



*Developing Children to be
Champions in Life through Swimming*

“LANE 4” TIMES

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The Championship Season!

As we enter the month of February, we also enter the championships part of the season. The championships season will last about two months, Feb and March.

Later this month, Riptides will send 11 members to the SC Swimming State Championships. Those swimmers include Chad Bateson, Eddie Bateson, Connor Campbell, Julia Campbell, Connor Churchill, Andi Churchill, Alyssa Cozart, Danielle Flaherty, Walker Harwell, Lexi Roberts and Chase Teasley.

Following the SC Swimming State Championships, many of our 12/Unders will compete in the Grand Prix Series Championships.

Moving into March, our Senior swimmers will travel to Auburn, AL for the Auburn Open. This is their “focus” meet of the season. Finally in March, the entire Riptides’ team will compete in the Lowcountry Palmetto Championships. Since Riptides will also host this event, we will want all swimmers competing. This is also the only “championship” meet in which the entire team can participate so it should be very exciting!

In the meantime, it’s important for swimmers to continue to refine their technique and improve their speed. All the championship meets following the State Champs are opportunities for swimmers to earn State q-times for the summer... so take advantage of all racing opportunities.

The next few articles can help better prepare swimmers for the upcoming championships. Good luck Riptides!

STAYING LOOSE AND CALM PRE-RACE:

BY DR. ALAN GOLDBERG

Why are races won and lost before the start?

As I've said many times throughout this series, the BIGGEST secret to swimming your best when it counts the most is having the ability to stay loose and

calm behind the blocks, right before your race. Far too many swimmers waste precious energy the minutes leading up to their event by thinking about and focusing on all of the wrong things. Because of this, they unknowingly undermine their confidence, get themselves overly nervous and set themselves up for failure.

The Devastating Effects Of Out Of Control Pre-Race Jitters

Ever wonder how you can run out of gas at the 150 mark of your 200, the very first race of your big meet? You've worked hard all season, you've got a solid training base, yet your arms and legs feel like lead and you're totally exhausted! What gives? You go 7 – 8,000 yards easily in practice and after a mere 150 you're wasted?! This is a direct result of a swimmer being far too nervous pre-race! If you're “over-amped” behind the blocks and thinking about the time you need, who you have to beat or, “what if you don't?,” then your breathing will get faster and shallower, your muscles will tighten up and the end result of these physical changes will be this feeling of premature exhaustion.

Controlling Your Eyes & Ears To Stay Calm Under Pressure

If you want to consistently swim to your potential under big meet pressure and avoid the devastating physical effects of excessive nerves, then you have to learn how to keep yourself physically and mentally composed at race time! One important way that you do this is by controlling your eyes and ears behind the blocks. This means that what you LOOK AT and LISTEN TO behind the blocks has to be only things that help keep you calm, loose and confident. For example, if focusing on another swimmer and how big or fast they look gets you nervous, you control your eyes by looking at spot behind the blocks or by defocusing your eyes as you look out across the pool. If listening to a conversation between one or more swimmers is getting you anxious, you control your ears by turning up the volume on your iPod or finding someone else to talk to about non-swimming related issues. Controlling your eyes and ears means that you need to establish set things that you look at and listen to right before your races.

How do you control your pre-race focus?

Every great athlete has a repeatable, familiar pre-performance ritual that they use leading up to the start of the action which helps them systematically control their eyes and ears. Your pre-race routine and what you do behind the blocks can help you stay in control of your focus and keep you calm during those critical minutes just before the start of your event. Your pre-race routine will give you very specific things for you to look at, listen to and do that will help distract you from the normal, anxiety-producing distractions that every swimmer has to face right before the start.

What You Need To Know To Develop An Effective Pre-Race Routine

There are several key points that you need to keep in mind whenever developing and using a pre-race ritual.

- **Keep your ritual SIMPLE.** The less complicated, the better!
- **Make your ritual CONTROLLABLE.** You should only have things in your ritual that you know you will always be able to control. For example, if your pre-race ritual depends upon looking at certain other people (coach/parent), they might not always be there for you and therefore are out of your control. However, stretching and adjusting your cap and/or goggles a certain way will always be in your control.
- **KEEP your ritual the SAME.** You never want to change the steps of your ritual right before the race. Keeping things the same and familiar will help calm you down and keep you loose.
- **Build in VISUAL, AUDITORY and/or KINESTHETIC FOCAL POINTS to your ritual.** Be sure that your routine has specific things that you look at (the back of the blocks, your goggles, your feet), listen to, (certain music, sound of your breathing or specific pre-race self-talk) and feel/do, (stretching a certain way, feeling your inhalation and exhalation, adjusting your cap and goggles).
- **Do what you're doing MENTALLY while you do it PHYSICALLY.** Rituals are most effective when you keep your mental focus on the steps of the ritual while you go through them. In other words, while you're stretching behind the blocks, your concentration needs to be on the feel of the stretch. Rituals will not help you calm down if, while you go through them, your mind is elsewhere!
- **Understand the SOLE PURPOSE of any good ritual is to give you specific things to look at and listen to, which will distract you from the distractions.** You don't do

your pre-race ritual just for good luck. This is NOT about superstition. You go through this pre-race routine to calm yourself down, and most important, to help you control your eyes and ears. This means that if, for whatever reason, you have to leave a step out of the ritual, and you can't do what you always do, you understand that you can still perform your best in this upcoming race. *The key is that you use whatever steps you do go through to keep yourself focused, loose and calm!*

7 Things You and Your Swimmer Should Let Go of Now:

by [Lisy McKinnon](#)



Yesterday, I was thinking about some tips I gave in last week's article, [Help Your Coach Help Your Swimmer](#) and it made me think of all the doubts and fears and little things that swimmers hold onto that get in the way of success in the pool. So, while we still have them with us everyday and they still hear some of what we're saying (even if they respond with the occasional rolling of the eyes) Here are some things we should let go of or help our swimmer let go of.

1. What other people think of you.

People will have opinions about all sorts of things related to your child's participation in competitive swimming. Some will be overt:

"Don't you worry about locking your child into just one activity at such a young age?"

Some will be disguised as a compliment:

"I am so in awe of your child's commitment to just one thing to the exclusion of everything else in her life."

Ignore them and don't let their judgment erode your conviction or your swimmer's love for the sport.

2. Last week's bad races or yesterday's bad practice

Your swimmer will have bad races. Period. That's actually how the coach helps them improve. A bad race reveals something that needs to be tweaked. It identifies the tiny imperfections in technique that will help your coach and your swimmer do what needs to be done to move to the next level. So encourage your swimmer to learn from them and then let go of the disappointment. Just like some races will be bad, some practices will be frustrating. There are many variables which can affect an adolescent swimmer's day but when you consider the thousands of days in their life that they will practice, you just have to trust that if they love it, they're going to have more good practices than bad. It's certainly worth your while to figure out which variables you can control (see #3) and what you can't, but ultimately you just have to move on from disappointment.

3. The idea that you can control everything.

We can't control what heat our swimmer is in or who they're swimming next to. Our swimmer can't change what happened yesterday at practice. He or she can't re-swim last weekend's race. All any of us can do is control how we face the challenges that are placed before us. We can control how we react to disappointment. We can control how we treat others around us. The rest is just wasted energy.

4. The pain that comes with hard work.

I'm sure you've heard the adage, "Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional." I've seen this attributed to everyone from Buddha to Michael Phelps. I don't know who actually said it, but there is truth there.

Swimmers encounter pain in the pool. It might be the physical pain of pushing through a difficult practice or the last 25 meters of the 200 fly. It might be the emotional pain of losing your best event to a rival. It could be the mental pain of fighting the voice in your head that says you'll never be good enough.

These are all part of getting better between the lanes and in life. So, help your swimmer name the pain, keep what you need from it to get better, then let the rest go.

5. Anything that you're doing or your swimmer is doing that isn't helping him or her grow.

Say no to what is unnecessary and insignificant. This is hard...because we are conditioned to believe that

we need to be "well-rounded" to be successful. How many things have we convinced ourselves that we are supposed to *do* that actually keep us from *being* who we are supposed to *be*. I subscribe to [Malcolm Gladwell's](#) 10,000-hour rule — that's how long it takes to become an expert at something. So, with the short life we are given, what is worth those 10,000 hours? I can't tell you or your swimmer what to let go of here...it may be swimming (unfathomable, I know). Just be intentional about what you say yes to and what you say no to.

6. Impatience

Every swimmer wants to be good enough now. Some of us parents find ourselves wanting things to happen before their time as well. Some swimmers become champions in 18 months, others swim for years before ever making their first final. Some swimmers master the butterfly in a few weeks, others take months just to get the dolphin kick. Patience isn't about waiting for things to happen. Patience is maintaining the belief that your goal is worth the effort. Patience is the determination not to lose your focus and to take things one stroke at a time without skipping over anything essential to improvement. Patience is recognizing that all progress is, indeed, progress, regardless of how small it appears.

7. Speculative fears and doubts

There's plenty to be afraid of in this life and plenty of room for doubt...especially if you're putting yourself out there to achieve something extraordinary. I'm sure many swimmers have felt afraid of never being good enough to make the next training group or to swim in college or to make the Olympic trials. But it is futile to be afraid of what hasn't happened yet and feeding that fear takes away from feeding a dream. Being in the present, enjoying the journey, taking calculated risks and appreciating all progress is a better use of energy than worrying about things that have not happened and may never happen. The future is another one of those things that you can't control (see #3.)

Regarding doubt: There are days that I have doubts about what we're doing — that all the sacrifice of time and vacations and the money spent will be worth it in the end. And I won't say that doubt is patently bad. If doubt is something that helps you identify what isn't working, then it has value. Dwelling in doubt, however, will get you and your swimmer stuck.

All I can say is believe in your swimmers and help them to believe in themselves. Believe in the value of hard work to achieve a goal and that the ability to do that in the pool will make them better able to do it in

life. Believe they can always get better and that being *their* best — if not *the* best — is reward enough.

Spring Break:

Due to the lateness of Easter and Spring Break from school, Riptides official break from swimming will occur from **March 31-April 5**.

The reasons for the Break at that time are 1) it immediately follows the Lowcountry Palmetto Championships, and 2) It allows time to return to training before the SMRT April long-course meet rather than having a break in the middle of training.

Although most schools will break a couple weeks later, Riptides will train during that break. If your family is going to leave town, please check with Coach Jim about training options.

Practice Changes:

Feb 14-17 – No Practices, SCS State Championships

Feb 22 – No Practices Bronze, Blue, Red, White, GP Champs

Birthdays:

McKenzie Bowers – 6th, Aubry Cloutier – 21st, Chase Teasley – 21st, Anna Riley – 25th, Connor Churchill – 28th, Makenna Zeitz – 28th