



Teaching Fast Finishing

by Dale Porter, Bolles School Sharks

Our next speaker brings a combination of coaching excellence, enthusiasm, passion, and leadership, which has produced swimmers at the highest levels including #1 rankings at both the statewide and national levels. His 20 years of coaching experience includes success with the Lake Erie Silver Dolphins, Spartan Aquatic Club and he is now with the Bolles Sharks Age Group Program. He is the LSC Age-Group Vice Chair. He was the Florida Age-Group Coach of the Year in 2011. He is considered not only a great coach, but a great role model. Please welcome Coach Dale Porter.

Thank you very much. Welcome, I get the late flight crew, the hometown, calling the hometown team to finish you off here. So, thank you for staying and adjusting your flights to get the full benefit of the clinic. My name is Dale Porter. I coach and work for Sergio Lopez, over at the Bolles School Sharks, which is six miles down the road. If you are by chance here next week for USA swim meetings, we have an open door policy. You are welcome to come by and visit and see what we are all about and see how we run our business per se. My task today is teaching fast finishes. I wrote this last fall for our Thursday Coaches' Development meetings. I wrote it out of frustration that I was feeling coming back from championship swim meets. And I will get back to that in a moment. My purpose for writing it last fall was to open dialogue with my staff to help me figure out a way to solve my problem. And, I have always loved this quote. I remember seeing this quote as a child in my youth, "You learn a lot about yourself in the last lap of a close race," and I often post this on the wall. I try and get this into my athletes' head and teach them the importance of finishing well and finishing the race altogether; but my problem is I felt like we are really losing more close races than we were winning. And I was coming away with a very long drive home, Sunday nights, championship after championship and feeling that frustration of just losing so many close races per se.

Now, I know me; I'm discontent. I want to win every one of those races; I want my athletes to win every one of those races. And I do not have data to know how many they lost versus how many close races they won, I do not. It could be one race

and I could feel this way. I am not sure. But I know enough about me to know that it could be just one. So know that, I do not have data on it. It is just a feeling I felt coming home and I wrote this hoping that my coaches could help me help my athletes. So as I came back, I went through a problem-solving scheme.

I needed to break down my problem, needed to clarify it. I needed to analyze the root cause and I really wanted to set a target date, which at that time that I wrote it, was spring and summer and I've come back two meets later and still feeling the same emotion.

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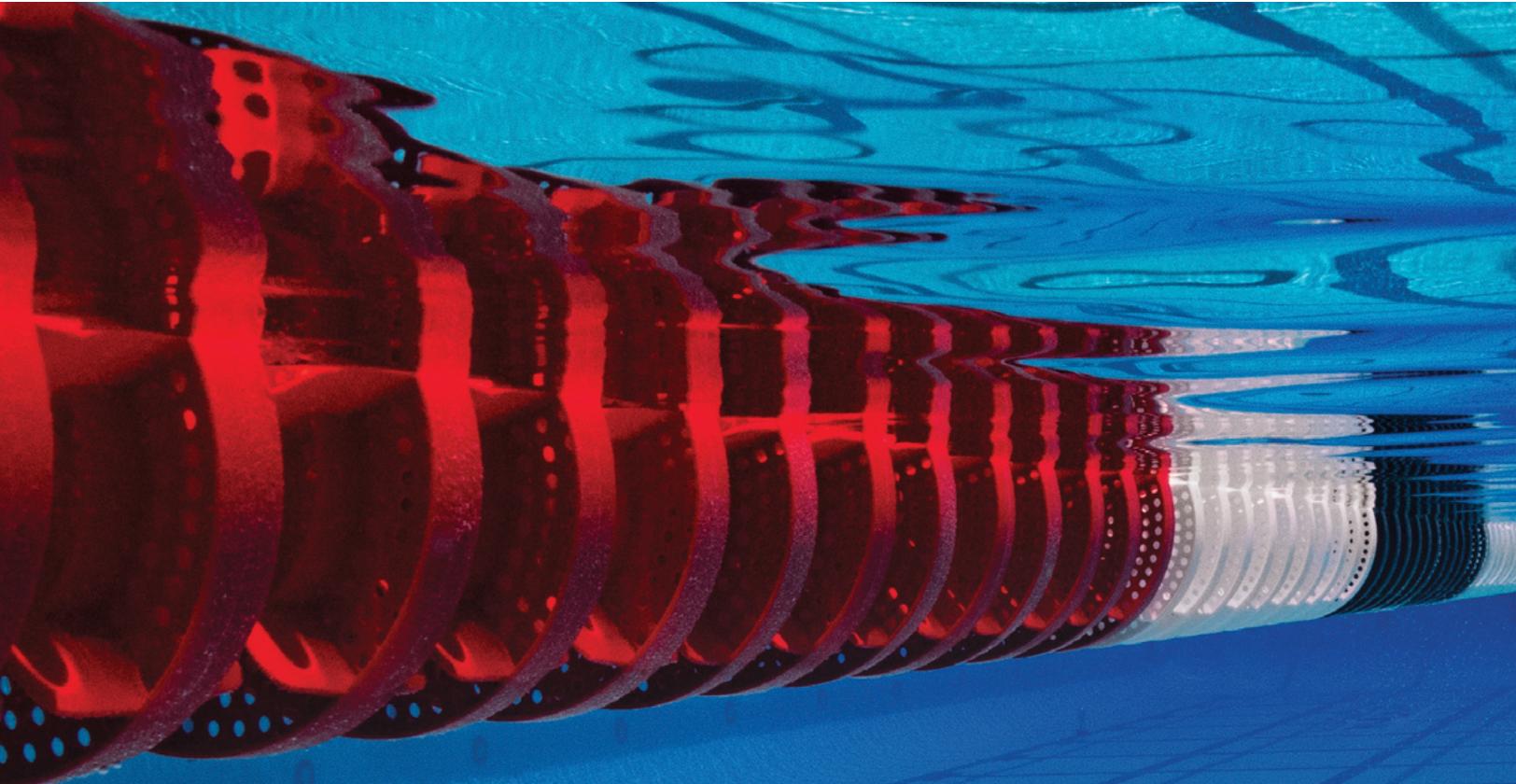
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Teaching Fast Finishing (cont.)

So I've dug deeper into it and asked John if I could present it here at the clinic. It is not a finished product yet. It is still in the works and there might even be time where you can help me. But it was encouraging to sit through the week and hear coach after coach after coach talk about some of these issues and I think they are issues we all struggle with. So, I do not feel like it is just me, and there are other coaches out there that have said this is a very difficult issue to either analyze, to measure, or to solve in itself.

So in the plan do check steps of problem solving, my intent is to develop some countermeasures and I have started to do that, to put them in into implementation and that's the process I have not yet done, I have not yet started. And then hopefully, come back and report to my staff if I feel better about it or that I feel that the athlete is actually doing their best to get into the wall. So when I was analyzing my issue, I thought what are the possible issues? It could be poor technique, getting into the wall, which could flat out the poor technique. It could be a lack of confidence or the self-talk that was going on in their head throughout the race. It could simply be grit and mental toughness. It could be something about within the energy system, meaning, I did not prepare them well. I missed the taper you know, things like that, or it could be that the athlete and the coach, we just blew the strategy plan. We had a plan in place and something happened, anxiety or the athlete did not believe or the athlete had the sense that they had to stay with somebody else as part of their race plan and that just did not work out for them, any one of those things. For me in my situation, I can take out conditioning and I can take out lone race plan because in every situation, splits made sense. Splits were fine. The race was a great race. It is winning that close race, winning that close race. We want that for our team, we want that for our athlete.

So I am up onto the top three: technique, confidence/self-talk, and grit. Technique, I can break it down and we will talk about that here in a moment how I present it to my coaches, how I present it to my athletes. Confidence and self-talk, I have got some strategies in place and you have them, too, in working with our athletes there, because you and I both know that a negative thought in a physical act will shut down the adrenaline and once the adrenaline is gone, we feel it, we know it. You might recall that as an athlete, you might recall it as a swimmer; you might be into aerobic sports as an adult now and just sense that a negative thought shuts down that adrenaline and we just feel empty in that moment. So we have got to work skills to keep that self-talk positive. Confidence, I think comes over time. It is a repetition thing; we will talk a little bit more about that in a moment. So I am focusing on the top three within this talk because I am pretty confident that those bottom two, the data says we are okay there. So for my situation and my problem, I am concentrating on the top three.

Technique, freestyle – at some point the breath is held and the athlete races to the wall. I will write at some point because you and I both have the sets of athletes in our group where they will take a breath the last stroke into the wall, which drives us crazy. So, some athletes, they just need to get better at that. We often have reference points, be it the flags, be it the changing colors at the lane lines. That is up to you, I leave that to you. I write that, "at some point". We, as coaches,

need to communicate with our athletes at some point; we are going to commit to keep the head in streamline all the way to the wall. On the final recovery, the finger pads reach for the wall directly in front of the shoulder and we state that in terms of a lever, you know. If I am towards my side, my hand is right in front of my shoulder, that is the shortest distance; that is the longest reach, I'm sorry, the longest reach to the wall. Anything inside the shoulder, anything outside the shoulder and the lever gets shorter and it is going to take longer to get to the wall, the finger tip directly in front of the wall. The head remains in line with the spine, possibly rolling to the side, I leave that to you, whether you want those eyes down, whether you like to let head roll with the side that's, I leave that to you to work out.

The kick stops only after contact and that is another discipline issue that you and I see within our athletes. I think that is common across the board, no matter for age group all the way up to senior level swimmers and the length at the finish is important, the length at the finish is important, that straight arm, the extension of the legs, extension in stretch from the side, the length at the finish is important. So we want that longest lever reaching for the wall. The finger pads not up here, I get a lot of this because of athletes protecting the fingers running into the wall, we got to teach them to make contact with that pad and then collapse the wrist.

For backstroke, I put both finishes up here and there might be more, I am aware of two that my athletes demonstrate. I have never ever taught the dolphin kick finish, I have never taught it. So, my athletes are performing it because they have seen someone else do it, okay? I have never taught it. I leave it up there because maybe you are teaching it and I do not think it is a bad thing, I think it is a risky thing for my athletes, does not makes any sense, the way our officials are calling the backstroke finish. So with the flutter kick, on the final recovery finger pads reach for the wall directly in front of the shoulder, common, limit the wrist spin, common with freestyle, "towards the side is faster" meaning we will have that longer reach with rotation than we will when those fingers are pulled away from the wall if we stay flat towards our back. The head can roll to the side if there is rotation, opposite shoulder dragging the surface, kick finishes after contact, opposite shoulder dragging the surface. I say that simply because that's what the rule book says. Some part of the body has to be dragging the surface, and in the flutter kick finish that is going to be the high body part. With the dolphin kick on final recovery, the kick changes from flutter to dolphin. The athlete makes one lunge for the wall, and this is that risky part that we get into.

Sometimes those athletes are just too far away from the wall and when they lunge, they go down and if they go down and the wall is not there, what is happening next? Coming back up again, so their line is now longer, its taking them longer to get to that wall, if they fail to time that kick properly. If they are lunging from the wall and they are completely submerged before their hand catches the wall, our officials are pretty much on top of that, here in Florida. We see that often. So, we are talking about that. If those athletes are using the dolphin kick, I am not telling them, "No, do not do it," I am not teaching it. But I need to coach them properly with the timing and encourage them that they simply need to be that kick-touch finish, or kick reach touch, kick reach touch. It has got to be instantaneous.



Toes drag in the surface in this moment, some part of the bodies has to be dragging the surface and you can see in this picture that, that athlete is clearly dragging his toe on surface. Recover, kick, touch. There should be no rise; we talked about that, and no glide for the wall. And that is common with either one of these particular finishes. What I like about this particular picture here, is that you can see that a bent arm is a shorter lever and it is going to take the athlete longer to get to the wall, with that bent arm and we want to be reaching directly in front of the shoulder. It is our longest reach and it is our fastest path to the wall. For breaststroke, another picture that kind of identifies, if we are not disciplined with keeping those elbows inside the shoulders, our lever becomes shorter. If we are not disciplined with keeping the elbows inside the shoulder we have a shorter lever and it is going to take longer to get to the wall. On final stroke, head leading toward the wall, head leading toward the wall. Shoulders up and over the ears, stretch the finger pads to the wall, final kick puts them there on that pad. Final kick; kick -touch, kick- touch. There should be no rise back up and if they are rising back up, it is taking them longer. The path is longer. There should be no glide for that. We're coaching for that kick- touch, kick -touch and that length is important.

If you go to Sergio Lopez's breaststroke talk later on today, you will see a beautiful breaststroke finish from Mike Barrowman. It is gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous. I will just put that up there as a promotion. But I think I am going to stay here for this talk next, for what's next; because I have seen Sergio's breaststroke talk.

Butterfly – famous picture here, famous picture, and what I like best about this picture, obviously I stole it, because it still has their corporate logo out there, is the discipline and commitment in one Olympic games flip-flopped on the next Olympic games. So, we are going to talk later about maintaining the skills and ability to maintain them and maintain these disciplines. It is a never-ending process, a never-ending process. But, what I like is: "Length is important," that last quote. You can see it. You can see what length can do in getting your hands to the wall and you can see when the discipline is released, when the brain has said, You are done, and the hands not on the wall yet, what happens to the rest of the body and this is what you and I see in our age group swimmers often. They have finished the race mentally before their hand gets to the wall and their body line is gone, shot and it is simply going to add time and it is very difficult to explain that to them. But on the butterfly, hold the breath, head in line with the spine on the final two strokes. Now I should say my same disclaimer, let's get it one stroke better than it is now, one stroke better than it is now. But final two strokes in fly. I don't want to promote holding the breath too long in butterfly for an age-group coach. It's the final two strokes, even if it is the final stroke, I do not get fussy in practice, but I would love it if they could commit to the final two in my group, 11 to 14 year olds. Fingers pad reach for the wall directly in front of the shoulders, that reach, kick touch; reach, kick touch; no rise and no glide, you and I have seen this quite a bit, especially in butterfly, that athlete has finished the race before their hands get to the wall, taking extra time to get to the wall.

Confidence - I think the most important thing we can do for our athletes in terms of building confidence is going through a goal-setting session with them. Hard part for me is to have that goal-setting session now and then I do not think to get back to it again especially when it is important to get back to it which is reviewing, going into

our midseason meet or our championship meet or any meet, really. But that confidence and that goal setting, I think in my mind, plays into grit. In the goal setting, its very important we are identifying the things we can control. We want to see them writing goals that they can control. We need to teach them to let go off things they have no control over. Let go of things they have no control over. It is very hard when they have to make a certain place to advance to an All-Star team, when they have to make a certain place to advance to a next level meet per se, when they have to make a certain place to make it to finals. It is much easier to coach that child to a time than it is necessarily to a place; but in many respects, they have little control over their place, because they have no control over the person next to them or two lanes over. We have to make sure that our goals identify things that they can control. So if your athlete is identifying that they need a certain place to advance, it is your and my job to figure out, well in the past what that time has taken. We need to turn it into something that they can control.

I think goal setting helps with the motivation level, helps with their motivation level. They have written it and they believe it. That's the key. You and I sit down and do goal settings, and everybody turn something back into us normally they believe it, it is interesting the next several practices to watch, if they really believe it, they really do. Imagery skills, I think plays into building confidence. Seeing yourself and your team perform successfully is a big piece of that emotion going into the last length of a close race. And that's one thing that I'm going to be doing with my athletes more is having them see that moment.

Repetition – reminding them, as it is happening, the things that they took control of to make that successful moment happen because again it is going to repeat itself time and time and time again. And learning from our mistakes, not making excuses for that and pushing it away, but teaching our athletes that it is okay to mess it up, because we are going to repeat this again, there is going to be another opportunity. It is very important that we are teaching our athletes that this thing we do- there's a whole lot of mistakes, there's a whole lot of failure attached to it. And it is okay as long as we commit that we are going do it better next time, as long as we learn from it.

Relaxation or arousal goes into that confidence, being psyched up or psyched out before the meet. We teach our athletes about that anxiety curve, a little bit of anxiety is great. Too much anxiety is performance detriment. Stress management goes quite a bit into building confidence, coping skills with stress management, being relaxation, controlling their breathing, encouragement from others that's from me, their teammates, their parents and this is probably the most important thing I need to do, and I heard it several times here at the clinic this weekend and it was encouraging to me that something I am not very good at now. I want to be good at it. I am not very good at it now, and I am not sure if it is one of those x-factor things. But you have seen these coaches and you have read about these coaches and you have heard these coaches talk that have this unbelievable ability to convince somebody what they can be instead of what they are right now. To convince them of what can be, that is where I want to grow this year, that is one of my professional growth goals this year.

And then reinforcement for others, believing in them and that's a personal growth for me. I am very good in here now but looking to



the future, what is best for the future, what is going to happen in the future. I am very fortunate to be on the staff of Bolles because that is Sergio's strength. Sergio's vision for the future and what "can be" is amazing and it is one of those x-factors that we talk about, very hard to teach.

Self talk – steady stream of thoughts and internal dialogue. We already talked about its impact on adrenaline. In that moment the athlete's deciding, Am I going to fight this out or am I going to run? Am I in this race or am I out? and as soon as that negative thought's in, it's going to be very hard to bounce back. In that racing moment, the negative thought is detrimental; behind the blocks that negative thought can be normal, and the very important piece is that we acknowledge it and we replace it right away. We teach them to replace those negative thoughts. Behind the blocks, those jitters are normal and we can teach them to replace; in the race, very difficult to bounce back from that negative thought. We need to teach them that confidence within that race to keep those thoughts positive.

And fight-or-flight logical analysis, self-defense mechanisms, you and I have it, you and I have the self-defense mechanism. We are pretty good at making excuses. I am not sure what your daily activity is or your competition but you and I are pretty good and if we are pretty good at making excuses, you know, if I am walking, you know, the last quarter-mile of my jog each day with Coach John, there is always an excuse why we need to walk that last bit instead of push it in. Self-defense mechanisms, we need to teach that to control that thought process to fight. And this is the piece I did not know how to teach and on the day that I wrote this last fall for the staff, I was anxious for their input and we finished and I asked them, "How do we teach this?" We just all kind of stared at each other and you know, shoulders up. And you and I have heard several speakers throughout the conference. It is a tough thing to teach. It's a tough thing to identify- well- identifying is the tough thing to evaluate- per se, in terms of, "how do we get them there?" And I think through that confidence and I think through self-talk that we can help them to that next level. But I just simply wrote down, whole bunch of words and you might be able to help me, add some words to it, but will power. You and I have seen it. We have seen it in the close races. We love it, we love watching those types of athletes swim, and they might not even be on our team and we encourage them when they come by, when they walk by us, giving them hi-five because we're spectators as well, we're fans of fast swimming and we love to see that. Effort expenditure, that is part of that, "Am I fighting, is this effort worth it in this moment, is it worth it?"

Then motivation level – I think that is directly related to the goal. They have purpose for doing this thing before they got up on the block. One of the greatest challenges I have as I went through that phase, I'd hear other people, and coaches talk about it, "Athlete, I want you to see me before your race and I want you to see me after your race," and the athlete will come up before the race and the athlete would stand there, and there would be a line of athletes. "How do you want me to swim this?" Motivation level - I want to go fast and I want to win it. We're going to learn about the other steps along the way. I think it is anxiety in that moment they're asking the question. I think they know how to swim it, but talented athletes coming up, "how do you want me to swim this?" I'd think that is nerves in that moment. It took me a while to understand it was nerves because at first it set me through a loop.

Goal directedness. That is grit directly related to goals. Discipline, we talked about the technique and can we repeat that discipline time and time and time again or has each race have its own value assigned to it by the athlete based on the type of meet it is, based on what's the reward in that particular moment. Again, my problems associated to championships, where for Florida for once there are points involved in this race, and that goes directly related to team unity, team unity. We have heard many meet stories this week about athletes that would do exceptional things for their teams. We have heard stories this week, I was in level 4 school and Doug Ingram was running that class and he talked about a tradition that had started nothing of his own billing, but an athlete on the relay self-conscious or nervous or felt like he had to wear the same shirt leading all the way up to championships. And he got to kind of right there towards championship season, and the team was teasing him about it, but he was superstitious and he was going to wear that shirt all the way to championships. Came down to two races, same athlete involved in both races and needed to win in both. The first individual race was the most challenging, the last relay, you know, could have been anybody's race. In both races, the same underclassman individual came from behind to win the race and that right t-shirt then became the unsung hero of the meet, which according to Doug is still, twenty plus years later ratted and torn and handed to the unsung heroes. It is still in rotation. It is still a tradition, but that team unity that willing to do it for team. I have got to do something for my athletes to help them by into this notion, because right now it is a selfish participation. It is selfish in practice and this is my opinion. It is somewhat selfish in a meet and that is just where we are at now. I have seen very, I have seen many teams that were totally committed to the team. But I am just talking about my athlete now, I love them, I love being around them. They are wonderful kids, they just have a disconnected team and I have not figured out what it is and I have got to work on that. I have got to work on that. I have no idea if it is the cellphone in their face 24/7, I do not know if it is their age, I do not know if it is simply I am missing that one spark and that is up there somewhere. Am I missing that one athlete that is going to spark the whole group? I am not quite sure.

Grit, insatiable desire – you and I have seen that racing, internalized motives to succeed, that spark of enthusiasm, that person that just wants to be that spark. I think that goes back up in the team unity and somewhat. Passion for a single mission, passion for a single mission, perseverance and as I researched that, that was the number one characteristic that the athlete felt. The coach thought it was self-control, technical. The athlete thought it was perseverance. How we handle that close race at the finish. A relentless pursuit in meeting our goals, grit and expectation to evolve, "I'm going to get better, I expect, I am doing this and I am going to get better." It's a strong expectation to evolve with athletes with high grit. Purposeful in achieving greatness and then, again, self-control.

This is where the title of the talk had come from, John had asked for last spring and this was the title of the talk when I was speaking with coaches in November, you know, who are these athletes that love to win and hate to lose? These are the athletes that we see with grit. These athletes that love to win and hate to lose, and what research in this did is it found some common characteristics of athletes who love to win and you might sit back and think of someone within your program that might fall into this category. They're often talented, very pleasant to be around, gracious, thankful for the time that you have put into the program for them, addicted to the good times of



winning, addicted to the good times of winning. They command respect from their teammates, teammates look up to them to be a leader of some type some way, very good at bonding with the team. You can often find this person with the team even after the water session is complete. They enjoy being celebrated, again a little ego going with them and a loss, it is an inconvenience, they know another competition is around the corner. They know another opportunity is there for them. Characteristic of athletes that hate to lose, I'm not so sure I agree with the first one "often without talent", and I was thinking about re-writing it but that would be my work and my thought instead of you know, some of the research. I would say developing talent, often developing talent. They have that strong desire to improve. They want to be at the top. They know where they are at now and they want to be at the top. And often we have seen is a model maniac on a mission, model maniac on a mission. I think it is a great word because it kind of speaks to intensity whereas a love to win athlete might be relaxed and calm, but an athlete that hates to lose, there is going to be a certain level of intensity with them. They have a deep emotional investment in what they are doing, deep emotional investment. Failure is a personal attack and they need time to deal with it. Failure is a personal attack and that goes into they need time to deal with it. Deep introspection. Their emotion in this process of healing is all tied up and the people they say they could not do it. "You can't do it and I am going to beat you." Negative feedback that teammates are tired of listening to them whine, fuss, complain, brag. Contradictory feedback. You know, they are in a process of understanding why did I lose, you know, and so that they are coming up to this coach to figure out, "What did you think?" and then they are coming up to that coach, "What did you think?" just gets all messed up and bottled up in their emotion at that moment, and their emotions are tied up in the decision makers, maybe I put them in the event, maybe they did not want to, maybe I put them in an event just before their favorite race and you know, there could be an official making a call that did not go in their favor. I write this up here because I need help understanding that athlete, because that athlete is time consuming, and draining my energy, okay. They are taking my emotion to help heal their situation. If I know that going into it, I can be prepared for it and I can help them through this process, and you can sit in your chair and know exactly who on your team this person is. Because in the past, I wanted nothing to do with helping you get through your problem, okay. But once I understand what is going on deep within them, I will be more patient in helping them heal and get ready for next opportunity.

We had talked about those that are developing grit, have that attitude that we like to see in athletes finishing races.

There is also some maintenance that needs to go on for them and we need to be aware of that, we need to understand that that needs to continue. We need to help them keep them goal-focused because their desires are big piece of this. At some point, they will make a choice they do not want to do this anymore and it is okay. They can always come back to swimming at some point. What I love about swimming, there is a level for you and I in it, no matter what we do. If we want to come back to it, we can safely.

Support network, we need to make sure that they have a strong support network and at any level, age group, senior, college, post grad at any level, there could be a completely different dynamic. And the psychological skills we were putting in place in the past may not

necessarily be enough. They might need something a bit more advanced, okay. Either I need to get better in understanding what they need or I need a resource person that I can count on to help that athlete, and you and I know that we have resources in those area that can help us, be it a pair, be it a professional, be it a retired coach you know, there's some different things that we can do in order to get these athletes more support in moving forward. And then back to that notion, the kids could be just fine and it could be me, the problem could all be me.

The problem could all be me, and was it my emotion that is part of the problem? Do I want to win so bad for something I have very little control over other than to teach and encourage and to praise and to correct? Is my pushing to win that race creating a sense of failure when standards are not met? Am I creating a sense of inadequacy? I have got to control my emotions in that moment. I have got to make sure that athlete understands that I still like them for who they are today. I still like them and I still love them. I cannot tell them that in the moment but I do, I need my face when they come back to me needs to register that I am with them. We are going to work through this. We are going to do it better next time. I save it for the drive home because in the end is it about that place is winning about that place, is it about the improvement in time? Is each competition something to be learned or is it just the love for the act of doing it?

So I have got to work on my skills as well. My emotion; I want everybody to win each race. I want that. I want my athlete to beat everybody, not a particular team, not a particular color cap. I want them to win every race, each heat. Possible? Probably not. We have no control over what the other team is doing, but I have got to be careful in how I teach these skills. I do not want to be the person that is going to talk about a color cap per se. And in a dual meet it is very clear who we need to beat. I do not have to say anything, it is understood. In a field full of eight qualifiers, I might be third in the team standings and it will help if you cover that person and get that person and it really help if that person beat some of them too, you know my brain is often that tangent. I am not sure if I want to be that person to teach that to the athlete yet.

So back to my steps, solving my problem. I knew I had a problem. I wanted to break it down, clarified it, analyzed it through and I set a target date, okay. Developing countermeasures and implementing them. I am going to be doing more visualization, I am going to be doing more relaxation, we already do. Sergio's has taught us both of those and we are simply running his program, but I am going to get it more specific to the last lap of a close race, I am going to see if that image will help them build some confidence. Evaluate and check for results, that is part of a process but I know me, all it is going to take this is one loss. I had a wonderful experience this summer, two very talented athletes racing head to head in a mile. The goal for a whole calendar year was to get a summer Junior National cut and you know the splits just did not say she was going to get the Summer cut, but I was pretty confident she was going to get the Winter cut and just that true grit in that last 100 and you know she was well behind another athlete that was in the race, but with this one oh six splits that she finished with, she lost by 2/100ths. She crushed the cut for summer but she lost by 2/100ths, and I am in this dilemma you know it was about the goal. It was about the goal but she lost by 2/100th and that's just, I think, that is my problem. I think that is my problem because her goal was to get the cut. We had not talked about winning the race, that was not part of the plan. Her goal was to get the cut and she had taken care of her side of it,



I have got to deal with my side of it, as well.

One of the things that I put in place on our website, if you are familiar with Team Unify web sites, on the event page, I have got an ASCA World Clinic event page and one of these things I am going to do for my athletes, I want them to understand some of these words in terms of developing grit and determination. So I just went online and Google searched, googled “word search generator free,” and you can do that, too, and all of a sudden now I have a pre-practice activity, a rainy day activity. We are outside and we get thunderstorms all the time. So now I have got a tool where I want these words in their head and I can just pen and pencils, papers and it is there for you too, if you have any desire for it or now that you know that I went to “word search generator free,” you can take your own and let it meet any of your needs.

That is what I have got today on this talk, happy to take questions. Again it is not an end process, but I will do my best to let you know where we are at with this and if you are traveling home, be safe. Thank you for coming to the clinic and if you are sticking around there’s several more very good talks today I hope you can join in on them if you are available. Are there any specific questions, I can answer, yes...

[audience member]: Can you talk about thought control? (Yes) And especially replacing the negative thoughts. I mean, I know for myself replacing negative thoughts in any sporting situation is really hard, how does the coach help an athlete through that process and is there a learning process they could go through that before the meet to replace those thoughts?

[Porter]: I would say for me it is going to be what I am teaching them when they are laying down on the floor before practice starts. That is a moment for me to teach, okay. Also I will explain this in my next talk, in every one of my outlines, I have a talking point and it just reminds me and I have got a curriculum, it reminds me that I can put that topic in place, I can bring them altogether in the water and I can talk to them there but in this case, if I am talking about thought control, I am probably want them flat on their back quiet and I am teaching them and maybe creating some scenarios for them to work through.

[audience member]: So we are looking at visualization... (Yes, yes.) So what do you do in practice to train them?

[Porter]: That’s an excellent question.

[audience member]: Create the race habit, so?

[Porter]: It’s an excellent question. I might use an idea from Games, Gimmicks and Challenges. I have a space for that in my outline and I could be doing different types of finish sets, some that praise them, some that punish them, a little bit of both to get a little bit different mentality going there, but I would say, I would say that is where the way my brain works. And when I was raised, we have ten day kids in a lane, four lanes and we are cranking it and you know again I might be part of the problem.

[audience member]: Do you do specific things for race finishes and practice?

[Porter]: Race finishes and practice? I would do pace work where they are told a time I want them to hold to get from here to there. Okay, so individually they might not be racing the person next to them but they

are racing for that time on my watch. I will also put games in where the winner gets, I have done it many different ways. The winner can get out and they can choose when to come back to it. They don’t have to return to the set if they don’t want to, they want okay and I have got different attitudes. I have got some kids that would be like, I will see on the bleaches, I will wait for the next set... and I have got kids that are, they win it and they want to win the next race and they are right back into it. Well I have done it. I have done it both ways where a winner can take a 50 off per se. I have not done anything unnecessarily. If I am punishing the loser, they simply have to keep repeating me, they have to say try again, try again, try again, any ideas on your part?

[audience member]: No, no, the concept is great; I was just wondering the workout, what you do and it sounds very good.

[Porter]: Yeah I go to Bob Steel’s books of all of your ideas compiled into one book; I go to that quite a bit, yes...

[audience member]: The basic visualization you do is that, you know, 11 year-olds that you have is that the youngest on your team doing it?

[Porter]: My group is 11 year-olds. I am not sure if we had 10 years-olds laying down, thinking of anything. I think if our 10 year-olds are laying down, they are probably just developing deep-breathing exercising. Yes?

[audience member]: What if the stress management is coming from the support system?

[Porter]: We all have that, I hope. I mean, I hope I am not the only one; obviously I am not because you are bringing up the question. That is where I have got to get out of my comfort zone and I have got to protect that athlete when I need to. And if that is pulling the parent in, if that is secluding the parent, if that is giving the parent a job in that particular moment. Sometimes inviting the parent as close to me as I can get them is better than having them far away from me. I have tried it every different way; my nature is to... no conflict. I do the best I can not to have conflict—it is just who I am. But I will bring a parent in if I need to bring the parent in. I do not know if I have answered your question on that. Because often times... sometimes I think... I watch the child in that moment a lot. And if the child seems to be able to handle that stress, if that looks normal for them, I might talk my other coaches out of... you know just let it be—let it be. Because that child might be okay with that normal. And, again, as long as we are talking about safety you know, I live in a house where one parent is quiet, calm and teaches with the soft voice. And I have another parent that is the exact opposite: always riding, always riding. And, you know, I think we are a nice compliment for the child; I do not think the child is screwed up yet. Did I answer your question? Do you want to get more specific with the situation? Is the child under stress? Is the child underperforming?

[audience member]: I think it is great performance on coach’s end and not so great performance on parent’s end. So we are giving... you know, they did not win the race. You know, like your swimmer: missed it 0.02 but did not work out. I think the goal of the parent is always to be winning in a measurable sense on paper, like times. But as a coach, just that correct technique we have been focusing on for six weeks now looked really good. And things were different. Did we get the best time ever? No. But we achieved something that we were working on. But having parents that know nothing about swimming and think that they



do. You know it is... I work mostly 12&Unders, so I get a lot of help from their parents... (Yes, in today's age: yes.) And some come down on our deck so that they can run up and down the deck, screaming at them; and the other parents are forced to sit up in the stands. (Yes.)

So just having a conversation in those terms of when you have that parent who no matter what you have done in terms of encouraging them to be a support system, they just will not back off. Try to see it from their side, and how they fit together with you. It really just shows to use words to describe: the coaches are doing great...

[Porter]: Yes. I have got if you come up to me afterwards, I will get online. There is a name of a newsletter that I have one coach that projects it out to her families. She loves this newsletter and it's a parent education resource. ASCA has a parent education resource, as well. I have one coach that really likes this and I will gladly show to you after the talk. Any other questions?

All right thank you, be safe. ■



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Keeping People in the Water: swimming beyond high school and college

Bill Brenner



Bill Brenner, in his talk “Keeping People in the Water: swimming beyond high school and college” from the 2013 ASCA World Clinic, speaks to coaches who coach all ages, on the importance of communicating the benefits of life-long swimming to athletes. He advises and asks coaches for ideas and help on how to keep people in the pool. His main focus is on the question: “is there anything that we could have done as coaches to affect a better outcome?” He notes that coaches are always trying to develop a partnership with athletes to attain success, but says that we need to figure out how to keep that partnership going once they have left our programs. Brenner encourages coaches to maintain the trust and responsibility that coaches have to their athletes beyond their program while also encouraging Masters coaches to welcome transitioning swimmers into their program.

Brenner encourages Masters coaches need to “go seek those young athletes out... always accept the challenge to open-up doors to a positive pathway.” On the idea of maintaining their positive pathway Brenner says that seeking these athletes out and continuing their routines with swimming helps to maintain good habits that they have had as swimmers. Keeping them in swimming also provides the benefits of being in a program: the sense of participation and being in a group, the support structure from the group, motivation, and fitness.

Brenner lays out some of the ways that he believes Masters programs can grow in membership and participation by members. He believes that to attract younger swimmers we should allow them to be active in the program with the

use of social media to increase team participation. He notes that there may be different excuses or obstacles to swimmer participation such as practice times, swimmers being tired of competing or wanting to try a different sport, money constrictions, and the perception that Masters means older people. He suggests combating these issues by trying to make some changes in scheduling if possible, marketing the participation as socialization and fitness rather than competition, swimming being a complement to other sports, maybe being able to set up a scholarship fund or financial aid for swimmers who cannot afford the costs, and breaking down the perception that masters means older people. He says that it is essential for people to understand “competition is optional, having fun is mandatory, and the byproduct is really a fitness and a healthy lifestyle.”

He notes that coaches should always be looking for ways to innovate and figure out ways to retain membership such as dual-programming and marketing the team as a service to the community, while Age Group and Senior coaches can begin the process of transition by introducing swimmers to the Masters coaches. Brenner encourages inviting swimmers in by raising awareness through stroke clinics, volunteering at USA Swimming meets, networking, and using swim-speak to the younger swimmers. All of these activities, Brenner says, will help bridge the gap between USA Swimming and Masters swimmers, “it just creates more of that overlap: it is not them and us, it is we.”

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Motivating High School Students to be the Best That They Can Be. **by Todd Larkin**



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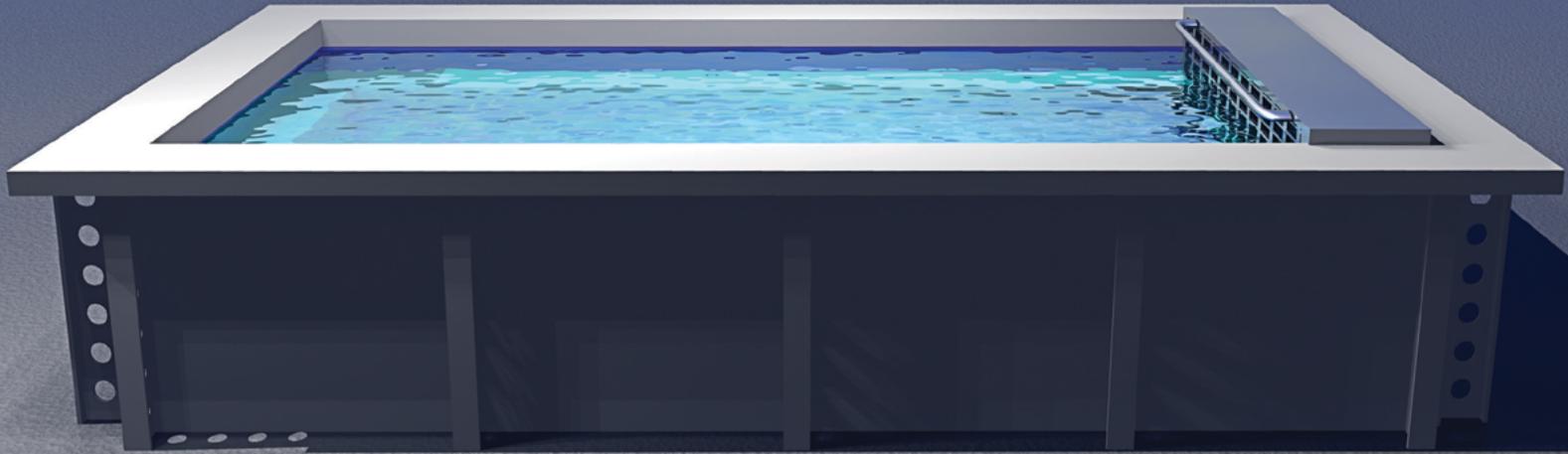
In his talk “Motivating High School Students to be the Best That They Can Be”, from the 2015 ASCA World Clinic, Coach Todd Larkin advises coaches on the best ways he has found to motivate athletes. First Larkin points to a key in motivation, “I never try to place limitations on my athletes...push past those boundaries...push past that training threshold,” and says “complacency is something that we need to guard against.” He notes to push past boundaries it takes a motivational piece to start the tip and start the program rolling. Larkin says the thing that separates his program and makes it successful is “we swim the best at the end...the end of workout, at the end of our races and at the end of the season when it matters most.”

On the topic of engagement Larkin says the four words to engage your team are “How do you feel”, noting that this question is both about mental and physical aspects of the swimmer. The question makes us better listeners and gives the swimmers value while promoting communication and engagement. It shows the understanding coaches have for their swimmers, knowing they have other things going on, and recognizes their sacrifice. Larkin encourages coaches to bring their passion in to students and notes that this is how you reach excellence as a team, “it starts with belief...you do not try for mediocre results...it is that constant pursuit of excellence.” He advises that in communication with the team there is a “triangular relationship...between parent, student and coach; that has got to work.” He notes that how you communicate with the parents and the student is important because of the importance of getting everyone on the same page. Larkin targets a key element of the communication as profes-

sional language and using business vocabulary “choosing your language and choosing how you speak is something that is also a pivotal piece to that communication process.”

In building team culture Larkin points towards a positive atmosphere, he believes the only way you can “really maximize your potential as a program, is to do so in a positive way.” In his own coaching Larkin notes that he has identified his weaknesses and he tries to make those stronger each day at the pool. In culture he notes that his team practices perfect technique during warm down, “Leave the day with that striving for perfection,” which he believes builds into the performance and team discipline. Culture, Larkin says, is also built by standards, which are voted on by the students. This leads to accountability, teamwork and maintaining motivation. He relays his idea of having a quote for each workout, “I feel that gets them mentally into where they need to be.” Larkin says to build positive habits he looks for a consistent routine for the swimmers and notes that the context of each situation “defines your moment, of what you are trying to achieve and what you are trying to do.” On the topic of context he advises to teach your swimmers about understanding their perspective and understanding their achievements. He encourages coaches to not be deterred by their changes taking time to impact the team, “I found that a lot of time some of the stuff takes two years, three years...I did not really see my work until a couple of years down the road.” As a team Larkin concludes there needs to be team discipline, “doing things right the first time...collective responsibility.” and notes that as a team, “You have got to have each other’s backs.”

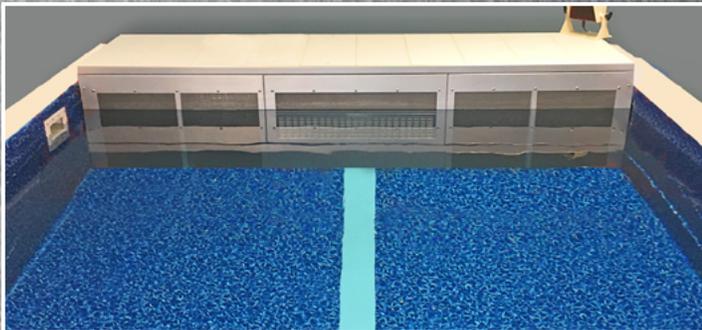
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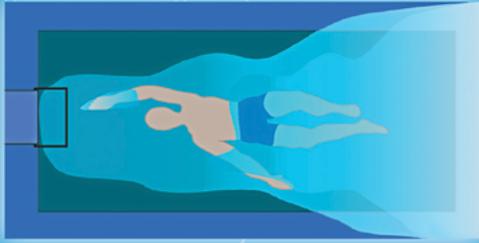
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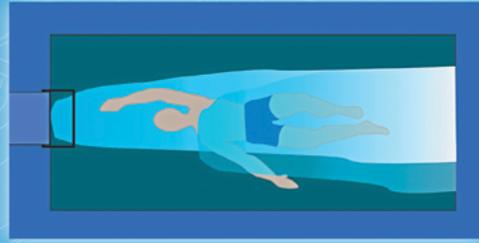
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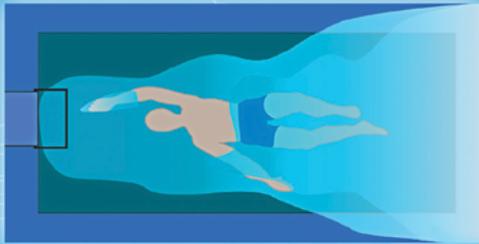
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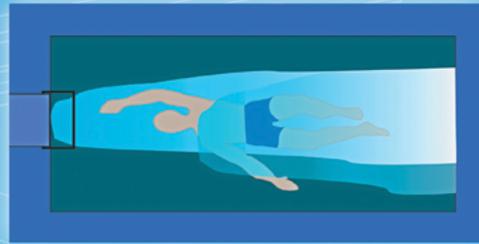
24" Walkway all around pool is standard



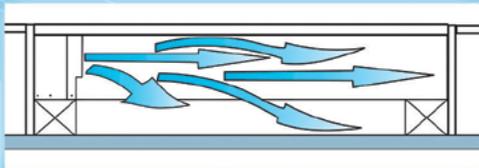
Construction does not allow for walkway unless a deck is attached off of the structure



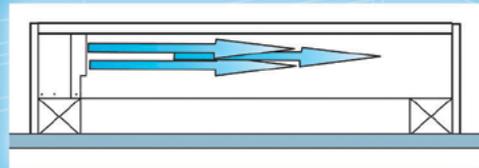
Wider current



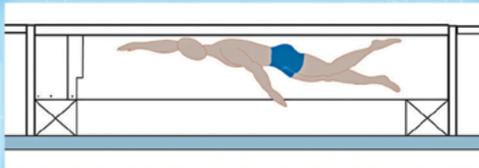
Narrow current



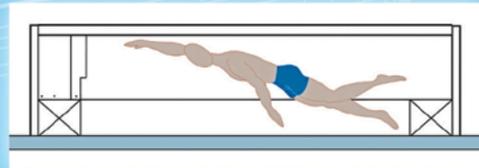
Deep Current from waterline to the bottom of the pool



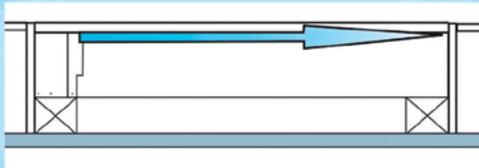
Current depth 12" from the waterline



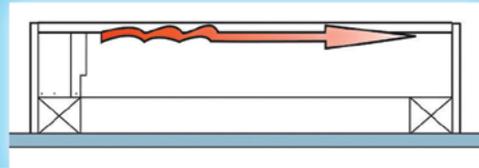
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by Teri McKeever

Suggestions for Success



Coach Teri McKeever gives her tips to coaches in “Suggestions for Success” from the 2014 ASCA World Clinic. In opening she discusses the importance of coaches coming up with their own definition of success, “If you do not know what your definition of success is, or you do not know what you are going to look for, to me it is like finding a needle in a haystack.” She suggests having a clear idea and having the ability to articulate your idea. She says the most important step for success is to be yourself and the best version of yourself. She warns against doing what you think others want you to do, noting that she realized, “I need to look at me, I need to look at what my strengths are; I need to look at what my weaknesses are.” She says this is a struggle not only for herself but for her athletes as well; they need to know how to be the best version of themselves to be successful. McKeever advises coaches to be “willing to ask for help...asking for help is a sign of strength, not a sign of weakness.” She encourages coaches to find mentors, either in swimming or from another sport, and to find experts who have an understanding of the goals of the program. In the process of hiring staff McKeever notes that she has made sure that the coaches she has hired bring “different strengths to the table.”

On the idea of communication, Coach McKeever advises coaches to look at their own communication to determine whether it is effective. She mentions nonverbal communication and eye contact and their importance in communication, skills she feels are “part of my responsibility to teach” to athletes. She hones in on journaling and writing as ways

that she has worked through things on the team, engaging swimmers in journaling exercises allows the swimmers to be more engaged. Another way she promotes engagement is on training trips by having her swimmers “give me two hours a day that they will use their electronic devices and then for the other 22 hours we are not.” She notes one thing she has gotten better at, “having hard conversations at the meet,” during the time when the conversation, “is the most important to them, and you can have the most impact.” She advises that for success coaches need to “coach the total person...I do not think your athlete cares what you know until they know you care.” McKeever says, “coaching the total person means challenging your athletes to be their best.”

Coach McKeever advises coaches to “be mindful of the impact of your role as a coach...I have an unbelievably powerful influence and that my responsibility is to use that in a very meaningful, impactful, positive way.” She says coaches should teach the fundamentals as well as exploiting the things athletes are doing right for their greatest benefit. McKeever notes that coaches need to “spend time addressing your environment and your culture” making sure that swimmers check-in with their behavior and the impact of that on the environment. Lastly she encourages coaches to stay learners themselves and to have fun with the process, “Being open to new ideas and sifting through them” and finding the joy in our coaching. She challenges coaches “to just show your athletes that joy and communicate that joy.”



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