

We will get through this!

Hans' Blog

I understand the disappointment and frustration that I have seen in many of our swimmers I feel it too, each and every day. I miss getting up at 4:20, getting in my car, driving to the pool and starting a new day. I miss the feeling of anticipation and the joy of guiding the swimmers and helping them to accomplish great things on a daily basis.

Some days, without it, I feel a bit empty and wonder when it will all end.

Even the markers that told us where we were and where we were going have seemed to vanish. Regionals, Provincials, Nationals, they are not only swim meets but rather markers in time, like New Years eve, telling us where we have been, how far we have come and where we are going. Those stepping stones have disappeared under the flow of this thing for almost a year now.

When I started in the sport, Mark Spitz was still the greatest of all time, Trudeau, his father, Pierre, not Justin, was Prime Minister and disco ruled, at least for some people:) Much water has passed over the gutters since then, so I have the advantage of hindsight and patience.

The swimmers, many of them, I know feel the immediacy and urgency of needing to get back in the water and to keep training and moving closer towards their goals. They feel as though something has been taken away from them and although they are told, they will get it back, they are not sure. I am more than frustrated and disappointed for them

We will get through this! We may not be able to swim or even compete in the same way, but we can and will continue our mission.

That is, to help build better human beings with values that matter and character that endures. Athletes who will always be striving for something just beyond their reach. Why, because they believe in themselves.

The optimist that resides within my soul continually told me that we were better than this, that somehow once we had successfully flattened the curve the first time, (see June 2020) everything would be OK and we would soon be back to normal. We got back into the water in July with senior swimmers, who were to be the model to make sure all was good, then in September the rest of the swimmers got back into the water, albeit with some well thought out restrictions. It was just a matter of time before everything crept back to the "old normal"



In September we were safely in the green zone. It felt almost euphoric, as other communities struggled with their yellow or orange, we had green and feeling a smug sense of satisfaction about it too. Then we moved into yellow, not a big deal, it was October and the leaves were just changing colour, right? Orange, that's a nice colour, but wait a minute here, we will never get to orange, will we? Well yes, we did, more leaves? The good part is there was little we had to change other than more distancing and paying a bit more attention to the details. Red, OK that must be serious because red is a serious type of colour. Now the changes were more palpable, even fewer kids in the pool and a whole new schedule, again! Then it hit, grey, grey is definitely not good and we were shut down again.

I know they were talking about the second wave, back in the spring. So, I wondered, Is this metabolic? If it doesn't get you the first time, does the virus mutate and return with reinforcements like some angry mob set to take you down. Or is it human nature? People relax, don't think it is quite so serious anymore. They start breaking the rules and when they get away with it, just keep breaking more rules. " Don't worry, it will be OK, we won't get it right?" Tell that to the people who have lost loved ones or had to live with the fear of a positive test. It is serious! The number geek in me has been telling me that for weeks now. The pessimist, that lives in all of us, sometimes in me too, told me that some people will just screw this up, and it won the day, this time!

The main reason I know we will get through this is our athletes. They actually possess qualities which are quite unique and even special. Our athletes are different. By their very nature, **they are disciplined.** How many people do you know who would get us at 5 in the morning to immerse themselves into cool water voluntarily. Then they work out like crazy for 90 minutes, get dressed, go to school all day and then come back and do it again in the afternoon before heading home to a well earned meal, homework, then bed and repeat it again the next day.

They are patient. Many other sports require games once or twice a week, swimmers can go for weeks without a competition. One should not discount this ability at delayed gratification especially today when most people desire instant gratification. This ability to focus on some far off goal and continue to train and stay engaged for long periods of time is what sets swimmers apart from most other athletes. The virus does not go away overnight, we all have to wait, be patient, strong and disciplined, just like waiting for the big meet.

They are crazy fit and have some mad athletic skills. One afternoon on a talk show they were discussing who the world's greatest athlete is and Michael Phelps came up. I once heard a football player expound on the abilities of swimmers and list all the skills they had, plus they had to do it in the water, which is foreign to almost everyone else. There was no question in his mind that Phelps was the greatest athlete of all time.

Dependability and trustworthiness I can tell you a story, one time I was searching for a



Sitter to come to our home 2-3 mornings a week at 4:30 and stay until our kids went to school. As soon as they found out the hour they politely declined. I had to find an ex swimmer who had to come in from a much greater distance too. When I asked them, they didn't hesitate.

Swimmers simply do things that most others would not even consider doing.

In addition to their athletic prowess, They are organised, excellent students as well as pretty good time managers. The past 14 weeks have shown incredible resilience and progress. We can take solace in the fact that we have been surviving a world-wide pandemic and that we are doing what we need to make it work and stay safe. Everything that has happened has and will make us stronger.



