

Tips from Murray Drudge

Reasons why we do not see improvement

All athletes share a common understanding that a personal best is the bottom line for success. Our job as coaches is to secure the belief in an athlete's mind that it is the road to success (the journey) and not the end result (the destination) that matters the most.

Furthermore, improvement alone, without relating the outcome to a potential, is mediocre at best. I have a girl in my group who I felt could go 4:45:00 in the 400 free by the end of short course season - she laughed as she had not yet broken 5:00 ! This past weekend a 4:51:00 time was recorded and now she realizes that the expectation wasn't at all unrealistic!

Additionally, the Junior National standard is 4:40:00, and maybe, just maybe, who knows, with a little more hard work, she could have achieved that, too!

The important thing is that young people relate to expectations. The education system taught us this by making reasonable demands towards a level of competence we felt was necessary to keep pace with the rest of the world.

After a training camp I was so impressed with another girl that I asked her to join our group for a while on Tuesdays and Thursdays. She was excited to come (this is a good thing), and I saw some potential in her fly, which, at the time, had considerable room for improvement. Feeling that the only thing she was lacking was rhythm, I asked her to place her hand on her chest and feel her heartbeat and to describe what she felt - "Boom boom", was her reply. I told her to swim like that, keeping her breath low - stunningly, she was off to the races - by the end of workout I asked her what her time for the 100 fly was - it was 1:20:00 - I told her to get ready to swim a best time right there - now 1:18:00 is her best time! I spoke to her about the NYAC 11-12 girls and our expectation for them to reach the provincial standard - I asked her if she would like to try to accomplish that (NYAC girls can race with the best), and she said yes. Well, first you have to make Provincials...- and at the next meet she exceeded the provincial standard in the 200 fly by over six seconds!

This story illustrates what I've learned over years of experience on my part - you develop an eye for talent and, even more important than talent - potential. This is what good coaches and teachers do and no amount of money can buy. To inspire, and to give the gift of confidence, makes this job very unique.

However, this "treasure" needs to be kept hidden from the over-excited parent with little or no coaching experience. Devastating results can happen if you put the carrot of potential too far out of reach. To the athletes, I would like to say - remember one thing - chances are that you are better than you think you are - never ask for guarantees, and there is no substitute for hard work and heart. Go NYAC!

Tips for Improvement

"A **coach's feedback** on swims can acknowledge a best time, but should be related to training elements and goals that are being worked on at the time."

"**Game plan** - are they rehearsing a strategy that teaches them how to race effectively? This is: **build - attack - finish.**"

"**Race splits** - you learn this at a young age, or else it is next to impossible to learn later on"

(See "**NYAC race split formula**" below for calculating proper race splitting).

Need versus Desire

During my tenure in Etobicoke (1985-88) I was constantly trying to impress my Head Coach at the time: Paul Bergen. I remember writing an article that impressed him so much he could not say enough about it. It must have struck a cord within him because he remembers it to this day. This was the only time I ever received praise and it was in front of the whole staff!

The article tried to tie together "winning" and "basic human needs". Water is a basic need, that without it, we die. For me, I needed to be successful, that I ate, slept, walked and talked swimming all the time. Even socially, the conversation was eventually steered towards swimming or some kind of

achievement. Needless to say, my only friends became other swim coaches. If you were not obsessed with something to win at, I did not want to be around you. Desires for me were things that, well if I didn't get it, "oh well" I just moved on.

Needs are things you have to have satisfied in order to live. For me the pursuit of winning was no different. Later on I read that sport psychologists said this was unhealthy and what I was really describing were desires and doing your best. Those things that we put our mind to we can achieve. They must be right, of course, but I never got sold. Even at the expense of everything else, my life still revolves around swimming and winning. For that one moment, you have to have it. It sustains you. For me winning is a need. It always has been and always will be.

Superior Race Tactics

The coaching staff has confirmed a race strategy format that is applicable to all our groups. We want to speak the same language and have our young athletes understand the specific fundamentals that promote superior race tactics.

For 100 - 400 races - (but not including the IMs)
know there are always
a beginning - a middle - and a finish.

100s (25-50-25)

200s ([50-100-50](#))

400s ([100-200-100](#))

and **remember these three stages:**

Build - Attack - Finish

and focus on

Stroke length - **Build** - 1st part of race

Stroke rate - **Attack** - middle of race

Strongest kick - **Finish** - end part of race

Too many of our young athletes fail to break the race down. This format

guides the swimmers' efforts towards specific actions in these three stages.