

Effort: A Step in the Path to Success

If you think talent is a sure sign of success, you have a lot to learn. Talent is not what makes Olympic champions or guarantees success throughout life. In fact, many athletes have failed to reach their potential based on the talent they supposedly had because they thought talent was a determinant factor in their success. It is therefore one of the greatest detriments to becoming great to have been declared talented. Greatness can only be reached if one has the desire and work ethic to reach the next level and to keep on reaching. If one wants to be great, they must set a goal on the outer bounds of what they think is possible and work to accomplish that goal. Once the goal is accomplished, the next step is to set a new goal and to keep working toward new success. Success relies on a work ethic that drives one to keep progressing systematically toward new goals (Stulber & Magness, 2017).

Now you may be saying, “not everyone can be great, so why go through such a hard path when success is not guaranteed?” The answer is that it is not being the best that is the ultimate reward. The ultimate reward is the meaningful lessons you have learned in the quest to be great. The path to these rewards requires hard work, but it ultimately improves one’s quality of life through relationships gained, contributions one makes, and many other skills one picks up along the way. All of these rewards will be helpful throughout life. To take advantage of these rewards, however, one must be in the game, which in this case is competitive swimming. In order to succeed, one must have the drive to work toward meeting and conquering new challenges. It is necessary to break through comfort zones and push oneself past new limits. Breaking through these limits often demands that one breaks through a psychological barrier, rather than a physical one (Orlich, 2008). For instance, the four-minute mile was a barrier that seemed impossible to break in running ... until Roger Bannister did it. And who thought breaking 18 seconds in the 50 free was possible 10 years ago.

So, the next time your coach comes by and asks for more effort, think about the barriers you would like to break. Pretty soon you will start pushing yourself to work harder and put in more effort. Comfort zones and barriers will be broken, and you will be on your path to greatness.

References

- Orlich, T. (2008). *In pursuit of excellence: How to win in sports and life through mental training*(Fourth ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Stulberg, B., & Magness, S. (2017). *Peak Performance: Elevate your game, avoid burnout, and thrive with the new science of success*. Rodale.