

## **Why setbacks in the pool aren't so bad**

Swimmers who succeed in the pool have a way of dealing with failure. It's easy to think that the high performers of our sport have never experienced (sometimes serious) failure.

Phelps' well-publicized slip-ups outside of the pool.

Vlad Salnikov having to wait 8 full years to try and finally win his Olympic gold medal in the 1500 freestyle.

Janet Evans having to compete against women nearly a foot taller than her (and taking some extra "supplements") during the '88 Olympics.

And on it goes.

Look...

### **We all experience adversity.**

It can be tempting to think that we have it particularly worse, that our pool is the worst, that our coach is the worst, that if only we had this or that we could be something truly special.

### **The greats find a way to make it work for them.**

It might not always be pretty, but when great swimmers fail they come back with more resolve. And a massive fire burning in their chest.

You can use setbacks to strengthen your resolve. To escalate your efforts. To motivate yourself.

Or you can use it as a crutch. As a reason to stall your efforts. A way to keep yourself hedged against having to go all-in on your goals.

After all, setbacks can do a few powerful things...

**Correct course.** When you stink up the big meet it should serve as a wake-up call. Obviously what you have been doing isn't working, so what will you do to get things back on track?

**Learning opportunity.** Some humility is required here, after all, realizing that we aren't as awesome and as smart and as tall as we thought we were can be a humbling. But don't let the sting of failure overpower the lesson that it uniquely provides.

**Sets the stage of change.** Creating lasting change in your training and habits is not easy. Often it takes a brutal defeat to shine a light on the things you absolutely must change.

**Kickstarts your motivation.** Whenever I had a bad meet when I was a kid, and there were a few, I was absolutely clawing at the bit to get back to training the moment I got back from the meet. The rage and frustration motivated me into training like a monster. Nothing quite like a bad meet to fuel the fire.

In sum, setbacks aren't so bad when you view them as the opportunity that they are.