We all dream of achieving the pinnacle of excellence.

But few have the stomach for what comes next.

The hard work, the sacrifice, the time spent honing and perfecting our technique, elevating our conditioning until that moment where we stand up on the blocks and let it all fly.

Here are three things you should consider before chasing down some organic, free range greatness...

**What is greatness going to cost you?**

In the immortal words of Snoop Dogg (or B.B. King if your musical tastes are a little more, ahem, aged), “you gotta pay the cost to be the boss”.

What will you have to pay to achieve greatness?

Podium-topping success comes with an equitable amount of sacrifice. The idea that we can have our cake and eat it too is sold to us via advertising (“*Swim faster with no effort*!”), but if you want to achieve something awesome in the pool you’ll have to earn it. (Shocking, I know.)

Daydreaming about success is fun, and therein lies a common problem—those fantasies can feel so real, so tantalizingly close that when confronted with the harsh reality that an obscene amount of work and time is required to make them come to pass that we recoil in disgust.

(“*Eww, two-a-days? No, thanks.*”)

Are you willing to do what is necessary?

It’s okay to say no—there are an endless number of reasons to say so.

But if you…

* Plan on being on the blocks the next time the Olympics come around.
* Wanna go to a Div 1 school and get your education paid for.
* Want to be the best dolphin kicker on the team.
* Plan on breaking a minute for the 100 freestyle for the first time.

…then you need to determine what it is going to cost.

There is no shortcut, and no getting around this fact.

If you ask any elite athlete if they were able to sandbag their way to excellence, they will laugh.

What is the cost for you to be great?

**What does your schedule for greatness look like?**

It’s easy to ignore the importance of the day-to-day grind in favor of the lustre and shine that comes with fantasizing about our goals of greatness. Talking and dreaming about our goals is fun, actually living them—not so much.

Having a goal is a crucial step, but it is an empty one without a plan to get there.

And even here most swimmers fall short—they will describe what they need to do (“Faster turns!” or “Better breakouts!”) but not outline what they are going to *do*.

What are the systems, habits and routines that you will have to put in place to achieve greatness?

Let’s say that you intend on smashing your personal best time and breaking the state record. To do so you’ve determined that you need to improve your kick. Knowing this, what will you do on a daily basis to get there? What are the things you will inject into your practices in and out of the pool to achieve this objective?

Will you…

* Spend an extra 10-15 minutes after PM practices doing vertical kick?
* Focus on banging out perfect breakouts in practice from warm-up to warm-down?
* Do bonus hamstring and hip stretches at home on Tuesday-Saturday nights?
* Run stairs on your own for 35 minutes at the stadium on Saturday and Sundays?

What will *your* schedule look like for you to earn greatness?

**Will you be a little (okay, maybe more than just a little...) stubborn?**

Okay, so you have your crazy goal.

A determination to earn it.

And maybe you have a schedule to achieve it mapped out.

Assuming you are ready to rock and roll, you will next encounter resistance.

Somebody, somewhere, at some point, if your goal is lofty enough, will tell you it won’t happen.

It might come from a teammate, or worse, a parent or coach.

Resistance comes in various forms. Dismissal of your goals as too ambitious for your abilities, the negative influence of those you surround yourself with (“Oh it’s just one morning workout, what’s the big deal?”), to outright jealousy and blockage.

A curious symptom of those who are jealous of what you are doing is that they now don’t have the feeling of superiority over you.

Isn’t that a weird thing? Because you choose to do something great, it makes them feel lesser than they like, leading them to hate on what you are doing. (“I couldn’t do it so why should they?”)

At the end of the day, if you know in your heart that greatness is upon you, will you be stubborn enough to see past those who doubt you?

There is nothing inherently wrong with simply doing your time when it comes to your swimming career.

For many the friendships, competition and travel are all they aspire to in their years of circling the black line.

But if you are ready to take it further, to extend yourself over and over again to the point of breaking, to take your talent and abilities for a sky-screaming rip, than it leads me to ask—will you be great?

[When you are ready you know where to go.](http://www.yourswimlog.com/ysb/?awt_l=9GHcA&awt_m=3bBie9YyRkdKqrd)

Olivier