

*Training Intelligence*  
*Part II*

*PEAQ Classroom Sessions*

The last session, we discussed three important training intelligence points:

1. Pre-Race Routines
2. Trusting in the Process
3. Olympians Advice

This week we will be building upon those and exploring,

1. Always Race 100%
2. Training More than Swimming

**WHY ALL SWIM MEETS ARE IMPORTANT**

Often as a coach, I feel asked, “Why are we doing *THIS* meet?” ...and although every opportunity is critical and important... lets revisit why we race in the first place. Be it an AMS meet or just your high school swimming through it meets... all are equally important!

**Sportsmanship**

In competition we learn the value of sportsmanship. There is value in waiting for other swimmers to finish before hopping out of the pool after a race, of waiting and cheering on the competition struggling to complete their own race. Watching young swimmers behave in this way is not only educational for other swimmers, but

heartening and inspirational for the rest of us.

**Teaches swimmers to set goals, and make a plan to crush ‘em**

Swim meets provide the opportunity for swimmers to work towards a specific goal. Which requires them to make a plan to achieve it, something that will translate well to whatever they choose to do outside of the pool.

**Learning to cope with disappointments**

They swam their little heart out, crashed into the wall in a flurry of arms and splash, spun around to see their time—and their face instantly fell. Either they lost the race they wanted to win, came short of breaking their personal best, or their goggles filled up with water right off the dive. Swimming is a microcosm of life; sometimes things simply don’t fall into place the way we want or expect. Realizing that things won’t always go our way, and understanding that the path forward is one we must pave, is a lesson that will come in handy during all stages of life.



**It is the ultimate feedback for how you train**

Piling up the miles and going in-practice bests are awesome, and can help keep you motivated and excited about training. However, to get a full idea of where your skills and abilities rack up, you gotta get up on the blocks. It's difficult to fake the nerves and adrenaline you get in the moments before your race, and more importantly, once your race is over you not only get a clear idea of just how fast you are capable of going, but you can figure out where you can improve most moving forward.

**Teaches the value of hard work**

The most dangerous swimmer in the pool can often be found with the silver medal around his or her neck. Coming that close to winning, close enough that they can taste it, often acts as the jet fuel to higher performance. Having come so close, our runner-up will double down on their effort and commitment in the pool so that they never have to suffer the indignity of losing again.

**Gives you the opportunity to redefine your limits**

There is nothing quite like swimming faster than you ever have. That feeling of looking up at the scoreboard and seeing a number faster than you thought was possible of yourself. When you shave a heap of time off of your best time your per-conceived limits are forever altered. You now expect more and better from yourself.

**Camaraderie**

Although swimming is a hybrid individual/team sport, the swim meet is a decidedly team atmosphere. Whether it is taking a coach bus together, painting the sides of the vans with inspirational sayings, or even flying cross country together, swim meets bring athletes together. Teammates cheer for one another, screaming themselves hoarse even though they have a final of their own to swim shortly after, to swimmers from different teams cheering on an athlete who is having the swim of his or her life. A sense of kinship is inevitable when you go to battle together for a full weekend, each chasing the outer limits of what is possible.

***Training for More than Swimming!***

I know it may sound weird, but ultimately swimming prepares us for the real world... Swimming and Sports create environments of safety to learn failure and perseverance through hardship. We are certainly fortunate at PEAQ to have the facilities and culture we do. It is important to keep in perspective

how later in your life swimming will help you achieve things in different “fields of play” or otherwise known as the fields of life.

**MAKING BIG IMPROVEMENTS  
REQUIRES PATIENCE.**

Patience has never been something I have been all that good with. Once I decide that I want something, if there is not significant and immediate progress visible quickly I tend to get rather frustrated. I want my awesome swimming goals and I want them five minutes ago.

From the emails I get on a weekly basis, and in watching fellow swimmers over the years I suspect that I am far from alone in this respect.

Often what will result is that you will create a list of unrealistic expectations that match up to the lofty stuff you want to accomplish. Things like having perfect workouts every time out. Or seeing improvement every single session. Or pushing yourself too soon, too fast, landing yourself on the DL.

Long term progress requires patience in the short term.

**YOU GOTTA BE ABLE TO PADDLE  
BEFORE YOU CAN SWIM**

Having those big lofty goals is necessary to achieve success in the pool. You need to have that compass that provides you with direction and purpose over the course of a long season in the pool.

Sometimes those big goals can be our worst enemy, however.

With the excitement of achieving big things on our minds, our veins pumping with excitement and drive, we hurtle headfirst towards our goals with reckless abandon. Overcome with enthusiasm we assume that we can skip the beginning steps, that because we deserve it, because we are more talented, or because we simply don't have the time for the necessary work.

Taking baby steps can be infuriatingly too slow for some people, but successful swimmers know that this slow grind provides a cumulative effect that makes a massive dent in the mid and long term.

Success in the pool – and life – is achieved step by step, mistake by mistake, small win by small win.

## YOU'RE NOT GOING TO WIN EVERY TIME

One of the quickest ways to see how people deal with the peaks and valleys in life is to watch them have a bad race.

Do they quietly pout back to the stands, foregoing warm-down and giving up on the rest of the meet? Do they spaz out, punch the touchpad and storm off inconsolably? Or do they walk back to the coach, head down, but resolved to bounce back?

Over the course of your swimming career, there will be times where you graze the top of the podium, just like there will be times that you place DFL.

You are going to have bad races. There are going to be times where life just doesn't seem fair, where you should have won but didn't, those performances that weren't reflective of the work and commitment you had invested in the water.

The question then becomes, equally in the pool as it applies to life outside of the lane lines—*how will you bounce back? What will you do to make that particular setback the best thing to ever happen to you?*

## RESULTS COME BECAUSE YOU ARE GOOD A LOT, NOT BECAUSE YOU ARE PERFECT SOMETIMES

I will admit that I have caught myself wearing the perfectionist outlook numerous times over the years.

I mistakenly told myself that every workout had to be a 10/10, took the bad swims personally, and valued myself far too much on what I accomplished in the pool.

The reality is this: Not every swimming workout will go perfectly. Not every race will go according to plan. Mistakes, DQ's and suit rips will happen. And your self-esteem should not entirely rest on what you do with your swimming.

When we learn to chase greatness instead of perfection in the pool and in life we discover that we are more resilient to failure by creating more realistic goals. By chasing 8's and 9's in practice we make far more progress as opposed to expecting every workout be an elusive (and impossible) 10. Chase goals that are challenging, yet realistic, the accomplishment of which pushes us ever further.

## IT'S ALL MENTAL

Swimming, and sport, provides an exceptional proving ground for testing your mental limits.

I cannot count how many times I watched coach write a set up on the board (“oh wow...and he is going to put brackets around that thing too?”) and felt myself inwardly cower, mind racing, with thoughts of how badly I was going to die over the course of the set.

But then what happened? I got in. Started the set, and talked myself through it. “Hey, this isn’t so bad.” A little bit later: “Okay, halfway done.” And finally, “I am going to punch this last rep in the face!”

The reality is you never know how shockingly tough you are until you are in the soup, crushing that set even though mere minutes prior you were mentally quivering in your swimsuit. This carries really well into the other challenges you will face in the course of your life. Things like epic writing assignments at university. Taking on large projects in work. Starting a family.

We always think we aren’t capable, that swimming or life finally has our number, but believe it or not, **you will always be as strong as you need to be.**

