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COMMENTARY - The WEDGE is IN!

A History of the Backstroke Start and Backstroke Wedge

By Jess Geriane, Courtesy Swimming World Magazine

The backstroke start is arguably the most unique start in the sport of swimming. But how did it come to be what we know today?

A Brief History of Backstroke

As the second stroke to be contested at the Olympics, backstroke is often said to be the inverse of freestyle. Backstroke made its debut at the 1900 Olympic Games, where only the 200-meter race was offered to male swimmers. In the following Olympics, the 200 backstroke was removed as an event, but it would eventually be reinstated in 1964. The 100 backstroke was introduced as an event at the 1908 Olympics. The 1968 Games was the first Olympics in which both the 100 and 200 backstroke events were held.

1924 was the first year in which women were able to compete in the 100 backstroke at the Olympics. It was not until 1968 that women were able to also compete in the 200 backstroke.

After several rule changes over decades, including the introduction of the backstroke flip turn (where swimmers could flip onto their stomach prior to the somersault) and the 15-meter underwater rule, backstroke has evolved into the stroke that we are familiar with today.

The Backstroke Start

The backstroke start is the only start in which the swimmer begins the race in the water. However, in the early stages of backstroke, it was not uncommon for swimmers to stand on the gutter, grip the top of the block, and dive backwards. Additionally, in the early 20th century, swimmers could also hold on to the lip of the pool and push off the pool edge to gain momentum. In the mid 20th century, backstroke bars were finally implemented in competition. Notably, during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the starting blocks had three hand grips for backstroke starts, one vertical and two horizontal at
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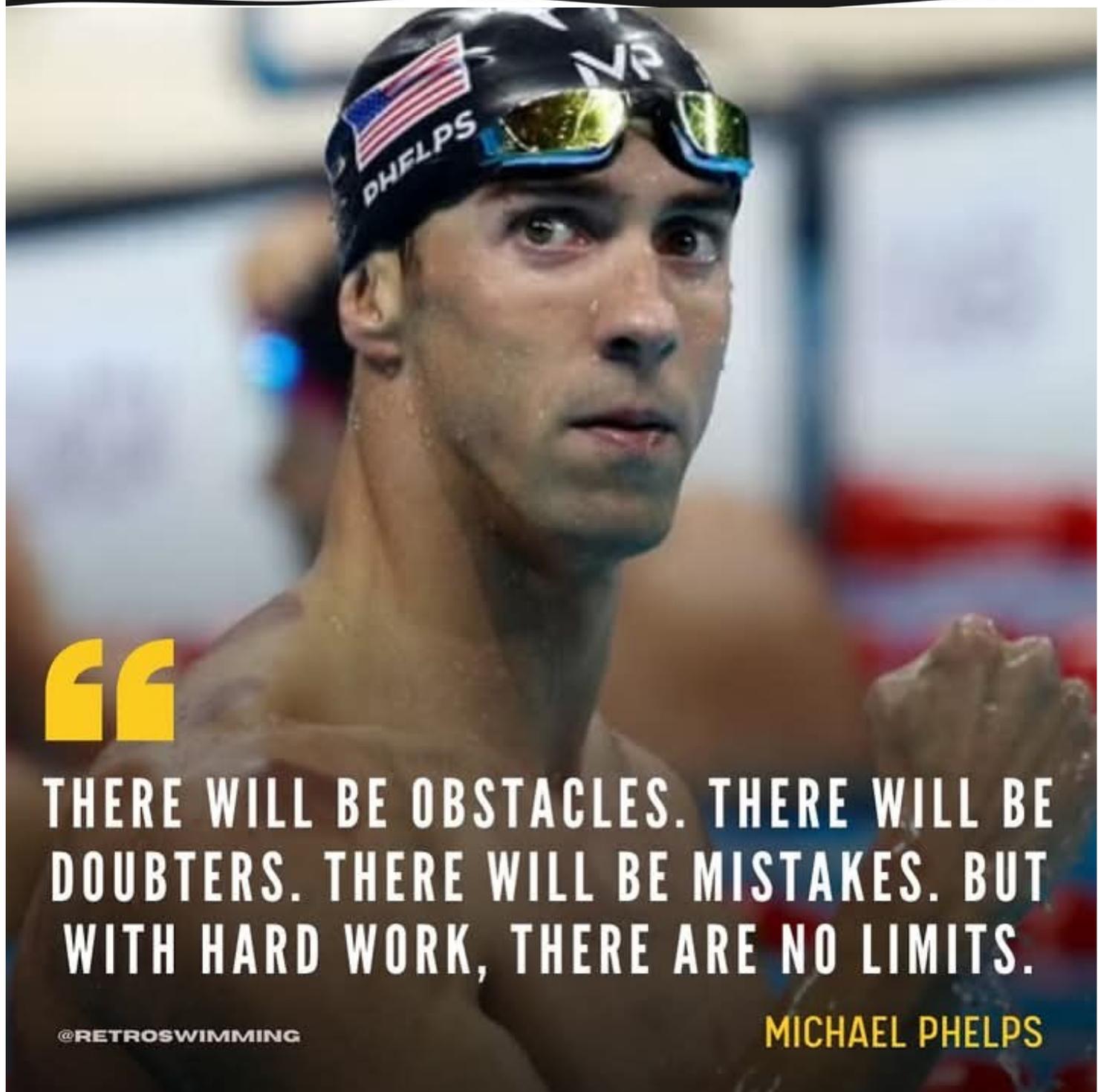
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MICHAEL PHELPS



FROM THE EDITOR, *continued from front cover*

different heights.

In the past several decades, World Aquatics (previously known as FINA) has implemented rules governing the start, such as banning standing on or bending the toes over the gutter.

The Backstroke Wedge

The slipping of the feet has been a common problem for backstroke starts since World Aquatics imposed the rule that swimmers could not curl their toes over the edge of the pool or touchpad. A well-known example of this problem is Elizabeth Beisel's 200 backstroke at the 2014 U.S. National Championships. Beisel came into finals as the top seed in this event. Unfortunately, her feet slid down on the start, costing her the entire race. She finished sixth overall, putting her spot on the Pan Pacific Championships team in doubt (although she would later qualify in the 400 IM).

A solution was finally proposed for this problem this past decade. In 2013, World Aquatics approved the concept of the backstroke "wedge." World Aquatics' rules specify the dimensions and design of the backstroke wedges, ensuring that they provide a consistent and safe starting position for all swimmers. The purpose of these wedges is to provide all swimmers with an equal and stable platform for their feet.

World Aquatics partnered with Omega and Myrtha Pools to develop a system where the wedge would hang off the block into the water. The swimmer could adjust the wedge height to their liking. In the summer of 2013, this wedge system was tested at national championships across the world, including the United States.

Eventually, other companies such as Colorado Time Systems introduced the pull-down wedge system. This wedge system was made specifically for pools with walls that end at water level. The user manually pulls down the wedge to their desired height and sets their feet on it, keep-

ing it in place until the user pushes off and dives. At this point, the wedge retracts back to its normal position out of the water.

The backstroke wedge was first used at an Olympic Games in 2016. Since then, the use of backstroke wedges has become widespread in competitive swimming.

Wedge Controversy

But in the years since, the use of the wedge has resulted in some issues at various points, with two particularly memorable situations in 2019. When Omega blocks are in use, officials must pull the wedges out of the water after the swimmer begins the race. At the 2019 NCAA Men's Championships, one official forgot to do so in a 100-yard back preliminary heat for Cal's Daniel Carr, who slipped on the turn as his feet hit the wedge. Carr initially missed the top-16, but later on, he was granted a re-swim. In the resulting solo race, Carr blasted his best time to qualify for the A-final, and the moment was a turning point in an eventual Cal national championship.

Months later at the World Championships, the semifinals of the women's and men's 100-meter back almost went off without the wedges after numerous swimmers slipped in prelims. Italy's Simone Sabbioni slipped twice, in his normal prelims swim and again in his first re-swim attempt. In the end, swimmer and coach pushback convinced World Aquatics to allow the wedges in the semifinals but swimmers were not allowed to adjust the height. And to ensure fairness after the re-swims, 18 men swam in the semifinals instead of the usual 16.

The use of backstroke wedges has not been without controversy or drama, but as a whole, their implementation has been successful. Swimmers are at less risk of slipping off a backstroke start, evening the playing field and ensuring the best swimmers will come out on top.

Will your state association allow it??? Let us know!



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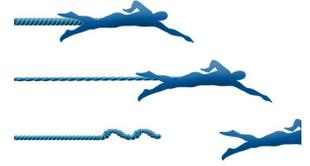


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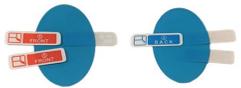


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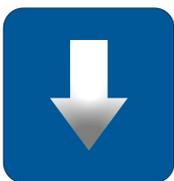
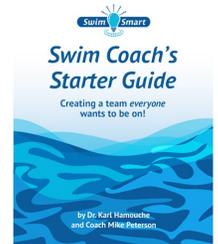


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Coaches,

It's hard to believe how quickly the year has gone by for most of us. I am always amazed how fast the swimmers are getting each year. Many states had records fall this year, and several national records were broken as well. I hope you have been able to take a moment to reflect on this past season and what worked well and what you and your team can improve upon next year.

At the annual conference in San Antonio June 23-26, my term as President will end, and we will have a new President, Kyle Bedalov. We will also elect our next President-Elect for the 2027-29 presidential term. We hope you will be able to join us to assist in charting the next course for our association's future.

As we work to continue providing a quality organization dedicated to supporting our swimming, diving, and water polo coaches and recognizing our amazing student-athletes for their achievements in the pool and the classroom, please consider joining the leadership group of the organization. Many of our current letterhead positions serve in multiple capacities in NISCA and have done so for many years. They serve because they believe it is important to give back to a sport that has been so meaningful to them. If you would like to learn more about any vacant position or have ideas on how we can better serve our members, please reach out to me or Kyle Bedalov.

I want you to think about the ways our organization can continue to be responsive to our coaches. We have always prided ourselves on programs for educating and honoring coaches, and recognizing our student-athletes for their achievements in the pool and the classroom. We continue to foster and strengthen our relationships with aquatic governing bodies and coaching organizations to further promote, educate, and honor our swimming, diving, water polo, and para athletes.

I have explored where I can continue to serve the swimming and diving community when my term expires in June. Although I am no longer a high school coach, I have become an NFHS and Texas high school official to help fill a scarcity we are seeing in that area. Many of you know there is currently a national shortage of qualified officials. If you know of a coach who has hung up their whistle, please ask if they would consider joining the ranks of those hard-working officials who oversee and administer our meets.

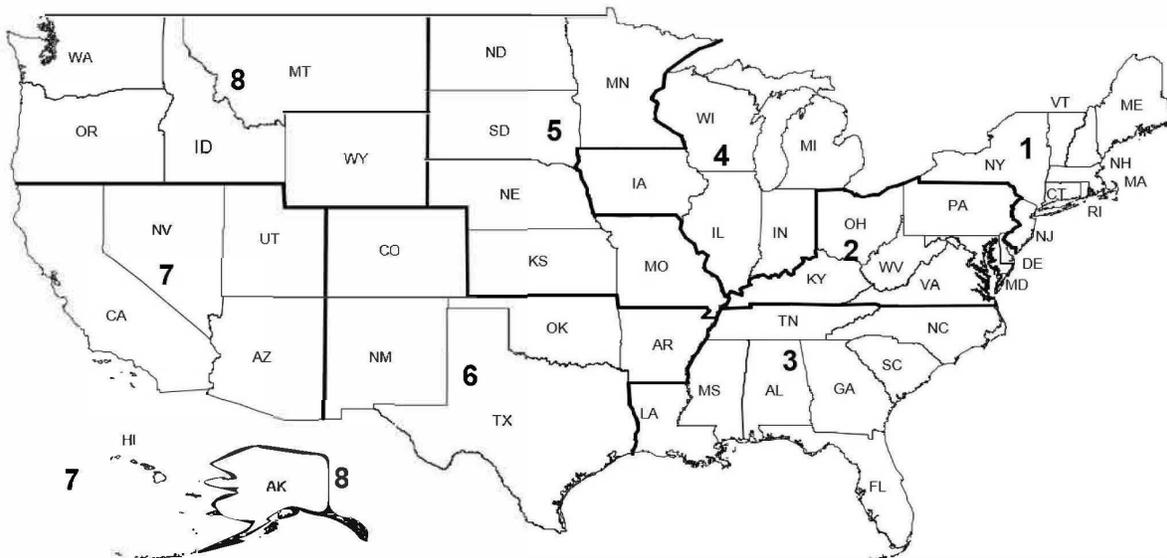
Lastly, please review your award submissions and ensure that you have not missed anyone. There is nothing more difficult than having to explain to parents you missed a deadline for an award submission that your student-athlete qualified for. I hope each of you has had a successful and fulfilling school year and that we will see many of you in San Antonio at the June Conference.

Sincerely,

Mark Jedow

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PASSAGES: Ron Raper



Longtime NISCA member Ron Raper passed away May 3. Throughout his life, Ron endeavored to motivate young people to the pinnacle of their abilities whether in academics or sports.

After graduation from Oklahoma State University with a degree in Secondary Education, he went to work for the U.S. State Department setting up schools for the U.S. Embassies in Cambodia and Thailand. Having won the state butterfly title at Capitol Hill High School, Ron was put in charge of the swimming teams for his assigned embassies. This was just the beginning of a lifetime of dedication to education, mentorship, and excellence.

Eventually returning home, he taught and coached across Texas in football, basketball, track, baseball, and swimming, first in Dallas ISD and then Odessa Permian. Ron taught biology, chemistry, and swimming at Austin High School (Houston) and Alief Elsik HS where he stayed until retirement. After a year of retirement, he got the itch again, and went back to work as head swim coach at the St. John's School (private) in Houston where he remained until this past year.

Ron was known for his pioneering use of technology in running swim meets, and was more than willing to assist anyone who needed help with the use of technology in their classrooms or swim meets. Ron served as the treasurer of TISCA (TX) for many years. He organized the membership with the first TISCA website and created the All State list for Swimming and Diving. Because of his success establishing the TISCA website, he was asked to set up a modern website for NISCA, and was its webmaster for a number of years.

In 2003 he received the TISCA Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2013 he received the NISCA Outstanding Service Award, and just this past April he was presented the very first **Dr. Steve Montgomery Outstanding Service Award** by TISCA. His St. John's teams won the Southwest Preparatory Conference girls state title in 2018 (T), 2019, 2020, and 2023, and the boys title in 2018 and 2022.

Ron is survived by his wife, Jan; his son, Charles; his older brother, Russell; his twin brother, Donald; and numerous nieces and nephews.

If called upon to serve in some capacity, Ron was always ready to do so. He loved working with others and always loved a good joke.



Ron with Dr. Steve Montgomery
2013 NISCA Outstanding Service Award



Inaugural Dr. Steve Montgomery
TISCA Outstanding Service Award - 2025

Physiological Requirements To Warm Up

By Sergei Beliaev, Ph.D., and Natalia Verchoshansky, Ph.D.

Super Sport Systems

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

Every book devoted to physical training and general exercise in almost every sport has a mentioning of the necessity of inclusion of warm up prior to execution of significant physical effort. Specific suggestions may vary from sport to sport as well as suggested composition of specific types of training sets optimum for that component.

The practical daily workout protocols provided to subscribers of the Super Sport Systems services are no different. We are including warm up component into every daily workout and sometimes suggest different warm up scenarios to make it more entertaining and meaningful trying to combine the physiological requirements to warm up with some technical tasks. However, in spite of provided suggestions we receive constant requests about the “best” warm up protocols and their duration in application to different situations.

Dr. Natalia Verchoshansky, the daughter of a renowned Russian specialist in sports training methodology science and a serious researcher herself, wrote an article devoted to physiological requirements to warm up. Considering the fact that the 3S focus is primarily on endurance sports, I took some freedom to rephrase this article in application to the issues imposed by peak performance in endurance sports. Having this said, it should be absolutely clear that the underpinning physiological and neuro muscular principles of warm up are remaining practically the same regardless of sport you are applying it to.

General goals of warm up:

It is a well known fact that the process of preparation of different physiological systems and neuro-muscular reactions to strenuous physical exercise requires some time. Therefore, in sport the main goal of the warm up is usually associated with the need to increase athletes' work ability to its maximum ability from the start of competition or training.

In theory this task can be achieved through acceleration of global and local energy-supply mechanisms and neuro-muscular coordination processes. In real life in order to achieve the desired effect we need to define the following components of the warm up:

1. Optimum duration of warm up period
2. Optimum intensity of training exercises
3. Optimum structure or composition of exercises used for warm up.

In general, the expected resulting effect of warm can be described by increased activity of the following functions and reactions:

–Increased sensitivity of neuro centers responsible for support of:

- ◆ breathing mechanism
- ◆ oxygen transport systems
- ◆ thermo regulation
- ◆ cardio-respiratory regulation
- ◆ motion control centers

Increased hormone production in response to stress caused by physical activity should also mobilize glycogen storage access and stimulate fast response time of heart, lungs and blood properties. All these effects combined as well as increased temperature of blood should lead to better oxygen supply of tissues and working muscles.

Once this stage is achieved, there is also a need to “test” specifically for the given exercise since the new condition of the system requires re-configuration of neuro-muscular responses. That is one of the reasons why general or “warming up” component should precede any technical work. This realization led to the suggestion that the warm up should consist of two components: general and specialized and solve three consecutive tasks:

- ◆ warm up the body
- ◆ prepare neuro-muscular apparatus
- ◆ test specific locomotion at their peak level

Specific goals of warm up

Once we understand the general warm up goals, we may proceed to search for answers related to specifics of warm up process. If you remember, in real life we need to find practical answers to three main questions:

1. How long?
2. At what level of effort / speed?
3. In what sequence of specific sets / exercises?

To answer these questions we may need to look at studies related to time and effect of different warmup protocols. Having this said, please note that different sports may require different approaches. We also know that different athletes' type respond differently to warm up as they may have different needs.

However, in the majority of endurance sports where the duration of effort is longer than 2-4 minutes, the rules of warm will be quite close from sport to sport. In fact, our study of warm up effects on rowers and swimmers suggest that the expected reaction to “standard” warm up is actually identical.

Numerous studies related to immediate reaction of the body to physical exercise suggest that athletes are reaching maximum power output and optimum neuro-muscular coordination at temperatures of the body between close to 39 and 39.5 C (102.2-103.1 F). It is important to note that reaching this level of body temperature is only important when we need to perform in short, high intensity exercises (I believe that all swimming and rowing events fully qualify for this rule). The studies of effect of higher body temperature on the central nervous system suggest that the speed of electrical impulses is also higher at higher temperatures.

Important condition to that effect – is that the increase of temperature should be achieved through internal activity. The passive methods (such as massage or ointments) are not producing the same results.

The time necessary for achievement of working body temperatures varies in data provided by different researchers and is found between 10 and 30 minutes. The important point here – is the shortest period of time necessary to achieve the desired parameter. Based on that information, warm up shorter than 10 minutes can hardly be effective.

The last component of our discussion – is selection of warm up training sets. By this time we know that one of our goals is to increase body temperature by executing some general work. We identified the minimum time necessary to achieve desired effect. We then have to include specific component which will coordinate the functional or physiological systems with neuro-muscular systems.

So if we put all these requirements together, we can arrive at a “perfect” pre-race warm up (pre –training protocol may be slightly different depending on daily sets selection).

We usually suggest the following “3S Standard” warm up:

1. Start with low intensity swim (Zone Ib) for at least 6-7 minutes (500-600 yards in swimming or ~ 2500 meters in rowing). How you arrive at that distance – really does not matter as long you do not interrupt the work with long rest periods.
2. Increase intensity to Zone Ia level and stay there another 4-5 minutes (300-400 yards in swimming, ~ 1500 meters in rowing, Zone Ia)
3. Short recovery if necessary, then execute 2-3 “slow” intervals of 100 yards at pace equal to Zone II effort (2 x 500 meters in rowing). By this time your heart rate should go up and stabilize.
4. Recover, then execute 3-4 25 yards efforts at race pace (or slightly slower (depending on your main distance event). For rowers the duration of effort will be equivalent to 250 meters.
5. Slow down now. You may continue with another 200-300 yards in Ia zone – depending how close is your start time. You are now READY!

As you can see, your total warm up distance is around 1500 and 2000 yards (or 5000-6000 meters in rowing). It is suggested that sprinters may respond better with a bit longer warm up, while distance swimmers will have time to “catch up” during the race...

We wish you fast starts and record finish times this season!



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Final Thoughts: A New Era in Sports Training

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COACHES EDUCATION:

Better Warmups

Andrew Sheaff - www.coachandrewsheaff.com

Swimmers and coaches put a lot of time, energy, and work into achieving better performances through training. Literally years of effort go into any one racing effort. It would stand to reason that we'd apply the same attention to detail when it comes to actually performing at our best at the actual competition.

However, a lot of swimmers and coaches make some simple mistakes during competitions that ultimately leave swimmers falling short of their potential. After all the long-term preparation, we get the short-term preparation wrong. Most times, it arises from not having a plan to succeed.

While there are many aspects of race-day preparation that are important, I'd like to focus on what particular aspect that coaches and swimmers alike have a lot of control over- the warm up. While executing a great warm up is not going to turn Clark Kent into Superman, it is going to make enough of a difference that it could leave swimmers in or out of a final, on or off the podium.

The challenge arises from managing different warm up situations that competitions present. There may be issues with the timing and duration of pool access, crowded warm-up spaces, or mandatory ready room timelines.

There is one KEY component of warm-up that is most critical, yet somehow overlooked in the process of comparing to race.

The clue is in the name: **WARM-up!**

The key component of an effective warm-up is temperature. More than any other effect we're looking to achieve, the body temperature needs to increase. This should be the primary consideration when designing warm-up strategies prior to competition. Swimmers need to get warm and STAY warm.

If swimmers are performing any type of movement, this effect will likely be achieved. Almost any strategy is going to help swimmers get warm. However, if swimmers are particularly thin, or the environment is particularly cold, there may need to be an extra effort to get warm during warm-up. If the environment is cold enough, some swimmers might actually get COLDER during warm-up. In this situation, the swimming you do may need to be more intense than otherwise intended.

However, the main mistake most swimmers and coaches make is in their attempt to STAY warm after concluding their warm-up, or lack thereof. If there is an opportunity to improve performance, it's doing a better job of staying warm during the transition period between the conclusion of warm up and when the gun goes off.

There are other considerations such as nutrition, technique, confidence, and getting all of the physiology rolling in the right di-

rection. These are all individual considerations based upon preferences of both swimmers and coaches. In this article, we're going to focus on the concept of getting and staying warm, as it is a general concept applicable to all. It's also a goal, as opposed to a specific strategy, and each coach and swimmer can determine which strategies will be most effective based upon the specific circumstances that they encounter

There are three main challenges that swimmers and coaches face that require more attention-

1. Early morning preliminary sessions
2. Limited pool space or limited pool time
3. Extended transition periods

All three situations require specific strategies to ensure that swimmers reach the blocks optimally prepared to go fast. The main goal is to GET warm and to STAY warm, regardless of the situation.

Preliminary Sessions

Across many physical disciplines, there is a time of day effect where better performances tend to be achieved later in the day. This effect is seen in many different types of performance, whether tests of endurance or strength. It has also been demonstrated in the pool.

It also appears that some swimmers are more susceptible to this phenomenon than others. It's pretty easy to recognize these swimmers as they tend to be poor trainers during morning workouts, and often swim faster at night during finals versus preliminary sessions. This isn't just 'laziness' or a lack of focus. Different individuals are wired differently.

Fortunately, some of these effects can be mitigated. In the first case, habitually training in the morning will reduce the time of day effect. Most swimmers are already performing some sort of training in the morning with some frequency. This is an important first step. The time of day effect can also be reduced with aggressive attempts to raise body temperature during warm up.

While acknowledging that this can be somewhat individual, and that some swimmers are wired to perform better earlier, there is a temperature issue in all swimmers. All swimmers will benefit from more aggressively raised body temperature prior to and during preliminary sessions. Here are some ways to do that.

Wake-Up Early Enough

Waking up 2 hours before the expected race start time is not a strategy for success. While optimizing sleep is important, being

HALF-ASLEEP for prelims is not a strategy for success. Getting up early enough is important to starting the process of getting warm and getting ready to go. It takes time and that time must be provided.

Wake-Up Swims

There is a reason coaches use wake-up swims; they get swimmers moving and awake well before the start of preliminary sessions. While it seems to be practiced with less frequency, you'll still see wake up swims performed with regularity at championship meets. For coaches that want a lot of control, this certainly ensures that swimmers will be up and moving early.

There is definitely a trade-off with sleep, especially when preceded by late night finals sessions. There is also the time and energy required to drive to the pool to consider. Wake-up swims accomplish their objective. They get swimmers up and moving. The consideration is whether it is worth the potential sleep loss, as well as time required to get to the pool. Depending on how early the sessions start, as well as the proximity of the pool to hotel accommodations, wake up swims can be a good strategy.

Hotel Pool Wake-Up Swim

For some, wake-up swims at the competition site aren't practical, or even ideal. Fortunately, there are other options. Most hotels have a pool and that pool is just about as good as the competition pool. It allows swimmers to get wet, getting moving, and get warm. When used in conjunction with a couple minutes in the hot tub, it can definitely elevate early morning temperature while providing a feel for the water. While the space is confined, swimmers can kick against the wall, perform sculling drills, or even swim against a stationary cord.

While it's not going to be as effective as swimming in the competition pool, the benefits of extra sleep and less travel may be worth it.

Hot Shower

If there is no hotel pool, or swimmers are traveling from home, a passive alternative to the wake-up swim is the hot shower. This will definitely elevate body temperature, particularly if swimmers are aggressive in using hot water. The advantage is that it is simple and fast, and accessible to all.

However, swimmers must be careful not to spend too much time under the hot water, as it can be fatiguing after a certain point. To combat this issue, swimmers can alternate hot and cold water, which will definitely wake them up!

Hotel Dryland

While the hot shower accomplishes the goal of raising body temperature, it does so in a passive manner. For some individuals, this may be sufficient. For others, they may benefit from getting

moving. This can be as simple as some jumping jacks, arm and leg swings, squats, and abs. Getting the heart rate up slightly and breaking a sweat can help ensure swimmers are getting ready to go early enough. Beyond elevating temperature, the advantage of movement is that it can help to alleviate any residual tightness.

Dryland Shower Combo

Swimmers can also combine dryland and shower for an all-encompassing warm-up. This strategy addresses both active and passive means of getting warm, increasing temperature and getting warm. The benefit of the hot shower and hotel dryland warm up is that it takes 5-10 minutes, requires no travel time, and accessible to all.

Limited Pool Time and Space

I've been to meets where swimmers have 30 minutes to warm up. This challenge is usually compounded when you consider that there are 30+ swimmers in a 50m lane. The ability to conduct a patient, thorough warm-up is definitely compromised. Alternatives are needed.

The best strategy is to accomplish as much of the warm up out of the pool as possible, leaving only the most important aspects of warm-up for in the water. This includes any technical work that needs to be done in the pool, as well as any higher velocity swimming which must be done in the pool.

Any aspect of the warm-up that can be adequately conducted out of the pool, should be done so. Any attempts to get warm and get loose should be done on deck. Getting the heart rate up and getting loose can be accomplished as easily on land as in the water. The goal should be to be warm and loose BEFORE getting in the water to ensure that all water work is of high quality.

It's important that any work performed on land is work that swimmers are used to. If they never do any dryland, warming up on land is not a great strategy, especially prior to competition. It will cause unnecessary fatigue.

Hot Shower

As with early morning sessions, a great way to beginning the warming up process is by taking a hot shower. Doing so can passively raise body temperature, requiring less swimming to get warm. If pool time or space is limited, this can be a great way to kick start the process.

Dryland

While passively warming up can be a great strategy, especially if deck space is limited as well, actively warming up out of the pool is a great way to minimize general warm-up in the pool and to maximize the water time that is available. Any activity that elevates the heart rate and uses progressively larger ranges of motion will be sufficient for these purposes.

It's important to have several options available so that swimmers that the flexibility to adapt to the specific deck situation they are faced with. As with wake-up dryland, all of the movements used should be familiar to prevent any unnecessary soreness of fatigue.

Prepare Multiple Warm-Ups

As coaches, one of our primary responsibilities is finding solutions in less than ideal situations. While it's important to have your 'perfect' warm-up, it's also important to be ready with alternative warm-ups that are appropriate for each situation you might find yourself.

There will be warm up situations where swimmers can never perform more than 50m without stopping due to congestion. We better be ready with a warm up that prepares swimmers to swim fast, even if the warm up consists of nothing more than 50m repetitions. It shouldn't change the results.

Extended Transition Periods

Between changing to racing suits, meet marshaling and ready rooms, as well as a lack of warm-up pool, there can often be an extended period of time between when swimmers must conclude their warm-up and when they actually race. In this case, STAYING warm is the challenge.

I feel this is where there is the most opportunity for improvement in preparing for fast swimming during competition. For the most part, swimmers are adequately warmed up for competition in ideal situations. While they might not always be optimally warmed up, warm up is usually sufficient. However, most of that warm up is lost by the time swimmers step up on the block.

As mentioned earlier, warming up loses a lot of its value if swimmers don't stay warm. Different situations will require different strategies. Below are some of the strategies that have been demonstrated to be effective in research.

A quick note on research. IF IT WORKS IN RESEARCH, IT ALMOST ALWAYS WORKS IN COMPETITION. As coaches, we're usually looking for very small improvements in performance. 1/10th of a second is a big deal. It's actually really hard to find these differences in research settings. So, when these are found, you can know that they're relevant to coaches and swimmers. Many of these studies found difference of 0.5-1.0 seconds per 100 as compared to just sitting around. That matters.

Even periods as short as a 30-minuteS between the end of the warm up and the start of a race can lead to a loss of body temperature. Anything we do to prevent that loss is going to aid performance.

Beyond the research, most of these strategies pass the 'common sense' test. These strategies all preserve body temperature and they help swimmers stay loose. However, the

challenge is not necessarily one of knowledge or understanding, it's one of implementation. Swimmers actually have to USE these strategies. Pay attention at meets; most don't.

Hot Showers

Hot showers are a great way to maintain body temperature after warm-up, or to re-establish body temperature prior to racing. Say a swimmer has to get out of the pool 1 hour prior to racing. That's certainly beyond a 30-minute window where body temperature drops.

The swimmer can reduce the that time period by taking an extended hot shower immediately following warm up. They can also take a hot shower 20-30 minutes prior to putting on their competition suit, to start the process of re-establishing body temperature. It's simple, easy, and available in almost all situations. As it's a passive means of warming up, there's little physiological cost to doing so. This can be particularly beneficial during meets with no warm up pool and extended wait times.

Warm Clothes

Even if swimmers don't change any aspect of their warm-up strategy, they can enhance their performance by what they choose to wear. Simply wearing warm clothing has been shown to preserve body temperature and enhance performance relative to not doing so. What are some ideas for warm clothing? Consider the following-

- Pants
- Sweatshirt or jacket
- Gloves
- Warm hats
- Thick socks
- Shoes

Again, these are all common sense choices, yet you see many swimmers sitting around in their suit, wearing nothing else. Swimmers are much better off being too warm than to cold. While it may seem like excess, covering the hands, the head, and the feet will make a big difference in the preservation of heat, and thus performance. It can be helpful for swimmers to think of heat loss as performance leaving the body. They need to do whatever is necessary to keep the heat in!

Dryland Stimulation

Land-based work can serve two different purposes during the transition period between the end of the formal warm-up and racing. In the first case, the purpose is similar to the purpose when used in regular warm-up. If there has been an extended break, it's valuable to get the heart rate back up, get body temperature back up, and get loose. The same types of exercises can be used. Anything that gets the body moving is going to be beneficial.

What exercises are chosen is going to depend on the space available, as well as the exercises the swimmers are familiar with. You want to use exercises that aren't novel, to ensure that fatigue and soreness is minimized. You're preparing to race, not get tired.

When no warm-up pool is available, getting ready for the next race is going to need to happen on land. When there is a plan, it's more likely to be executed and executed effectively. As importantly, swimmers will believe in the plan, improving its impact.

The second area that dryland can be used is more relevant to higher level swimmers with tight, controlled transition periods. An applicable situation would be a championship competition with a ready room prior to finals sessions. In this case, the additional dryland is used as a stimulatory effect 10-15 minutes prior to competing.

As an example, an athlete could perform a 3 med ball slams or 3 maximal effort butterfly pulls, 5 explosive sit-up variations, and 3 explosive jumps, with about 10 seconds between exercises. This circuit would be performed twice. A very similar circuit has been evaluated and demonstrated to be effective in research. Of course, this is simply a starting point for ideas. Different swimmers may respond favorably to different exercises, different volumes, and different timing as to when the exercises are performed.

Regardless of what is chosen for implementation, the following rules need to be respected for optimal implementation:

1. Keep the intensity high.
2. Keep the volume low.
3. Perform the stimulation relatively close to the race
4. Choose familiar exercises.
5. Choose safe exercises.
6. Ensure the swimmer is performing exercises they believe will be beneficial.
7. Target the whole body.

No special equipment should be required. Simply find a strategy that should be repeatable regardless of the situation, and practice it so that it's familiar. It then becomes part of what swimmer's do to get ready to go fast.

Getting Warm

It's important to understand the impact of these effects. They're not going to turn average Johnny into an Olympian. However, it can make an impact on performance amongst competitors of similar ability. The impact tends to be around 0.5-1.0 seconds over 100m racing distances in simulated racing conditions. When considered in the context of championship performances, these effects are probably going to be a smaller.

However, even if it makes 0.2 seconds of a difference over 100m, that could be the difference between winning and not

medaling, or whether a swimmer even qualifies for the final. As these strategies are simple to implement and cost very little if any money, there is no reason not to take advantage beyond the cost of doing what's required to be successful.

Keep in mind that the main purpose of warm up is to get warm EARLY and SUSTAIN that warm up. Regardless of your situation, if you and your swimmers can find a way to make this happen, you'll be rewarded with better performances that more accurately reflect what each swimmer is really capable of.

Choosing a Strategy

I've outlined the various strategies, as well as the variables that might influence why someone would choose to implement any one strategy. At this point, it's about creating a plan to use them effectively.

This process is all about the fundamental skill in coaching- problem solving. You have a goal you need to achieve, and you need to solve the problem of accomplishing that goal in the present environment with the resources you have available.

Know the Goal

The goal is to get warm, get moving, and STAY warm. We know the objectives. If we can accomplish these objectives, regardless of the circumstances, we are well on our way to helping our swimmers optimally prepare for competition. Beyond any specific aspects of warm up, these are the overarching goals that must be achieved.

Know the Options

Understand all of your options, knowing which are best applied in what situations. By knowing and understanding the options available, you're in the best situation to make effective choices once you understand the environment you'll be competing in.

While body temperature retention strategies are relatively straight forward, there are a lot of options for various pool and land-based warm-ups offer a lot of different choices. Have several different warm-ups ready that are more conducive to different situations. If you're ready with options, it will be much easier to adjust to unexpected circumstances. As importantly, these warm-ups should be easily modifiable in the event that one part of an otherwise excellent warm-up can't be completed. A small adjustment can make a big difference.

Examine the Environment

How far is the hotel from the competition pool? Does the hotel have a pool? What will the warm up environment look like? How much time will you have? How much space will you have? What is the water temperature like? What is the temperature on deck? What is the temperature outside? How much space is there on deck?

These are all factors that can influence what strategies you choose to implement. A change in one factor may result in choosing a very different strategy. You may have plan A, plan B, and plan C. Being ready for any situation, and making sure the swimmers are ready for any situation, will help to ensure the warm up process goes smoothly. A good warm-up sets the stage for a great race.

Make the Decision

Once you understand the environment, it's time to decide and develop a plan. Once you've decided on the best course of action for the situation, it's time to communicate that plan and implement it. Some of the strategies may seem unnecessary to youth and even elite athletes, especially when they represent a departure from common practice. Communicating WHY is critical, as well as communicating confidence in the plan. If you believe in it, your swimmers will as well.

Go FASTER

Hopefully, you're convinced that some small changes to warm up can make a significant difference in performance. While these strategies won't take a swimmer to the next level, they can create real and relevant changes in performance. It could help a semi-finalist become a finalist, a finalist become a medalist, and a medalist become a champion. The differences in performance at the top are very small, and the impact of effective race preparation can be larger than these differences.

Important to remember is that each aspect of this is somewhat individual. It will take a different type and amount of work to get warm, get loose, and STAY warm. However, the principles remain the same for everyone. It only takes some careful observation and honest communication between coach and swimmer to find out what works best for each swimmer.

After that, it's about commitment and execution. It starts with having a plan, and helping swimmers understand the impact that plan can have on their performance.



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.

How about ANOTHER FREEBIE??? Free download about using stroke counts better:

<https://andrewsheaffcoaching.kit.com/strokecounts>



Sticking With It

By Tomer Rozenberg, Author of *“New Day, My Way, Your Life”*
Discovering life lessons in everyday moments

We love the idea of motivation—the lightning bolt of inspiration that strikes suddenly, filling us with unstoppable energy. **But motivation is unreliable.** It comes and goes, often vanishing when we need it most.

One day, you wake up ready to conquer the world, and the next, even brushing your teeth feels like a monumental task.

This is where consistency becomes the real game-changer. **Success doesn’t come from bursts of motivation—it comes from showing up, over and over, even when you don’t feel like it.** The key isn’t waiting for motivation to strike; it’s learning to move forward without it.

Why Consistency Matters More

Motivation is an emotion. **And like all emotions, it’s temporary.** Consistency, on the other hand, is a habit—one that builds momentum, reinforces discipline, and compounds results over time.

Consider this: Who will be stronger—a person who trains only when they feel motivated or someone who trains a little every day, regardless of mood? The answer is obvious.

Success isn’t built on high-energy days. It’s built on what you do when motivation is nowhere to be found.

The Compound Effect of Small Actions

We tend to overestimate what we can accomplish in a day but underestimate what we can achieve over months and years. **Consistency is what turns small actions into massive transformations.**

Writing one page a day may not seem like much, but in a year, that’s a full book. Ten minutes of exercise daily adds up to a healthier body over time. **It’s the accumulation of effort that makes the difference.**

How to Stay Consistent (Even When You Don’t Feel Like It)

1. **Lower the Bar** – Perfection kills consistency. **Instead of aiming for the perfect workout, the perfect article, or the perfect routine, just aim to show up.** If you don’t feel like running, walk. If you don’t feel like writing, jot down a few thoughts. Progress, no matter how small, is still progress.
2. **Create Systems, Not Goals** – Goals are great, but they rely on motivation. **Systems are what keep you moving forward.** Want to read more? Make it a habit to read just one page before bed. Want to exercise regularly? Set a time each day, even if it’s only for five minutes.
3. **Remove Decision Fatigue** – The more decisions you have to make, the easier it is to give up. **Reduce friction by making things automatic.** Set out your workout clothes the night before. Keep your journal next to your bed. Make it easier to stick with the habit than to skip it.
4. **Forgive Yourself and Keep Going** – You will miss a day. Life happens. **The key is not letting one missed day turn into a missed week.** Instead of guilt-tripping yourself, simply pick up where you left off. **Success is about getting back on track faster, not about never slipping up.**

The Long Game

The people who succeed in any field—writers, athletes, entrepreneurs—aren’t the ones who felt motivated every day. **They’re the ones who kept going, even when motivation disappeared.**

Motivation is great when it’s there, but it’s not what builds lasting success. **What does? Showing up. Even when it’s hard. Even when you’re tired. Even when it’s the last thing you want to do.**

Because in the end, consistency wins. Every single time.



Steve Magness: *“Being #1 at Age 12 is Not The Goal”*

How To Perform Under Pressure

By Nate Tscholl, summarizing Brett Hawke’s YT interview with Steve Magness (Episode #412)

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/529b8frh>

Courtesy The SwimNerd Newsletter (Edited)

Steve Magness is one of my favorite follows on X. He’s from the running world and went from athlete to coach to best selling author of *Do Hard Things*, *Peak Performance*, and his newest book, *Win the Inside Game* - developing the mental skills to handle pressure, push limits, and achieve consistency.

Follow him on Instagram and Twitter for his daily thoughts and insights. He has some great YouTube videos, many endurance training related. So check him out on YouTube, as well.

Key Takeaways

Your Brain Controls How Far You Can Go

Steve explains that while physical training is essential, it’s ultimately the brain that decides how much effort you can give.

The Gas Gauge Analogy: Fatigue is like a gas light in a car - it warns you long before you’re actually “empty.” Your brain is protecting you, but with the right mindset, you can push further.

Stop Forcing It - Effort Should Be “Soft” not “Loud”

One of the most counterintuitive lessons from Steve is that trying too hard can hold you back. Athletes often tighten up under pressure, which reduces efficiency and performance.

- ◆ The Mental Trick: Instead of forcing effort, focus on small, deliberate adjustments - range of motion, rhythm, and form.

Pressure and Expectations Can Break You (If You Let Them)

Brett shares his own story of swimming at the 2004 Olympic Games, where he unexpectedly swam his fastest time in the semifinals after “letting go” of the pressure. But in the final, heightened expectations got in the way.

Steve explains how athletes can handle this:

- ◆ Accept that pressure is natural and can’t be avoided.
- ◆ Reframe the moment as a challenge, not a threat.
- ◆ Focus on one actionable goal instead of the big picture to stay grounded.

Comparison Is Killing Young Athletes

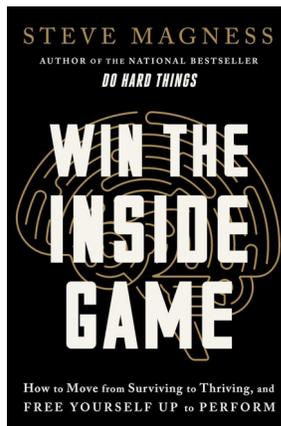
Steve and Brett discuss one of the biggest challenges in youth sports today: over-comparison and unrealistic expectations.

- ◆ Parents and athletes fixate on rankings, often prioritizing short-term success over long-term growth.
- ◆ ***The Truth: Being #1 at 12 years old means nothing. Everyone has their own performance path and it is important to understand that.***

Recovery Matters - Including Mentally

Mental fatigue can be just as limiting as physical fatigue. Steve emphasizes the importance of mental recovery to avoid burnout.

- ◆ Even small mental tasks - like solving math problems - can impair physical performance.
- ◆ Another study found that getting on the bus after a game and doom scrolling social media produces negative recovery markers. Going out to eat as a team, does the opposite.



Renowned performance scientist and bestselling author Steve Magness reveals a new path to sustainable success. In **Win the Inside Game**, Magness argues that excellence and fulfillment are not mutually exclusive; we can and should seek both.

Be—Clarity on Who You Are
Do—Clarity in Your Pursuits
Belong—Clarity on Where and How You Fit In

STRENGTH TRAINING

Developing the Swimming “Conduit”

Charlie Hoolihan

ASCA Swimming Strength and Conditioning Specialist Coordinator

Strengthening the muscles that attach to the hips and shoulder blades to develop stability is a key element in athletic training. Since swimming is one of the few sports in which the upper body and lower body appendages apply force in multiple directions to move forward, having stability at the hips creates a platform for speed and power.

The ASCA Swimming Strength and Conditioning Specialist course refers to the hip musculature region as a “conduit” because it represents a center from which movement from the upper body and lower body can flow.

As such, the best conduit exercises are those which contain stimulus for most of the muscles in the body from the hands to the feet.

Some of the best exercises to enhance the conduit’s stability are planks, crawls, suspension trainers, and carries. (*Note: videos of these are available on the ASCA Swimming Strength and Conditioning FB page.*)

Planks

Planks engage the whole body in a stable, isometric position which helps exercisers feel the connection between upper and lower appendages via the muscles attached to the hips.

The awareness of this connection helps all athletes develop a stable platform from which to train and compete, but it’s crucial for swimmers.

The muscles surrounding the hips must be able to contribute stability and controlled movement because the arms are the primary propulsive mechanism with the legs, particularly in sprints, also contribute enormous power.

The hip musculature becomes a “conduit” for storing and transferring energy for propulsion.

Adding movement to planks is important because propulsive energy is transferred from the upper to the lower body in swimming through the hips via either rotation or undulation. Still, the athletes need to recognize what proper stability in the conduit muscle group feels like.

The correct position for the swimmer’s height, athletic development, and muscle strength must first be found. The best way to do this is to progress the height of the elbow position while the feet are on the floor at approximately shoulder width.

As seen in the two pictures below the progression starts at an

angle on the box and moves down to the floor. Newer athletes can even start with their elbows on the wall.



Plank on box



Plank on floor

Once achieved, increasing the muscle strength of the conduit muscles can begin by adding movements.

Several common elements before adding movement to planks are required.

- ◇ First – success with the isometric tension plank seen in last week’s post.
- ◇ Second – many movement patterns can be added but only taken as far as the athlete can maintain a consistent straight axis between the head and the feet.
- ◇ Third – The hip and torso muscles must adjust to changing movement forces to maintain the straight axis between the head and feet.

The picture below shows a **tricep extension** from the front plank position.



Tricep extension

Crawling patterns

Crawling involves force placed on the opposite arm and leg to move forward. Contralateral work refers to movements on one side of the body acting in conjunction with a part on the opposite side of the body.

The alternating directions of crawling’s contralateral pairs are somewhat akin to freestyle and backstroke, and both utilize muscles like the latissimus dorsi and serratus anterior for forward propulsion. Additionally, scapula protraction and retrac-

tion (movement away and towards the spine), elevation and depression (up and down movements), and isometric stability are trained to promote shoulder health.

Bear Crawl positions help the swimmers learn how to coordinate the contralateral movements, increase stability during movement, and serve as an appropriate full-body movement for warm-ups, conditioning, and a platform for both strength and stability exercises.



Bear crawl

The Bear crawl technique is basic, but two essential cues during movement are important.

First, the hips and back should parallel the floor on both forward and lateral Bear Crawls. Some novices with poor conduit control will attempt the movement with hips elevated and straighter legs.

Practicing holding a proper stationary position for a time before adding distance will help reduce hip elevation which is compensation for weakness throughout the conduit.

During movement, it's crucial to keep knees moving underneath the hips, with the hip/femur angle staying between 45 and 125 degrees.

Strength can be added via sled, or weight plate pushes to increase the stability of the conduit muscle groups in the region. Pulling a sled or partner holding a tether or long resistance band further strengthens and coordinates the contralateral pairs.

Suspension Trainers

Using a suspension trainer for conduit work is particularly suited to swimmers because the support muscles from hand to feet are effectively stimulated while a variety of movements are performed with the appendages.

Streamline conduit development transfers from planking to suspension trainers where a variety of upper and lower appendage movement patterns can be performed with the body fully extended or finishing in extension.

The picture at the top of the next column shows the full-body streamline in a dryland setting. In this position, gravity assists in strength development as the athlete is encouraged to lengthen their body and hold it with isometric contractions.



Suspension streamline

Once this position is mastered, arm motions like high elbow pulls, single-arm pushups, and more can be added. Leg lifts from the streamline bring lower body stimulus and stability development.

Carries

Carries are somewhat new to the popular fitness exercise offerings but are also effective in developing conduit stability in a variety of positions while moving. The goal is to maintain fluid movements in response to the force-directional demands of the weight.

The basic carry consists of holding a pair of dumbbells and walking a specific distance with shoulders held straight and upper back held in an upright position. The weight should be enough to challenge this posture and develop the muscles that help keep the body upright. This strength development transfers well to the water.



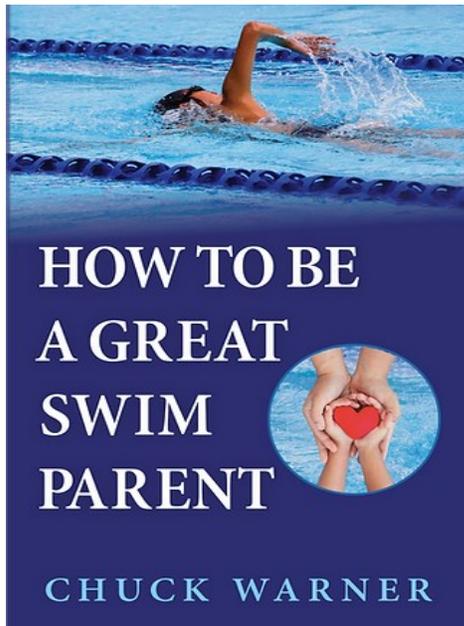
DB carry

Holding a light barbell with weight on one side during an overhead carry is another way to challenge the upright posture in more of a streamline position. As with a dumbbell carry, holding the upper back and shoulders upright is a key cue but the added challenge of more weight on one side also develops the oblique support system.



Barbell Overhead carry

BOOKS WE RECOMMEND



Sage advice distilled from a Hall of Fame swim coach's years of interactions and astute observations, this straight-to-the-point guidebook for parents of young athletes describes how to support your child's journey to their dreams and capture their heart.

"This is the parent education piece that we all wish we'd had for years!"
—KATHLEEN PRINDLE, Head Coach/Founder, Performance Aquatics, Board Member, USA Swimming

"Wow!! What a gift to have this as a resource for any parent or coach in any sport!"
—MIKE KOLEBER, Nitro Swimming, former Board President/Board Member, American Swimming Coaches Association.

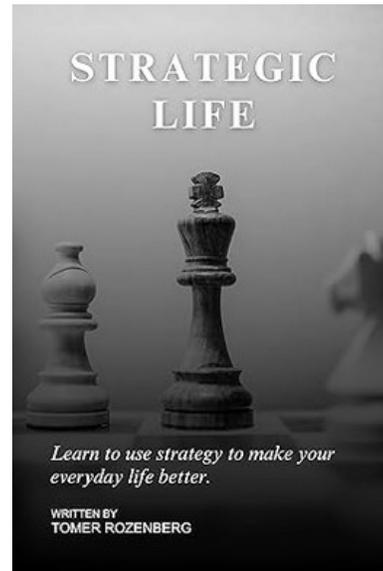
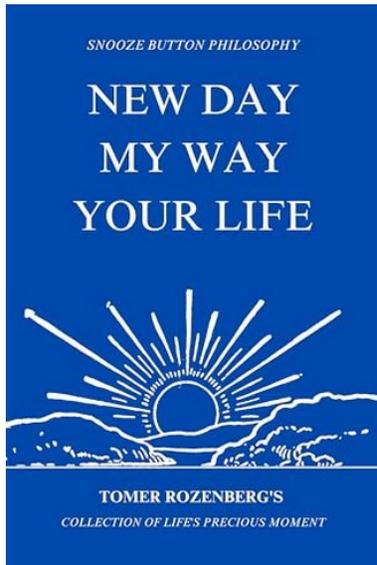
"Every parent wants to support their child, but the "how" very rarely comes from a Hall of Fame coach and mentor in the sport. Applying the ideas and anecdotes in this book has helped swimming bring my daughter and I closer."
—RICHARD QUAD, First Generation Swim Parent

"...an absolute joy to read...so critical to help educate new swim parents but will also be very informative for the veteran parents on your club."
—COACH IRA KLEIN, Head Coach Sarasota Tsunami, Board Member, USA Swimming

"I can't imagine a better resource to help us focus on the "right things" as we support the development of a young mind and body."
—MICKEY WENDER, Head Coach, Colorado Mesa University, 2024 NCAA DII Coach of the Year

"I highly recommend *How To Be A Great Swim Parent* to anyone seeking guidance and inspiration to be the best swim parent possible."
—MIKE MURRAY, President, American Swimming Coaches Association, Head Coach, The Victor Swim Club

The book we have needed for YEARS! Available at chuckwarnerbooks.com



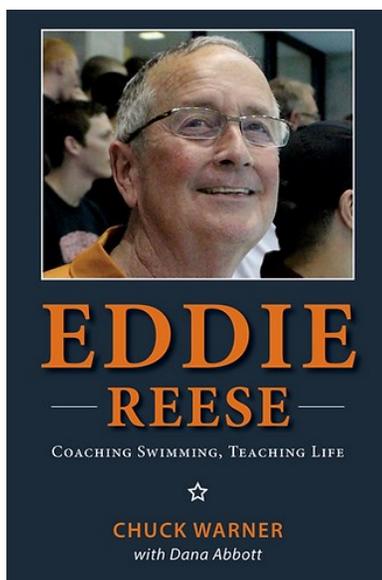
In this refreshing take on life management, you'll discover:

- How making your bed can set the tone for a productive day
- 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

BOOKS WE RECOMMEND



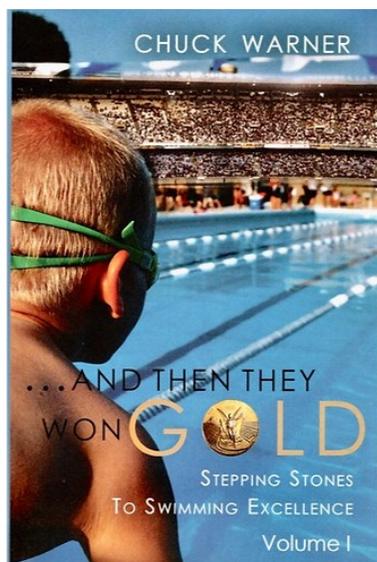
Eddie Reese is one of the most successful and effective coaches in sports history. His method of building his swimmers' character first has resulted in unprecedented success at The University of Texas including:

- 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.

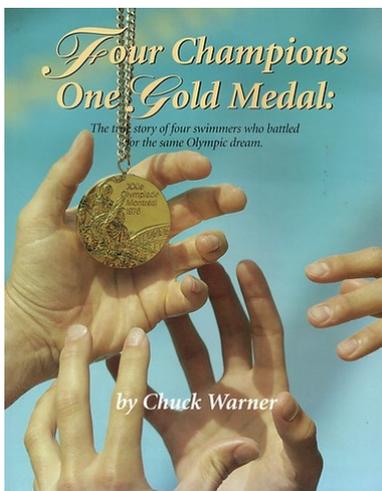
Technique tips.



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



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 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.

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.

Stop Believing the 5 Worst Nutrition Myths for Athletes

Can You Trust Social Media for Sports Nutrition?

By Dawn Weatherwax, RD, LD, ATC, CSCS

Social media is packed with fitness influencers showing off “What I Eat in a Day” videos and crazy diet trends. Some claim that cutting carbs makes you faster, protein alone builds muscle, or that energy drinks are the key to better performance. But is any of it true?

For athletes who need real fuel to perform at their best, following the wrong advice can lead to:

- ◆ Low energy and burnout
- ◆ Poor recovery after training
- ◆ Weaker performance in games
- ◆ Increased risk of injury

Let's break down the top social media myths and what you should do instead.

“Cut Carbs to Get Faster” – FALSE

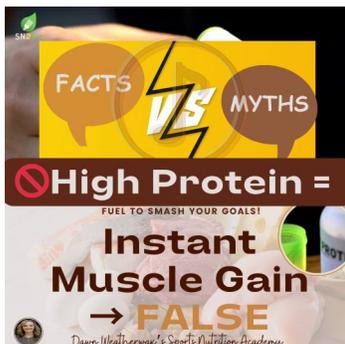


Carbs are NOT the enemy. They are your #1 source of fuel for high-intensity sports. Skipping carbs = running out of energy faster.

Better Strategy:

- ◆ Eat carbs 30-60 minutes before training or a game (fruit, bagels, sports drinks, pretzels, rice).
- ◆ Refuel with carbs and protein post-workout to restore energy levels.

“More Protein = More Muscle” – MISLEADING



Protein helps muscle growth, but too much without enough carbs leads to fatigue and poor performance.

Better Strategy:

- ◆ Focus on protein TIMING. Aim for 20-30g of protein every 3-4 hours & within 30-60min after a hard workout or lift. (post needs to include carbs)
- ◆ Pair protein with carbs & healthy fats (Greek yogurt + fruit + nuts, eggs + toast + avocado, chicken + rice + olive oil) for muscle repair, energy and optimizing body composition.

“Energy Drinks Give You More Energy” – FALSE



Energy drinks are loaded with caffeine, sugar and questionable ingredients, which can cause jitters, increased heart rates and crashes. They don't replace proper fueling.

Better Strategy:

- ◆ Hydrate with water + electrolytes before and during workouts.
- ◆ For a real energy boost, eat carbs like bananas, sports drinks, or regular Cheerios.

“Skipping Meals Helps with Weight Control” – FALSE



Not eating enough slows your metabolism and hurts growth, endurance, speed, strength and recovery!

Better Strategy:

- ◆ Eat balanced meals with protein, carbs, and healthy fats (chicken + quinoa + avocado, oatmeal + peanut butter + berries).
- ◆ Fuel every 3-4 hours to keep energy high.

“Supplements Are Better Than Real Food” – WRONG



Powders, pills, and trendy drinks can't replace real nutrition from whole foods.

Better Strategy:

- ◆ Prioritize real food first – meats, dairy, nuts, whole grains, fruits, and veggies.
- ◆ If needed, work with a sports dietitian to pick safe supplements.

How to Fuel Like an Elite Athlete

Pre-Game Fuel (30-60 Minutes Before)

- ◆ Bagel + honey + Almond Butter
- ◆ Banana + peanut butter
- ◆ Sports drink + pretzels + Sunflower Seeds

Post-Workout Recovery (Within 30 Minutes)

- ◆ Greek yogurt + granola + nuts
- ◆ Chocolate milk + PB Sandwich
- ◆ Smoothie with banana, protein, oats and chia seeds

Hydration Guide

- ◆ Start your day with 16-32 oz of fluids within the first 3 hours
- ◆ Drink 20-32 oz every 2-4 hours after that
- ◆ Add electrolytes, mainly sodium. Aim for at least 3-4g of sodium a day

I recommend 500-1000mg of sodium within the first 3 hours of waking (from food, salt or product).

Are You Eating Like an Athlete?

In a world where social media is filled with viral trends and unqualified advice, it's easy for athletes to get swept up in myths that sound convincing but ultimately do more harm than good.

As an athlete, your body demands real, science-backed fuel to recover faster, train harder, and compete at your best. Don't let social media determine your training table. Instead, lean into proven strategies—balanced meals, smart carb intake, consistent hydration, and proper recovery.

The truth? There are no shortcuts. Real food, real timing, and real knowledge will always outpace the latest internet fad. Be smarter than the scroll. Choose performance over popularity—because your goals deserve better than myths.

A promotional graphic for a course. At the top left is a circular portrait of Dawn Weatherwax. The main title reads 'WHAT TO EAT & SUPPLEMENT FOR DAILY SWIMMING!' in large white letters on a black background. Below the title are four small images showing swimmers in action: one adjusting a cap, one swimming freestyle, one swimming backstroke, and one celebrating. A green banner at the bottom contains the text '2 HOUR ACCELERATED COURSE/CAN DO ON YOUR OWN TIME FOR YOUTH SWIMMERS (AGES 12-18YO)'. Below that, it says 'Dawn Weatherwax Sports Nutrition Academy' and provides contact information: 'DAWN WEATHERWAX SPORTS NUTRITION ACADEMY WWW.DAWNWEATHERWAX.COM 513.779.6444'.

7 Rules of Life

1. Make peace with your past.
So, it won't disturb your present.
2. What other people think of you is none of your business.
3. Time heals almost everything.
Give it time.
4. No one is in charge of your happiness, except you.
5. Don't compare your life to others and don't judge them, you have no idea what their journey is all about.
6. Stop thinking too much. It's alright not to know the answer.
7. Smile: You don't own all the problems in the world.

Event Specialization and the Case for Varied Training

What Do Coaches Think?

Michael J. Stott, *Courtesy Swimming World Magazine, May 15, 2025*

[Note: This piece which features commentary from several coaches on the topic of young swimmers and whether or not they should focus on specific events.]

We've all seen it—an age group phenom who dominates a particular stroke and claims it as his or her own. “Athletes will often self-identify their primary events. Those are dictated by genetics, attention to detail, previous history and personal history,” says Ben Keast, SwimMAC age group coach who earlier assisted at several Canadian High Performance Centers.

Past history and current day records are littered with such examples. Case in point: In 1983, Chas Morton set the still-standing USA Swimming 11-12 national age group record in the 100-meter fly (58.74). At 15, Michael Phelps set the world record in the 200 fly. Both were products of multi-disciplinary training.

As a 10-year-old swimming for Nashville aquatic coach, Joe Goeken, Morton held all the NAG short-course yards records (except for the 50 breast). He then held ALL the 11-12 NAG SCY marks. Later, NAC coaches Kris Kubik and John Morse helped elevate him to three USA Swimming National Teams and ultimately a successful career at Stanford. As for Phelps, he was quite versatile, too, earning 28 Olympic medals in a variety of strokes—including six in the IM.

In their lengthy careers as sports physiologists, Jan Olbrecht and Inigo Mujika posit that every athlete responds differently to training stimuli and peaking for performance. And while young swimmers have favorite events, experienced coaches see to it that they don't become bound by early specialization. Ultimately, training, physical maturation and a host of other factors often find athletes excelling at strokes other than their early favorites.

TIME WAS...

When at the Dad's Club in Houston years ago, Richard Quick worked with 12-year-old prodigy Keena Rothhammer. He suggested that rather than concentrate on the dorsal stroke, she vary her training because he saw a competitive opening for her at the 1972 Olympics in the 800 free. “My daughter is a backstroker,” pronounced her mother, who promptly moved her to Santa Clara to train with George Haines. Three years later, Rothhammer made the U.S. Olympic team and earned a gold medal...in the 800 freestyle.

Another who benefited from varied training was Tom Jager, world champion/record holder in the 50 freestyle, NCAA champion in the 100 back and whose first national cut was in the 1650 free. And how about Nathan Adrian, NCAA and Olympic champion in the 50 free? He had an incredible distance training base under age group coach Jay Benner. Among others who

have benefited from diverse training include Leon Marchand, Kate Douglass and Gretchen Walsh.

CURRENT DAY

In what follows, a number of respected college and age-group coaches provide perspectives on swim training and the role of specialization. The reader will note a consensus on the value of varied training—albeit with interesting tweaks:

Tyler Fenwick, Sr Associate Head Coach, University of Virginia

“Swimming other events leaves the door open for development in other things. Plus it's fun for swimmers. Swimming the same thing every year can be a little boring. Kate Douglass didn't come to Virginia as a 200 breaststroker, and she is now an Olympic champion in it.

“I don't think there is ever a point when you should have straight specialization. You want to leave the door open and give swimmers options to explore. At Virginia, everyone trains IM—whether it is the 100, 200 or 400. And we've seen a lot of people discover new events at which they are really good.

“Especially age groupers, and that includes high school; it's a crime to specialize in certain events. Youngsters are still developing, and it closes the door on some events. What we are looking for are kids who are Swiss Army knives, who don't have a set mindset and are willing to look at other events.”

Whitney Hite, Associate Head Coach, University of Florida

“I think every kid should swim every event. My son is on a high school team as a sixth grader. I want him to swim every event for as long as possible.

“Specialization, I don't believe in it. You don't want to be a one-trick pony. You can always learn from a race. Every race has the ability to be your race or event. That is how you learn.

“With kids, you never know. One swimmer came to me in college as a butterflyer, then set an American record, won an NCAA championship in the 200 back and was named Swimmer of the Year.”

Kimi Davidson, Head AG Coach, Mission Viejo Nadadores

“I believe that swimmers can begin focusing on a specific stroke or range (sprint, mid-distance, distance) around 16-18 years-old, depending on how high-level they are. However, that doesn't mean only focus on that.

“Swimmers should still be doing multiple strokes and ranges, even throughout their college or pro careers. While an athlete may be recruited to a college team for a specific stroke/event, they should still practice and occasionally compete in others. This helps keep practices engaging, allows for occasional mental breaks at meets—not putting all the pressure on the same

events meet after meet—and it helps athletes use/strengthen all muscle groups to be better athletes in general—not just doing movements or using muscle groups specific to one stroke. The same can be said for a post-grad swimmer as well.

“At MVN, our 14-and-unders are doing every event in the lineup, at least once, throughout the season; 10-and-unders are encouraged to do multi-sports/activities, and we expect them to come to swim if not at another sport practice.

“Every group, from beginner to elite, is doing movement activation prior to entry into any swim (practice, competition, etc.). For example:

- ◆ Gymnastic-like exercises are done at 12-and-under;
- ◆ Introduction to weight room (body weight programs) begins at 13-14 through high school;
- ◆ Weight-room exercises begin freshman year of high school.

“We value athleticism both on land and in the water at all ages in our program. We also value development training and drill progressions from 10-and under to 11-12 to 13-14 to 15-and-over in our dryland program. The purpose is to help athletes continue to grow and improve, as well as keep them engaged with new aspects to learn as they get older.”

Bill Doughty, Head Coach, DART Swimming (Davis, Calif.)

“Our top 13-14 groups do pretty much the same workouts. They have sets that allow them to choose primary strokes. However, for the most part, they are doing the same workouts that are designed for more 200-level training, allowing them later to go up or down as needed. The activity really focuses heavily on kicking and building much of the aerobic base from their legs.

“At 14 or in high school, swimmers have the ability to move to our senior groups.

“We have a large staff that allows additional coaches to come in and help run specific workouts for each group. We usually warm up together, do some kicking and technical work for the first hour, and then we break apart in groups for the second hour.

“Following is our thinking regarding different practice groups:

“**Distance:** Swimmers here may specialize in—and enjoy—longer events like 400 IM and 500 free. These athletes really have to have the mental toughness and understanding that this work will help them. A big workout for us is around 6,500 yards, so some may not even call this a distance group.

“**Middle distance:** This is more of a catch-all for swimmers who might be versatile or more 200 stroke kids. This group also has distance swimmers who just mentally can’t stay engaged for the longer sets.

“**Sprint:** This is our smallest group. I’m most strict with this group because I am doing these swimmers a disservice if they are in this group just because they are not hard workers. These swimmers truly have to have quick-twitch and explosive power. They are also our swimmers who struggle with aerobic work and who break down quickly.

“We find swimmers who just train better in certain cohorts even though they may technically fit better with another group. If they mentally can’t handle a certain style of workout, we make adjustments for them. I’d rather have them working hard with a

specific technical focus than lap swimming.

“At our end-of-season evaluations, we assess what worked and what didn’t for each athlete. I’m honest with swimmers if I feel like they struggled with a specific type of work, or if the DART staff placed them in the wrong group. This season, I moved a girl down to sprint because I think I physically overworked her this summer. She never found her speed in taper because we had her overly broken down all season.

“A cautionary tale: Once we had two swimmers who trained in different groups achieve success in the same event. Swimmer-A and Swimmer-B both made the National Select Camp in the 400 IM. All kinds of coaches approached me about how DART was training 400 IMers. The two girls couldn’t have trained more differently. Swimmer-A hated to train IM, so she opted for more of a distance free-based training. Swimmer-B struggled even with a mid/sprint workout focus. Swimmer-B would have quit had I forced her to train distance free or longer IM. Interestingly, Swimmer-B later learned to enjoy training and finished seventh at Olympic Trials in the 200 IM. We did the best we could to set them both up for success while making sure not to run them off from the sport.

“Personally, I feel that not taking a more individual approach prioritizes the club over the athlete. Kids don’t fit into the ‘one-shoe-fits-all’ mode anymore. Mental health, social issues and external stresses are all so impactful on their daily lives. Our goal shouldn’t be to create more stress for kids by forcing them into our system. With careful thought, we can be more creative as coaches.”

Colin Kennedy, Head Age Group Coach, Fleet Swimming (Cypress, Texas)

“I believe all 14-and-unders should train for the 400 IM and 500 free, developing all four strokes, working to build up weaknesses and accentuating strengths. Programs need to be flexible enough to meet the coach goals for improvement/learning/development while also providing chances for kids to be themselves.

“Groups tend to look different by season, so this requires regular adjustments. One year, I had a lot of big strong boys who liked to race, and they needed more chances to do that in practice. It was easy and fun to find different challenges for them to learn and grow while doing what they liked. Another year, I had a lot of individuals whose best strokes were all different, and they all excelled in IM. That season was easy to plan as we always worked each stroke and let individuals shine on their best stroke day.

“Providing choices is key. If your plan is a 2,400 free set that’s just basic descending/aerobic, you can write that three different ways: 1) maybe 6 x 400s for kids who like longer repeats; 2) 8 x 100s/4 x 200s/2 x 400s so they get a mix; 3) 24 x 100s on descending intervals.

“All accomplish the same goal, but do not force someone into a set they will hate. You can do the same with stroke sets—choose from fly, back or free—or let them pick IM or free. The more opportunities swimmers have to pick, the more they seem to mix it up without being told—and if not, you can help them make a better choice.

“Focusing on 400 IM and 500 free means trying to build endurance and foundation. We do sprint sets and sprint days. We do pace days, test sets, emphasize kicking and turns/underwaters. You must teach it all. Then as athletes get bigger and stronger, they can specialize. Coaching an IM program doesn’t mean every day is IM. It does give you a lot of room for creativity when designing sets and progressive overload through a season and athlete-driven choice, which makes it fun and helps swimmers practice some independence.

“I do not have a specific age for specialization. We empower them to choose within coach-directed guidelines, giving kids options and letting them choose. I’m not going to force a swimmer to focus on distance swimming when they want to sprint. We want them to swim for years to come, so we’ll give them sprint stuff without ignoring their aerobic development—so they can swim 19-21 times at a champs meet. That’s our job as age group coaches.”

Russ Kasl, Head Age Group Coach, SwimMAC (Charlotte, N.C.)

“I coach SwimMAC’s top 11-12 and 13-14-year-old swimmers at our south site. Our approach for 14-and-unders is to move coaches toward being master generalists as they help swimmers develop proficiency in all events and strokes.

“Our approach during pre-puberty is exposing swimmers to—and working toward—successful development in a myriad of skills. We view this as an opportunity—without the advantage of Mother Nature—to develop all aspects within the swimmers’ control prior to any boost from their DNA.

“Such a concurrent training system involves the parallel development of several motor abilities—i.e., strength, speed and endurance—while producing multi-faceted physical fitness development. Much of this falls into what the swim community calls ‘IM-Based Training.’ Swimmers learn four different strokes—which involves four different kicks, pulling patterns, body movements, rhythm cycles, display of speed, etc.—four different starts and finishes, seven different turns, underwater travel/exiting each length, racing strategy, etc. And that’s just in the water.

“As for specifying events, we want swimmers to contribute to team success locally and nationally. That requires the ability to be successful in as many as eight events—that’s the meet limit at our age group championship meet. The USA Swimming Virtual Club Rankings allow for four events per swimmer to score. So, there must be quality of versatility as well as performance.” (Editor’s note: SwimMAC has won the last three Club Excellence rankings and has been a Gold Medal Club for the last 20 years.)

“Training versatility bolsters swimmer excitement, reduces rate of injury, develops movement patterns in multiple planes of position, affords individual opportunity to shine in best events and helps reveal other avenues.

“With the 13-14 group I coach, depending on where we are in the season, we do have a ‘main no-free day’ or times where we have specific sessions for sprint, mid-distance and distance freestylers, which allow swimmers to sharpen specific skills.

“In truth, the more the event window is narrowed, the fewer

opportunities exist to be successful. However, at SwimMAC, we believe some specificity has value once swimmers move to our 15-and-over training and higher-level performance groups, and where the college decision impact becomes more relevant. At the end of our swimmers’ 13-14 careers, (their) strengths have been revealed, and so a conversation—and perhaps training—inevitably shifts toward maximizing swimmer potential while still considering contribution to team goals.

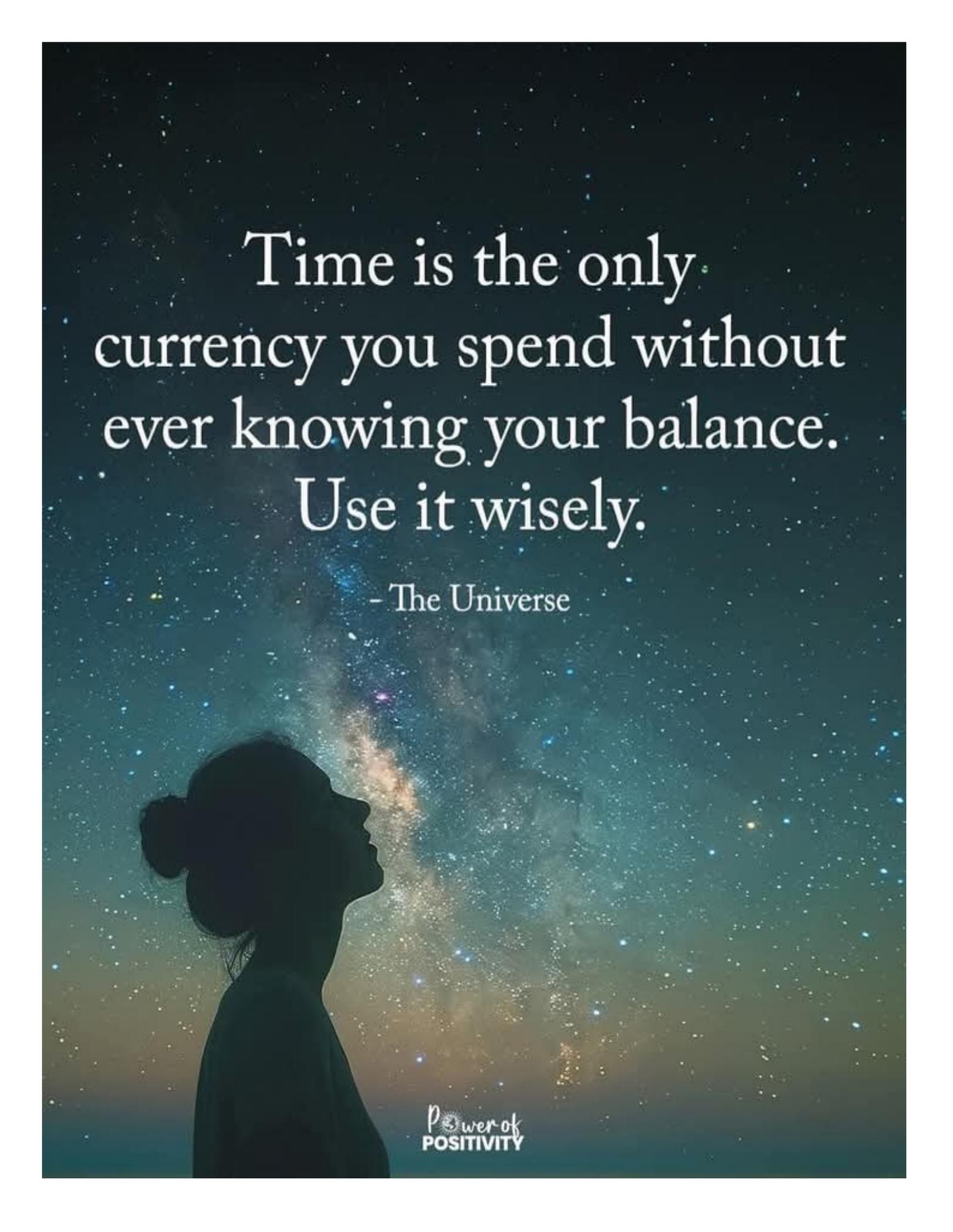
“For swimmers performing at a national or international level, accelerating training in specific events is appropriate and necessary. It also becomes much more individual—and highly specialized.”

BEYOND THE AGE GROUP YEARS

“At the apex of swimming, there is specialization,” avers Keast. “Athletes with the will and capability to be the best elect to specialize and stay specialized. And that applies to most professional swimmers,” he says. “In almost all cases, these elite athletes have benefited from comprehensive and robust training plans that have prepared them for a variety of races and moments of specialization that follow.”

Michael J. Stott is an ASCA Level 5 coach, golf and swimming writer. His critically acclaimed coming-of-age golf novel, “Too Much Loft,” is in its third printing, and is available from store.Bookbaby.com, Amazon, B&N and book distributors worldwide.



A woman's silhouette is shown in profile, looking upwards towards a vast, starry night sky. The Milky Way galaxy is visible, stretching across the frame with a mix of blue, green, and orange hues. The background is filled with numerous stars of varying brightness.

Time is the only
currency you spend without
ever knowing your balance.
Use it wisely.

- The Universe

Power of
POSITIVITY

The Future Is Built, Not Given

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

Discovering life lessons in everyday moments

The future isn't just something that happens—it's something we build, one step at a time. We learn from the past. We envision the future. But we take action in the present.

Too often, we think of the future as some distant event, shaped by forces beyond our control. We tell ourselves that time will bring change, that someday things will be different. **But the future is not a waiting game—it's a creation process.** The choices we make today shape what's ahead, whether we realize it or not.

The Past as a Compass, Not a Map

We tend to either romanticize the past or get trapped in its mistakes. But **the past is neither a place to return to nor a burden to carry—it's a guide.** It teaches us what worked, what didn't, and what patterns tend to repeat. We can use it as a reference, but **it shouldn't dictate our next move.** The world moves forward, and so should we.

History is filled with moments where people stood at a crossroads—some chose fear, others chose action. **The ones who acted shaped the course of history.** Whether it was a ground-breaking invention, a revolutionary idea, or simply the courage to take a different path, the past reminds us that progress belongs to the doers.

Envisioning the Future Without Getting Stuck in It

We dream of a better tomorrow. We imagine success, fulfillment, and growth. But dreaming alone is not enough. **A vision without action is just a wish.** Planning is important, but it's easy to get caught up in overthinking, waiting for the perfect moment that never comes.

The most successful people don't just dream—they **break their vision into small, actionable steps** and execute them, even when things feel uncertain. They understand that clarity comes from action, not just from thought. **If you want to shape the future, start by shaping today.**

The Bridge Between Now and Next

The only place where we truly have power is the present. Right now. **Every decision, every step, no matter how small, contributes to the life we are building.** It doesn't have to be a grand gesture—sometimes, it's as simple as starting the project you've been putting off, making that difficult phone call, or choosing to show up despite doubt.

We often wait for **motivation to strike, but motivation follows action, not the other way around.** The more we do, the clearer things become. **Momentum is built, not found.**



The Future Is in Your Hands

So, if you're waiting for the future to change things for you, flip the script. **You are the architect of your own tomorrow.** Use the past as a lesson, the future as a guide, and the present as your playing field.

The future isn't a place you arrive at. **It's something you create—one step, one choice, one action at a time.**



How Leaders Turn Challenges into Opportunities

By Kevin Pierce, NISCA Education Chair

A universal aspect of leadership is challenges. We're going to discuss equipping young leaders with insights and strategies to help them excel both on and off the field.

Every leader encounters tough moments, but here's the key. It's how we approach these challenges that often defines our growth as leaders. It's not about avoiding difficult situations, but rather about finding ways to turn these obstacles into learning and growth opportunities.

I'm going to share a few stories, some action steps, and hopefully some inspiration to help you see the challenges are the gateways that they truly are.

Let's start by getting clear on what we mean by **challenges as opportunities**.

Often challenges are the roadblocks or unexpected setbacks that push us out of our comfort zone. They could be personal, like facing a tough season in a sport, or team-based, like navigating through conflicts among team members.

I remember early on in my coaching career when I took over a summer swim team that hadn't had a winning season in years. The athletes had accepted the idea that they were a losing team. They went through the motions but didn't really believe that things could change.

This was a huge challenge for me as a coach. It wasn't just about improving their swimming technique or their times. It was about shifting the entire mindset of a team. Instead of seeing the team's losing streak as a problem, I reframed it as an opportunity to create an entire new culture and show these athletes the power of resilience and unity. We went on to be pretty successful, and it's where I got my coaching career started. So I saw every challenge that had a potential to become a defining moment.

When you start viewing challenges as opportunities to grow, you're already halfway to a solution. Your mindset shifts, and suddenly you're asking, how can these challenges make me a better leader?

Take a moment right now and think about a challenge you're currently facing. It could be in sports, school, or even in your personal life. Ask yourself, what's one positive thing that could come from this experience? This perspective shift is the first step in seeing this challenge as an opportunity.

Now that we're looking at challenges from a different perspective, let's look at how to put it into action. I'm going to walk you through **three steps** that I think can help you transform any challenge into a chance to grow.

Step one, reframe the challenge. Reframing is one of the most valuable tools that you can have as a leader. It's all about shifting how you see the situation. When one of my athletes missed making the relay team one season, he was devastated. But in-

stead of letting that discourage him, we reframed it as a chance to focus on his individual events. He used his time to sharpen his skills, and by the next season, he became one of our top swimmers. That setback actually gave him the space he needed to improve, and it began the turning point in his swimming career.

So think of a challenge in your life right now. What new skills or strengths can you build because of this? This simple question can **transform your mindset** and help you see the opportunity hidden within the obstacle.

Step two, take action with purpose. Once you've reframed the challenge, it's time to get proactive.

When my team faced that losing streak in the summer, we didn't sit back and wait for things to change. I started small by introducing weekly team-building activities and setting individual goals for each swimmer. We also celebrated every single personal best, no matter how small. Taking these small, purposeful steps helped us build momentum and renewed the sense of purpose as a team.

Identify one small action you can take towards addressing your current challenge. It might be setting a new goal, seeking advice, or just breaking down the problem into manageable parts. Even small steps create progress, and progress builds confidence.

Step three, inspire resilience in your team. One of the best things about facing challenges as a team is the opportunity to grow together. When a team captain faces a setback, how they handle it often sets the tone for everyone else.

A few seasons ago, one of our captains was sidelined with an injury just before the championship meet. Instead of sitting out, feeling frustrated and not showing up, he stepped up as a leader, encouraged his teammates and offered insights from the side of the pool. That moment of resilience became a divining example for everybody. Everyone learned that **being a leader isn't just about competing**. It's about how you lift others up even when you're down.

If you're part of a team, think about how you can encourage resilience in others. Start by having open conversations about the challenge and brainstorm solutions together. When your team sees you facing setbacks positively, it'll inspire them to do the same.

For a solid example, let me tell you a story from one of the swim seasons that put us to the test. A few years ago, we were up against a major setback. We had just lost several key swimmers to graduation, and our team was relatively young and inexperienced, and the odds were against us. Instead of focusing on the pressure, I reframed this season as a rebuilding and growth.

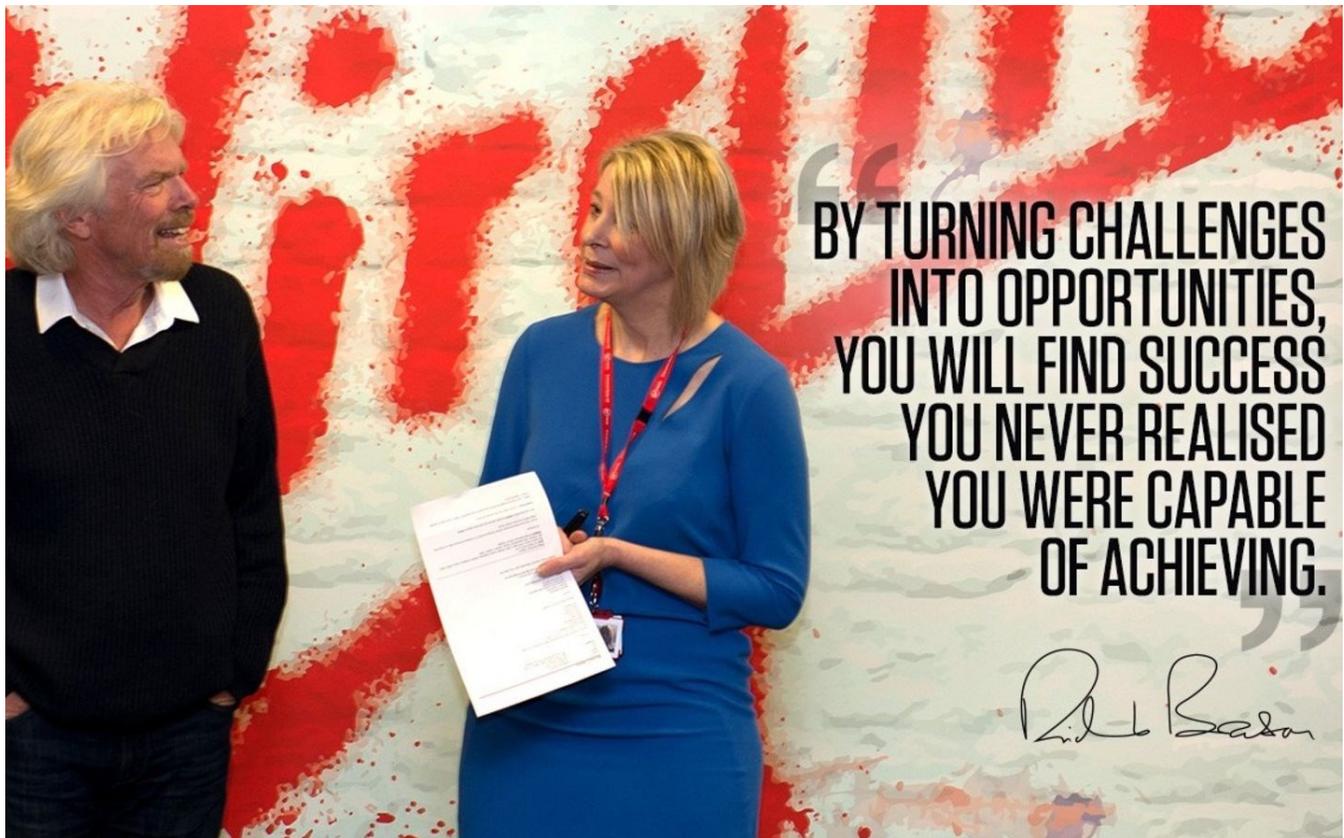
I told the team this is our chance to start fresh, to set new standards, and create a culture that's all our own. We emphasize setting personal bests, valuing hard work, and supporting each

other no matter what. Our young swimmers took up the challenge and started achieving personal records week after week. By the end of the season, we hadn't won every single meet, but we had created a culture of resilience and determination.

In the following year, we came back stronger than ever. That season taught us that setbacks can be the fuel that drives a team forward. When we focused on what we can control, our effort, our attitude, and our support for others, we turned a challenging season into one of our most meaningful experiences.

I want to challenge you to turn one of your current challenges into an opportunity. Take one setback, one tough situation, and apply the steps discussed. Reframe it, take purposeful action, and inspire those around you with resilience. For me, one of the biggest ongoing challenges is balancing my coaching, my family, and my side projects like writing *Leo the Lion's Great Adventure*. It's hard work, but instead of seeing it as a burden, I see it as an opportunity to develop my time management skills and to model resilience for my team and my family.

Remember, challenges are not roadblocks. They are opportunities for growth, leadership, and learning. By reframing, taking action, and inspiring resilience, we can turn any obstacle into a chance to lead and make a positive impact.



THE DAILY COACH

Great teammates consistently embody these 10 qualities:

1. **Lead By Example:** The best teammates establish winning cultures through their own character, commitment, and work ethic.
2. **Sacrifice Your Ego:** The ultimate teammates set aside their personal agendas, sacrificing themselves for the good of the team.
3. **Care Passionately:** Great teammates are incredibly supportive. They are excited for your success and always have your back during times of struggle.
4. **Bring Out the Best in Others:** Great teammates completely believe in their fellow team members.
5. **Communicate Openly:** A great teammate connects with team members by personally investing in each one.
6. **Be a Positive Force:** A great teammate lifts the spirits of the group through enthusiasm and encouragement.
7. **Show Respect:** Great teammates are coachable.
8. **Be Reliable:** The best teammates can always be counted on.
9. **Be Competent:** Great teammates push themselves to expand their understanding of the systems they employ.
10. **Be Highly Competitive:** Great teammates are fueled by an internal fire that pushes them toward continual improvement.

The best teams aren't just collections of talented individuals. While such groups might win in the short term, great teams with great teammates are built for the long game of mastery, excellence, and transformation.

Pro Basketball Coach JP Clark

Doing Great Things Starts with Culture

A lot of times people don't do great things because it's not really expected of them and nobody demands they try.

Nobody says "Hey that's the culture here, to do great things."

If you set that up, people will do things that are greater than they ever thought they could.

Source: Steve Jobs

This Week, I Will:

- ◆ *Stop playing around with my peace.*
- ◆ *Let my actions align. It's time to grow.*
- ◆ *Trust I am exactly where I need to be.*
- ◆ *Begin unlearning the guilt of prioritizing myself.*
- ◆ *Leave it in the past and begin to change the narrative in my mind.*

"In a world where most of us die before we are dead, where most of us hyper-fixate on what we cannot control and leave in ruins everything that we can, where most of us fear our humanness and our vulnerability—I hope you find the courage to try. I hope you will come to see that just maybe, beneath the journey you fear to take is the life you had been waiting for all along."

— *Brianna Wiest, The Life That's Waiting*

"Champions behave like champions before they are champions."

NBA Coach Bill Walsh

You're Never Just Anything

Being a star in your role isn't about status. It's about attitude. It's about energy. It's about how you elevate others — day in and day out.

Leadership is not just about what decisions we make. It's about how we make people feel when we make them.

You can't live a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you.

Your beliefs become your thoughts, your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your habits, your habits become your values, and your values become your destiny.

The best way to predict the future is to create it.

Most people live the same year 75 times and call it a life.

I'm not afraid to be the dumbest person in the room. I want to be in rooms where I can learn and grow.

The quality of your life is determined by the quality of your questions.

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- The quality of your life is determined by the quality of your questions.



"There's something kind of beautiful about the fact that you'll never fully know how much good you've put into the world. You'll never know who saw you smiling and felt a little less alone. Who heard your laughter and remembered that joy still exists. Who read your words and carried them in their heart like a secret source of comfort. Who chose to stay just because they saw you doing the same. You don't have to be loud to make an impact. Sometimes, just living your life, being kind, and being you is enough to change someone else's world. And that's pretty incredible." *@Poetic_Whispers_*



Stop Competing for Awards That Don't Exist

Awards that do not exist and you're trying to win anyways:

- ◆ *Most perfect.*
- ◆ *Never said no.*
- ◆ *Rested the least.*
- ◆ *Didn't need help.*
- ◆ *Worked the longest.*
- ◆ *Didn't make any mistakes.*
- ◆ *Lived up to everyone's expectations.*
- ◆ *News Flash: there's no award at the end of this race.*
- ◆ *None for best people-pleaser. None for being perfect. None for working the longest.*

None for never making mistakes. None for meeting everyone else's expectations instead of following your own dreams.

Remember it's your life to create. Do it with intention.

Source: Charlotte Grimmel, @themindfriend

Either we select our paths in life, or someone else will select them for us.

Take something ordinary and turn it into something extraordinary.

"Do not take life too seriously. You will never get out of it alive." — Elbert Hubbard

Sometimes we think we want certain things because other people think we should want them.

We are not sent anything that we can't make better.

We live in an abundant world. There is enough for everyone if we share.



"Part of getting to know yourself is to unknow yourself—to let go of the limiting stories you've told yourself about who you are so that you aren't trapped by them, so you can live your life and not the story you've been telling yourself about your life."

— Lori Gottlieb, *Maybe You Should Talk to Someone*



You're Here to Evolve, Not Shrink

- **Growth is uncomfortable. You might miss the old spaces, the old versions of yourself, the people and places that once felt like home.**
- **But staying in places you've outgrown won't bring back the comfort you're searching for: it will only keep you stuck.**
- **If something no longer fits, let it go. If a space feels too small, step out of it. If you feel yourself shrinking, remember: you are allowed to grow.**



- ◆ **Find something that's underappreciated, not being addressed, or being overlooked—and get really good at it.**
- ◆ **The key is to keep moving, keep exploring, and to learn from every experience along the way.**
- ◆ **It's important to recognize that leadership doesn't hinge on perfection.**
- ◆ **Simple isn't the same as easy—but it's still worthy of a motto: Keep showing up.**
- ◆ **True fulfillment comes from forging and trusting your own path.**

A good leader grows and learns. Stagnation is not leadership.



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

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



Mary Oliver understood the urgency of living with purpose, aware that life's deepest regret often arises from passivity and hesitation:

"When it's over, I don't want to wonder if I have made of my life something particular, and real. I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened, or full of argument. I don't want to end up simply having visited this world."

Larry Winget on integrity:

"Every time you're tempted to slack off or do or be a little less than you could, remember that you are a person of integrity who lives by the simple creed: do what you said you would do, when you said you would do it, the way you said you would do it."

Richard Feynman on passion, curiosity, and living fully:

"Fall in love with some activity, and do it! Nobody ever figures out what life is all about, and it doesn't matter. Explore the world. Nearly everything is really interesting if you go into it deeply enough. Work as hard and as much as you want to on the things you like to do the best. Don't think about what you want to be, but what you want to do. Keep up some kind of a minimum with other things so that society doesn't stop you from doing anything at all."

Discipline is cheaper than regret.

The loudest signals come from the emptiest sources. Those who truly possess something rarely need to announce it.

Those who fear appearing foolish rarely discover anything new. The genius of tomorrow often looks like an idiot today.

A focused hour outweighs an unfocused day.

Great ideas often look wrong at first; that's why the independent-minded discover them.

Progress doesn't come from revolutionary leaps but from the patient accumulation of small, earned advances.

Work becomes great when curiosity drives it beyond obligation.

When we lack real problems, we create imaginary ones; when we lack meaningful work, we perfect the unimportant.

What you're taught isn't always what matters.

Persistence isn't just continuing to try—it's the runway that gives your talent time to take off.

Truth trumps narrative. You can temporarily rally people around what sounds good, but reality eventually imposes its verdict.

Thomas Mitchell on finding happiness where we are:

"People are always looking for happiness at some future time and in some new thing, or some new set of circumstances, in possession of which they some day expect to find themselves. But the fact is, if happiness is not found now, where we are, and as we are, there is little chance of it ever being found. There is a great deal more happiness around us day by day than we have the sense or the power to seek and find."

Roger Federer on the kind of talent you can practice:

"Yes, talent matters. I'm not going to stand here and tell you it doesn't.

But talent has a broad definition.

Most of the time, it's not about having a gift. It's about having grit. In tennis, like in life, discipline is also a talent. And so is patience.

Trusting yourself is a talent. Embracing the process—loving the process—is a talent. Managing your life, managing yourself.

These can be talents, too. Some people are born with them. Everybody has to work at them."

What separates good work from great isn't talent but persistence.

The most successful people aren't those who feel motivated all the time; they're the ones who work even when they don't feel like it. Too often, waiting to feel ready means never starting.

Steve Jobs explains why motivation can't be forced:

"I've never found in my whole life that you could convince someone who doesn't want to work hard to work hard."

When your priorities are clear, every 'no' becomes a step toward what matters.

The person who finishes one race beats the person who starts a hundred and never finishes.

Life comes down to two things:

1. Knowing how to get what you want
2. Knowing what's worth wanting

Henry David Thoreau on the hard part:

"Simplify, simplify, simplify!"

Ayn Rand on just doing things:

"The question isn't who's going to let me; it's who's going to stop me."

George Santayana on the highest aim:

"A man is morally free when ... he judges the world, and judges other men, with uncompromising sincerity."

Stick to the basics:

- ◆ Be reliable.
Do your job.
Speak for yourself.
Outcome over ego.
Focus on the details.
See challenges as opportunities.
Go to bed smarter than when you woke up.

Jim Rohn on failure:

"Failure is rarely the result of some isolated event. Rather, it is a consequence of a long list of accumulated little failures which happen as a result of too little discipline. Failure occurs each time we fail to think ... today, act ... today, care, strive, climb, learn, or just keep going ... today. If your goal requires that today you write ten letters and you write only three, you are behind by seven letters ... today. If you commit yourself to making five phone calls and you make only one, you are behind by four phone calls ... today. If your financial plan requires that you save ten dollars and you save none, you are behind ten dollars ... today. The danger comes when we look at a day squandered and conclude that no harm has been done. After all, it was just one day. But add up these days to make a year and then add up these years to make a lifetime and perhaps you can now see how repeating today's small failures can easily turn your life into a major disaster."

- ◆ Source: 7 Strategies for Wealth and Happiness

Charlie Munger and Warren Buffett: All I Want To Know Is Where I'm Going To Die So I'll Never Go There: Buffett & Munger - A Study in Simplicity and Uncommon, Common Sense

The main takeaways:

1. Wisdom is prevention.
2. The fundamental algorithm of life: repeat what works.
3. The wise of every generation discover the same truths.
4. Avoid distraction.
5. Spend time thinking.
6. Position yourself for opportunity.
7. Invert: Much of success comes from simply avoiding common paths to failure.
8. Avoiding stupidity is easier than seeking brilliance.
9. The weakest link causes the problem.

Progress is just falling and getting back up over and over again, disguised as a straight line.

The best things in life—trust, talent, luck—have one thing in common: the harder you chase them, the faster they run. Your reputation is the only magnet strong enough to make them come to you.

Problems scream for attention while successes only whisper. We're wired to chase whatever's loudest. Your biggest opportunity isn't hiding in what's broken; it's hiding in what's working that you've stopped noticing.

You have just six seconds to capture someone's attention — but if you interest them, you earn another twenty to thirty seconds.

Practically, this means you have about thirteen words to hook them and another thirty to forty to deliver your most compelling information.

If your email exceeds 100 words, allocate your editing time wisely: dedicate 40% to perfecting the first sentence, 40% to refining the next 2-3 sentences, and just 20% to polishing the remainder.

The Power of the Perfect Pause

The quietest person at a dinner party often leaves with a reputation for brilliance, while others talk themselves into corners.

You see it in boardrooms too - the executive who tilts her head thoughtfully during presentations, somehow radiating wisdom without speaking a word. Even therapists build their practices more on artful silences than clever words.

The wisest among us have learned that saying nothing often says everything.

Embracing Discomfort

The Key to Unlocking Leadership Potential in Youth

By Kevin Pierce, NISCA Education Chair

In every journey of leadership, there's an essential, sometimes overlooked, element that separates those who lead from those who follow: the willingness to step out of one's comfort zone. For young athletes, this skill is as important as mastering a play or technique, as it forms the backbone of resilience, adaptability, and personal growth. But how do we encourage students to embrace discomfort in a way that fosters leadership rather than fear? In my experience, the answer lies in creating safe yet challenging environments that help them see discomfort not as a barrier but as a bridge to their highest potential.

Why Discomfort is Essential for Leadership Growth

Growth, by nature, involves change, and change rarely feels comfortable. Whether they realize it or not, young people experience discomfort all the time: a new class, a tough practice, or a challenging conversation. The difference for leaders, however, is in learning to navigate these moments purposefully, embracing the uncomfortable and seeing it as a path forward. When athletes and students develop this mindset, they gain the confidence to take on new roles, make tough decisions, and inspire their peers by showing strength through vulnerability.

This isn't just a lesson for high school athletes—it's a fundamental principle of leadership that will serve them well into adulthood. In a world that constantly presents us with new challenges, the ability to lean into discomfort becomes the ultimate leadership advantage.

How to Encourage Students to Embrace Discomfort

In my work with young athletes, one of the most rewarding challenges is helping them step out of their comfort zones. Recently, I've been working with a young athlete named Colin who, like many of us, finds it hard to feel comfortable when he's out of his usual routines. We've focused on small, manageable ways to expand his comfort zone incrementally. Here are a few strategies I've found effective:

1. Start Small and Build Confidence

Begin with low-stakes challenges that gradually introduce discomfort. These could be as simple as having an athlete lead a drill in practice, speak up in team meetings, or take on a small leadership role. By building up slowly, they start to see discomfort not as something to avoid but as something they can overcome.

2. Create a Supportive Environment

One key aspect of helping students embrace discomfort is building a culture that celebrates effort and learning over immediate success. A supportive environment helps athletes feel safe enough to take risks. If they know their coaches and teammates won't judge them for making mistakes, they'll be more likely to step up and try new things.

3. Challenge Them with 'Stretch Zone' Activities

I often talk about the "stretch zone"—a state that's between the comfort zone and the panic zone. It's where students feel challenged but not overwhelmed. For example, asking a student-athlete to mentor a younger teammate, or leading a short part of a practice session, can stretch their abilities without pushing them to the point of stress. By repeating these "stretch zone" experiences, they learn to associate discomfort with achievement, not fear.

4. Emphasize Reflection Afterward

Growth happens when we reflect on our experiences. After any challenge, I encourage athletes to take a few minutes to reflect: What felt uncomfortable? How did they handle it? What did they learn? Reflection reinforces positive experiences with discomfort and prepares them for the next challenge with confidence.

Practical Exercises for Developing This Mindset

Here are a couple of practical exercises that parents, coaches, or teachers can use to introduce this concept:

- ◆ The "Try Something New" Challenge: Once a week, encourage each athlete or student to try something they've never done before, either in practice or in life. It could be speaking up in a class, trying a new skill, or tackling a drill they find intimidating. The key is that it's something they choose and control.
- ◆ Comfort Zone Journaling: Ask your students to keep a journal where they write down moments when they felt out of their comfort zone and how they responded. Reviewing this can help them see their growth over time and remind them that each experience—comfortable or not—adds to their leadership journey.

Embracing Discomfort as a Life Skill

In the end, embracing discomfort isn't just about leadership—it's a skill for life. When students learn to confront challenges head-on, they gain a resilience that extends beyond the playing field, helping them tackle academics, relationships, and future careers with courage. My hope for every young athlete is that they'll not only step into their stretch zone but thrive in it, seeing discomfort as a key part of achieving their true potential.

Leadership isn't about always having the right answers; it's about being willing to face the unknown. By fostering this mindset in young leaders, we're setting them up for success in every area of their lives. And in the process, we're cultivating a new generation that sees challenges as opportunities and discomfort as the starting point of greatness.

Why Youth Sports Are Quietly Failing ***And How We Can Save an Entire Generation of Athletes*** *By Kevin Pierce, NISCA Education Chair*

I've been a coach, a teacher, and a parent for a long time. I've stood on pool decks, sidelines, gym floors. I've watched thousands of kids lace up cleats, strap on goggles, pull on jerseys. Kids full of hope, excitement, and potential.

And what I'm seeing now scares me.

We are watching youth sports collapse in slow motion.

And most people have no idea it's happening.

Let me be blunt.

Over 70% of kids quit organized sports by age 13. Referees are quitting in record numbers because of the abuse they take from parents and coaches. Youth athletes are burning out mentally and physically, some before they even hit high school.

I'm not just talking about occasional injuries. I'm talking about torn ACLs, stress fractures, chronic overuse injuries in kids. I'm not just talking about occasional anxiety. I'm talking about full-blown mental health crises, depression, self-worth tied to performance.

If you think I'm exaggerating, look around. Talk to any youth coach. Talk to any high school athletic director. Talk to any parent with two or three kids in sports.

The system is broken.

And we are the ones breaking it.

We've built a culture that chases status over substance, exposure over experience, and winning over growth.

We've taken what should be the most joyful, playful, character-building part of a kid's life and turned it into a high-stakes pressure cooker.

What happened to the neighborhood pickup games?
What happened to trying a sport just because it looked fun?
What happened to messy, imperfect, hilarious, beautiful childhood sports moments?

Here's what happened:

We've told kids they need to specialize early.
We've told parents they have to spend thousands to give their kids a chance.
We've told coaches their worth is measured in championships and scholarships.
We've told officials they're disposable and undeserving of re-

spect.

We have created a system where an 11-year-old is afraid to make a mistake, a 13-year-old is thinking about quitting, and a 15-year-old is playing through chronic pain because they're terrified to fall behind.

I've seen it firsthand.

I've seen swimmers break down on the pool deck after a race they didn't win.

I've seen soccer players playing through injuries because they're scared they'll lose their starting spot.

I've seen parents pull kids out of one sport to invest full-time in another, chasing a college scholarship that may or may not ever come.

And the cost?

It's not just physical.

It's emotional.

It's spiritual.

We are robbing kids of resilience, leadership, and life lessons. We are robbing them of the very things sports were designed to teach.

I'm not saying competition is bad.

I'm not saying ambition is wrong.

I'm saying **we've lost balance**.

We need to remember why we started.

Sports were never just about winning.

Sports were never just about scholarships.

Sports were about teaching kids how to work together, how to handle setbacks, how to communicate, how to lead, how to fail and get back up.

When I look back at the best athletes I've coached, the ones who grew into strong, resilient, remarkable adults, they weren't always the most talented. They were the ones who learned to lead when it mattered most, who lifted up their teammates, who pushed themselves not because someone was yelling at them but because they wanted to get better for the team.

If we want to save youth sports, we have to start now.

We have to let kids be kids.

We have to stop specializing too early.

We have to make space for play.

We have to lead with values, not just wins.

We have to protect the people who make sports possible: the referees, the volunteers, the everyday heroes on the sidelines.

We have to make youth sports about building better people, not

just better players.

And parents make sure you hear me on this. Your kid's worth is not tied to their stats. Their value is not determined by how many minutes they get, how many points they score, or whether they land that college offer. Their worth is in who they are becoming on the field, off the field and in life.

Coaches, parents, athletes, communities:
We are at a tipping point.

We can keep pretending this is fine.

Or we can choose to rebuild something better.

If you believe youth sports can be better, share this. Share it on Facebook, share it on Instagram, share it with your team, your league, your school.

Tag a coach, tag a parent, tag an athlete.

Let's start the conversation today before we lose another generation.

It's not too late. But we need to act now.

Let's bring back the joy. Let's bring back the play. Let's bring back the heart.



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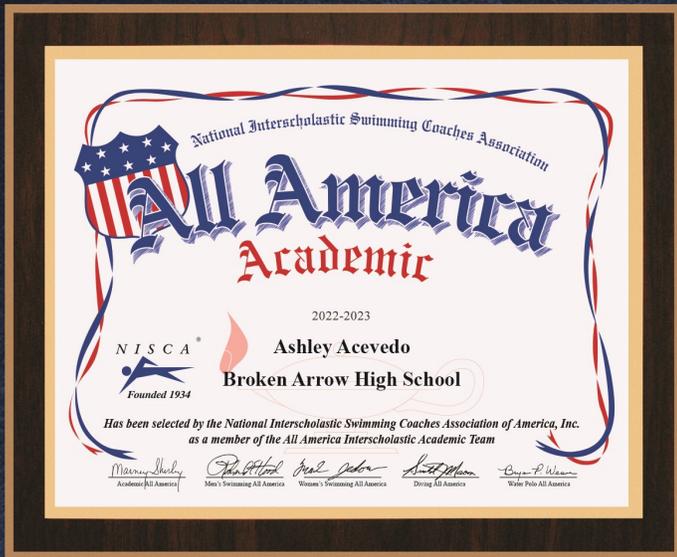
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Wood plaque displays the All-American certificate printed on a clear acrylic overlay so it's waterproof. It measures 10½" x 13" and comes individually boxed for presentation. Available in Water Polo, Diving, Academic, Team Scholar Award and Swimming.



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

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



\$79.95 / PQ-NISACR

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

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The hard things lead to the good things.

The seasons that test your strength, the situations that feel uncomfortable, and the decisions that require courage, are the very things that will lead you toward true fulfillment.

If you're willing to walk through the fire and surrender to uncertainty, you will eventually experience all the beauty that awaits you on the other side.

So stop running away from the hard things. Because the hard things build the foundation for the good things to grow.

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Individual Stroke (Back, Breast, Fly, Free)	\$ 55*
Special Package of All Four Strokes (SAVE \$50!)	\$200*
12" x 12" Color Montage (above) of All Four Strokes	\$125*
12" x 12" Sepia Montage (above) of All Four Strokes	\$100*

Secure Packaging and Priority Shipping **\$ 15**

Order your prints from: nancybryantstudio.com

Questions? Contact Nancy here: <https://www.nancybryantstudio.com/contact>

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

There is a Japanese legend that says,

If you get on the wrong train,
get off at the nearest station.
The longer it takes you to get off,
the more expensive the return
trip will be.