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**That Swimmer Doesn't Practice Hard, but Beats Me in Races. What Do I Do?**

**By Alan Goldberg//Competitivedge.com  | Monday, October 14, 2019**

*“So, it* ***really*** *frustrates me that 'X' doesn't work hard in practice, frequently skips out of the main set when it gets too hard and then beats me at meets! It's just not right and it's driving me bananas!”*

I can't tell you how many swimmers have shared their version of this frustration with me over the years. You know the story – you are a serious and dedicated swimmer. You make all of the practices and push yourself to the max. You listen to the coaches and do everything you can to make yourself better. And then your teammate(s), do exactly the opposite. They don't do doubles. They consistently skip important practices. They rarely, if ever push themselves in training. Occasionally, they'll save themselves until the end of a tough set and then go all out on the last 100 or 200. And the killer is that they seem to regularly beat you when it comes to races.

What gives? It is so frustrating that you find you can't stop thinking about them. This going around in circles between how hard you work and ***how hard they don't work*** is driving you to distraction. So what can you ***constructively*** do about this confusing and seemingly unfair situation?

My advice to you is very simple. It's the same advice I regularly give to swimmers who find themselves getting much too nervous right before and sometimes during their races. ***STAY IN YOUR OWN LANE!*** That is, keep your focus of concentration on you and what you're doing when you train, and not on what other teammates may or may not be doing.

While these kinds of situations are unbelievably maddening and confusing, you have to learn to tune out how others train and just focus on yourself, on your technique, your walls, strengthening your weaknesses, etc. If you insist on obsessing about how you work so hard and they don't, yet they beat you when it counts, then you will end up feeling really badly about yourself and totally de-motivated. In fact, allowing yourself to stay stuck over-thinking about these kinds of teammates will undermine both your confidence and desire to work hard, leaving you feeling like, “What's the point? Why even bother?”

Here's one of the realities to explain why this kind of thing sometimes happens. Some swimmers are blessed physically and have the body to be able to ***temporarily*** get away with inconsistent and mediocre efforts in the pool. They can skip practices, back down when the training gets hard and still go fast under pressure. However, the reality is that sooner or later these kinds of training habits will come back to haunt them. No one can become successful without consistently putting in a full effort. ***NO ONE!*** As you get better and the competition gets tougher, swimmers who have poor training habits will ultimately fall behind. They may be able to get away with it now, but sooner or later their bad habits will come back to hurt them.

Whether this happens sooner or later should be totally irrelevant to you because their sub-par training habits don't have to have any negative effects on you unless you allow them to. Regardless of whether they can beat you now, your job is to bring your focus in practice and at meets back to your own lane and whatever you're doing. In training, you don't ever want to waste your physical and emotional energy focusing on these kinds of swimmers. Instead, you want to keep your focus on what ***you*** are doing during practice, on ***your*** goals, strengthening ***your*** weaknesses and giving a full effort!

Just remember, at some point in the future, your hard work and good training habits ***will pay off***. Whether this happens while this other swimmer is still on your team or not is inconsequential. Whether it will pay off with you beating this person sooner rather than later is also unimportant. What is important is ***your*** commitment to training, NOT ***their*** lack of commitment.

So give yourself a break and keep your concentration between ***your*** two lane lines whenever you train and race! Pay close attention to yourself and no one else. Channel all of your frustration and anger into training harder, focusing more on what you are doing and getting better for yourself and to achieve your goals.