



Dayton Raider Tapering Tips - 1 Week to go!

Shave Down

Shave down close to the meet. Usually, this is the night before. Nearly every swimmer shaves the legs. Some swimmers also shave the arms. For some, you can re-shave after the first couple of days of racing if some additional hairs begin to peak through. This is commonly referred to as “re-shave”.



Save your energy for the meet

If you feel like you have extra energy this week, don't waste it – save it for the meet. Remember – the idea during a taper is to gain energy, so don't waste it away on something just because you feel like you have “extra energy”.

No sugar and caffeine!

By all means – no candy! No sugar! No pop! No caffeine! Those things will weather away the increased energy you are supposed to be gaining, as well as increase the potential for colds and flu's.

Don't overeat

Avoid those large meals where you are stuffed for an hour afterwards – not good during taper. This will cause additional imbalance to the body that counters the rest period. Yes, you do want to increase the calorie intake during the rest phase (you may even be hungrier), just don't gorge out.

No strength building activities

Do not do activity that builds strength. Most of you are too young for lifting weights, but when you are older you would want to stop during the rest phase. But things such as pushups or other activities that are designed to strain the muscles and build strength should cease. Activities that may continue during a taper are: abdominals (situps & crunches), stretching, flexibility, light cardio (jumping jacks to get the heart rate up). For those of you that participate in school gym class that has scheduled a major rock-climbing-type activity during the taper: do your best to lay off; without getting a scolding from the gym coach, of course. If you need a note from your swim coach, we are happy to provide one. Usually, you - the athlete - simply communicating with your gym coach will make everything work out fine as swimmers tend to garner a high level of flexibility from their teachers and coaches.

Stay warm. Before and during the meet

I know we talk about this at the meet, but I've always felt that staying warm and keeping the surface skin temperature at or above the air temperature of where you are (such as your home) is vital all week. Occasionally feel your hands. If the skin feels cool – get the body warm! Use mittens all week. If someone asks why you have mittens, tell them why – they will be impressed and you may start a new fashion trend.



Set goals before the meet

Waiting until the meet is not a good idea. Know what you want to accomplish before going to the meet. This will also help you prepare for each practice leading up to the meet by helping you focus on times and swim strategies. A little tip from the coaches: if we do a broken swim or pacing and you are asking questions like “What shall I swim? Or “what time should I hold?”, then these are cues for you to get more involved with what your goals are the weeks leading up to the meet.

You are prepared. Now swim fast!

Unless you are having open heart surgery the day before the meet, do not worry about that time you missed practice due to an earache, or the cold you had that kept you out of the water for a week. Swimmers that attend regularly throughout the year, especially the younger ages, have the luxury of getting right back into it following practice disruptions during the season. You are as prepared as you are going to be, therefore show up at the meet and do what you do best – swim fast!

Spend mental time alone

For some swimmers, time alone such as getting lost in a book or shopping actually “resets” the brain. Despite the famous quote we see on the back of shirts, swimming is not life – have balance and allow your brain to journey away from the pool this week.

Visualize

Spend time visualizing your race. This is best when lying down for sleep at night - it only takes a few minutes. Close your eyes and literally “feel” yourself at the meet stepping up to the block for one of your races. Then, swim the entire race in your mind. Here is a tip: actually accelerate and build the finish. This will allow you to overtake competitors during your visualization, which will make it easier to remember during the actual race. “Your mind is your best weapon”. Practice using it before you get to the meet.

A little anxiety is OK

Swimmers: Do you feel more anxiety this week? That is normal for some.. Many athletes may even appear to give off a negative energy as a way to cope. Coaches and parents may help you understand and deal with your anxiety. But don’t worry about it – it is just your nerves settling in. It is also an indicator that you really care and want to do well – and that is the first step on reassuring yourself that you will do well! Just remember – do not create a negative environment for those around you. Stay positive and upbeat – all will be fine!

Parents – sometimes your athletes just want to have a forum to talk and say things, and your first instinct is to deal with your child’s issues. Most of the time, there is no need to go into “fix it mode” during the taper. Let them explore their thoughts as we get closer to the meet.

Get to bed earlier than you normally do

If you typically go to bed at 10PM, shoot for 9:30PM all week. It will make a big difference!