



PCAT RAMBLER

PARK CITY AQUATIC TEAM

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Preparing for the BIG Race

By Coach John Harvey

Swimming, just like every sport, has athletes that prepare for competition in many different ways. During my days of competition, I changed my style many times, but one thing that was always constant was getting excited to swim. I could always look back after a race, no matter if I was in good shape or round shape like now, if I wasn't excited before I got on the blocks, the race almost always ended in a catastrophe. It hurt more, I would feel sick, and everything just fell apart. On the other hand, if I got myself really excited for a race, great things happened. My time was great, the race felt good, there wasn't as much pain, and the meet was fun. Of course there are days that after I have done everything I possibly could to prepare for competition, things just didn't work out the way I had hoped. It happens to everyone, but we want to always make sure that we have done everything we can do in order to give ourselves the best chance to swim fast.

Like I mentioned before, there are many ways to prepare for a race. However, there are certain things that you should do as an individual to prepare and there are certain things as a teammate you should do to help your teammates swim well. There needs to be a time to warm-up and cool-down directly before and after a race, there needs to be time with your coach, and there needs to be some "ME" time. These different periods of time can be in different orders but they all need to be present. Warming-up before races helps your body be prepared to swim fast and cooling-down after races helps your body recover to swim fast again. Without one or the other of these, the body isn't able to compete at its fullest potential.

Talking to your coach before and after races is very important. They see you every day in practice and know your weak points as well as your strong points. By talking to your coach, they can help remind you of certain aspects to think about during your race and they can also talk to you about race strategy. No matter how fast you become as a swimmer, you will always have a coach. Every Olympian has a coach and is very involved with them. They are always talking about ways they can swim faster. Good relationships between swimmer and coach will only help each individual become a better swimmer. When athletes don't listen or talk to their coach, their success usually isn't very good.

Finally, what is "ME" time? It is the certain rituals and things that someone does before every race in order to swim

great. When Amanda Beard was about 15 years old and she just barely made the US Olympic Team, she was always seen with her teddy bear. She would carry that bear to her blocks, put it down to swim, and pick it back up after her race was over. It was her good luck charm and it made her feel comfortable before her races. Gary Hall Jr. always had his big earphones on listening to music before his race. The music would stimulate his body and get him excited to swim fast. Drew Bowles, a former Utah swimmer, swam in a competition in Moscow Russia. He would often follow the same pattern as Gary Hall Jr. and listen to music before his race. Just Prior the 200 Breaststroke, he was in a room with a bunch of huge Russian guys who were only speaking in Russian. There was only one other American in the room, so he turned to him and had him listen to the song that was playing on his player. It so happened to be *We Will Rock You* by Queen and the two of them started hitting their legs twice with their hands and then clapping. They repeated the pattern with the beat of the song and stated singing the words, "We will, we will, rock you." To their surprise, all these huge Russian swimmers were joining in and everyone in this room was now singing the song. The energy and excitement was so high in this room that when it was time swim, they were all so excited to swim, they all swam extremely fast.

Sometimes you are able to control your environment and sometimes you are not able to. For instance, you can keep your good luck charm close to you before your race like the young Amanda Beard, or you can listen to your own music like Gary Hall Jr. Sometimes the outcomes of your actions are surprising like with Drew Bowles. Just think of the outcome of that race if he wasn't preparing himself at all. Take out the music completely and he probably wouldn't have swam well and the others would also not have swam as well. Another way to the situation is if he did listen to the music but didn't involve his teammate, again the results probably wouldn't have been as good. Excitement is contagious. If one person is excited, it is a rippling effect and helps everyone better their performance. When that excitement grows among friends, the original person that was excited gets even more excited and when it comes to race, great things can happen. Everyone gets excited in different ways and it is up to the individual swimmer to find how they get excited and do that for every race.

The Controllable Environment

By Coach Mike Werner

In today's society and environment, there are so many external stimuli that we are exposed to in everything we do. It's amazing that we all do as well as we do seeing how we are continually subject to sensory overload. What in the world does external stimuli and sensory overload have to do with swimming and athletes? The answer is EVERYTHING!

There are so many factors around us that we just have to deal with. In swimming, these factors would be like what the temperature of the water is, or how many people are in the lane, or what crazy-insane set the coach is making you do, or what the air temperature is, or how fast the meet is moving, or who you have to race against. The factors listed above are things that we are UNABLE to control. Which brings me to my main point: WHY WORRY ABOUT THINGS THAT YOU ARE UNABLE TO CONTROL?

Talking about or complaining about UNCONTRALLABLE factors is pointless and a waste of time. In today's world, complaining or commenting about every little thing is common place. But what is the point of it? Is it doing anything to help you? Is it constructive or positive? Does it allow you to focus on the task at hand?

In swimming, there are many factors that NEED to be controlled but are often overlooked for whatever reason. Leaving from ready position, streamlining after a big/strong push-off, using underwater kicking, smooth breakouts, consistent breathing patterns, building the speed into the turns, implementing race type turns and having good finishes are universal constants on every single set given. And this doesn't even begin to account for the focuses that need to happen when doing different strokes or specific types of sets.

What about out-of-the-water environmental factors? PMA – positive mental attitude! This is huge. If you come into workout with a great attitude and are willing to work and follow directions, you are setting yourself up for success and good results. If you come in with poor or bad attitude, how can you do well? A few weeks ago, my group did a test set of a timed 2000 yard swim. As soon as I said the set, the vast majority of the group started whining and complaining (I had one that was very excited about the set). So I gave my usual speech in my gruff anti-whining retaliation mode and proceeded to say if you are going to give up before you try and complain about the set to leave now. Then I proceeded to point out that while the 2000 is straight swimming, that it is actually shorter than our usual main sets in both distance and in time. I also threw in an incentive to stimulate performance. I figured out a time that even the newest group members could achieve and told the group that if everyone made the time I set, that they could play games the remainder of practice. The time was challenging, but every single swimmer met the time and did personal bests! Needless to say we had a learning experience that we went from a negative environment to a very positive outcome. It's amazing what can happen when you change your outlook.

Other important controllable environmental factors are diet, sleep and time management. An athlete's body is like a high performance machine. If you don't put in the right kind of fuel, you won't get the best performance possible. The right nutrition directly affects how well you perform. Sleep, rest and recovery go hand in hand with nutrition. It is vital that athletes get good rest and recovery. Rest is when the body heals itself and it recovers from the daily fatigue that it's put through. If we consistently don't get enough rest, our immune system tends to shut down because our body is weakening and unable to heal itself. Rest is especially critical for teenagers. Teenage athletes NEED to be very proactive about time management and make sure that they allow themselves enough time to eat properly and recover. Unfortunately, these are the first two things that get negated when they are in a time crunch!



Team Commitment

By Coach Serena Reynolds

As coaches we feel that swimming needs to come in steps. Swimmers in our program often begin with swim lessons, coming twice a week for thirty minutes and progressing to twice a week for forty-five minutes. Lessons are designed to introduce basic swimming technique and to develop safe water skills.

After swimmers have progressed through the lesson program they are eligible to try out for Pre-Cat. A try-out is required to ensure a swimmer has developed basic swimming skills needed for the program. Once a swimmer is ready for Pre-Cat they continue coming twice a week, but we increase the practice time to one hour. Pre-Cat is for swimmers of all ages who want to advance to a competitive team, as well as, for swimmers who just want to stay in shape and develop their swimming skills. We encourage swimmers who are interested in moving to the competitive team to come as often as possible.

PCAT is a competitive team for swimmers of all ages. Competing once a month is required for this team. If a swimmer is not interested in competing they should not move on to PCAT. A try-out is required to ensure a swimmer has developed necessary swimming skills and endurance for the program and to ensure the swimmer is mentally prepared for the competitive team. As the swimmer moves on to PCAT we increase the training to three times a week for two hours, thirty minutes of stretching and core training and ninety minutes of swimming. Coming fewer times than this a week is viewed as maintenance swimming. It does not allow swimmers at this stage to progress and get faster or stronger.

Often I get asked why the team commitment and requirements are so much. After having thought about this many times over I always come to the same conclusion. The Park City Aquatic Teams requirements are not very hard to meet or even very demanding. To help make my point on this I looked at other age group sports offered in our area. I found that requirements for youth soccer, lacrosse and ski teams are very comparable to our requirements. Cost for soccer and ski teams were higher. Ski team had longer more demanding practice schedules. I also found that many of the skiers end up skiing multiple weekends in a month for a few hours each day.

As coaches we often see swimming get pushed aside for other activities. We have swimmers come to practice late or leave practice early so they can finish various activities or be on time for others. We hope that the swimmers and parent of PCAT will make swimming a priority in their lives. As a coach I know how valuable team commitment and dedication are not only now but later on in life. The lessons learned will contribute to who a swimmer will become.

Positive Self Talk in Practice.

By Coach Eyreka Smith

How many of us talk to ourselves? In the car or locker room before practice, in the water during practice, or after practice - I'm sure most everyone does. What we say makes a huge difference in how we perform. Negative words can crush a performance; positive words can result in a swimmer doing what they may have previously thought impossible. Here are a few tips to help you use self talk in a positive way to improve your performance in practice.

Use phrases to help you stay on track during a tough set, or when you just don't feel like putting out the swimming effort the way you know you should. Repeat words to yourself, over and over, it will help take your mind off of negative thoughts and help move you towards the positive, helping you perform better. Tell yourself things like: "Hard work is good!" "I feel strong!" "I love pushing myself to discover what I can do!"

Using words or a count as you move through a stroke can make your technique much better. This includes things like: Counting 1-2-3-4 to coordinate arms, legs, and breathing in butterfly. Using cue words during breaststroke, like pinkies out, pinkies down, push forward. Repeating a word or series of words to remind you to keep doing something, like kicking in backstroke and freestyle.

There are many ways you can help your swimming. Talking to yourself is an easy, simple way that every one of you can make yourself better in workouts.

Nutrition Corner

Drink Early and Often

There are 2 reasons to drink fluids: (1) to stay hydrated, and (2) to provide the body with fuel.

During Workout - Regardless of age or length of workout, all swimmers need fluids during practice to stay hydrated. Easily accomplished with a couple of sips from the water bottle every 15-20 minutes. As swimmers progress, workouts get longer and tougher. It's well established that exercise beyond 90 minutes benefits from a supplemental fuel source. The sports drink can provide it. But we still have hydration to think about. Drinks that are too strong, or "concentrated," can provide the fuel but also inhibit fluid absorption and often lead to cramping.

Years of research tells us that drinks that are 6-8% carbohydrate by weight provide the perfect balance. Enough carbohydrate to provide a fuel source during long exercise, but not so much that will inhibit fluid absorption. A couple of sips every 15-20 minutes keeps the body fueled, helps prevent unnecessary tissue breakdown, and maintains hydration. Today, only Gatorade and Powerade meet the 6-8% criteria. Most other drinks are too strong to be effective during workout.

After Workout - Water is an excellent choice to replenish fluids after practice. It's always wise to drink at least one cup. But after a tough workout, replenishing fuel stores is equally important. Competitive swimmers need a little over 1 gram of carbohydrate for every kilogram they weigh (lbs/2.2) each hour after workout. **And they need it within the first hour.** Oftentimes, a sports drink that is easily digested and quickly absorbed, such as Gatorade or Powerade can provide a convenient way to get some of this fuel within the first 20 minutes. Accelerade, a newer drink on the market may also do the trick. Endurox, perhaps, but beware of the high protein drinks, as they often forgo the carbohydrate, and carbohydrate is what you are trying to replenish within that first hour after workout. A little protein won't hurt, in fact a little bit of protein may actually help by supporting tissue repair and re-building processes. But too much protein, especially when it comes in place of carbohydrate, may actually be detrimental to the post-workout recovery process.

****Remember...**

1. Carbohydrate is the primary fuel source during tough workouts. Protein is used as a fuel source during exercise only when carbohydrate and fat are not present in sufficient quantities. This can happen during long/tough workouts when the body uses much of its stored carbohydrate, and it must find an additional source. If an additional carbohydrate source (ex. Gatorade, Powerade) is not supplied, the body taps into stored protein, aka your muscles. This is why we drink carbohydrate-electrolyte solutions during workout...to spare muscle protein. And this is also why it is important to replace carbohydrate stores lost during a workout...so you start the next workout with a full tank of gas!

2. Following exercise, the body is very sensitive to the hormone insulin. Insulin is that hormone that rises every time blood sugar rises. In other words, every time a swimmer eats carbohydrate, which causes blood sugar to rise, insulin goes up. Well, it's insulin's job to remove sugar from the bloodstream, and it does so by facilitating its storage as glycogen. Glycogen, the storage form for carbohydrate, is what the body taps into for fuel when exercise is very intense. This can happen quite a bit during a tough workout, which is why it's important to see that glycogen is replenished before the next practice.

During the Day - Staying hydrated during the day is just as critical as hydrating during and after workouts. Most swimmers can do this by incorporating a variety of fluids into their daily diet. Water, fruit juice, milk, soups, etc, etc. Water is always an excellent choice, but other drinks, including sports drinks (defined as 6-8% carbohydrate by weight) are okay too. Just remember that variety is the key to a healthy diet. If you use a sports drink during and after practice, it may be better to drink water and juice during the day to stay hydrated. Juices are often healthier than sports drinks in that their sugars are natural. Always keep in mind that juices and sports drinks contribute to total caloric intake.

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