



The night before the first race

- Get your swim bag packed the night before. That way, you can get some extra time to sleep, and won't be stressed and rushed in the morning.
- Do whatever you want that keeps you stress-free. Play with your pet, watch a movie, read a good book. If it makes you happy, do it – as long as it is not physically strenuous.
- GET SOME SLEEP! I cannot stress this point enough. Sleep is the body's way of healing itself. The average teenager should get a minimum of eight to nine hours of sleep each night.
- Try to keep the big meet off your mind as much as possible. It is completely natural to have the "what ifs" creep in. Acknowledge those thoughts and find a way to replace them.

The day of the meet

- Show up to the meet 15-20 minutes before your warm up and find a space. Make it a place where your teammates can congregate. After all, you are all in this together.
- Find your coach, and let him or her know you have arrived. We get nervous, too!
- Make sure you get in right when warm up starts. Warm ups are crowded. However, if you play the game right, you can get in an effective warm up.
- The first few minutes and the last few minutes are when it is the least crowded. Operate under what I call the FILO principle: First one In – Last one Out.

Minutes before the big race

Here it is. The big race has arrived. I always tell my swimmers to talk with me before their race, and this is crucial for every athlete, no matter the experience level. Your coach can impart some final wisdom or corny joke to lighten the mood.

When behind the blocks, do whatever it takes you to get into the zone. Some swimmers like to be silent and still, others like to chat it up, and some like to dance around to music. Whatever works for you, do it. This is your moment!

On the blocks

Nothing more you can say or do at this point will matter. You trained with purpose, you listened to your coaches (hopefully), and you have fully prepared. Let all that take hold. Swim the race to the best of your ability.

After the race

You finally reach the wall, and that's it. It's all over. Regardless of the outcome, always display good sportsmanship. Shake your competitor's hand as a sign of respect, not only for them, but for the sport you all work so hard to be a part of.

- Go directly to your coach. Do not pass Go, do not collect \$200. Talk about your race – the good, the bad and the ugly.
- Get the GCY 2015-2016 Goal and Race Tip Sheet – WARM-DOWN and get ready for next race!
- If there is a warm down pool available, use it. Your body just exerted a huge amount of energy and expended large amounts of lactic acid. Keep swimming a little longer after you feel like you've recovered.
- Once you properly warm down and feel you have returned to a stable place, relax. Go find your bag, throw on some clothes and just be a part of the team.

Months of swimming and planning with intent leads to a successful swim meet. The next time you are struggling during a huge set, think about that big meet months away. Get into the mindset of swimming fast now!

THANKS TO SWIMMING WORLD MAGAZINE AND GRAHAM BODNER FOR THIS GREAT ARTICLE!