer, and without both of them.

I repeat that process by adding spreadsheet tabs for our key rival(s), lining up their best relays.

Once I know how I would line up our rivals' relays, then I can line my up to maximize the result.

This, of course, can be an extremely tedious process that could take several hours so I draft the first version about halfway through the season

That also allows me to see who needs a chance to improve their relay split and earn a spot on an "A" relay for the championship season.

Once I know the relay line-ups, then I can move to the individual line-ups.

Generally, I won't put a swimmer in both 100 breaststroke and the 400 free relay, unless I think our 400 free relay will score more points with them swimming tired.

Other than that, I don't worry about back-to-back relays and individual events.

Here's where Hy-Tek comes into play.

When you are doing your "Entries by Event," leave the Team filter blank above the list of swimmers.

That way, you can have everyone in your database listed.

If you click on the column heading for "Best Time," you'll get every swimmer in your conference sorted from fastest to slowest.

After that, I go through the eight individual events and line up one swimmer in each event based on their ranking in the conference.

Naturally, I have to apply some projection of what events the other top swimmers are likely to swim.

Then, I go back through the eight events and place a second swimmer, then a third swimmer, and finally a fourth swimmer.

The goal is to complete a line-up that has the best chance of scoring three or four swimmers in the top 12 for each individual event.

That's how we've won 30 girls conference championships in over the last 31 years – depth.

Two years ago our girls won the conference championship by more than 100 points without winning a single individual event.

Preparing your swimmers for success

Step 1: get a bunch of USA swimmers

We have a team of 135 kids (in a school of 350 kids), but not many of them are USA swimmers.

So we mostly have to build our own swimmers, some of whom we are able to introduce to the local USA coaches

High School-only swimmers can often make dramatic progress during the course of a high school season, so we spend the regular season trying to get as many kids as possible to swim all eight (8) individual events.

After building every stroke and turn from scratch with every swimmer from our first practice on election day through Christmas break, we find that many kids surprise us with the events at which they can be good.

The 11-meets we host in-season are an important part of our championship preparation.

We give kids many opportunities to excel.

Last season, not counting relay splits, our team had a total of 1,205 personal records.

Winners All

Successful coaches, like those profiled above share some common traits. Among them passion and commitment to provide the best possible winning experiences for their athletes. While their methods may vary, the overarching result is victory for the athletes in aquatics and life.

A win-win for all concerned.

Mastering Time Management:

Book - The Art of Laziness

1. Plan your day.
2. Write everything you want to achieve in a day.
3. Write your goals on a physical paper.
4. Follow the 80/20 Rule. 20% of your work will bring you 80% of your results.
5. Stop Multitasking. Switching tasks significantly reduces your productivity.
6. Focus on one task at a time.
7. Remove all distractions from your environment.
8. When tired, take a nap.
9. Learn to say no. You will never have enough time if you say yes to everything.
10. Delegate all the non-important tasks.
11. Don't wait for the perfect time. Do It Now.
12. Anything that can be done in under five minutes should be done now.
13. Do the task that you hate first.
14. Set deadlines; the task will never be finished without deadlines.
15. Stop focusing on things that don't help you achieve your goals.
16. Don't be a perfectionist when it's not required.
17. Schedule a time when you're going to check your email.
18. Avoid all unnecessary meetings.
19. Avoid negative people at all costs.
20. Do what you love.

**“May we never lose
the drive to pursue the
things we love, no matter
how bumpy the road is.”**

-@unsaidart

CURRENT EVENTS: A Spotlight on the Big Deal That's Changing the Landscape

How the House vs. NCAA Lawsuit is Hurting High School Swimmers... and What Coaches Can Do About It

By Kevin Pierce, NISCA Education Chair

The *House vs. NCAA* lawsuit is reshaping the landscape of college athletics, sparking intense debate about athlete compensation and the financial stability of non-revenue sports. While much attention has been given to the impact on football and basketball, the ripple effects of this lawsuit are being felt across all sports, including swimming. Unfortunately, these changes threaten the opportunities available to high school swimmers hoping to compete at the collegiate level. As high school swim coaches, it is crucial to understand how this lawsuit is altering college swimming and take action to support student-athletes navigating this uncertain landscape.

Understanding the *House vs. NCAA* Lawsuit

The lawsuit challenges the NCAA's traditional model of amateurism by arguing that athletes, particularly those in revenue-generating sports, should be compensated beyond scholarships. If the courts rule in favor of the plaintiffs, colleges may be required to share revenue with their athletes, dramatically shifting how athletic departments allocate funding. Since football and basketball generate the bulk of NCAA revenue, these sports will likely receive most of the financial benefits, leaving non-revenue sports like swimming at risk of budget cuts.

How High School Swimmers Are Being Impacted

Reduced Scholarship Opportunities

One of the immediate consequences of this lawsuit is the potential reduction in swimming scholarships. Currently, NCAA Division I men's swimming programs are limited to 9.9 scholarships, while women's programs are capped at 14. These numbers are already tight, often requiring athletes to rely on partial scholarships and financial aid. If schools must allocate more funds to compensate revenue-sport athletes, they may be forced to reduce the number of scholarships available for non-revenue sports like swimming. High school swimmers must prepare for this shift by actively seeking alternative scholarship opportunities, such as academic scholarships, grants, and financial aid programs.

Elimination of College Swimming Programs

Perhaps the most devastating potential outcome of this lawsuit is the elimination of college swimming programs. In recent years, we've already seen institutions cut their swim teams due to budget constraints. Schools such as Clemson and the University of Iowa have discontinued their men's swimming programs, citing financial difficulties. If revenue-sharing becomes mandatory, universities may opt to eliminate even more non-revenue sports to balance their budgets. High school swimmers need to be more open to exploring all levels of collegiate swimming, including Division II, Division III, NAIA, and junior colleges, to maximize their opportunities.

Reduced Recruiting Resources

Another critical issue is the potential reduction in recruiting efforts for high school swimmers. Athletic departments may have to cut back on recruiting budgets to accommodate financial changes caused by the lawsuit. College coaches may not have the same resources to travel to club and high school swim meets, limiting the exposure that many swimmers need to get noticed. To combat this, high school swim coaches should actively educate their athletes and parents on how to market themselves effectively, create strong highlight videos, and take initiative in reaching out to college coaches directly.

Increased Financial Burdens on Families

With fewer scholarships and potential reductions in college swimming programs, families may have to shoulder more of the financial burden if their children want to swim in college. This could mean higher out-of-pocket costs for tuition, equipment, and travel. Some colleges may also pass training expenses onto student-athletes, requiring them to cover costs that were previously handled by the university. Coaches should encourage families to explore all possible financial aid options, connect with businesses that may provide local sponsorships, and educate swimmers on potential NIL (Name, Image, and Likeness) opportunities to help offset costs.

How High School Swim Coaches Can Help

While high school swim coaches cannot change NCAA policies, we can take proactive steps to support our athletes in navigating this shifting landscape.

Educate Athletes and Parents on the Changing Recruiting Process

With recruiting becoming more challenging, coaches need to educate athletes and their families on how to maximize their opportunities. Hosting information sessions to explain the new realities of college recruiting, helping swimmers build strong recruiting profiles with highlight videos and academic resumes, and encouraging them to proactively reach out to college coaches can make a significant difference in their chances of securing a roster spot.

Expand College Options Beyond Division I

Many swimmers dream of competing at the NCAA Division I level, but with fewer scholarships and increased competition, it's important to encourage athletes to explore other divisions. Helping swimmers research and identify schools across all divisions that match their academic and athletic goals, emphasizing the benefits of Division III programs that provide strong academic support, and encouraging athletes to attend college swimming camps where they can showcase their skills and connect with coaches can open more doors for them.

Advocate for High School and Club Swimming Programs

As college programs face potential cuts, it becomes even more crucial to strengthen high school and club swimming. Coaches should work to develop robust programs that prepare swimmers for the next level, ensuring that athletes have the skills, training, and competition experience necessary to stand out in the recruiting process. This includes working with athletic directors to secure funding for high school swimming programs, building relationships with local swim clubs for year-round training, and organizing showcase meets that provide additional exposure for swimmers.

Promote NIL (Name, Image, and Likeness) Opportunities for Swimmers

Although NIL deals have been more prominent in football and basketball, there are still opportunities for swimmers to benefit from endorsements and sponsorships. Coaches should educate athletes on how to create a personal brand through social media, connect them with businesses that may offer local sponsorships, and encourage them to explore NIL deals that align with their personal values and career aspirations. This can help swimmers find financial support outside of traditional scholarships.

Advocate for Legislative and Institutional Support

Coaches, parents, and swimmers can work together to advocate

for policies that protect Olympic and non-revenue sports. Joining organizations like USA Swimming that work to protect collegiate swimming opportunities, encouraging parents to contact state representatives and petition for continued funding of non-revenue sports, and supporting initiatives that promote financial equity across all collegiate sports can help keep college swimming programs alive.

The Role of High School Coaches in Protecting Opportunities for Swimmers

The *House vs. NCAA* lawsuit is a game-changer for college athletics, and unfortunately, high school swimmers may be caught in the crossfire. With scholarships at risk, college programs in danger of being cut, and recruiting becoming more competitive, it's more important than ever for high school swim coaches to step up and guide their athletes through these changes.

By incorporating these strategies—educating swimmers and parents, expanding recruiting strategies, strengthening high school programs, promoting NIL opportunities, and advocating for institutional support—coaches can help ensure that high school swimmers continue to have opportunities at the collegiate level. While the future of college swimming remains uncertain, our commitment to developing and supporting our athletes can help keep their dreams alive. Now, more than ever, we must take action to protect the sport we love and ensure that talent-

My second children's book, *Leo the Lion Learns to Lead*, is now officially available.

For me, it is the continuation of a conversation. A conversation about leadership, about courage, about how we help young people step into their best, truest selves.

When I published my first children's book, **Leo the Lion's Great Adventure**, I was blown away by the response. Parents reached out. Teachers emailed. Coaches texted me. Most importantly, kids, the kids I wrote it for told me how much they connected with Leo and his friends.

I heard again and again: "We want more."

That wasn't just a call for another adventure. It was a call for deeper exploration.

Writing a second children's book is a strange and wonderful challenge. You don't want to repeat yourself. You want to evolve. You want to build on what worked, but also push into new ground.

This is where *Leo the Lion Learns to Lead* was born.

Why Leadership, and Why Leo?

As a coach, a teacher, and a father, I think constantly about the world our kids are growing up in.

They are surrounded by messages about success, achievement, status, competition. From school to sports to social media, they are learning whether we like it or not what it means to stand out, what it means to be "good enough," and what it takes to be seen.

But here's the problem: so much of that messaging leaves out

the heart of what truly matters.

We don't talk nearly enough about character.

We don't talk nearly enough about servant leadership.

We don't talk nearly enough about the quiet, everyday choices that build integrity and trust.

When I wrote Leo's second story, I wanted to craft something that helps young readers understand that leadership is not about being the loudest voice in the room or the one holding the trophy at the end of the game.

It's about showing up.

It's about caring for others.

It's about having the courage to do what's right, even when it's uncomfortable.

It's about learning from mistakes, getting back up, and trying again.

Leo is not a perfect leader. He has doubts. He stumbles. He questions himself. But he keeps showing up. And along the way, he learns that leadership is not about getting everything right. It's about being willing to try, to listen, and to serve.

What I Hope Kids Will Take From This Book

At the heart of *Leo the Lion Learns to Lead* is a message I want every child to hear:

You can lead, right now, exactly where you are.

You don't need a title.

You don't need a special badge.

You don't need to wait until you're older, taller, faster, stronger.

You can lead by being kind.

THE DAILY COACH

Naomi Osaka has been on a deeply personal journey—one of self-leadership, self-healing, and personal transformation.

Despite the accolades and the global spotlight, she faced internal battles: mental health challenges, shame, and the exhausting belief that self-worth must be earned through performance.

Recently, Osaka shared how deeply her identity had been tied to performance:

"My whole identity as I knew it was being a tennis player. I would value what my value was as a person on whether I won or lost."

Her vulnerability reveals two powerful lessons for leaders and high performers alike:

Lesson 1: It's Okay to Fail

Too often, we don't give ourselves—or those under our leadership—the grace and permission to fail. We romanticize perfection and over-penalize error, forgetting that true growth comes from the discomfort of falling short.

When we make room for failure, we unlock a mindset—and a culture—of learning, creativity, and long-term resilience. The pursuit of excellence should never come at the expense of our humanity.

Lesson 2: Balance Competitive Drive With Contentment

In elite, high-performing spaces, we often celebrate ambition and comparison as fuel. But constant comparison is a slow erosion of inner peace.

But how do you stay competitive and also be content?

It's a question every leader and high performer must wrestle with.

Leadership today isn't just about winning. It's about evolving—learning to prioritize inner growth over public validation.

Once driven by titles and trophies, Osaka now finds peace in her growth, her values, and her new role as a mother — all while continuing to put in the work to become the best version of herself on the tennis court.

In a world that's constantly telling us who we should be, where we should be, and how we should perform—silencing the outside noise and reconnecting with our inner truth and voice is one of the most transformational things we can do daily.

May we let Naomi Osaka's story remind us: You can be both powerful and tender. You can lead and still struggle. You can compete and still rest.

And most importantly— You are still enough, even when you're not performing or winning.

- Once you realize the power of your words, you won't just say anything.
- Once you realize the power of your thoughts, you won't just think anything.
- Once you realize the power of your presence, you won't just be anywhere.



Some of us weren't raised. We were just managed.

We weren't nurtured. We were just told to behave. Be quiet. Be good. Don't upset. Don't feel. Don't need too much.

We didn't get emotional education.

We got emotional neglect, disguised as discipline. And now we're adults trying to build lives, hold relationships, raise children, with no blueprint for how to meet our own needs—let alone anyone else's.

That's not our fault. But it is our responsibility to break that cycle.

To re-parent ourselves. To learn how to comfort, not just control.

Because the world doesn't need more "well-behaved" adults. It needs emotionally safe ones.

Source: @lifewithanxiety101



Some goodbyes are just pauses in the story.

You think it's over. But love has a strange way of circling back in silence.

Not always in the way you expect. Sometimes it returns as peace, not a person.

The ache in your chest? It's just your heart reshaping itself around what it lost. Making space for the new. While never denying what once was.

Healing doesn't mean forgetting.

It means honoring the past without letting it define you.

So breathe. You are not behind. You are blooming differently this time.

Some goodbyes don't close the book — they just turn the page.

Source: @haven_feels



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



BRAIN FOOD



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

Motivation has perfect attendance. It always shows up after you.
**

Every choice is a brushstroke. No single stroke creates a masterpiece, but eventually the portrait emerges.

Most people are too loyal to their distractions to ever meet their destiny.

The courage isn't in taking on more, it's in cutting off everything that doesn't feed your goal.

Focus requires subtraction.

Historian Edward Gibbon on the duality of originality:

"Conversation enriches the understanding, but solitude is the school of genius."

The lesson isn't avoiding failure. It's refusing to let failure define the outcome.
**

Writing is the process by which you realize that you do not understand what you are talking about.

The entire self-help industry in one sentence: Do what makes mornings exciting and nights peaceful.

Will this make me excited to wake up? Will this let me sleep in peace?

Everything that fails both tests is noise.

Warren Buffett on what most people don't understand:

"You don't have to do exceptional things to get exceptional results."

The gift with the highest return: believing in someone before they believe in themselves.

Legendary Coach Bill Belichick on competing:

"Helping the team win doesn't look warm and fuzzy. It looks like work—usually hard work—if you want to outcompete your opponent."

Tolstoy on shortening the distance between where you are and where you want to go:

"A man on a thousand-mile walk has to forget his ultimate goal and say to himself every morning, 'Today I'm going to cover twenty-five miles and then rest up and sleep.'"

Singer Jewel shares her formula for happiness:

"Do things that lend themselves to the happiness you desire. Exercise. Eat well. Do something that makes you feel joy, even when you don't feel like it. Surround yourself with people you admire and who add substance to your life."

Critics arrive before customers.
**

Overthinking is underdoing with better vocabulary.

Impatience is an expensive emotion.

Every app wants your decision in seconds. Every employer wants results this quarter. Every investment platform profits when you trade. Meanwhile, the boring investor who indexed and touched nothing decades ago owns your neighborhood. Who's winning?

The patient inherit everything the impatient leave behind.

John Steinbeck on ignoring the finish line and starting:

"Abandon the idea that you are ever going to finish. Lose track of the 400 pages and write just one page for each day, it helps. Then when it gets finished, you are always surprised."

This Larry Winget quote reminds me of something I say often, "don't tell me your priorities, show me your calendar."

"It's not that we don't have time. It's that we don't have time for the things that are really important. There's always enough time to do what's really important, but we get caught up doing things that aren't important."



FILM AND MEDIA: “When Everyone Swims”

“When Everyone Swims” is a compilation of inspirational and insightful stories about how people from every walk of life can have a healthy and fulfilling relationship with the water through water literacy.

The documentary features compelling voices from Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, White, and Asian interviewees of all ages along with Olympic swimmers Cullen Jones, Lilly King, Maritza McClendon, Cody Miller and Summer Sanders. Howard University Head Swim Coach Nic Askew, New York Times editorial board member Mara Gay, historian Jeff Wiltse and Indiana University School of Public Health associate Professor, Dr. Bill Ramos also shared their experience and insights in the film.

At its heart, When Everyone Swims is a call to action. It follows those who are fighting to make swimming accessible to all—parents determined to protect their children, instructors breaking down fears, and communities rallying to ensure no one is left behind. It is a story of resilience, determination, and the belief that every person, regardless of background or circumstance, should have the opportunity to feel safe and confident in the water. This is especially important because approximately 11 people die due to drowning every day. Drowning is also the number one cause of injury death following motor vehicle crashes – and the primary cause of death among children ages 1-4.

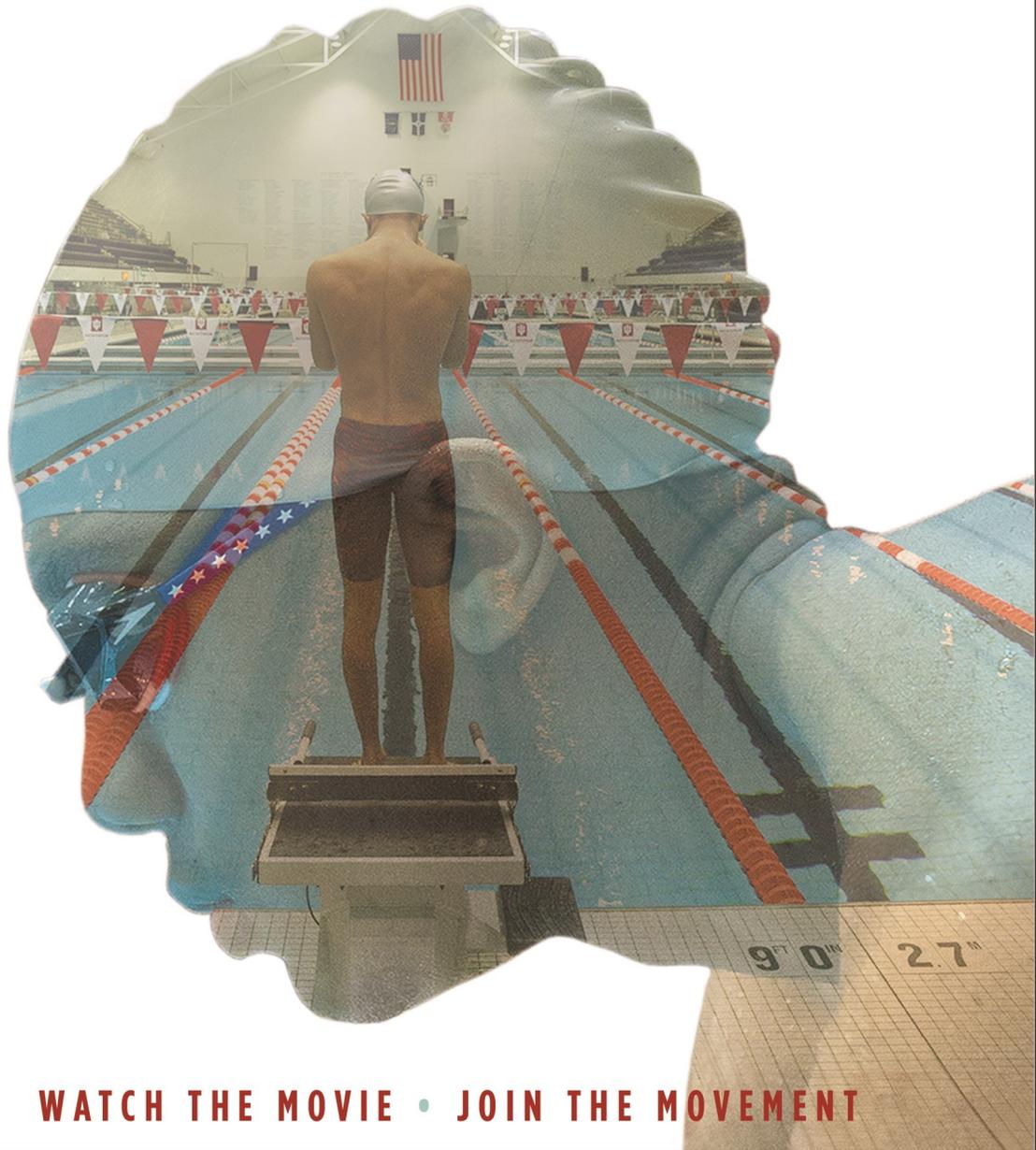
Here are the 10 Essential Water Safety Tips.

1. **Make Learning to Swim and Water Safety a Family Affair** Enroll yourself and your children in age-appropriate swim lessons to build confidence and essential survival skills. Reinforce water safety rules and encourage regular practice in safe, supervised environments.
2. **Always Supervise Children Near Water** Never leave children unattended near pools, lakes, bathtubs, or any body of water, even for a moment. Designate a responsible adult to supervise closely and constantly when children are in or near water.
3. **Use Life Jackets, Not Floaties** Ensure all non-swimmers and young children wear properly fitted, U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets, especially near open water. Floaties, noodles, and inflatable toys are not safety devices.
4. **Swim in Designated Areas Supervised by Lifeguards** Choose swimming spots that are monitored by trained lifeguards and marked safe for public use. Lifeguards are equipped to respond quickly in emergencies.
5. **Know the Rules of the Pool** Establish clear safety rules such as “no running,” “no diving in shallow areas,” and “swim with a buddy.” Install secure barriers around home pools or hot tubs to restrict unsupervised access.
6. **Know First Aid, CPR, and Emergency Response** Get trained in CPR and basic first aid—it can save a life. Courses are available online and in-person through the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, and local organizations.
7. **Avoid Alcohol and Drugs Around Water** Alcohol and drugs impair coordination and judgment. Avoid them before and during swimming, boating, or supervising children around water.
8. **Understand and Respect Water Hazards** Be aware of rip currents, sudden drop-offs, and underwater obstacles. If caught in a rip current, remain calm, swim parallel to the shore, and then angle back toward land.
9. **Secure Pools and Hot Tubs at Home** Use four-sided fencing with self-latching gates. Install pool alarms and use covers when pools or hot tubs are not in use. Remove ladders from above-ground pools when unsupervised.
10. **Teach Water Safety Through Education and Conversation** Start early. Talk to children about water rules using age-appropriate stories, games, and visuals. Reinforce habits like asking permission before approaching water and always swimming with a buddy in fun, engaging ways.

“When Everyone Swims” is produced and directed by Jerald B. Harkness of Studio Auteur. Executive Producers are Jon Goynshor of Lincolnwoodland Productions, Jerald B. Harkness, Joy Ann Reid, Jason Reid and Adrienne Lopez. Luke Renner of Bird Shine Films serves as Editor and Story Producer. The film’s fiscal partner is Diversity in Aquatics.

You can learn more about the film and to host your own screening at WhenEveryoneSwims.org.

WHENEVERONESWIMS



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CONSULTANTS DR. MIRIAM LYNCH DR. ANGELA BEALE-TAWFEEQ DR. TIFFANY QUASH
VISUAL DESIGN BARBARA RUDE-HARKNESS COMPOSER DEREK REEVES
PRODUCTION CONSULTANT ERIC JOHNSON ASSOCIATE PRODUCER KATELYN CALHOUN
PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY JERALD B. HARKNESS

www.wheneveryoneswims.org

What Swimming Teaches That the Classroom Doesn't

By Kevin Pierce, NISCA Education Chair

Every weekday morning, I stand in front of a classroom filled with students learning about history, culture, and how the world works. Every afternoon, I'm on the pool deck, whistle in hand, guiding a group of teenagers through challenging practices designed to build speed, strength, and strategy. I've coached high school swimming long enough to know this for sure: some of the most important lessons our student-athletes will carry with them through life won't come from a textbook or lecture—they'll come from the water.

As a teacher, I believe in the power of education. But as a swim coach, I've come to believe just as strongly in the education of sport—especially a sport as uniquely demanding and transformative as swimming. There's a hidden curriculum in every swim season, and it teaches things the classroom often can't: resilience, discipline, teamwork, self-awareness, and leadership.

Let's start with accountability. Swimming doesn't allow for hiding. There's no pass-fail group project or seat in the back of the room to quietly disappear into. When your name is next to a lane assignment, you're the one diving in. Your time is your time. Your effort is your responsibility. And your progress, or lack thereof, is often publicly visible. The pool teaches young people what it means to own their performance. When they succeed, it's theirs. When they fall short, that's theirs too. In an age where finger-pointing and excuse-making are common, swimming offers a refreshing and powerful message: your results reflect your habits.

Then there's consistency and discipline. The grind of a swim season is unlike anything else in high school sports. Early mornings. Two-a-days. Weekends sacrificed for invitationals and meets. Holidays spent at training camps instead of with friends. While other students might be sleeping in, swimmers are pushing through main sets, chasing intervals, logging yardage, and constantly striving for marginal gains. Over time, this lifestyle builds a mindset that's hard to teach in a traditional classroom—one that embraces repetition, delayed gratification, and the value of process over outcome.

In the classroom, success is often about getting the right answer. But in swimming, success is built in the moments no one sees—the extra turns done at the end of practice, the stretching done at home, the decision to fuel properly or go to bed early. Swimmers learn that being great isn't about talent alone. It's about choices. Daily, intentional choices.

Swimming also teaches young people how to handle failure with grace and grit. A missed final, a DQ, a race that ends with added time instead of a best time—these aren't abstract setbacks. They sting. And they often happen in front of teammates, parents, coaches, and even college scouts. But the water doesn't judge. It

offers every swimmer the chance to come back the next day and try again. That kind of environment builds resilience. Swimmers learn not just how to lose, but how to grow from loss. They learn that their identity isn't tied to one swim or one meet, but to how they respond.

While swimming is often labeled an individual sport, the team element in summer and high school programs is transformative. Relays become bonding experiences. Pasta parties turn into therapy sessions. Group cheers, locker room chants, and travel meets all become part of a shared journey. The truth is, swimmers push themselves harder when they know their teammates are counting on them. They show up not just for their own improvement, but because they've made a commitment to something bigger than themselves. And when a team buys into that idea—that we is stronger than me—magic happens. Times drop, culture grows, and kids discover the beauty of belonging.

There's also an incredible opportunity in swimming to develop leaders—not just in name, but in action. On our team, leadership isn't reserved for the fastest swimmers or the ones with the biggest medals. It's for the ones who live the standards every day. The ones who check in on a struggling teammate. The ones who model positivity during a grueling dryland session. The ones who lead not with ego, but with empathy.

I've seen swimmers who were quiet and reserved at the beginning of the season emerge as the heartbeat of our team by the end—not because they became state champions, but because they learned to lift others up. They learned that real leadership is about service, not spotlight. And they carried that lesson into student government, peer mentoring, and eventually, into college and careers where they continued to lead with authenticity and integrity.

Swimming also builds something else that's hard to quantify but easy to see: mental toughness. There's a special kind of fortitude required to train all year for a race that lasts less than a minute. Swimmers know what it feels like to fail publicly. To plateau. To be injured. To have a breakout meet followed by a disappointing one. They've learned how to talk themselves through doubt. How to control their breath when their heart is pounding. How to stay calm when everything's on the line. That ability to self-regulate under pressure—call it poise, call it toughness—is a superpower in every other area of life.

Let's also not overlook the emotional growth that comes from swimming. Swimmers cry. They laugh. They bond. They struggle. They support each other through wins, losses, breakups, rejections, and everything else high school throws at them. The deck becomes a safe space—a training ground not just for athletes, but for humans in progress. As coaches, we're not just building

swimmers. We're helping shape people.

So yes, the classroom is important. It prepares students for tests, for essays, for college entrance requirements. But the pool? The pool prepares them for life.

In swimming, students learn how to navigate adversity, how to set goals, how to take ownership of their choices, how to lift others up, and how to keep showing up even when it's hard. These are the lessons that turn students into leaders, teammates into lifelong friends, and swimmers into the kind of people who make waves—long after they hang up their goggles.



Kevin Pierce is a coach, educator, speaker and author dedicated to developing the next generation of leaders. Through his work with high school and youth athletes, he helps young people unlock their leadership potential, fostering resilience, integrity, and a mindset for success.

As the founder of Green Mystique Leadership Consulting and creator of The Leadership Launchpad, I

Kevin provides leadership development workshops, team-building programs, and consulting services for athletes, coaches, and sports organizations. His passion for leadership extends beyond the playing field. He believes the lessons learned in sports translate into life, shaping individuals into strong, confident leaders.



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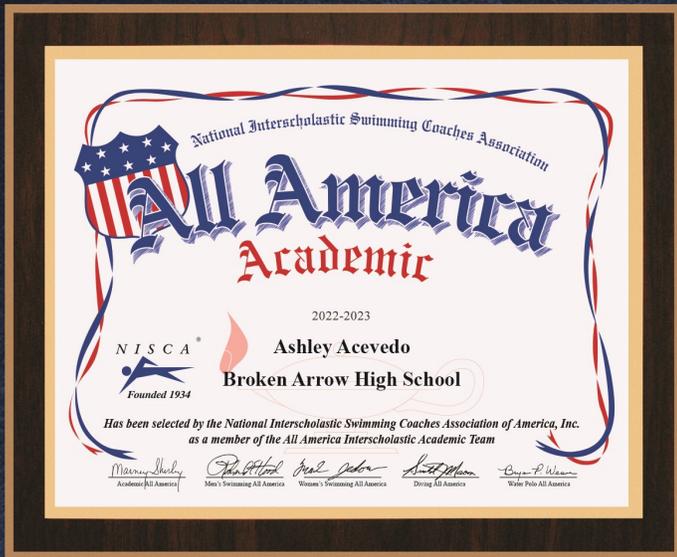
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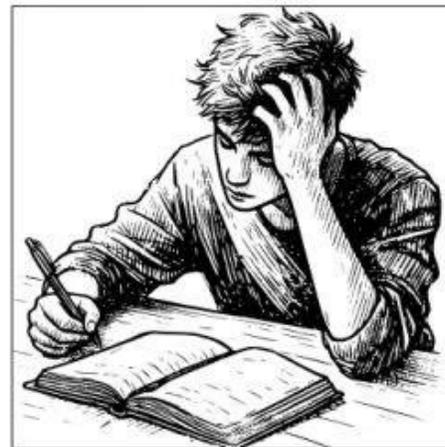


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