

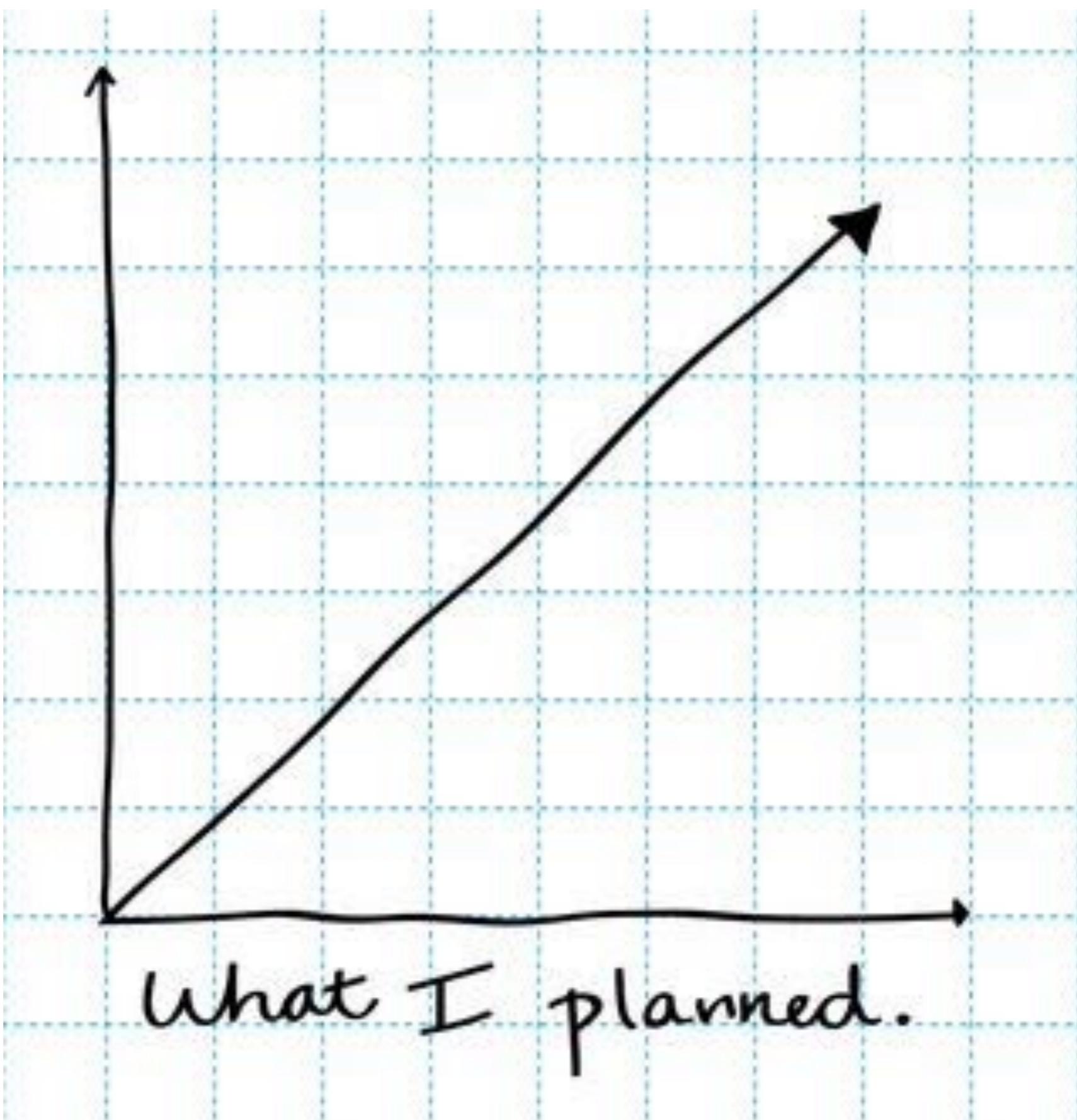
THE MANY PATHS



Understanding Athlete Growth and Long Term Development



Chris Sheppard
2015, revised 2019
Information from USA Swimming and
www.changingthegameproject.com



THE CLIMB

**AGE GROUP DEVELOPMENT:
UNDERCURRENT, HIGHTIDE, RIPTIDE**

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INVITATIONALS - INDY / BALTIMORE: These meets provide age-group competition outside of The Current's usual regions. Upwards of 40% of the team qualifies for these meets each season.

REGIONALS: Occurs once a year, approximately half of New England qualifies, and 95% of The Current qualify.

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THE CLIMB

SENIOR TEAM DEVELOPMENT: SENIOR GROUP, NATIONAL AND HIGH PERFORMANCE TEAMS

SECTIONALS: Sectionals occur in March and July. Swimmers compete in the “open” age group against the fastest swimmers in the region. Athletes come from Maine, New York, Virginia, Delaware, etc.

NE SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS: These are the New England Championship meets for the “Open” and Senior level athletes. The top 10% of New England participates in these meets,

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THE CLIMB

OLYMPIC GAMES

US OLYMPIC TEAM TRIALS

ARENA PRO SERIES

NATIONALS

JUNIOR NATIONALS

FUTURES

SECTIONALS

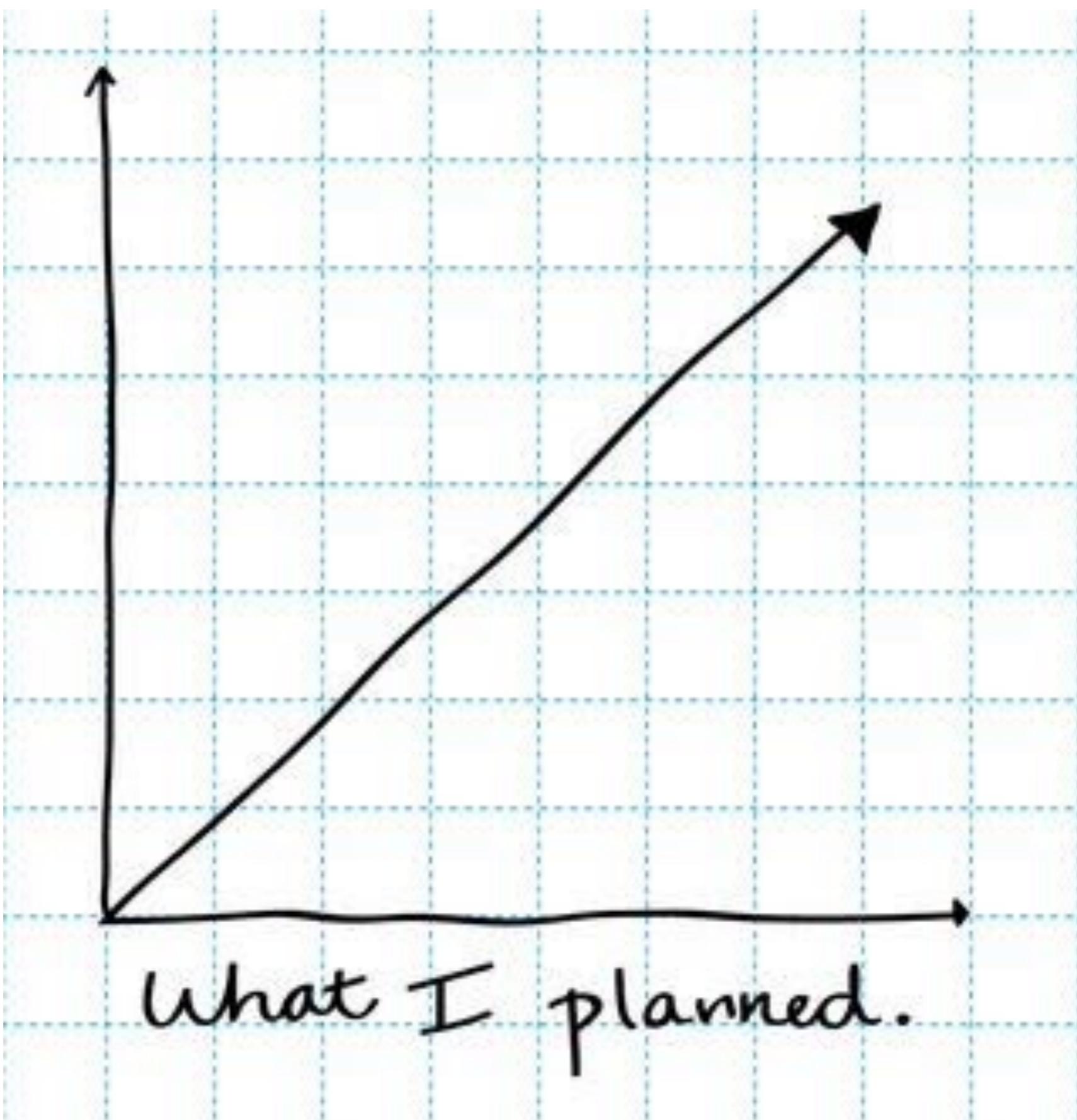
NE SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

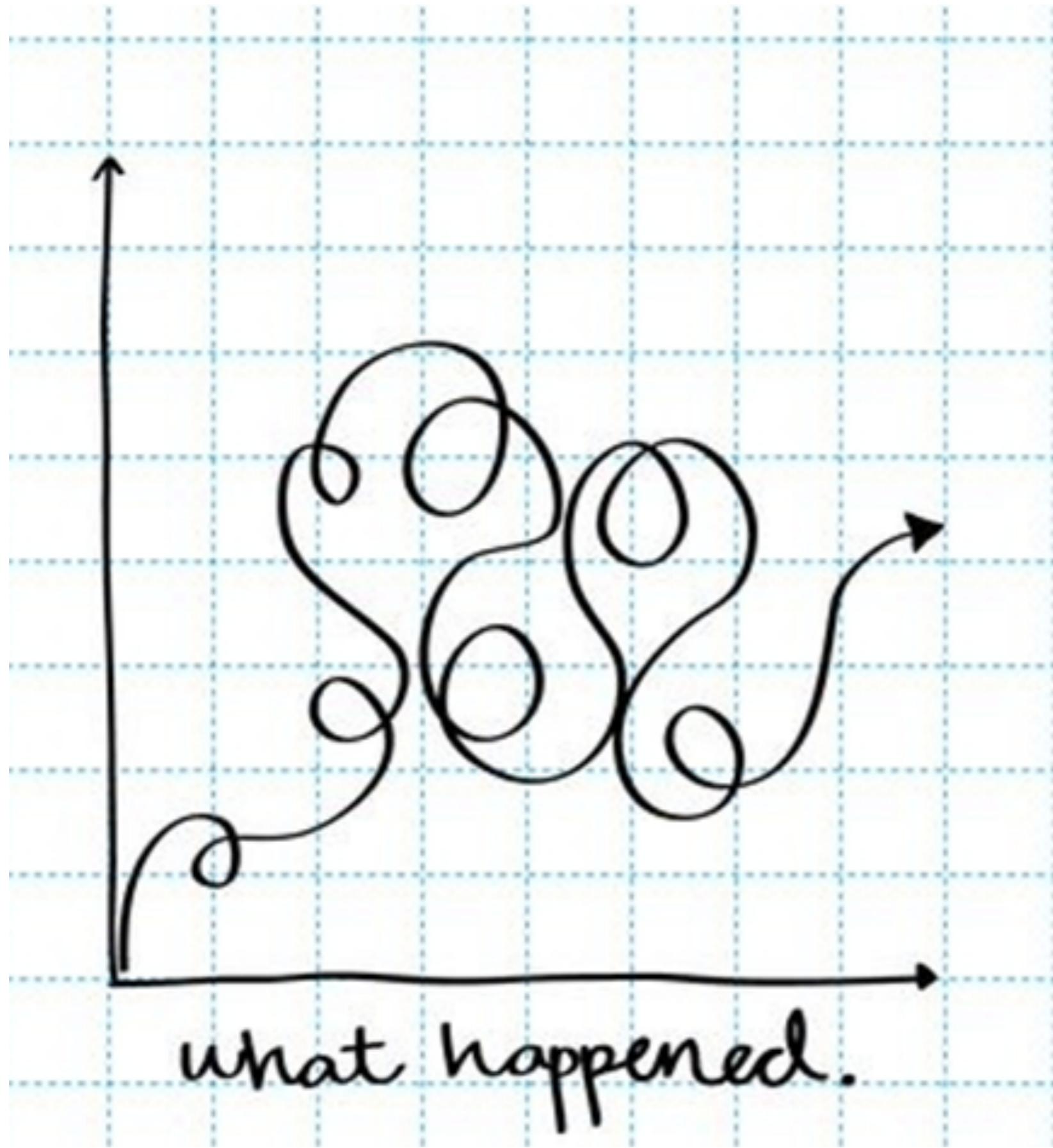
EASTERN ZONE ALL STAR CHAMPIONSHIPS "ZONES"

NEW ENGLAND AGE GROUP CHAMPIONSHIPS

INVITATIONALS - INDY / BALTIMORE

REGIONALS





what happened.

UNDERSTANDING GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

THERE IS A PREDICTABLE PATTERN OF PHYSICAL GROWTH, BUT THE RATE OF GROWTH VARIES



3-5 INCHES IN A YEAR



PRE-GROWTH SPURT
WEIGHT GAIN



BODY COMPOSITION AND
STRENGTH

BIOLOGICAL AGE = CHRONOLOGICAL AGE +/- 2.5 YEARS

HOW DOES THIS INFLUENCE PERFORMANCE?

COORDINATION

MOTIVATION

FLEXIBILITY

REACTION TIME

BALANCE

ENDURANCE

BODY COMPOSITION

SELF-ESTEEM

STRENGTH

AGE 6-9: LEARN THE FUN-DAMENTALS

Time for discovery.

Let them discover it, don't discover it for them!

Small groups and constant action.

Kids are egocentric and have short attention!

Develop skills through games and drills.

Focus should be on learning through fun and developing relationships.

3 times a week is good!

just be sure to do other activities three days a week, and one day of rest.



EARLY RESULTS ARE NOT AN ACCURATE PREDICTOR OF FUTURE RESULTS

RANKED TOP 16 (10) IN AGE GROUP:

10 & UNDER	STILL RANKED AS 17-18	11%
11-12	STILL RANKED AS 17-18	21%
13-14	STILL RANKED AS 17-18	36%
15-16	STILL RANKED AS 17-18	48%

MORAL OF THE STORY:

A 10 & UNDER WONDER CAN SURVIVE AND THRIVE...

BUT 50% OF THE TOP SWIMMERS DEVELOP DURING SOPHOMORE/JUNIOR YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL.

AGE 8-12: LEARN TO TRAIN

Golden age of skill development.

Just before puberty creates a temporary loss of coordination and motor control.

Focus on developing sport specific skills.

Ball sports have interchangeable skill sets, but specialized sports require more time.

Early and late developers each have a hidden advantage.

Early developing athletes can have more motivation, but late developing athletes spend longer in the “golden age”.

Practice needs vary, and less vital activities fall away.

Specialized sports require more skill time, and athletes should move from 3-5 practices during this age.

EARLY MATURERS *MAY*^{*}:

EXPERIENCE SIGNIFICANT EARLY SUCCESS
RECEIVE EXCESSIVE RECOGNITION
DEVELOP POOR PRACTICE HABITS
BECOME FRUSTRATED WITH PLATEAUS/LESS SUCCESS LATER

LATE MATURERS *MAY*^{*}:

HAVE A LOW PERCEIVED COMPETENCE LEVEL
BE DISCOURAGED BY LACK OF RECOGNITION
QUIT TOO SOON

***MAY DOES NOT MEAN MUST**

AGE 11-16: TRAIN TO TRAIN

Time of cardiovascular and muscular endurance development.

Athletes become sport specific and ramp up training time, 5-9 sessions is expected.

Focus on development, education, progression.

Future plateaus can be attributed to a premature shift in focus towards achievement.

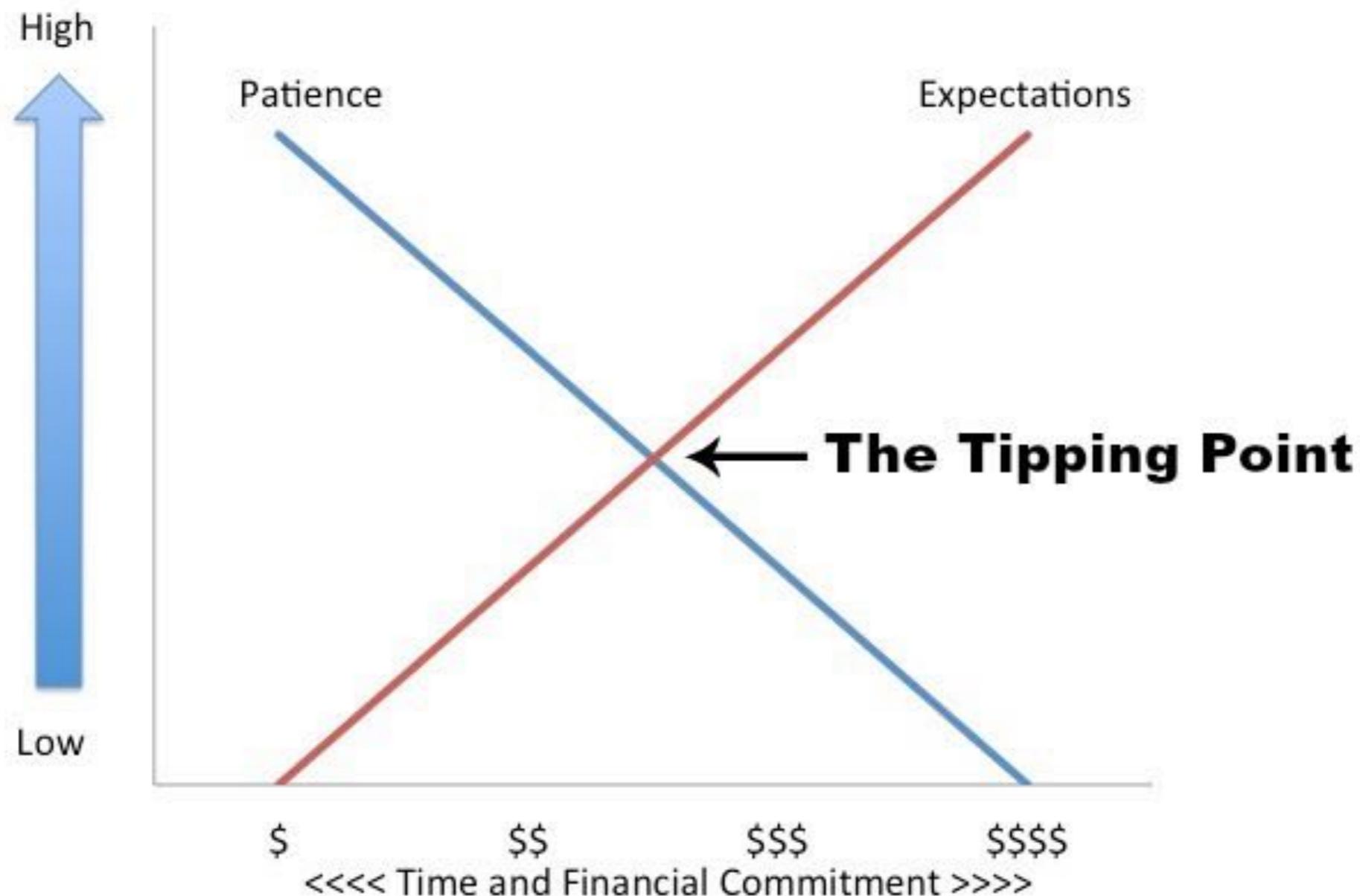
Growth and development have diverse effects.

Some athletes spring forward with new strength, others become uncoordinated for a period.

Parental perspective is key in success or failure.

Parental goals and expectations can make or break an athlete during this time.

Patience vs. Expectations in Sport



Patience vs. Expectations: What it Should Look Like



NATIONAL AVERAGE AGE AND DURATION TO ACHIEVE VARIOUS TIME STANDARDS

SCY Achievements	National - Female				National - Male			
	Avg Age at Achievement	Avg Number of Clubs to Achieve	Avg Time to Achieve	Sample Size	Avg Age at Achievement	Avg Number of Clubs to Achieve	Avg Time to Achieve	Sample Size
Time Standard Name								
2015 Summer Nationals (LCM)	19.22	2.91	9y 9m 25d	870	20.27	2.87	9y 3m 29d	1,154
2015 Summer Juniors (LCM)	17.44	3.01	7y 1m 8d	6,769	18.21	2.76	7y 2m 22d	10,838
Winter Nationals (SCY)	17.81	2.79	8y 7m 24d	7,065	18.88	2.77	8y 6m 18d	7,431
Winter Juniors (SCY)	18.21	2.85	9y 1m 7d	5,300	18.48	2.62	8y 4m 8d	10,004
"AAAA"	13.91	2.32	5y 0m 15d	26,764	14.98	2.26	5y 2m 25d	27,564
"AAA"	13.27	2.03	4y 5m 24d	61,531	14.38	1.98	4y 7m 2d	58,274
"AA"	12.70	1.86	3y 10m 13d	104,288	13.79	1.82	3y 11m 8d	91,903
"A"	12.40	1.74	3y 5m 24d	141,228	13.43	1.71	3y 6m 8d	117,622
"BB"	11.57	1.57	2y 5m 15d	246,565	12.40	1.56	2y 6m 0d	184,084
"B"	10.91	1.45	1y 8m 27d	324,188	11.49	1.45	1y 9m 13d	227,223





KATIE LEDECKY

SEPTEMBER 2010



RANKED 210TH
NATIONALLY IN THE
400M FREE

OCTOBER 2011



AUGUST 2012



A photograph of a group of approximately 20 people gathered around a large campfire at night. The fire is bright and orange, casting light on the faces of the people. Some are sitting on the ground, while others are standing. The background is dark, suggesting a forest or outdoor setting.

OUR VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

THE COMMONWEALTH WAY

COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

- ▶ We are invested in developing the whole person.
- ▶ A love for the sport, the team and our community is taught along side technical foundations.
- ▶ Goals are developed by and with athletes and leadership supported.
- ▶ A focus on leadership and core values are woven into the fabric of every day.
- ▶ Our team exists in a community larger than the team, and we want to live our values within the team and in the greater world.
- ▶ We get out what we put in.

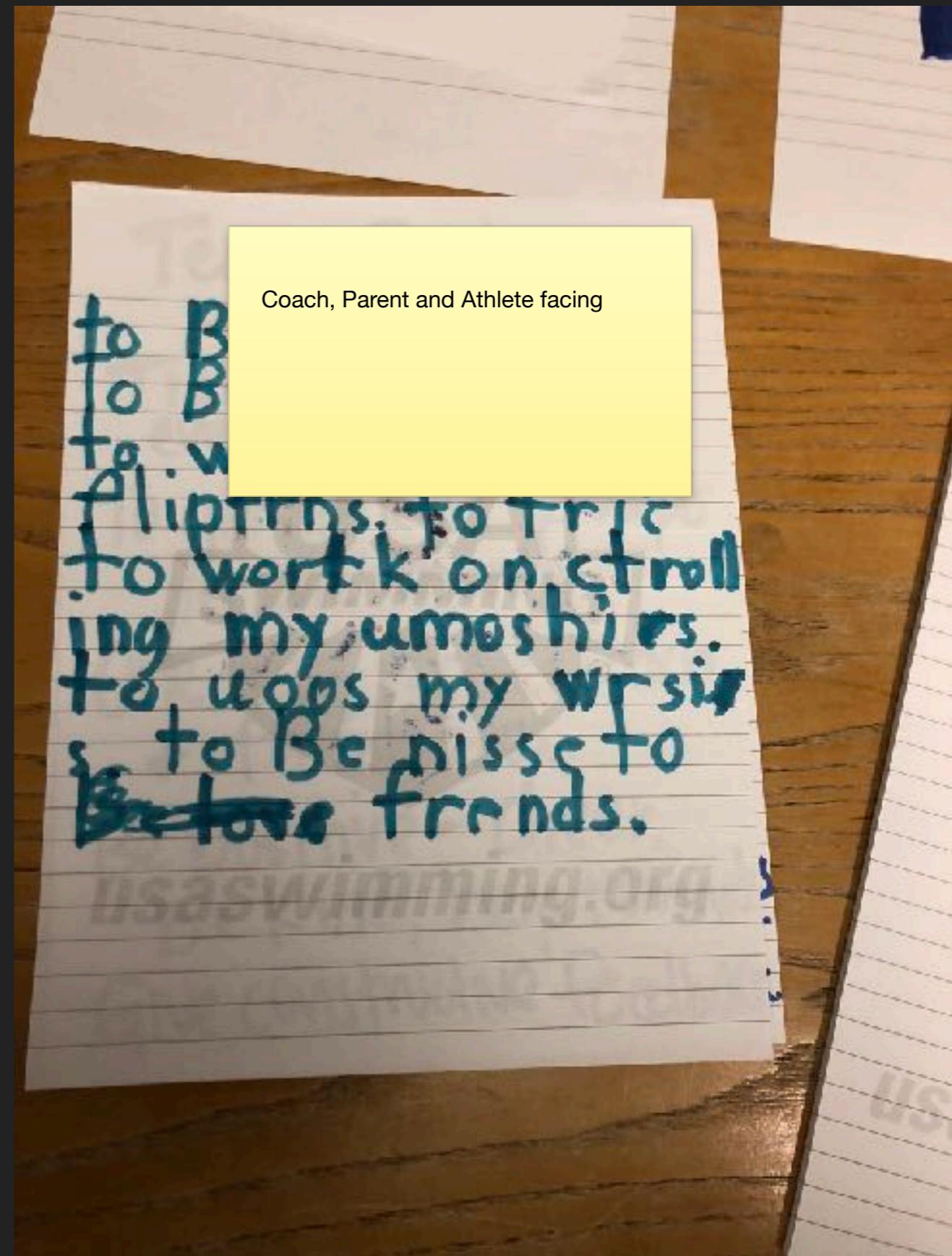
ANNUAL RETREAT

Athlete Developed Goals

- ▶ Athletes were asked to brainstorm motivating, challenging and achievable goals for the team and themselves.
- ▶ Through an athlete-led process, the team establishes our goals for the year.
- ▶ The team goals provide a motivating framework for all levels of the team and individual athletes recognize their individual goals are pieces of the larger puzzle.
- ▶ This framework extends to the coaches, as we are faced with an exciting new challenge of coaching to the goals set forth by the community, not just the goals of the coaches.
- ▶ Coaches set goals too!

MAKE GOOD CHOICES

- ▶ We work to help athletes determine their priorities through the process of goal setting. If the goals aren't thrilling they will be easily forgotten.
- ▶ Goals create the structure that athletes use to make their choices.
- ▶ Thrilling goals turn “future choices” into “now choices”.
- ▶ What is Important? What is Actionable?



MAKE GOOD CHOICES

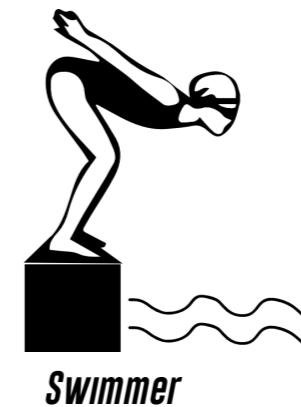
- ▶ Younger athletes should find it easier to make decisions because they don't feel “overloaded”. They often don't realize they are making a choice in the first place.
- ▶ Older athletes begin to recognize that choosing one thing means leaving something else behind. They can't have it all. Meaningful Goals = Easier Decision. Commitment is not the same as sacrifice.
- ▶ Priorities vary from athlete to athlete; school, family, pool, social.
- ▶ Goals should be shared with those they trust to help hold them accountable.



Undercurrent

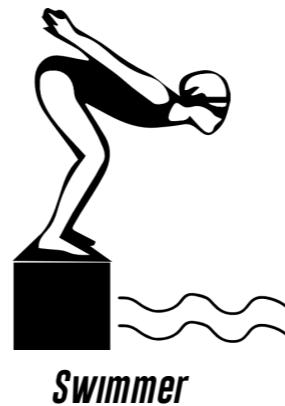


lead the



Swimmer

Hightide



Swimmer

**work
together**

Riptide, Senior

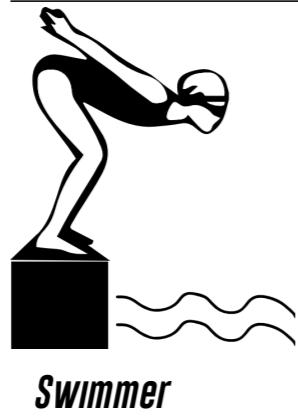


**work
together
while**



support

*National, High
Performance*



**drives the
VISION while**



support

EVOLVING THE EGO

Correct, don't protect; give up being right; don't take it personally:
A rocket to the moon spends more than ninety percent of its time
off course and yet successfully reaches its destination with great
accuracy.

It does so by constantly correcting its error without hesitation, and
without feeling wrong, guilty, dominated, or invalidated, because it
does not have an ego that has to protect itself by being right. It is
simply in the business of getting to the moon.

-Karl Mohr

EVOLVING THE EGO

Ego holds us back because it believes the current version of oneself is the best version of oneself, therefore resists growth and change.

We approach this challenge in two ways-

1. Working with young athletes as their psyche develops so that they believe the best version of themselves is the one that is open to growth. (*process vs. outcome*)

2. Connecting athletes' identity with that of the team (*developing ownership*). Their best self is one that honors the team and their teammates.

When your 9 year-old says she wants to go to the Olympics or fly a rocket to Mars, you are NOT in any position to really judge the reality of her future. Very simply, you don't really have any idea what your child can become.

However, even if you think you do have insight into your child's future, you still do not want to discourage her from dreaming. Dreams are what kids do best. If nurtured and encouraged their dreams can positively shape their entire life.

By definition dreams are NOT supposed to be practical and realistic.

Dr. Alan Goldberg