

# DEVELOPING A CHARACTER CULTURE

“PREPARE THE CHILD FOR THE PATH, NOT THE PATH FOR THE CHILD.”



**Don & Ron Heidary**  
***Orinda Aquatics***  
***June 1, 2011***



# ORINDA AQUATICS ACHIEVEMENTS

*WITH A CHARACTER BACKDROP*

- × **With under 100 swimmers, the team has:**
  - + *Won Sectionals, Far Westerns, Juniors (West)*
  - + *Men were 9<sup>th</sup> at SC Juniors in Atlanta*
  - + *Current team has:*
    - × *Six Junior National Qualifiers*
    - × *One National Qualifier*
    - × *One OT Qualifier*
    - × *35 Sectional Qualifiers*
    - × *Men's 400 Free Relay - 3:03/200 FR 1:23/Pac Rec  
200 BK*
  - + *Senior Group GPS is 3.75*
  - + *90% of swimmers compete in college (all want to)*
  - + *Virtually no "burnout"*
  - + *No discipline issues*
  - + *Travel with no chaperones/no problems*



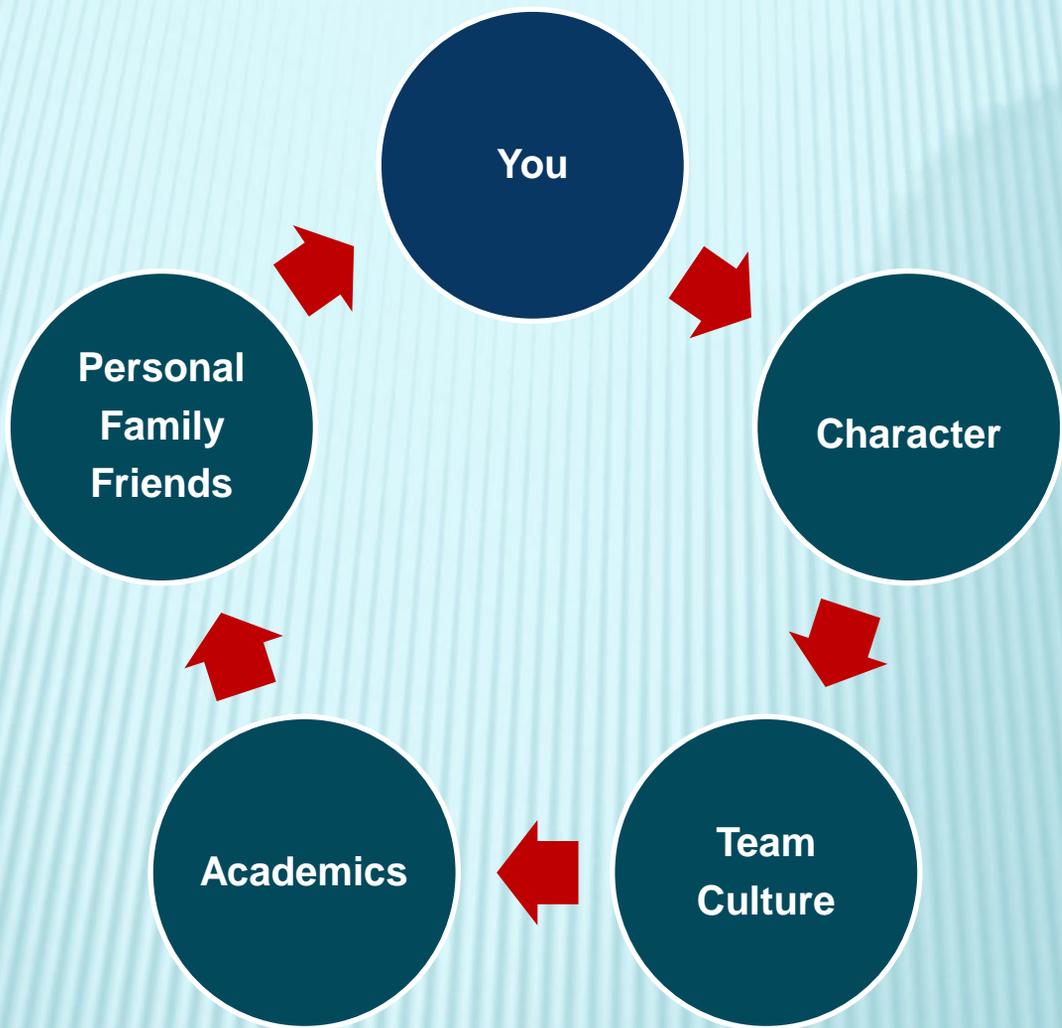
# WHERE DOES CHARACTER FIT INTO COACHING?

- ▶ **What is a high-character athlete?**
- ▶ **What role does character development play in athletic training, youth sports, and the team?**
- ▶ **Should coaches be recognized only for athletic performance?**
- ▶ **Should there be some dual mandate for coaches?**
- ▶ **Should we leave the character stuff to the parents?**



# THE CYCLE

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# EXTERNAL PRESSURES

- × *Media*
- × *Technology*
- × *Peer Pressure*
- × *Drugs/Alcohol*
- × *Need for acceptance*
- × *Overprotective parents*
- × *Self-esteem/depression*
- × *Academic pressure*
- × *Family situation*



Would suggest even more the need for a positive, structured environment.

# THEME QUOTES/ARTICLES

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## QUOTES:

**"SUCCESS IS ALWAYS TEMPORARY,  
WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, THE ONLY THING YOU'LL HAVE  
LEFT IS YOUR CHARACTER." VINCE GILL**

**"ALL YOU HAVE IS WHO YOU ARE." UNKNOWN**

**"CHARACTER IS SO LARGELY AFFECTED BY ASSOCIATION THAT  
WE CANNOT AFFORD TO BE INDIFFERENT AS TO WHO OR  
WHAT OUR FRIENDS ARE." UNKNOWN**

**"NOTHING SPLENDID HAS EVER BEEN ACHIEVED EXCEPT BY  
THOSE WHO DARED BELIEVE THAT SOMETHING INSIDE OF  
THEM WAS SUPERIOR TO CIRCUMSTANCE." B. BARTON**

**"THE WHOLE IS THE SUM OF THE PARTS. BE A GOOD PART."**

## ARTICLES:

**THE APPLE – BE SELFLESS/GIVE YOUR BEST**

**THE BUTTERFLY -CHALLENGE/STRUGGLE IS GOOD**

**THE UNCOMMON PROFESSIONAL – DAILY DUTY**

# MAIN QUESTION:

*WHAT IS YOUR PRIORITY AS A COACH?*

- **Develop fast swimmers and build a competitive team**
- **Develop high-character young men and women and teach life lessons**
- **Both?**
- **If you emphasize one over the other, which one do you compromise, or do you?**



# THE ANSWER SHOULD BE...

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**BOTH**

*Develop fast swimmers with no character emphasis*

- In the long run, the kids lose. When they stop swimming, will they be better people for having been in your program?

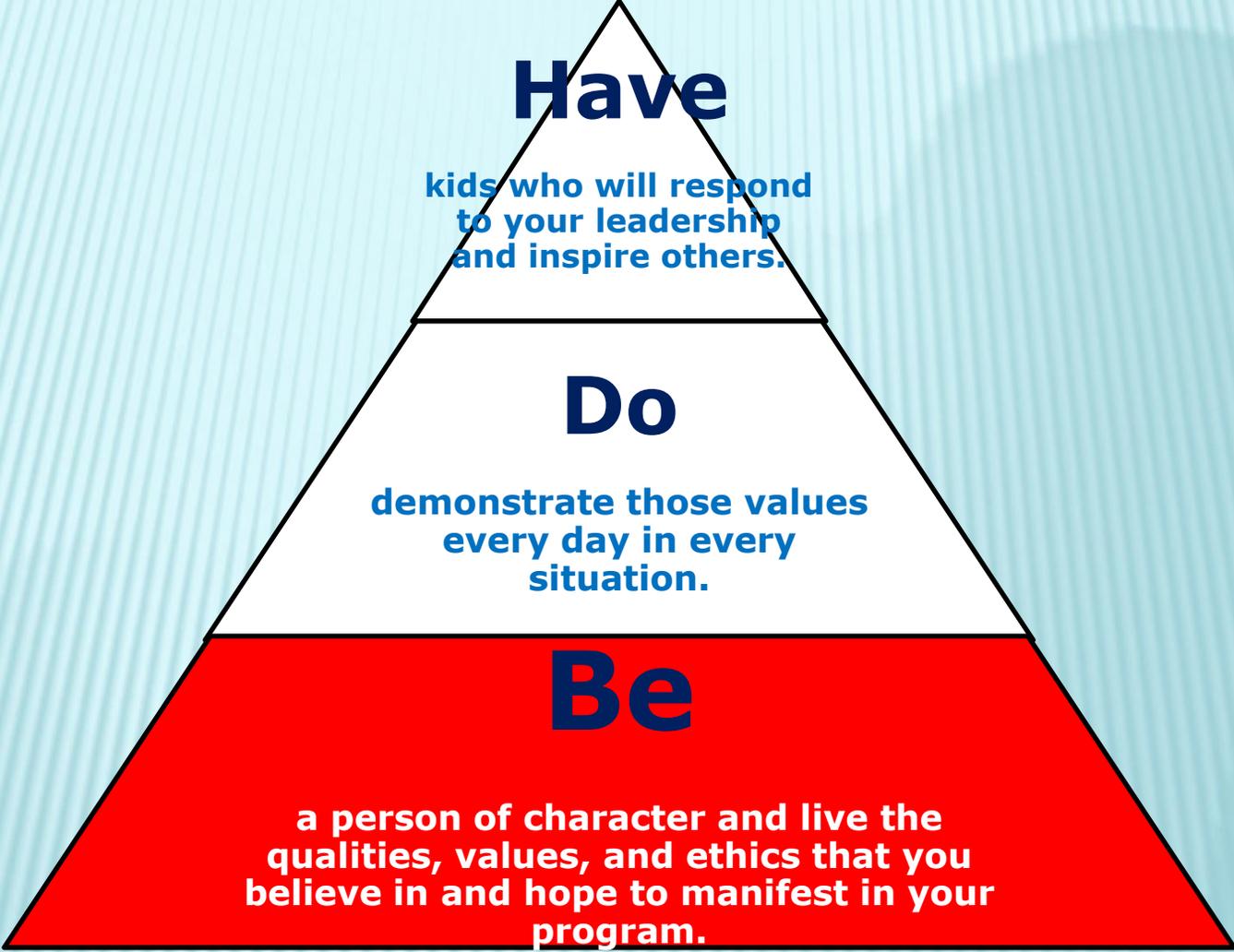
Character growth with little athletic development

- You will have a positive program, but talent will leave and you may have cheated kids from reaching their full potential.

# THE COACH'S ROLE

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## THE **BE, DO, HAVE** PRINCIPAL



**Have**

kids who will respond  
to your leadership  
and inspire others.

**Do**

demonstrate those values  
every day in every  
situation.

**Be**

a person of character and live the  
qualities, values, and ethics that you  
believe in and hope to manifest in your  
program.

# PEOPLE FIRST

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**We do not simply look for;**

- + Good “kids”
- + Or “well-behaved” swimmers

***We look for good people.  
Period. Regardless of age,  
success, or circumstance.***

**In our view;**

- + The better the person
- + The better the athlete
- + The better the swimmer
- + And the better the team

# CONCEPTS

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× **The following are concepts that are:**

- × *Sold*
- × *Employed*
- × *And enforced daily*

× **This is done to:**

- × *Parents*
- × *Coaches*
- × *And swimmers*



# THE TEAM CONCEPT

- ▶ **The team concept is a life concept** and there is no better place to learn it than in an athletic setting.
- ▶ “Team” ***is*** family, friends, students, co-workers, community, and on and on. ***It is co-existing and co-producing.***
- ▶ The ability to be a good team person or a leader can be developed in the pool and the locker room every day. **It requires empathy, sacrifice, and an unconditional commitment to a greater cause.**
- ▶ This ability and understanding will serve athletes long after their careers have ended.



# SERVICE OVER SUCCESS

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- ▶ **Service is the key to humility, character, and ethics.**
- ▶ *It is found in the "daily duty" of supporting one another and giving back. Our team's mission statement and our daily message is "team over the individual".*

## PEOPLE OVER TIMES

- ▶ If people feel and know that you care about them as individuals first, they will do virtually anything for you and for the team.
- ▶ **Unconditional, mutual respect must drive the coach-athlete relationship.**
- ▶ This eliminates or minimizes lying, deceit, disrespect, etc.



# HUMILITY

## *A DOMINANT AND CRITICAL THEME*

- Ego is not tolerated or allowed in any form
- The most successful kids on the team are the most humble
- As coaches we check and monitor ego very closely
- **We sell humility as a virtue and core value**
- **We do not treat anyone as a “star.” It is more the contrary.**



# INTEGRITY - *DO THE RIGHT THING.*

*If one minute late is OK...*

*If one bad word is OK...*

*If one swimmer out of team attire is OK...*

*If one act of disrespect is OK...*



## **In workout:**

- **On-time**
- **Drills**
- **Laps**
- **Cookies**
- **Truth**

## **In Life:**

- **Positive life choices**
- **Respect/appreciate parents**
- **Rise above social pressures—drugs/alcohol**
- **Know that self-esteem and self-worth are self bestowed and NOT determined by others**
- **Use technology wisely**
- **Embrace academics**

# EMBRACE CHALLENGE, *ELIMINATE NEGATIVITY*

## Concepts:

➤ As “elite athletes” (they all are), they **MUST** embrace the most challenging aspects of sports. If they can’t, they should quit and find something more comfortable.

➤ If **challenge equals growth**, then **nothing** is negative, and the negative really becomes positive, hence, the “**Path of Most Resistance**”.

➤ Examples are weather, tough sets, pool set up, “bad” swims – everything is sold as a growth opportunity

➤ **EVERY** race has value  
➤ **find it!**

**Challenge (hard) = good**  
**Helping = Leadership**



*Megan Liang has one leg and is one of the most positive and inspiring people you will ever meet.*

# BUILD LEADERSHIP

- ▶ Ethical coaching should support the leadership process. Every team and athlete must know that the younger members are future leaders and role models.
- ▶ From day one, we begin building future leaders. Swimmers are made aware of the standards and responsibilities *and what is expected of them now and in the future.*
- ▶ ***Hazing or “tradition” as it is euphemistically put, that makes people feel less or inferior, is not tolerated in any form and has no place in building young leaders.***
- ▶ Through swimmers (captains, seniors, and anyone of influence) and coaches, young athletes must see role models and leaders. They must see a demonstration of work ethic, integrity, and a resiliency that inspires them.



# EMBRACE ACADEMICS

## Athletes are Student/Athletes

- ▶ A diligent student represents a great deal more than his or her academics. We have seen academics and athletics work hand in hand and support and complement each other. The more an individual commits to either, the more the other is strengthened.
- ▶ **Athletes that do not *embrace* academics are generally not leaders (in the student-athlete sense) and can become one-dimensional.**
- ▶ Our process and objective is to foster and support student-athletes at the highest level. **Our team *must* commit to both.**
- ▶ It has been our experience that a swimmer who does not commit to academics (to the best of their ability) usually has personality characteristics that are not healthy for them or the team. What fills the void?
- ▶ *Our Senior Group (of 65) average GPS is 3.75. All are very academically focused.*

# APPRECIATION OF PARENTS

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- × This is probably the most significant sign of character. "Gratitude is the mother of all virtues."
- × A young adult that does not appreciate the unconditional commitment and support of their parents would typically be unappreciative of other key support functions.
- × A sincere awareness and gratitude for that which supports an individual is a critical component to a well-rounded athlete, person, and team. We devote meetings to this topic and make it clear that this is a part of our culture and mission.
- × We had a recent issue with a freshman girl who was disrespectful to her parents. One observation (among many) that we made to her was, "We have never, in our team's history, had a swimmer who was a leader, role model, team captain, or high character athlete who did have a profound appreciation and respect for their parents." And we made it clear that our coaching and personal relationship with her, if her attitude didn't change, would be minimal at best.



# TEAM ATTIRE

- × Team attire is and should be a statement of pride and not a policy in and of itself.
- × Your team attire is your representation of the team.
- × **Our swimmers do not compete in a meet or travel with the team if they are not in team attire.** At travel meets, swimmers know they will not get in the van (or on the bus) if they are not in team attire.
- × At regular meets, we monitor our swimmers' team attire closely and have "conversations" with anyone not dressed appropriately.
- × Coaches should lead the way in this regard.



# TRAVEL LIGHTLY

***Integrity has no need of rules.***” *Albert Camus*

- ▶ If you as a coach, or your parents, feel that you need chaperones, you already have a problem.
- ▶ Swimmers should travel with the absence of attitude, ego, or indiscretion.
- ▶ ***Our travel policy is very simple...***
- ▶ ***If you (swimmer) need a babysitter, you need another team.***
- ▶ Our swimmers should carry themselves as mature, dedicated athletes (and individuals) on a **“business” trip**.
- ▶ They must be **on time for everything**. We have left some of our best swimmers at the hotel when they were late for our morning departure to the pool.
- ▶ **The travel expectations** should be made very clear and the **penalties should be severe**.
- ▶ Room Captains take their leadership role seriously.



# SOME THINGS WE DO ...

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- × **Weekly meetings**
  - + Usually Friday afternoon before practice
  - + We typically discuss important aspects of character development, team development, and areas of personal concern. We try to **relate everything to core values**
  - + We give articles about inspirational stories, individuals overcoming hardship, leadership examples, etc.
  
- × We **reinforce our values** almost daily with individual and group discussions about integrity, alcohol, drugs, etc. with the team vision in mind.
  
- × We monitor the character and integrity of the group by the minute – **EVERY word and action.**
  
- × We acknowledge outside achievements
  
- × Integrated **Team workouts** – challenge, fun, etc.
  
- × We **act quickly** and aggressively at the hint of unacceptable behavior even in the mildest form.
  
- × We are very deeply involved in the **college search**
  
- × Kids will NOT **“move up”** if they are not leaders (regardless of time)
  
- × We aggressively **support personal problems**
  - + Dinners, family meetings, Doctor apts, driving, etc.
  
- × We will readily **excuse anyone (from the team)** that does not embrace the core values of the team

# SOME THINGS WE EXPECT ...

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- × **Impeccable behavior at all times**
- × **Absolute honesty (they earn trust and respect)**
- × **Unconditional team commitment**
  
- × Swimmers to be (and act like) **owners/partners** of the team
  
- × Swimmers are **on time** or early for all workouts, meets and activities.
  
- × All **swimmers help** with covers, lane lines, and general pool set up.
  
- × Swimmers are out of the locker room and in the water on time. **We get in as a team.**
  
- × We have swimmers **get out** of the water to discuss the workout or a set (in the wind and rain).
  
- × Getting **equipment** for their lane **is a sign of leadership**
  
- × Upperclassmen and team captains should, and do, **lead** in all of these areas.
  
- × No menial task is delegated by any swimmer

# THINGS WE GET ...

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- + *Great people*
- + *Great leaders*
- + *Great friends*
- + *No burnout*
- + *No departures*
- + *All want to swim in college*
- + *No problems, suspensions, issues with drugs or alcohol*
- + *NO disrespect – ever*
- + *Swimmers who will give up relay spots at championship meets*
- + *Swimmers that embrace mentorship*

## **Our upperclassmen, team captains, and fastest swimmers are typically ...**

- + **The first ones to the pool for workout, often arriving before the coaches.**
- + **The first ones out of the locker room and on the deck for workout.**
- + **The first ones to help with pool covers or lane lines.**
- + **The ones who lead stretching.**
- + **The ones who lead the facility set up and take down when we host meets.**
- + **The ones who take being room captains on travel meets very seriously.**

# RESOURCES

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- × Website: [orindaaquatics.org](http://orindaaquatics.org)
- × Email: [OAswimcoach@aol.com](mailto:OAswimcoach@aol.com)
- × *On website: “Character First”*

- × Senior Letters
- × Coaches Letter
- × Testimonials
- × ASCA Ethics article
- × College Planning/History
- × Articles



*Thank you*