

When you tell someone you're going to do something, you do it!.

By Jackson Leonard

Our swim club learned a lesson last week that is worth sharing.

John is a great 13 year old boy who has recently found enjoyment in chopping wood and hauling water. It took four months, but he is no longer the stereotypical 12 year old boy and is now a real young person who is loving *training* (vs swimming) and has taken completely to hard work. Occasionally he says something that reminds me he is *barely* 13, but for the most part, he's becoming a great guy.

Two Fridays ago, we finished practice with 25's underwater dolphin kick with fins. I made a point to say we were going to make all of them NO BREATH. Immediately before we left, John asked if he could go without fins. I hesitated, unsure if he actually could make it the whole way, never mind no breath. I nodded though, and said, "*Only if you make ALL of them, underwater, no breath, on interval.*"

John accepted these conditions. 13 under waters into the set, John realized how tough the set really was and how uncomfortable he was. He asked, "May I put my fins on to finish?" I said, "No. You told me you would finish them without fins. This is a lesson that applies to everything, not just swimming- if you tell someone you are going to do something, you do it. Period. Do you understand?"

He nodded reluctantly and went on his way, uncomfortable for the rest of practice. I went home disheartened and unsure if he had received the message. (He had...)

Rose is a 12 year old girl in the group, who is conscientious, hard working, and good person. She has normal insecurities and concerns about her swimming, but overcomes them most of the time. A week and a half before our Mile Meet, her parents take her to Georgia on a family trip. She doesn't swim while away. Her first practice back, she goes 90x100@1:25 with the group and averages 1:09's (very good for her). Three days later at the Mile Meet, she is nowhere to be found, even though she signed up and told me she was going to be there only days earlier. I went home disappointed she hadn't swam it; it is likely her best event.

Monday, after the Mile Meet, during warm up with everyone at the wall, I quietly asked Rose why she wasn't at the Mile Meet. "Because I didn't think I was ready to swim it," was her reply.

As a coach, a million irate thoughts raced through my head- as if it was up to her to decide if she was ready to race well! Before I could get a word out, thankfully, John cut in and said- quite forcefully- "You said you were going to be there Rose, you should have been. When you tell someone you're going to do something, you do it!" and quickly dipped underwater.

I was momentarily stupefied and just nodded and said, "He's right."

I have been growing more and more worried about how the group will swim at Champs. But if John's reply is any indication of how the group is growing and *learning*, I'll be okay with anything. As I remind the AG coaches in our weekly meeting (partially to remind myself)- **we need to be infinitely more interested in the swimmers as human beings than as athletes.**