

Profile: Training Tobias with an eye to who is next!

Tobias Work has been one of the greatest swimmers ever to represent the CCSC. He is talented and was blessed with certain natural abilities but he has also worked very hard and has done some of the greatest workout sets that anyone has ever seen. Each week he tries to do things that he has never done before and the exciting part of training him is that he is pushing into new territory all the time. His sets of 3000 swims, 200 butterfly sets, and sets of 100 repeats are very special and one has to get to some of the top swimmers in the USA to find other men who can do these sets. As of this writing he is the 5th fastest 18 and under in the 400 meter freestyle in the United States in 2004 and the 19th fastest American man. It was a terrific year for both of us as he was able to devote himself to training for one year before going to College and we trained with no compromise. We are not resting on our laurels. We are trying to go faster.

The type of set that epitomizes both Tobias Work and Al Roan is a set of 100s we did last week. In most sets, the Coach says "Do 10 x 100 on 1:10." On Sunday about a week ago, we had just finished a difficult workout in the AM. I often give the swimmers a set to think about for the day and to come back in the next workout with some goals in mind. For the PM Workout, I asked them to do as many 100s as they could at a certain pace on 1:05. The 1:05 is the interval which means if a swimmer swims 59, he gets 6 seconds rest. Tobias was given a time of 56 and Al Roan was given a time of 1:00. This type of set is very self-directed. I told the boys they looked exhausted and I would be happy with 12 repeats. It was up to them as to how many they could do. That afternoon, Al Roan swam 35 x 100 at 57-59 and Tobias swam 51 x 100 at 54-55. Both boys climbed a mountain they had never climbed before. Al did the equivalent of 2 x 1650 at his best time pace in workout! Tobias did the equivalent of 3 x 1650 at best time pace!!! They both have the mind set of being able to go until their body won't do it anymore as opposed to just saying "uncle". Neither of these boys will say "uncle" which is what I think is one of the ingredients that makes them champions.

As we started the year, we knew we wanted to do some big yardage, up to 100,000 yards in a week of training which consists of six out of seven days with one day off for recovery and contemplation. One of my goals was to avoid the massive week or "killer" week although anything over 50,000 yards can be a massive week for someone who isn't prepared. Presently the rest of the National Group does anywhere from 34,000 weekly (my youngest swimmer- 12 year old Melayna Grassetti) to about 75,000. Dillon Delaney and Al Roan often push over 60,000 in a good week. We tried to be very consistent in our training and we rarely had a week under 60,000. Most of our good weeks were regularly in the 80-90,000 yard range. As we did this work, there were many things we tried to do in order to stay healthy. Because Tobias came from Nantucket, was a late bloomer physically, and has very loose shoulders, he did not progress to these yards in a gradual manner over the years. In my mind that made it very important to be aware of his general health. The workouts are planned to stress him to the limit but also to protect him where he is vulnerable so that he can come back to fight another workout. Every single set of every workout, I try to be aware of all the factors that go into his health. Some of these considerations are the water and air quality, his sleep, his eating and diet, his work the day before and the work planned for the future, and his place in his cycle with his dryland training.

We varied his training greatly. Most freestylers training 90,000 yards in a week swim a tremendous amount of distance free sets. This is not so with Tobias as we take the time and he has the ability to train well in all four strokes, the 400 I-M, four kicks and several important drills. His ability to do this so well helps me to keep his workouts interesting, varied, and healthy. We have an infinite number of goal sets that he does well. If we hammered a difficult freestyle set for two or more workouts in a row, we tried to have a workout wherein we didn't do butterfly or freestyle. Varying his strokes builds all the muscle groups around his rotator cuffs and keeps his shoulders strong. As I write this we are in the middle of a 90,000 yard week and this AM we have almost a total leg workout planned. He can spend a workout kicking 8000 yards. Fortunately, he is so talented in this regard that the sets are not too dull or slow. For example this week he kicked 16 x 200 alternating intervals of 2:45/2:25 kicking fly kick and flutter kick. For most swimmers in the world, this would be a good swimming set. We also kept up a great deal of running and if the weather is good, we often run 20-25 miles per week. This is great for his overall athleticism, and general fitness. There are things he can get from running as a supplement that we can't do in the pool. And, it gets him outside and away from the water for a little

time.

As I write this article, April 18, Sunday was a typical Tobias training day. Typical in that there is often new and exciting swims. This AM, he swam a 1400 yd warm-up, 40 x 200 kick on 2:45 and a warm-down for about 10,000 yards in two hours and 20 minutes. At the end of workout he kicked a 100 free for time to demonstrate for the X Group and kicked a 1:01 100 flutter- his fastest ever 100 flutter kick. In the PM he first went for a 4.5 mile run. Then after about 4000 yards, swam 8 x 100 free on 1:00. His times were 54, 54, 55, 55, 55, 56, 57, 55. Then he swam a series of 300 I-Ms followed by a 400 I-M. He swam the last 400 I-M from a push in 4:02- his fastest 400 I-M and under his Club record of 4:03. There are no limits and we need to learn not to be surprised and to expect and/or strive for swims that have never been done before. His total for the day was about 16,000 yards plus a 4.5 mile run. It included a best workout time in a kick drill, an unofficial best time in one of his best events, and a set he had never done before. The week totaled about 91,000 yards, 25 miles of running and three dryland gym workouts. He is doing some very special and unique training...it's a special moment in time...a happening. He may not know it but I do.

Tobias was able to commit to the gym three times per week and is fortunate to be able to work with our expert trainer, Jeff Handler. Jeff challenges Tobias on some strength drills, and makes sure he is doing his shoulder exercises properly. Tobias is also very aware of diet and hydration and I trust he takes care of himself in this regard about as well as any National Class swimmer who is also a teenager. Sleep is the issue I struggle most with and when he doesn't get enough sleep, we see the poor results immediately in the pool. This immediate result is as much emotional as physical. When one is swimming 90,000 yards in six days, one is very very fatigued. To face a new challenge in workout without sleep is almost impossible on an emotional level.

As Tobias got a head cold that wouldn't quit over December, I began to insert a recovery week built into his program. So, since December, we try to cycle his weeks a little more wherein we try to have two big weeks followed by backing off a little. The week is still a difficult training week, but we do try to take a little bit of the stress out, maybe just 10% less. Maybe this is enough to allow him to recover just a touch mentally and physically and possibly fight off a cold.

Several times over the course of this season, other Coaches have over-heard me talking to Sam Speroni, Al Roan, and Tobias or have over-heard them talking without me and have told me how much they appreciate their attitude. They have the mind set of wanting to work hard, looking for the tough sets, and wanting to keep pushing ahead. And, this we think is one of the key elements to new swimmers stepping up as Tobias moves on to College. The leadership in the group is essential, and the most important aspect of this leadership is work ethic. Claire Hawley and Dillon Delaney set the standard the last few years. Anyone could measure their work ethic against Claire and Dillon. There could be no deceiving oneself about working hard with Claire and Dillon. And, it could be a humbling experience. Often parents and swimmers think they work hard and are dedicated. Well...spending a week with those two is enlightening. As Claire has moved on, Tobias picked up and led the way along with Dillon. Now, Al Roan, Sam Speroni and a few others are stepping up. We're not worried about our younger swimmers at all with the leadership we have now. They will see the training being done and know what it takes to be successful. Some of them will want to meet and surpass the records and training standards set by those swimmers who came before them.

In September, As Tobias goes off to swim at University of Florida and Dillon goes off to Swim at Brown University, I have no doubt that Al Roan, Sam Speroni and others will begin leading the way for the younger swimmers. That's what leadership is all about. And, that is why we are one of the few clubs in New England to be able to make National B qualifying times or National qualifying times year after year.