

Brad Bridgewater – 1996 Olympic Gold Medalist – 200 Backstroke “INSIDE THE MIND OF A CHAMPION”

- ☺ **In the 1996 Olympic Finals, underdog Brad Bridgewater was competing against the 1992 Gold Medalist in the 200 Back, Current World Record Holder in the 200 Back, Current American Record Holder in the 200 Back, and the 1994 World Champion, yet still managed to win the Gold medal in the 1996 Olympic Final. How did he do it????**
- The biggest difference in the 1995-96 season was a change in ATTITUDE!!!
 - Before the 1995-1996 season, Brad was attending the University of Texas, and although he was a very good swimmer, he lacked self-discipline, and had problems going to class and problems going to school.
 - Brad had 2 major disappointments that later served as sources of motivation. First, as a great, young upcoming swimmer, he was expected to make the 1992 Olympic team but failed to do so. Second, he failed to make the finals at the 1994 World Championships.
 - His training in the 1995-96 Season, he felt was the best training he ever did because of conscious decisions that changed his ATTITUDE.
 - ✓ Some of these changes included the following:
 - ❖ His #1 Decision was to RACE EVERYDAY IN PRACTICE!
 - ❖ He made a conscious decision to win every set in practice including warm-up and warm-down.
 - ❖ Starting in Sept 1995, he decided to be first on the deck and first in the pool for the next year (and he was).
 - ❖ He was going to make a conscious effort to DO WORKOUTS CORRECTLY – (this included no pulling on the lane lines, touch up his stroke using drill work, proper swimming of sets and no cutting laps).
 - ❖ He decided he would make every workout no matter how he felt.
 - ❖ Before every AM workout he would wake up, and instead of rolling over and going back to sleep, he thought about other people in the world trying to beat him.
 - ❖ When it comes to competition, he decided he always plans to Win, no matter who he is competing against. He said the following: “Winning is a Habit, and So is Losing.” So, Every Race in Any Stroke, at Any Distance, became Important to Him.
 - ❖ Brad would also swim every event for which he qualified at major meets.
 - ❖ When he didn’t win, he was a good sport and re-grouped well after a loss. Every loss was a learning experience for the future. He did not dwell on the past.
 - ❖ Brad also never concerned himself with the heat sheet & who he was swimming against. All he wanted to know was which heat and lane he was in.
 - ❖ Brad was seeded 3rd at the 1996 Olympic Trials, and even though one guy ahead of him was the Current World Record Holder, he did not worry about it at all.

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- ❖ In the 1996 Olympic Finals, Brad was competing against the 1992 Gold Medalist in the 200 Back, Current World Record Holder in the 200 Back, Current American Record Holder in the 200 Back, and the 1994 World Champion, yet he still managed to win the Gold medal in the 1996 Olympic Final. He was nervous like anyone would be, but did not worry about who his competition was.
- ❖ Brad was the only 1996 Olympic Champ not ranked #1 in his event in the World.
- ❖ Brad went into the Olympics ranked #4.

☺ Prior to the 1996 Olympic Trials and the Olympics – Brad Bridgewater Quote:

“Coach, I am going to go to the pool everyday. I am going to be a great teammate. I am going to cheer for my teammates. Every time one of my teammates does well, I am going to pretend it was me. And I am going to build my confidence on every one of those swims.”

- ❖ Brad, did in fact, become a great teammate. He did everything he promised he would do.
- ❖ Brad would go out of his way to make everyone around him better and feel better about themselves (for example: Lenny Krazelburg – an up and coming backstroker).
- ❖ Brad was always positive with Lenny and would always Race him in practice.
- ❖ Brad & Lenny:
 - ⇒ Would always have Fun Racing in Practice Every Day.
 - ⇒ Would Correct each others mistakes.
 - ⇒ Would Encourage each other.
 - ⇒ Would Watch each others Race Videos and Help each other Improve.
 - ⇒ Lenny would eventually help Brad win the Olympics and Brad would help Lenny win the US Senior Nationals.

☺ **These BEHAVIORS, as far as ATTITUDE, are what enabled Brad to Win the Gold Medal.**

- ☺ Brad’s coach and him never talked about winning the Gold medal; they just talked about being the most improved backstroker in the meet. They also talked about how some athletes have improved in the past and beaten others that has faster times, but did not swim well at the Games.
- ☺ Brad’s coach and himself talked about how to Build on Enthusiasm and also about specific things they needed to work on in training between the Olympic Trials and the Olympic Games.
- ☺ They talked about how important it was to Compete in practice everyday and set specific practice goals.
- ☺ Brad’s Coach, the legendary Mark Schubert, said, “Brad deserves a lot of credit for making conscious decisions about changes. Anything I suggested to him, he agreed with. He then would follow through with a lot of Confidence and Enthusiasm.”