

Rent-A-Cheer

By: Coach Wally Fall, Alexandria Senior High School, Alexandria, LA

Well, Here I am at a swim meet again. I'm the coach and my twelve swimmers have finished standing in the corners at the ends of the lanes for 40 minutes - warm up! I've gone over "The Talk" and where the heat tent is (We call it the heat tent because it is confusing to call it the clerk of course. Besides, calling it the heat tent just keeps them warm.). I also told them why we only have one relay and it is a senior relay with the oldest being 14 years old. But the hardest to explain is the fact that we aren't doing a team cheer.

Why no team cheer? Well the last meet we tried it at was when we had 15 swimmers, our traveling squad, and we began a cheer. The only thing was a big team evidently did not hear us and began a cheer of their own. We never finished. My 10 and unders, both of them, wanted to know why they didn't let us finish. Boy, did I feel bad.

Being a college graduate, I felt I hadn't completely exhausted my ideas on this cheer thing quite yet. Then it came to me. I knew a time when everyone would be quiet at the swim meet and could hear us cheer. The only thing was that my parents refused to let us begin a cheer with the word AMEN. So, I spent all of the meet thinking of when to do it.

Then I had the perfect idea. There was another time that everyone would be quiet at a swim meet and could hear us. Heck, they even blew a whistle to quiet everyone for us. So, the next Monday at practice I asked for some cheer ideas to use at the next meet. Ben said, "Let's throw you in!" I had to explain that I wanted real cheers, motivational ideas or rhymes, we could yell at a meet. Well, I got lots of ideas. Some had to be thrown out due to language (I couldn't make out the writing) and others were too long.

Well from Tuesday on we swam little as we practiced cheers for the big moment. I even had to break up fights between swimmers who wanted their cheer used (You see, we are a very competitive if not large team). This was necessary because we only would

have time for one cheer. By Friday we had it. The meet was tomorrow, Saturday. We had 18 there - it was an open meet! We arrived, warmed up and got ready to cheer. We let the big teams do theirs and listened with envy. The invocation was over as was the National Anthem. Ben came up and said, "Coach, when?"

Then they did it. "Eight and under 25 freestyle," was the call "Timers and judges ready?" the starter yelled. Then came the whistle. We let out, "Gimme a C" - CCCCC was the reply. Gimme an O- OOOOO was the answer and so on until we had spelled out our initials of COAST. Well, the first heat was standing up on the blocks and there was no noise; everyone was looking at us and we finished up with, "What's that spell? COAST," we answered. "COAST has the most (spirit not swimmers) so we just gotta boast."

The referee was almost to me by now. She had been getting her clip board (the one with the Olympic emblem on the back so everyone could see it when she carried it just so). I was told that if there was another outburst like the last one, that I would be asked to leave the deck. She wrote down a brief description of the incident followed by a statement I would be signing promising to not do any more cheers just before a race starts.

My kids had their cheer and swam fast in the meet because of it. I, however, was at a loss again because we had done a cheer we couldn't do any more and we had a meet in two weeks. Then a swimmer from another small team came up and said how neat it was to be on a team that cheered - even a small team. He gave me the idea I needed.

The next meet came and after the coaches' meeting was over, I asked to meet with all of the coaches of teams with less than 18 swimmers at the meet. There were five of us. As I announced my ideas and began to explain, I was interrupted. It was the last meet's referee. "You're not going to pull any more cheering tricks at this meet," she said. I promised to be good for the kid's sake.

About this time a big team began one of those rhyming cheers made up of a lot of rhyming non-words. But, they were together, clapped a lot, were loud, had fun and ended by yelling and whistling.

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Now mind you, this was the team that two years ago stood and sang the National Anthem (we had misplaced the tape for it). That's why everyone was quiet and listening to see what they would come up with this year. The other coaches with me noticed the attention the team got as well as the fun and togetherness the swimmers enjoyed. They went for my idea.

By now the meet had started and so had our "discussions" as to what kind of cheer our group (from five teams) would do. We decided not to recognize any one team with the yell. People looking at us would see which teams were involved by the T-Shirts.

The cheer we came up with seemed like an es-

cape to the kids but we did it. It involved holding up poster cards on each starting block that spelled out USA SWIMMING as we yelled each letter. Once into it, the excitement of the swimmers soon followed. Soon we (unlike the big team cheers) had all of the other swimmers at the meet as well as their friends and parents in the stands cheering with us. The end, of course, was USA - USA - USA! The teams loved it. We had ten year old swimmers walking around as if they had just been let of the movie, "Rocky" or "Chariots of Fire." Pumped up? You Bet! And all thanks to Rent - A - Cheer. We plan to do it again at the state championships.

The 10-Percent Challenge

By Aimee Schmitt

Adopted from *The Success Express* by Belinda Elsworth.

The key to success is not doing something big or spectacular, but doing the little things extraordinarily well. The vast majority of highly successful people in any area of life are simply those who worked a bit harder, stayed a bit longer, and did a bit more.

Did the best coaches or swimmers in the country arrive at that status because they are 100 times smarter? Or are they 50 times more ambitious? Do they work 20 times harder? Or do they have more hours in the day? Of course not!

The most successful swimmers and coaches *do the little things* extremely well. They remember the details, acknowledge what they need to learn, and they keep consistent. These "great" swimmers go to workouts, get enough rest, eat right, listen to their coaches, and encourage their teammates. These "great" coaches consistently encourage their athletes, organize their season, challenge them with new sets, run up and down the deck to push them further, and never tire of consistently correcting their swimmer's bad habits and explaining the path to the "goal". The simple truth is this: they go the extra mile each day, and it makes a difference.

Why not take the 10-Percent Challenge? Strive to be just

10-percent better in everything you do. It makes more difference than you think! In baseball it means the difference between a .350 and a .250. In swimming, a sport of hundredths, it can mean the difference between first or last place. A tiny 10-percent improvement on starts, turns, or finishes can even make this difference. With so many components to swimming mechanics, training and discipline, a 10-percent improvement in any of these areas can mark a huge improvement in performance. Just think of the possibilities achievable if you challenged yourself to be just 10-percent more excited, enthusiastic, dedicated, determined, organized and confident. Just think about where you would be in just 10 weeks.....10 months....or 10 years from now!

Strive for the 10-Percent!

Aimee Schmitt

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