

An Insight Into Ian Thorpe's Mental Strength

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Ian Thorpe gave some revealing insights into the extent of his mental strength, in an interview he gave an Australian newspaper recently, though many readers may not have noticed them.

He uses some extraordinarily *powerful mental attitudes* which any competitive swimmer could implement into their own outlook, and reap their own successful results using them.

For instance, the interviewer noticed Thorpe used the word 'enjoy' a total of 78 times during the interview - and when questioned about this, his answer proved once and for all that a swimmer (or anyone else for that matter) can *only* succeed if they can truly *enjoy* what they are doing.

His answer was that he used the word "enjoy" *deliberately*, explaining that if you say to yourself that something is "difficult", it is *thought of as something negative*. He went on to say that as his *swimming training* was often hard work and time-consuming, and that using the word "enjoy" *changes this way of thinking* in his mind. (How important is this?!)

Whilst I'm on the subject of enjoyment, the recently crowned 2002 Wimbledon tennis champion **Lleyton Hewitt** also said at the beginning of the year how much he was *looking forward* to Wimbledon, and how much he *enjoyed* the grasscourt season. Another example of true enjoyment turning into true success, as it so often does.

If your mind is focused upon the *negatives* of swimming, such as the pain, the early mornings, the social sacrifices etc - then all these negative things simply *increase in intensity* and just make it too hard to continue over a long period of time. So enjoy what you are doing, it's *vital*.

Thorpe also believes - very revealingly, that he has *never lost a race in his life*. When questioned about his in regard to his 2nd place to Pieter van den Hoogenband in the 200m freestyle at the 2000 Olympics, he replied that "losing" was not coming *second* - it was getting out of the water *knowing he could have done better*. And as he believes he has *always* tried 110% in every race, he believes, in his mind, that he has won every race he has been in!

That is an incredibly powerful mindset which literally allows no place for negative thoughts *whatsoever*, and one which you could easily try to employ yourself. This mindset can bring *nothing but success*.

He also showed how he converts another classic swimming *negative* into a morale-boosting *positive* - that of "crowd expectation". Rather than seeing the public's huge expectation of him as a *negative* - ie. a weight on his shoulders, he instead *chooses to see it as a positive* - which he sees as **huge support to boost him to greater heights**. This is a very clever way to mentally deal with the intense pressure and expectation of him before an event.

He also gave a small but valuable insight into his mental state *whilst he is swimming* (after commenting that everyone always asks him what goes through his mind as he swims!). His answer only goes to prove my earlier articles and ravings about how to reach *the zone* - the peak of human performance. **He basically said that his mindset was as *neutral* as possible while he swam, and that he simply *allows his body to do what it knows best*.**

This is a classic way to reach the zone - by simply surrendering to the swimming control center - the subconscious mind, which runs the body's performances automatically - and simply allowing it to *instinctively run the performance*, rather than trying to consciously orchestrate or direct it as one might in training.

So there you have some amazing insights from one of the greats, which you can bring into your mental attitude towards swimming from now on, which are:

- to 'enjoy' everything to do in your swimming (and also use the word "enjoy" a lot!)
- to remember that you have *never, ever lost* a race in your life (unless you give less than your best)
- to remember that *others' expectations of you* to swim well are actually *support*
- and that the best swims are *instinctive, automatic* performances which the body runs *itself*, directly from the subconscious.

OK, there's nothing to stop you now - go to it!

"The Mind controls the body, and the mind is unlimited".