



The Highs and Lows in the Lead Up to Success in Rio

by Greg Meehan

Greg Meehan: Good morning, everybody. Thanks for the awesome introduction, Josh. After the talk about our experience through the last quad leading into Rio and the Rio Games, I will spend a little bit of time talking about the World Championships this summer in Gwangju; it was quite the experience. We are still kind of recovering from that, but certainly excited about what's ahead in this year in the Olympic year. For all of us, I am sure we can think back to a moment or moments as swimmers, as coaches, through our careers of Olympic Games and just really inspiring moments. I think back to my first real recollection of swimming was the '84 Olympic Games in L.A. and I was hooked on the Olympic movement. Being the host country for those games in '84, and the sense of pride that we, as a nation, had in hosting the Games and then being able to watch the swimming events. At that point, I was already in the sport and I was the youngest of five and so everybody in the family swam. But being able to really enjoy that and that Olympic spirit is what motivates me every day to get out of bed. I know that I am an NCAA coach and my primary responsibility from a day-to-day perspective is helping our Stanford women be successful. But there isn't anything that motivates me more than wanting to help Team USA be successful in the Olympic Games. And so, being introduced as the Head Olympic Coach for next summer in Tokyo was like the greatest honor of my life. We are going to make you very proud over the next 11 months and certainly as we get to Tokyo.

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ASCA PRESENTATIONS

Nicole Harmon

“The Fish”, Being a Young Coach; Coaching Young Athletes

In her talk from the 2016 ASCA World Clinic Nicole Harmon offers advice from her own experiences on how to be a successful young coach. She starts by noting “I was going to use my experience as an athlete to relate to my athletes” which “really helped my swimmers to embrace my arrival”. She says the success of her swimmers comes from “their love of the sport, and because of the support and investment that I am making in their swimming.” She advises that young swimmers are fun, energetic, growing and changing every day, adding that they need structure as well as love and attention. She explains that we need to appreciate they are at this level for a short period of time and says coaches should “appreciate that and where they are right now”. Harmon advises that coaches need to try to match the energy and enthusiasm of their younger swimmers “The more energy that you are giving them, the more that you are going to be able to get out of them.”

Harmon notes that giving younger swimmers structure “is something comforting for them, knowing what the expectations are when they come to practice every day.” On love and attention Harmon mentions to “celebrate the little victories”, call them out on their incredible practices so that teammates will see that and strive to have that recognition as well. She advises each swimmer is different so coaches need to be aware of their differences and celebrate this, “do the best that you can with it.” When they are doing incredible things Harmon says “it is easy to forget how young they are.” Harmon speaks of being “conscientious of how much what I am saying

to them is going to stick with them and affect them years later.” Harmon notes that as a young coach she has been able to learn from senior coaches, and this combined with her experiences as a swimmer and coach she was able to create her own strategy to help her swimmers, which keeps her excited for what is coming.

Harmon states our swimmers “need you to be patient. They need you to teach them. They need you to be: compassionate, strict, a good listener, flexible, fearless, and aware of what they need.” On being patient and teaching she notes “I try to be patient and understand they are learning...explaining what they are doing wrong and how they can fix it; not just this is bad or that is bad.” On compassion: “you want it to be the place that they can come and feel safe...You can show compassion for your swimmers, and be understanding of all those other things that are going on, without getting walked all over.” She notes that being a good listener and taking a bit of interest in their life beyond the pool means swimmers are more likely to talk to you about important things. Being aware of what cues swimmers are giving leads “to a stronger bond and trust between you and your athletes.” Harmon says her biggest challenge as a new coach was writing practices, and suggests to new coaches to take in everything you are experiencing and learn from everyone. She gives a last note to younger coaches when earning credibility from parents, “just be confident in what you are doing. You are the professional here.”



CLICK HERE

To listen to the full audio presentation of
Coach Nicole Harmon
“The Fish”, Being a Young Coach; Coaching Young
Athletes

ASCA PRESENTATIONS

David Wendkos DISC for Improving your Communication Skills with Athletes

In his talk from the 2017 ASCA World Clinic Coach David Wendkos presents coaches with a way that we can adapt and adjust our communication skills to better communicate with our athletes. He outlines the different personality traits that can differ throughout the DISC styles. He notes a key point “there is no good or bad style, they just all are...There are good attributes and challenges for each style. They all have strengths, they all have areas for development, and the reality is we are human.” He notes “Our style does not limit how much we can accomplish...It just tells us how we prefer to do things and that is where it become behavior and not personality. He advises the way to figure out what style others are is by using “the acronym OAR - Observe, Assess, Recognize” keeping in mind things such as what people talk about, do they speak up, how descriptive are they, what is their use of body language.” He notes that email is a great tool to have, however it does not account for body language and tonality, which accounts for more than 50% of our communication.

Wendkos notes that adjusting communication style is where he finds the greatest amount of resistance. He notes that the problem with how we are communicating is how people interpret what we are saying, “if my intent is for her to get what she needs, then I need to understand that I need to adapt and give more than I necessarily would want.” He advises to look farther than the Golden Rule to a “‘platinum rule’ of ‘do unto others as others would have you do unto them.’ Treat others the way they prefer to be treated...by speaking their language, they will become more engaged and the likelihood of positive outcome is going to be increased.” The Platinum Rule “gives us a much higher chance that our communication is going to be understood in the matter it is intended.” He notes a few keys to interaction with the different styles:

- D** “Give Ds immediate feedback...Do not restrict their power. Concentrate on the subject, maintain the results orientation, and do not frustrate their desire to take action.”
- I** “Show enthusiasm, smile, chat, focus on the positive, make it fun. Let him or her talk; try to not put their enthusiasm down, even if it is misplaced.”
- S** “Slow down, take your time, provide assurances and support, and give enough time to decide...do not make sudden changes...If they know what to anticipate, they are so much better.”
- C** “Give them all the detail they could want and answer the questions patiently and give them time to think and decide and analyze, but do not keep that information to yourself, pressure for immediate answers, or be too chatty.”



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The Highs and Lows in the Lead Up to Success in Rio (cont.)

This was an interesting topic to talk about. It isn't necessarily strategic, it's a little bit more of a storytelling. Each one of these women had a very different path to that moment. That was the last night of finals at Olympic Trials in 2016 before we got introduced. But this is really a story about these three women and their path to the Games in Rio. At that time, in 2016, I've been coaching Simone and Maya for four years. Actually, Simone was three years, Maya was four years, and Lia was four years, as well. And so, the path for each of them was totally different. I think that's really important when I am working with athletes is just recognizing that we all want to go down this perfect path and want to be able to follow the owner's manual on how to get from point A to point B. But swimming isn't that clean, right? It's messy at times. That's a little bit of what I will touch on here with some of their paths. But each path needs to be unique to them. We are all kind of smiles in this picture. But, it was also the end of very different years and very different quad for each one of them.

I am going to start with the easiest one. That's Lia, my friend Lia. Lia was already an Olympian in 2012. As many of you know, she was an Olympian as a teenager in the London Games. She qualified for the 4 by 100 free relay, she won a bronze medal, and then came into our program a year later. While she had this really good success, there aren't many teenagers that make the Olympic team these days, let alone in the 100 freestyle, even if it was a relay alternate spot. She had pretty good success. In a lot of ways, I don't think anyone necessarily grasps very well how she got there. Sometimes teenagers can lack a little perspective in that. So, she came to us after the summer of 2013. She didn't make an international team and in 2013, she missed out on the World Championship team. At the 2014 U.S. Nationals, she had a good swim to be in the top six, but wasn't in the top four. So, didn't get to qualify or in the top three that summer for the Pan Pac team in 2014.

So, no international competitions, 2013 and 2014, which for a kid that was on the Olympic team as a teenager- that rocked her. I can still remember post 100 free in Irvine in 2014, just kind of managing that conversation with the disappointment that she was feeling. She did earn a relay alternate spot for 2015, because as we know, the World Championship team is selected a year in advance. She did earn that spot and went to the World Championships and competed on a 4 by 100 free relay. 4 by 100 mixed free was also on a prelim. 4 by 1 medley, but she was always a relay swimmer and hadn't swam in individual event and a major international competition is something that she really wanted to do heading into the 2016 Trials. She was trying to really reinvent herself. She didn't love the fact that she was known as a just a relay swimmer. And so, working through that 2015-2016 year, Simone had decided to take a year off. She stayed at Stanford to train, but wasn't on our collegiate team. So, in a lot of ways, it was great for Lia because it allowed her to shine in our collegiate program. She was our best sprinter and she was great anyway, but it allowed her to shine a little more and carry great confidence through that year. And then, as we got to Olympic Trials, she had a good swim, but it just didn't come together and she finished fourth. I think, fourth or fifth in the 100 free. So, she made the Olympic team, but sort of made the Olympic team and felt disappointed about it. I was really proud of her for how she managed that next period, going into the Games and putting herself in a good spot to have a good swim in the morning in Rio. Then her Olympic Games was over the first morning in Rio. It was an eight-day meet, right? She was trying

to process all of that.

The reason I got to talk about Lia first is, in a lot of ways, even though she had these ups and downs, hers was probably the most linear path and the most consistent path to make the Olympic team. She's now trying to reinvent herself again. She has since transitioned. She's down in San Diego training with David Marsh. I think it is a really good spot for her right now and at this time in her life. And so, there isn't going to be anybody that's going to be cheering for Lia harder at Olympic Trials than I am. Her path was pretty consistent.

And then, we move on to the next two. Those are our very different paths and experiences. So, Simone, in 2013 she qualified for the World Championships in the 50 free at a pretty young age, I believe the end of her junior year in high school. So again, she was another teenager in a sprint freestyle event, which is a little bit rare especially as an individual event. She went to World Championships and she swam on some relays as well in 2013. In 2014, she won summer Nationals, so she was our top representative at Pan Pacs and qualified in both the 50 and 100 free, which then qualified her for the 2015 World Championship team. At the Pan Pacs in 2014, I don't remember if she medaled individually, but the swim that really stood out was the 4 by 100 free relay and we decided to put Simone first so that she could race Cate Campbell, who was leading off. She got in and just got right on the lane line; a very strategic swim and went 53.3 or 53.4. It was a best time and just had a ton of momentum coming out of that summer into the 2014-2015 year, which for her was her first year at Stanford. She had a great collegiate season, like everything just went perfect. Mid-year: great; we go to NCAAs and she wins and sets an American record in the 100 free. Our team does really well, we finished third. Then, as we are getting ready for the World Championships and I start noticing a lot of stress and anxiety. We go to Worlds and she finals in both the 50 and 100. But it doesn't sniff a medal, she's pretty far back in the field, which is not a very good feeling for her. At that point, she was 19 years old and you are a year out of the Olympic Games. Here you are at the World Championships and you are not necessarily relevant for medals. Now you are thinking about just making the Olympic team.

But, we come out of that into that 2015-16 season and one of the things that I think we do really well is we are constantly evaluating and being self-critical and making changes. We had a really good conversation at the end of that 2015 season on some little tweaks to her weekly training schedule; adding in a little bit more kicking and a little bit more kick to swim work. We introduced more power tower work for her at that time because one of the things about Simone, for those of you that don't know, is she swam for Allison Beebe as an age group swimmer. Allison is an incredible coach and is very much in the work based 200 focus and just being a really good trainer. We didn't train Simone like a sprinter really until about eight months ago. We have continued to train her like a 200 swimmer for most of her time at Stanford because she was too young at an age to go down to that, "Hey, let's sprint and let's focus on the 50 free."

I am going to come back to that in a bit, but we made some changes in the schedule. She decided to take a year away from swimming collegiately. She still stayed in school, which I think was really good because, honestly, these athletes need distractions. This is what I worry about for some of our

professionals that are just getting out of the collegiate environment. What are they doing with their day? What are they doing with their weekly schedule? That's something that both she and Katie now are still fine-tuning a bit. But she stayed in school, but didn't swim collegiately. She was doing pretty well through the fall and swam really well at U.S. Winter Nationals in December. She continued to just take some really good steps and every time that anybody talked about her, the expectations just continued to rise and rise and rise. I remember listening to Amy Van Dyken covering one of her PAC 12 meets and was talking about Simone, and the fact that she was going to win a gold medal the next summer at the Olympic Games. And she's never even been on an Olympic team! Right? And so, the expectations for her just continued to rise and rise and rise. Here's this young kid who's a sprinter, African American, like this is going to be the perfect story. All of that was overwhelming for her. The stress carried through that year. She had sinus stuff and illnesses that led to a rib injury. Come February and we're dealing with that. She is having trouble breathing. So, she's having sinus surgery the first week in May, right? Olympic Trials is in the middle of June.

Here we are. It's like, this has been the most up and down season for anybody that I have really had the experience of working with because the highs were great and the lows were pretty rough. She's young and kind of an emotional kid, and trying to balance that as she's getting ready for the most important meet of her life, which is Olympic Trials. We get to Olympic Trials and we get to a day three of the meet. She swims the 200 freestyle. We decided still to swim it; we knew she probably wasn't going to make it individually, that's okay. But, does she make it as a relay alternate? Take a little bit of pressure off? Then you've got the 100 free and 50 free later in the meet. Well, she makes to finals. It's great. But it's one of those situations where when you make it to the final on the 200 free, or even in 100 free, the mentality is that 'I only have to beat two people.' That's the worst, right? If I only beat two people, I am sixth. I make the team; I am relay alternate, I am ready to go. She finished seventh. She had a good swim, but finished seventh. So, now the stress is elevated a little bit more. We get to the 100 free final and she does put together a really good swim. But a lot of people forget that she was second at our Olympic Trials in both the 100 free and the 50 free. She went 53.3, 53.4, 53.3. I think to get the second spot in the 50 and 100. Abbey Weitzeil won 100 and then Abbey won that 50 free again, a couple days later and Simone finished second in that. It was one of those moments where it was just pure relief that she made the team. It's a fine balance of excitement and you are really excited for her, but she's also relieved. That's what Olympic Trials does to people. It is a very stressful, pressure-cooked environment.

We leave Trials and it's all about, "Now we have got to go and perform." I applaud Danny for his commentary last night. The last couple of years, we have been talking about this on our international staffs; it's not about making the Olympic team. It's about going and performing and winning medals for Team USA. We left that Trials with the mentality that 'we're ready to go and win a medal.' The Olympic experience then becomes really fun because you are part of Team USA, you get all this cool gear, and you go on the training camp. We went to San Antonio and things were going pretty well. We go to Atlanta and it's great. She's getting better and better and better. We go to the Games and she is in tears on the second or third day that we're in Rio- just really nervous and stressed. She leads off the relay the first night. We put her first on the 4 by 100 free relay. She had a fairly solid swim. It wasn't her best swim of the meet, clearly, but she had a decent split. First day, first Olympic race, like, "Okay, we won a silver medal; it's fine." We get to days five, six, seven, and eight, and that's where it's 100 free prelims, semis, and then finals. 50 free: prelims, semis, and finals. Starting after that relay

swim, it was like she was really starting to feel comfortable and relaxed and got into this really good momentum. She just comes in and swims a great prelim swim. It feels pretty easy. She comes back at night and has a great swim and earns lane three for the finals and has absolutely nothing to lose.

The one thing that you can't teach, you can help coach it, but you definitely can't teach is that competitive spirit. She embraces that competitive spirit. That single swim in Rio, while she had already had a lot of that leading into it, absolutely changed her career. We've seen that over the last couple of summers now. She just swam the perfect race at the perfect time. It didn't matter that Sarah was faster earlier in the year, it didn't matter that Cate Campbell had broken the world record three or four weeks before that. What mattered was in that moment, taking advantage of the opportunity to have a lane in a final at the Olympic Games with Team USA cap on. The rest of that story is history.

One of my favorite moments after that race was when she came down to the warm down area, and I'd gotten to see her for the first time, and Maya was there and Lia was there and Simone was there, and they just embraced as a group. The realization that there were so many people that helped her get to that place. In that group huddle, from myself as her coach, to Lia as one of her best friends, to Maya as this is incredibly calming presence for this young person at a time of high stress. And then, she comes out of that swim and two days later, earns another medal in the 50 free, which was kind of unexpected at that point. Again, not even being the top American coming out of the Trials. We fast forward to the mixed 4 x 100 medley relay.

Did anybody watch the mixed 4 by 100 medley relay at the World Championships? Yeah, that was a low moment at that meet. Simone dives in as the anchor leg with the lead, Cate Campbell and Australia is next to her and she just swims a lousy race. She got tight, didn't flow on the first 50, and she took a breath inside the flags- which she never does. We have a hard and fast rule at Stanford about when we take our last breath. Her cap is literally falling off on her last two strokes. Everything that could have gone wrong with the swim, went wrong. She comes over to our team area and she is hot. The anger turns into emotion and she was really trying to process what just happened because she had the opportunity to help Team USA earn a gold medal and they got past us. Cate had a great split, but probably not one that Simone would have given away. She's just an emotional, up and down roller coaster.

Then, she comes into the next day and has the 100 free individual. It's like, "All right," she has let it go. She has a good morning swim and comes back at night. It's hard, people thought she was just trying to coast to get an outside lane. No, that was a really hard swim for her. She went 53.3 in semifinals. There wasn't an easy stroke on that swim. We had also decided to lead her off the 4 by 200 relay, which was about 80 minutes after the 100 free semifinal. So, she comes over, and she's a little bit like a deer in the headlights. She's never been on a 4 by 200 relay in an international meet. Let alone, now we're putting her first and she's going next to Ariarne Titmus. It is like this perfect storm of stress, right? But to her credit, she led off in 1:56.0, which was her best time by a second and helped Team USA to an American record. They were under the old-world record, but unfortunately, we got touched out at the end, which is not going to happen next summer.

The next night, she's got the 100 free and she's out in lane one and it's like, "Just go. Don't look, don't think. You've done all this preparation; you have the freedom to just kind of let it flow." And sure enough, she did. She put her feet on the wall at 24.8, which was the fastest she ever put her feet on

the wall for the first 50. Nobody could see her and just like a shotgun on that first 50. She really held her stroke together, she gets the touch, and she goes 52.0- a new American record and wins gold. She does the same thing again a couple of days later. You can't teach some of that stuff, you can help manage those moments of stress. I think Josh touched on it earlier, we need a counseling degree, absolutely. We're not coaching at the Olympic Games, we're not coaching at the World Championships; we are managing and counseling and trying to motivate. But you are not really making a whole lot of technical changes at that point. You are not training at that point. You are trying to keep these young people on this path, to believe in themselves, and to believe in what they are capable of doing.

Then, we get to Maya's story. Maya's story is really fascinating because here's this kid who super smart, like skipped a grade in school. She had perfect math scores on her SAT, just very well put together emotionally, socially, intellectually, and as an athlete. She checks all these boxes and is just a really neat person. When I got to Stanford in the fall of 2012, she had just come out of Trials and she finished fourth in both the 200 IM and 400 IM. Even though she finished fourth, she never felt like she was close to making the team. She was really far back from a time perspective. But I recognized quickly when I got there that this person is different. She's really special and has all these, 'it factors.'

She goes through her first college season. That was a pretty good college season, but my first year in coaching women again. It had been five years since I had been coaching women. I didn't dial in our first taper very well at NCAAs and so she was okay in the short course season, but made some really good strides. In the 2013 World Trials, she has her breakout meet. She wins the 400 IM. That was the first time that she had beaten Elizabeth. She was second in the 200 fly. So, she also qualified for the World Championship team in the 200 fly. She qualified on the 4 by 200 relay, she probably would have qualified in the 200 IM; she got disqualified in prelims. It was like, 'this is going to be it.' Now I can see this path very clearly for this quad leading into what what Omaha could be in 2016. She goes to Worlds and has a pretty good swim. She finishes fourth at the 2013 Worlds in the 400 IM and just missed the final of the 200 fly and was on the prelim of the 4 by 2 relay. It was good, a good first international experience, right?

The next year is her senior year and she just crushes it during the college season. She goes best times and wins the 200 IM. At NCAAs, she wins the 400 IM and finished second or third in the 200 fly. We finish second as a team. She was on three of our four relays that won, just a perfect ending as a senior at the NCAA championships. She hadn't communicated this, but at that time was very much considering being done with everything. She had in her mind this kind of life plan. For anyone that knows Maya, I know she's pretty organized. So, it's like, "Okay, well, I am going to do this, I am going to this, and I am going to do this." That picture didn't really include swimming. So we get through the NCAA championships and we're talking about, "Okay, what are you going to do?" And it was like, "Well, I will swim this summer and I will just see how it goes," because it's still two-and-a-half years before the Olympic Trials. That's kind of a long time.

So she was someone that was like, "I never thought about the Olympics. I never dreamed that I would actually be an Olympian, I never thought about the Olympics. It is not what motivates me every day. Having these conversations, knowing she is as good as she is, it's like, "All right, well, let's just take it cycle-by-cycle." So, we get through the first couple of weeks and I remember a day- it is just etched in my mind, the middle of the main set- she gets out. I was like, "All right, what's going on?" So, we sit down

and we talk, and she goes, "I just don't know if I want to do this." And if anyone also knows Maya, you know that you are never going to make her do something that she doesn't want to do. And so, it just gave her the time and space to make a decision based on what she was feeling, but giving her the time and space was super important. Not trying to talk her into it was really important at that time because if I had pressed, in that meeting in the spring of 2014, she would have quit. And so it was, "All right, let's just think about it." She comes back the next day and trains. Finally we get into a good rhythm and she makes the Pan Pac team. She wasn't particularly great, because as you know, when you are in this sport and you are one foot and in one foot out, you are just not going to have great performances. She was fortunate enough to make the team and win a gold medal at Pan Pacs in the IM, but wasn't very fast. She was silver in the 400 IM behind Elizabeth. Then it was like, "All right, now we're having really serious retirement conversations."

Keep in mind that she skipped a grade. When she finished her last year as a senior; let me say it this way, at NCAAs her senior year, she was still 20 years old. She didn't turn 21 until April of her senior year. I am having this conversation with a 21-year-old. And as coaches, we can see what's there, what she's capable of, but we're having this conversation and I am just thinking in my head, like, "What are you doing?" Because her parents, her boyfriend, her teammates, her coach, everybody's like, "You'd be insane not to do this." But, you have to let it happen. So, finally we get to the end of that summer in 2014, and she commits to the next year like, "All right, I am all in for 2015. I think I am going to go through 2016, but I want to see what this year looks like. It's my first year as a professional swimmer. Let's just feel it out a little bit."

She just gets into a rhythm. For the next 20 months she is just hauling every day. She was training, going to meets, whether it's a pro swim or winter Nationals. She goes to Worlds in 2015, goes 4:31 in the 400 IM and wins a silver medal, just misses the American record. Qualified in the 200 IM. She didn't medal, but finished fourth with a best time. Everything was going great, we get into that Olympic year, and had just a perfect September, October, and November. We get to Winter Nationals. She's great. We go to some pro swim meets. We go to a training camp in Colorado Springs for 18 days. We do one in December, but we did another one for 18 days in March and April. It's just perfect, like, she is riding this wave. We get to Olympic Trials. For those of you who were there, you remember the big doors on the outside of the Quest center. They do this often times at meets, but they have those stickers that they put on the glass doors of athletes. There's Nathan Adrian. There's Elizabeth Beisel. And there's Simone. And there's Ryan Lochte. And there's somebody else, and then there's Maya.

Well, the only two people with her huge faces planted on the doors of the center that had never made in the Olympic team before then was Simone and Maya. Then Simone is talking, but they both get there and see that it's like, "Holy smokes, now it's real." Expectations and stress cause crazy things to happen. Maya was recapping a good story via Twitter a few weeks ago about the stress of that day. It was related to a little bit of what Elizabeth Beisel went through the first time that she made it, she like threw up on her front seat or something.

So, 400 IM is day one of Trials, it's right out of the gate. She has a very tight, not free-flowing 400 IM in prelims, which is somewhat to be expected for everybody on that first day. It's a hard first day out of the gate, like, you have an event that isn't prelims-semifinal-final, you can't work into it. It's like, "You have got to be good," and then she doesn't have a great swim. We get to

finals that night. I can see the stress on her face. She does the worst pace I've seen her do in four years. She gets out, I am looking at her, and she's looking at me and it's like, "Uh oh." "Are you doing all right?" She can't even talk because she's so stressed. This is the most calm, chill, cool, collected person you'll ever meet in your life. That is what this meet does to people, but we talked for a bit and got her to settle and just goes and has a great swim. It wasn't the best time, but like the stress of the moment and winning Olympic Trial was crazy. You fast-forward a couple of days and then she wins the 200 IM and you fast-forward a couple days, and she wins the 200 back, an event that we had been really focusing in on. She had been quietly racing from time-to-time, but she had never swum the 200 back internationally until Rio. It really came together. So, we go on this Olympic trip. Now she's just a different person, she's back to her normal self. Everything is just icing on the cake at this point for her. And she goes, and she swims the 400 IM on day one and wins a silver medal. She goes another best time, again just misses the American record. Go to day three of the meet and she wins a medal in the 200 IM. She had never medaled before in the 200 IM. She's been really good at the freestyle at the end of the races.

We get to day five, which is the 4 by 200 relay, and she didn't qualify on the 4 by 2 relay, but we had some folks there that weren't necessarily having a great meet. It was like, "All right, the coaches were talking and we'll see how prelims goes, but if we need Maya to be on it, do you think she'd be good and ready to go?" And it's important in those moments, in those relay conversations, that you are really honest and transparent about what you believe. And I said, "I think she'll be pretty good. I think she'll be 1:56.2 or 1:56.5." And at that point that was going to be better than anybody else that we had that we were considering.

So, after prelims I sent her a note so she knew it was possible she'd be on the relay, but I think in the back of her mind, it's like, 'probably not going to happen.' I send her a text, "Hey, you are going to be on the relay--" what time it is, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. I just get this text with like exclamation points on it. She comes in that night on the relay and goes 1:56.3, which was a great swim for her. Team USA won a gold medal. It's awesome. All right, then the next day, we start our what we call our "Good, better, best." Prelims is good; semis is better; best in the finals, for her 200 back.

She has good prelims, does a nice job in semifinals, she gets in a great spot for the final, and we're in the warm down pool. Actually, take a step back. After the semifinal, I run down to the warm down pool where she's warming down. She says, "I've never wanted to win something so much my life." I said, "Yeah, well, let's do it." How do you respond to that? She's not a very competitive person from that perspective, like, she's really interesting in that she always wants to be the best that she can be. It's always relative to herself. It's a good healthy competitiveness, but it's competitive with herself and wanting to be better than she's ever been before. In most moments, it's just wanting to be the best version of herself, which is something that we talked about quite a bit.

But all of a sudden, we added this like, "Competitive element," because it was Katinka and she was having a great meet and she didn't want to necessarily finish her last swim with any regrets. We warm up and she looks great. Just before she goes, I look at her in the eyes on the third 50, "We have been working on, just press the third 50." She has a pretty good first 100. Katinka is out fast, but then that that gap gets closed on the third 50 and she really just executed the race plan. She flips at the 150 wall and Katinka has a really good underwater kick out. But, then it's just closing and closing and closing and then has one of the great touches in the

history of our sport to get the win.

It was just a culmination of someone that really did things the right way through the sport. That was her story. It was pretty easy until here and then it was pretty easy until the day of Trials, right? But she is generally a pretty calm and collected person. When I think back on it and she walked away from the meet with four medals- individual gold, relay gold, silver, and bronze, it's not that surprising. I think in the moment it was, but when I think back to the things that she did every day and the focus that she had, it wasn't super surprising.

That's each of their experiences. I started with the idea that everyone's path is different and I think that's super important. As coaches, we have to make sure that we need to motivate and we need to encourage and we need to challenge and inspire, but sometimes we can't put them into a box. Allowing them to work through that path a little bit on their own is important, especially as we look at Olympic quads. They all had totally different Olympic quads, but it all ended up with success in Omaha, and then, it ended up with even greater success in Rio. I look at some others who had success in 2016 and they weren't even on the World Championship team in 2015. I look at it now where we were in 2019 with Team USA. We had really great swims around the globe this year, including some of our junior swims in Budapest. That path is going to be very different than what someone like Simone has had in this quad, where she came out of the Olympic Games, and it's World's gold and then hopefully making the Olympic team again next summer. But, each path is going to be a little bit different and allowing them to work through that, I think is pretty important.

Male Speaker 1: What do you say to Simone and Maya in those moments when they get to the Quest center and their faces are on the outer doors of the facility?

Greg Meehan: Yeah, it's not easy at that point. The ship has sailed a little bit. The question was, what do you say to Simone and Maya in those moments when they get to the Quest center and their faces are on the outer doors of the facility? I wish I had known for starters. That would have been helpful. You are trying to get them back to control levels, right? What are the things that that you can control in this? You can't control that. You can't control the number of people in the stands. You can't control how fast your competitors go. Identifying the things between now and race time that we can control and having a sense of calm confidence in that. Then, those conversations were different for each of them, but just trying to find a way to best communicate with them and figure out a solution, but it was messy.

Female Speaker 1: When they are having those low moments in a meet, but they still have more races coming up, how do you get them back on track?

Greg Meehan: Yeah. The question was, 'when they're having those low moments in a meet, but they still have more races coming up, how do you get them back on track?'

All right, when Simone came over after that 100 free semifinal, and again, it was super hard. She was not happy. Knowing that she had the relay, not even the next day, you've got this relay in about 80 minutes. Pardon my language. But I said, "All right, we're going to take that piece of crap swim and we're just going to put it over there. We are going to talk about this right here, what have we got?" We can acknowledge that was a piece of crap swim, it's okay. "We will acknowledge that and then we'll talk about that later. But right now, I need you right here." We need to do everything that we

can do to get yourself ready to have a great lead off swim.

I use the fact that Ariarne Titmuss was leading off as a positive. "You don't have to go 1:54." Her best time was 1:57.0, so it can be intimidating knowing that Titmuss has already been 1:54 leading off that relay. It's like, "You don't have to go 1:54, you just have to give us your best swim right here."

Then I back away, let her do some more stuff in the water and then I come back five or 10 minutes later to check in, see what she needed, and just try to get her back on track. To her credit, she's super competitive, but I think that it's just a good way to craft it and I guess the answer to the question is trying to find ways to craft your commentary in a way that's going to get them centered. We, as coaches, also have to be salespeople at times. It is like taking that fact that she was leading off next to Ariarne, she could look really bad going two seconds slower, but it still would have been a good swim for her. I did not think she would necessarily go 1:56.0. I thought, if we go 1:56.5 coming out of that 100 free, that would have been great. But, just trying to find ways where she can again, not focus on too much on what is going on around her, but instead- maybe 40 minutes before-it's like, "You got this." 'I got this,' she got out and went there. It is just a matter of trying to find ways to connect with people, but I think because I have those conversations with them at home, it makes it easier having those conversations at competition. If they're struggling with something, acknowledge it, talk about it, address it, and find ways to get them back on track; it makes it easier to have those conversations then in times of stress.

Greg Meehan: From a culture perspective, I think it's super important to communicate and to take the time to get to know them. I had a talk yesterday and one of the things that I mentioned was that kids nowadays like that personal relationship piece for them. It seems to be more and more important. My sister Tracy says, "They don't care what you know until they know that you care." If you can establish that part with them, then it allows that time and space for you to then press or be critical because they know that it's going to be coming from a place of care. I just think that's super important. I think it's important with all athletes. I think it's incredibly important with coaching a women's only program.

Then from a training perspective, there are things that I do that that maybe I wouldn't have done coaching a men's team in our weekly cycle. We do a little bit more aerobic and threshold work, as they are able to recover a little bit better. But, there's a lot of moving pieces to that. I would think the most important piece is maybe the non-technical side and more on the relationship and cultural side.

Yes?

Male Speaker 3: How do you break down duties and work for the associates that you get?

Greg Meehan: The question was about Tracy, our Associate Head Coach and how we structure our coaching breakdown each week. For us, I really encourage all coaches to do this. I think when there's only two coaches on deck, or we have a volunteer as well, it's really important that we are working with everybody. Greg has his group and Tracy has her group. People are flowing in and out of groups all the time. I am coaching different groups all the time. I usually coach the same groups through the course of the week, but there aren't people that are only working with me everyday or only working with Tracy everyday. I think it's important that we have the opportunity to coach each one of them, especially for Tracy. I think she has a lot to offer them as a coach and as a mentor, and so, making sure that they have access to work with her. I think it's also important that even on days when I am not coaching a particular athlete, I am coaching these groups here that I know exactly what they're doing. That starts with our communication. We talk every day before our training sessions about what's going on and the focus. That part is pretty important.

Yes?

Male Speaker 3: How do you move forward within a meet when they've won a medal?

Greg Meehan: It goes two ways, right? It is either going to be complacency or it's going to be motivation. Using Simone as an example, she has so many races through the course of a World Championships. Let's use this past summer as an example. There isn't necessarily time to get complacent. She raced on day one. She raced on day four. She raced three times on day five. She raced on day six; twice on day seven; three times on day seven. You are just running through. If you maybe are not on relay, you just have an individual event here, and then later on in the meet, it is making sure that you give them time to enjoy that moment because it is a really cool thing. You have to let that experience happen. Then you have got about 12 hours till the next morning. 'All right, let's refocus. There will be time for a bigger celebration after the meet is over.'

Thank you all for coming.

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Making the Torch Burn Brighter

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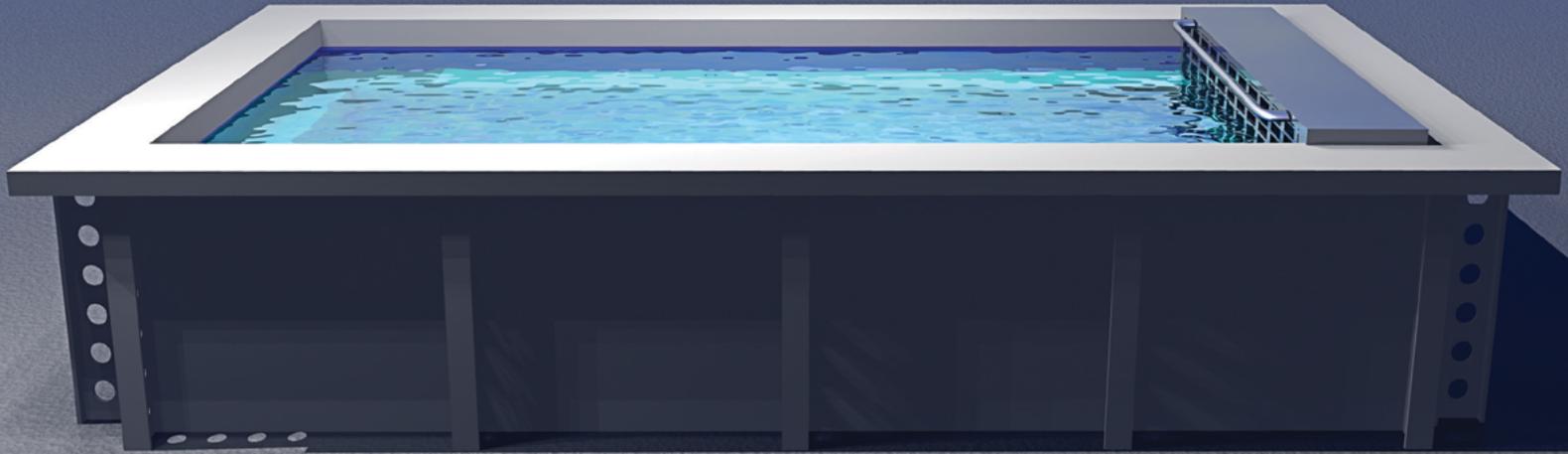


In their 2016 ASCA World Clinic talk “Making The Torch Burn Brighter – Maximizing the potential of a coaching staff” Phillip Davis and Chris O’Linger give coaches advice on how to get the most out of the staff that you have. Davis mentions the importance of having a staff that buys into the culture and the vision of the program. Davis notes, “as a head coach you have got to know thyself...you have got to know your weaknesses; you have got to know your strengths.” Knowing these strengths and weaknesses lends itself to the staff selection process as coaches can know what they need for example, “If I am not good at being organized...I need somebody that can help me be better.” He notes that Coach O’Linger “seems to address the things that we are not good at, and we are on the same page,” and notes the importance of always talking with the staff, being in constant communication so that the staff is on the same page. He encourages “staffs to really go the extra mile...go to lunch with your head coach; Find ways to get involved with them so you are really sharing the same brain, so to speak.” Coach Davis speaks on keeping your GA’s more than a year or two, and finding ways for them to make money such as starting a club team. He notes that when developing “a staff as a head coach, you have got to be humble, you have got to check your ego. You cannot just rely on what you are going to do...you can do a lot of great things by yourself...but only for so long. Somebody is going to suffer”. Davis speaks on staying humble and quotes “ you can accomplish anything in the world if you don’t care who gets the credit”, following up with “you’ve got to have this mentality so that it doesn’t matter who gets the credit, it’s the ultimate goal.” He also points out that language has to be intentional as well as a top to bottom thing throughout the program. In the process of hiring an assistant Davis says “it doesn’t end when you get the job and I didn’t hire somebody because I want them to come in and change everything and make it better. I want to see what they’re able to do

and find a way to help shape and mold them.” His advice to assistant coaches is to learn something from the program, the coaches and the situation. He notes that head coaches should “Take care of your people and kind of protect them from themselves a little bit from the selfishness, the will to win, all those things, I know, I know, I know.”

Coach O’Linger mentions that as a new coach on the team he would “sit back and observe what was going on. Taking in the little things that are going on every day, it gives me a little bit more leeway into when it is time to take action.” He says assimilation is a big key for him, “I am not coming in to change anything; I am coming in to assist”. He notes that having a purpose is key to being an assistant coach and that assistants need to acquire/demonstrate ownership over team and atmosphere when you are taking action. “You have got to find your voice. You have got to find who is listening, who is not, how to address the ones who are not; because if you are going to be a head coach, that is probably an important thing to do.” He notes the importance of expressing athlete’s concerns with the head coach, “do not withhold any information... it’s my job to express the athlete’s interest to him.” The importance is in making the coach aware of the interests as well as discussing and evaluating performances with the head coach. This ties in with “helping head coaches with the tough decisions...academics...mental health stability/issues going on at home.” He notes that their athletes “will have an unlimited amount of ownership over the program as long as the vision is carried out on a day-to-day basis,” and says “The feeling of ease allows coaches to generate more innovative and evaluative decisions. This method of coaching will establish a hierarchy necessary for peer leadership to occur. And that’s our home goal.”

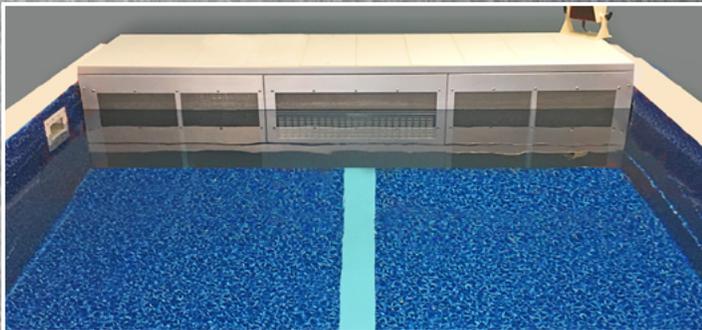
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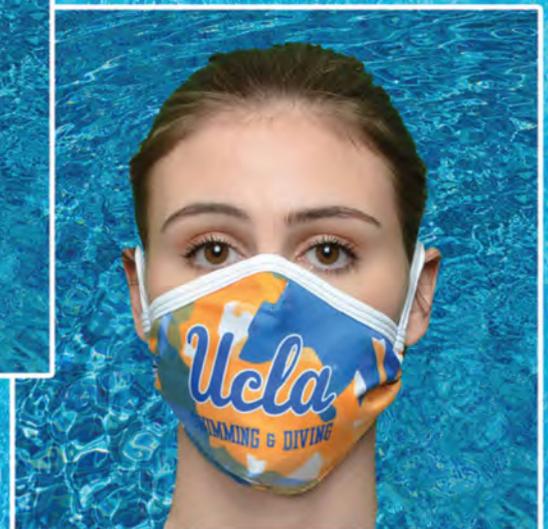




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