

O C T O B E R 2 0 1 5

# NE Athlete Reps Newsletter

## Health Outside of the Pool

Everyone talks about how to swim faster with technique, but there are many things to think about outside of the pool to ensure fast swimming. It is important for elite athletes to maintain good nutrition, get enough sleep, and prevent injury outside of the pool doing drylands and other activities.

### **By Kayla Metivier (Athlete Representative)**

Swimming is one of the best workouts you can give your body, since it uses unusual muscles and joints that are not used during other activities. After two or three hours of practicing, every muscle, bone and limb aches and throbs because they have been worked to their maximum. One of the most important recovery steps after a long tiresome workout is to eat, in order to regain the energy that was just used.

One question often asked is, "How long should I wait until I eat something to maximize recovery?" The answer is the sooner the better; ideally within one hour after swimming. After a hard session, the body needs essential nutrients to kick start the growth and repair process. These essential nutrients consist of carbohydrates and protein. Carbohydrates are very critical to have the proper recovery because carbs are the body's main fuel. This particular nutrient group is stored in your muscles to restore the energy that was just burned in practice. Next is protein, vital for the growth and repair of muscles. During a long practice, the muscle tissue in the body, which consists of protein, gets broken down. Since hard training breaks down this protein, it is important to regain that muscle tissue back. The intake of protein after practice is a building block to growth and repair and can lower the percentage of muscle soreness for the upcoming practices. If the recovery process of eating after a workout is not incorporated into the daily routine, it would not be uncommon to feel very weak without the necessary energy to do normal daily activity. Furthermore, weight-loss may occur, but this weight drop will be from loss of muscle which will then affect the next practice and so on and so on.

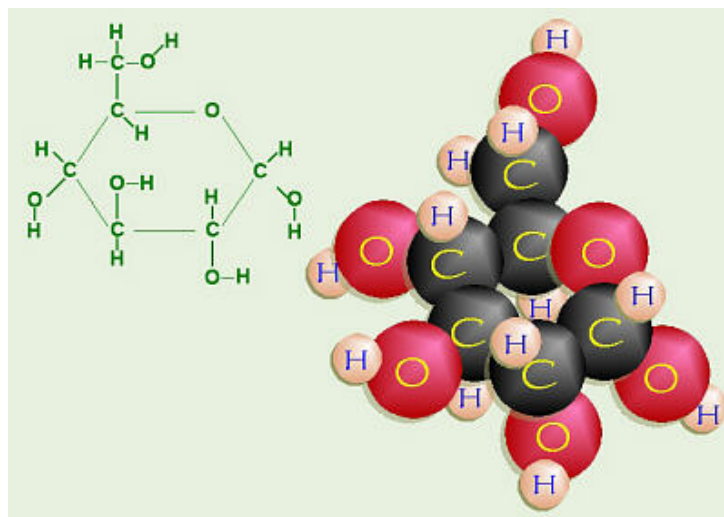
Remember to always eat healthfully to rebuild the fuel and energy that was used in the pool!

## By Ophir Danenberg (swimmer)

In the middle of a meet, you rush to get a Power Bar before your next event. When you get to the concession stand, you see a huge assortment of candy: Twix, Skittles, M & Ms, Kit Kats, and lollipops. There is nothing you want more. You tell yourself it's been a long meet, you've gotten some best times and you've worked really hard all season long. Your coach won't notice: it's just a quick bite and you've earned it, but you realize that the candy, the simple sugar, will do nothing to help your next race. The high amount of sugar in candy robs your body of all of its nutrients, since the body uses those to break down the sugar. Candy gives your body a rush of energy from the high amounts of sugar that is very short lived. This is known as a "sugar rush" and is followed by the dreaded crash. Studies show that 30 minutes after the consumption of the large amount of simple sugars your body begins to feel fatigued. The body then begins to release serotonin, which is a chemical involved in the transmission of nerve impulses between nerve cells and is thought to promote sleep. This could result in a rollercoaster effect of low and high energy rather than the long constant supply of energy which is necessary for a meet where you know you still have 2 events to race before the end of the meet. The Power Bar on the other hand takes a longer time to digest since it contains more macronutrients, rather than simple sugars, which the body slowly breaks down into usable energy. Which is precisely what you need for your upcoming 100 fly.

In that exact moment, the only thing stopping you from getting that candy is yourself, not your parents, not your coach and not your friends. That's when your mental toughness kicks in. You use the focus, determination, grit and self control that you've developed throughout practices to not succumb to the easy choice. While you earned a reward for your hard work you realize that you also owe it to yourself to finish the meet off strong. All those hours in the pool, the test sets, and early morning practices, you realize that you put in too much work to just throw it all away for a temporary happiness.

You pay for the Power Bar and confidently make your way back to the pool deck, prepared to take on any race.



# **STAYING CALM & COMPOSED UNDER PRESSURE THE FIRST MENTAL TOOL EVERY SERIOUS SWIMMER NEEDS IN THEIR TOOL BOX**

**By Doctor Alan Goldberg**

The secret to swimming fast when it really counts is having the ability to calm yourself down the night before and day of your BIG meet whenever you get too nervous. If you get over-amped as a swimmer – either too excited or too nervous – then your muscles will tighten and your breathing will get faster and shallower. Tight muscles and faster, shallower breathing will shorten your stroke, kill your endurance and ensure you swim poorly. **What You Can Do to Stay Calm Pre-Race:**

## **Slow & Deepen Your Breathing**

- The first place nervousness hits you is in your breath, so deliberately focus on inhaling to a slow count of four, holding your breath in to that same count of four, then exhaling to a four count and then pausing to that count before you begin the process over again. Practice this breathing technique every night before bed. It's important that as you practice this, your breathing should stay relaxed and effortless.

## **Switch Your Concentration from Thinking to What You're Doing**

- Your pre-race focus should be in your body on what you're DOING, and not in your head on what you are THINKING. Go through your pre-race ritual, and while you do, concentrate on the feeling of it, one step at a time. As you stretch behind the blocks, be sure to feel the stretch in your body. If you get distracted by thoughts, quickly return your focus to the feeling of the stretch.

## **Allow Your Negative Thoughts to Come and Go**

- Many swimmers under pressure are flooded by negative thoughts and try to combat this onslaught with “positive thinking” or telling themselves to “STOP” thinking. This strategy rarely works and tends to make you feel even more nervous. Understand that negative thinking is normal and won't affect the outcome of your race as long as you immediately let it go. Negative thinking is like quicksand. The more you listen to, fight with and/or follow it, the more you get sucked under. Practice letting your negative thoughts come and go by noticing them without judgment and then refocusing your attention on the music you may be listening to, your stretching or whatever else you're doing behind the blocks.

## **Stay In Your Own Lane**

- Focusing on other swimmers will kill your confidence and make you uptight. Don't compare yourself. Don't allow yourself to focus on the size, speed or strength of your opponents. Stay away from “studying” the heat sheet. Your concentration needs to remain totally on YOU. Whenever you do notice that your focus drifts to others, quickly return it to YOU, as often as you need to. Keep in mind that this happens to all swimmers and what's important here is to immediately bring yourself back without getting frustrated with yourself.

## **Leave Your Goal Times at Home**

- Your goals are a motivational tool for PRACTICE ONLY. Bringing them into races will only get you too uptight to swim fast. While it is normal to want a fast time, thinking about this pre-race represents a BIG mental mistake. To stay calm, you need to keep your concentration in the NOW, on what you are doing. This means that the instant you mentally jump ahead to the future and start to think, “I need to break 2:00 minutes” or “qualify for Nationals” you want to quickly return your attention to what you are physically doing in the moment.

## **Have FUN**

- In order to stay calm pre-race, you have to let yourself enjoy the challenge of the moment, the butterflies, excitement and even the doubts. If you get too serious about the importance of this race, your nervousness will crowd out your enjoyment. If you've forgotten what it feels like to have fun at a meet, then you need to remember WHY YOU are swimming. Too many swimmers wait until they swim fast before they'll allow themselves to have fun. This is backwards! You have to have FUN first before you can then swim fast!

Handling pressure like a champion is NOT a chance thing! You need to work on it to get good at it. Use these tips to help yourself stay calm and composed when the heat of competition is turned up high!

# The Importance of Sleep to an Elite Athlete

**By Mollie Westrick (Athlete Representative)**

## Why Should Athletes Sleep?

In today's busy world, teenagers have more to do than ever before. So much is expected of young adults in class, in sports, at home, and in every other aspect of their lives. Because of this, most teens do not receive the sleep that they need to perform optimally both in and out of the pool.

Sleep deprivation can have many disastrous effects, both short-term and long-term. Not sleeping is correlated with: stress, a decrease in cognitive function, a negative mood, alterations in glucose metabolism (leading to weight fluctuations), high blood pressure, a weaker immune system, and many other dangerous things. So, human beings, and especially teenagers who go through so many changes, need to get enough sleep. However, to elite athletes, sleep is even more important. Through studies with marathon runners, scientists have realized that sleep is an essential part of recovery for athletes. Not only does sleep allow the body to rest, but it promotes muscle rebuilding.

Everyone feels tired when they do not get enough sleep. People have trouble staying awake in class, paying attention, and going through every day activities. Sleep deprivation hurts the body as much as it does the mind. Though sleep is not perfectly understood, is it a rest from being awake and it a necessary part of recovery from the day and from extreme physical exertion.

## How to Sleep More

- Avoid caffeine and other stimulants after 2 pm
- Manage time effectively
- Be aware of time lost to screens
- Limit availability to phone calls and texts late at night

## The Basics of Naps

Naps are an important aspect of a swimmer's life. However, there are some important things athletes should know about taking naps. The first sleep cycle while sleeping lasts about 90 minutes, and the later cycles get shorter as the night goes on. Muscle rebuilding takes place during slow wave sleep (NREM3 and NREM 4) while cognitive recovery takes place during REM sleep. It is important to get both of these things, but not to wake up during slow wave or REM sleep. To try to prevent this, swimmers should take naps no longer than 90-100 minutes, to still get the full sleep cycle in.



For more information on nutrition, visit:

<http://www.eatrightpro.org/resource/practice/position-and-practice-papers/position-papers/nutrition-and-athletic-performance>

Or <http://www.aasdn.org>

For more information on mental toughness, visit:

<http://www.usaswimming.org/ViewMiscArticle.aspx?TabId=1596&Alias=Rainbow>

The athlete representatives are Mollie Westrick (KING), Elise Atkinson (CRA), Katherine O'Shea (PSC), and Kayla Metivier (PHX). The athlete reps are on the Board of Directors for New England Swimming, and they are able to stick up for the 9,000 swimmers in the New England LSC and vote on issues that are presented at board meetings. Athlete representatives are on the Board for two years, (voted on as sophomores,) and attend the monthly board meetings. In order for the athlete reps to do their job in the best way possible, they need feedback from other swimmers. If you want to write an article for our next newsletter, let us know! Find the athlete reps at meets and don't hesitate to say hello, or email us: [neathlereps@gmail.com](mailto:neathlereps@gmail.com)

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