

# NASA Coach's Corner

February 2020

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**“It’s not the losing that matters...What does matter is how you choose to respond to losing.”  
- Wayne Goldsmith**

## Lessons About Losing

By Wayne Goldsmith

*So, You Lost! Congratulations! Welcome to the Greatest opportunity you’ve ever had in swimming. Here’s how Losing, Failure, Disappointment and Setbacks can be used to your greatest advantage.*

Everybody loses. More swimmers lose than win... so you’d better get used to it. Even the greatest swimmers in the world-the Olympic champions, the world record holders - do not win all the time! It’s not the losing that matters - it’s a part of the sport, and it’s a part of life. **What does matter is how you choose to respond to losing.**

### WHY IS LOSING IMPORTANT?

Everyone hates losing, Sure. I get it. But losing is important. More accurately, it is important to learn how to choose to respond to losing. Think about how you felt the last time you lost a race or got a lower grade than you expected or missed out on something that you really wanted. Sad? Negative? Distraught? Angry? That’s normal and natural. However, at that moment - whatever it was that made you sad, negative, distraught or angry - you have a choice: you can CHOOSE to continue to be sad, negative, etc., OR you can CHOOSE to think, “Man I hate losing. This Sucks. I am going to training early every day next week and work harder than ever.” It’s a real-life “glass-half-full” situation. Think about it this way: you will lose far more often than you will win. Learning to deal with winning is easy - Everyone loves that feeling of success. Learning to deal with losing, however, is difficult. It’s challenging, and it’s why so few people are good at it. But if you can learn the power of choosing to respond positively and constructively to losing, your whole world changes.

### REAL-LIFE STORY - 20 GREAT THINGS ABOUT BEING INJURED

I was running a swimming clinic recently in New Zealand. A teenage boy approached me. He was hobbling around on crutches - he had a heavily bandaged ankle and a very sad expression on his face. He said, “Coach, I really wanted to be part of this clinic, but I’ve got a stress fracture in my ankle, and the doctor told me I can’t swim or run or do any exercise for about six weeks. It’s not fair, and I’m really upset about it.” I replied, “First of all, it’s great you’re here. Now...I’ve got a challenge for you. I want you to tell me 20 great things about having a broken ankle.” He looked at me like I was a raving lunatic. “Coach,” he said “there’s nothing great about having a broken ankle. I can’t do anything. I can’t swim. I can’t ride my bike with my friends. I can’t

do anything right now.” I said “This is one of the best moments of your swimming career because right now you’ve got the opportunity to learn one of the most important lessons you will ever learn: **It’s not what happens to you that matters - it’s how YOU choose to respond to the things that happen to you that really counts.** There will always be another clinic, another session, another bike-ride...but right now, you can learn something that will change your life forever. So, I want you to sit down over there and write down 20 great things about having a broken ankle.” He still didn’t get it. “OK...I’ll get you started,” I told him, and I started to rattle a few ideas:

1. You can start a gym program to strengthen your upper body.
2. You can spend time studying the swimming techniques and skills of the national team swimmers in your event on YouTube.
3. You can take a course on nutrition and improve your diet. You could even learn to cook a few healthy, nutritious meals.
4. You can work on your flexibility in your shoulders, arms, back, chest, hips and legs.
5. You can go and do a yoga course to learn more about relaxation, breathing flexibility and stress management.
6. You can come to the pool and take times, stroke counts, stroke rates and other measurements for your team-and in the process learn more about the sport.
7. You can...

“Do you get it now?” I asked. “You’re too focused on what you CAN’T do-and you’re not seeing the incredible opportunity you have right now to work on things you CAN do.” He nodded and headed off to complete his task. Around 15 minutes later, he came back to me and said, “Coach, guess what?” “What?” I responded. “I came up with 34 things.” I said, “Then you learned 100 times more today than anything I could have taught you in the pool. You’ve learned that win or lose...succeed or fail...injured or not injured...it all comes down to how you choose to react and respond to the things that happen to you.”

#### REAL-LIFE STORY - WHAT DID LOSING TEACH YOU ABOUT WINNING?

I was working with a swim team recently, and the coach asked me to talk to the swimmers about winning and losing. We sat on the pool deck, and I began by asking the team, “Can someone tell me what it feels like to win?” A number of swimmers replied and told their stories about personal record and winning medals and making representative teams. They were excited and smiled broadly as they shared their experiences of success. I then asked, “Can someone tell me what it feels like to lose?” Something interesting happened. There was a strange movement across the group - it was as if every single swimmer “slumped” at once. The whole energy of the team changed! It was as if someone had “deflated” them. One of the senior swimmers said, “I hate losing. It feels terrible. People keep asking you, “what happened?” Your team members aren’t sure what to say or do when you get back to the team area. It’s awful to lose” Everyone was nodding in agreement. “losing,” as one swimmer put it “Sucks!” I said to the team, “Close your eyes. I want everyone to take a few, slow, deep breaths...and just relax. I want you to think about the last time you lost a race. Think about your start. Remember everything you can about your underwater work. Try to focus on your stroke technique, your turns, your kicking, your breathing and your finish.”

After a few minutes I asked them to open their eyes. I motioned toward one swimmer, “Tell me about your race - the one you just thought about - the one in which you lost.” The swimmer responded, “My start was slow. I remember I kind of slipped on the blocks, and I hit the water at a kind of weird angle. So that really slowed me down because I couldn’t get my underwater kick going, meaning I had to come up a bit early, and I forgot all of the stuff we’d been working on for breakout strokes.” Excellent” I said. Thank you for sharing your story. A few other swimmers shared similar memories about their own “losing” races. “Here’s the lesson,” I suggested, “Winning or losing doesn’t really matter. It’s not about winning or losing - it’s about **getting better**. The best athletes - the most successful people - don’t overly value winning, and they don’t overly hate losing. They see both winning and losing as lessons. “The problem is that many people associate winning and losing with ‘feelings’ and emotions that cloud the opportunity for learning. The trick is to try and remove emotion from the moment so that all that’s left is learning! If you win - smile, hug your family and friends...then as soon as possible, write down all of the things you learned from your race so you can get better. Focus on the learning, concentrate on improving, be centered on getting better...and everything changes.”

## Age Group Happenings

*From Coach Dan*

January has flown on past and I am seeing greater passion continue to thrive for our sport. This New Year is an opportunity for us to continue our core value of constant improvement, but also to reflect on the greatness of what we have accomplished in the last. I love watching our NASA swimmers walk proudly on the pool deck, scream louder than teams twice their size, and in the greatest of their trials elevate one another's physical and moral being. These are the habits, that you as swimmers are forming, and they will continue from year to year to improve every aspect of your lives. Constant improvement is a lifestyle. NASA is living proof that it exists, and it only gets better from here! Where do you want to be next year? Talk to your coaches, parents, and teammates if you need help. We are all one team.

*From Coach Andrew*

Jan. 20th thru Jan. 23rd we ran a HIT week in MS Blue group. HIT stands for High Intensity Training. During this week, I threw very challenging sets, intervals, and curveballs at our swimmers. I was amazed how well the group handled this week. Yes it was tough, yes we saw some breakdowns, and yes we saw some swimmers out with the flu unfortunately. However, after talking to a few of our swimmers after the week ended, they were proud of the work they and their teammates put in.

In Dev. Blue we have been on a roll as well. In recent weeks, we have been working on intervals and understanding times. So far we are getting the hang of it. We've been building endurance and working on kicking primarily these past several weeks. I am really stunned by how well the kids have taken on these new challenges.

After seeing the results from the Fishers meet, the amazing work both groups have been putting in during practice, and the higher mental focus I am looking forward to our Avon and Concord meets.



## Important Dates

- 1<sup>st</sup> - Parent Deadline to Declare for Concord Last Chance Meet
- 1<sup>st</sup> - HS Boys NLC Finals at Concord High School
- 6<sup>th</sup> - HS Girls Sectional Prelims at Elkhart Aquatic Center
- 8<sup>th</sup> - HS Girls Sectional Finals at Elkhart Aquatic Center
- 12<sup>th</sup> - NMS Swim Team Begins
- 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> - AVON Aqua Sprints
- 14<sup>th</sup> - HS Girls IHSAA State Prelims at IUPUI
- 15<sup>th</sup> - HS Girls IHSAA State Finals at IUPUI
- 20<sup>th</sup> - HS Boys Sectional Prelims at Concord High School
- 22<sup>nd</sup> - HS Boys Sectional Finals at Concord High School
- 28<sup>th</sup> - HS Boys IHSAA State Prelims at IUPUI
- 29<sup>th</sup> - HS Boys IHSAA State Finals at IUPUI
- 28<sup>th</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> - Concord Last Chance Meet.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> - Final Practice for Non-Championship Qualifiers



## Safe Sport Corner

### January Scenario

A group of girls on our team have been saying mean things and spreading rumors about a boy on your team. They comment on the way he dresses and make up stories about him that you know are untrue. You thought that the girls would lose interest in picking on your teammate, but this has been going on for several weeks now. You know this isn't right.

### Proper Response

- Safe Sport says: Speak up! While you may not be chiming in during these girls' take-down of your teammate, your silence isn't doing anything to stop it. Next time you hear them bad-mouthing the boy, say something nice about your teammate or ask them to stop. Make sure your coach knows what is going on. Is this bullying? Not necessarily, but that doesn't mean you should ignore it. Bullying is intentional, repeated, and involves an imbalance of power, which can be real or perceived. Even though only two of the conditions for bullying are met in this case, it's clear that there's some negative stuff going on within your team. As someone who notices this, you can be part of changing your team and making it more positive.

### February Scenario - Discuss with your Athlete

You've been a part of your team for a few years, and a bunch of new swimmers just joined the team this fall. At first, they seemed really nice, but over the past few weeks, the team has become very clique-y. Some of the new swimmers don't know the rules and are taking snaps in the locker room and telling dirty jokes. A few of your old teammates have join in. You used to think that your team was a really positive one, but now you're not so sure.

- What's going on in this situation?
- What do you do?
- Do you have to tell your coach?



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## January Swimmers of the Month

### Developmental Blue

Noah Brooks - Coach Powell and I picked Noah for swimmer of the month because of the progress he has made over the past several weeks. We saw some really awesome swims from Noah down at Fishers! In practice he has been doing a very good job at focusing especially for being only 7! Keep up the hard work.



### Developmental Gold

Emma has been focusing on getting her times in practice and training to her full potential each set. She has been excited at practice, and that helps her to keep working hard. She listens on the wall and often helps her friend to pay attention as well. Sometimes she struggles with sets, but her attitude is great and she gets right back at it with a smile. That's why Emma is January's Swimmer of the Month.



### Middle School Blue

Natalie Mount - I think over the past 4 weeks Natalie has been putting tremendous amounts of work into training. Along with outstanding physical work, Natalie is working on becoming more aware of her best times and training needs. I think Natalie does a very neat job at encouraging her teammates while at the same time pushing herself. Keep up the great work!



### Middle School Gold

Carson Clemens - Carson has worked hard to be exceptionally coachable. He listens very well and applies what is said to nearly every aspect of his training. He has missed very few practices and communicates very well about what he needs to do and when. He also spends a lot of time outside of practice being a student of the sport. This means he reads and watches video in his free time on how to be a better swimmer, then communicates that with his coach. These traits have helped Carson improve greatly in his swimming as well as earned him January's swimmer of the month.



### Senior/Elite/National

This month's swimmer of the month for the National/Elite/Senior groups is Tristin Bratt. Tristin comes to practice each and every day with a great attitude that allows him to push himself. Day in and day out Tristin is challenging himself and his teammates to be better in the pool. Tristin is easy to coach as he is always looking for feedback that will make him a better swimmer. This season has seen Tristin perform at a high level on a consistent basis and he is always willing to swim whatever is best for his team. Great Job Tristin, keep up the great work.

