

VOLTAGE AQUATICS

From the Coaches

Happy New year!!! The following article is a great read about developing a positive “mentally tough” attitude. 2018 is going to be a great year!

New Season, New Mindset

By Olivier Poirier-Leroy

For a lot of us, this season is the one where we are going to be “mentally tougher.” It’s where we are going to lock in that killer mindset that will help send us hurtling towards our goals as though we are wearing fins and paddles.

When we look at the superstars in our sport we tend to think that they were always mentally tough. That they were born and bred to be resilient, focused and optimistic in the face of adversity.

But a championship mindset isn’t something you are born with, and it’s not something you magically show up on the blocks with. It is very much a skill, something you can work on each day in practice. If there is one reason to work on your mindset during your swim workouts it is this: The way you react to the little things in practice are a good indicator of how you are going to react to the big things in competition.

The way we train is the way we race.

Here are four things you can do each day in practice to level up your mental game this season:

1. Do your part to create a culture of excellence.

Coaches talk a lot about “team first,” which can be hard for swimmers to grasp when most of the time we race as individuals. But helping to create a positive environment—both in practice and on deck in competition—not only helps your teammates rise up, but boosts your own attitude and mindset.

For example, we have all had those sets that leave us grumbling and sighing. Instead of complaining, swallow the urge to be a soggy towel. The only

thing that makes that hard set worse is complaining about it.

Being positive can be as simple as saying, “Okay, guys, this set is hilariously brutal, but let’s put a whopping on it anyway.” You don’t need to be excessively cheery either. Especially if that’s not “you.” A simple “Let’s do this” can work wonders. Choosing to be a good influence on the lane and the group in practice, when the set “is sooo stupid” or you don’t think you can make the interval, is a subtle but powerful indication of mental toughness.

2. Reframe that one stinky thing that always happens in practice.

Practice will be going, well, swimmingly, when boom, it happens. *That* mental roadblock. It’s always the same thing, around the same time in practice. You don’t want to push yourself past a particular point. Or you don’t think you can do an interval.

Our mental hang-ups, as annoying as they may be, are usually shockingly consistent. What’s yours? What’s the moment in practice where things turn for the worse?

Take that moment and reframe it: “Sure, this set is hard...but I’ve done harder sets before and survived.” Here’s another example: “I’m really tired and sore, but imagine how good I will feel knowing that I worked hard anyway?”

3. Reset when things aren’t going your way.

One of the lowly experiences of our sport is that moment when our stroke has abandoned us. Our feel for the water has sunk into the cloudy depths of the deep-end (is that band-aid still down there?), making us want to throw in the towel on the workout.

Instead of quitting, slow things down and hit reset. Being able to bounce back in practice is critical. It provides you real-life examples of your resilience

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that you can use when things fall apart in competition.

Resetting requires patience, and you will come to understand that swimming really, really fast in the pool always starts with swimming really, really well. Not the other way around.

“If only I try harder!” is usually the go-to response when things aren’t going our way, or we feel particularly struggle-ey in the water. Believe it or not, raw effort isn’t always the answer. Sometimes to reboot our stroke and our practice means slowing it down, getting in touch with the fundamentals, and scaling up again from there.

4. Pick one technique thing to work on.

What does focusing on technique have to do with our mindset? Quite a bit, actually. When we are focused and engaged on what we are doing, whether it’s a new drill, or a breathing pattern, or trying to hit a specific time or interval, we enjoy what we are doing more, and experience the increase in skill and speed. (Best side-effect ever, perhaps?)

When you walk out on the pool deck today, pick one technical thing to completely destroy. Really, really tight streamlines are a good one. Keeping that high elbow catch is a good one for you freestylers. Gliding like a boss at the end of your breaststroke kick.

Concentrating with all the power in your CPU will keep you engaged (making the workout less boring), but perhaps more importantly, those really good streamlines will turn into really good breakouts, which will turn into efficient swimming. The sneaky reality is that when we do one thing exceptionally well that attitude inevitably infects the rest of our swimming too. Boom!

~ Coach Phoebe

Important Dates

January 11-14: *Washington Open*, Federal Way, WA.

January 27: *Igloo Pentathlon*, Twin Falls.

February 2-3: *Bridgerland Open*, Logan, UT.

February 9-15: *Psych Up Week*.

February 16-18: *SRS Winter Championships*, Nampa.

February 16-17: No practice.

Volt Values

Commitment:

1. The state or quality of being dedicated to a cause, activity, etc.
2. An agreement or pledge to do something in the future.

Voltage Aquatics is striving to teach all swimmers the value of commitment to the goals that they set in swimming and in life. Please help us by discussing the value of commitment with your swimmer. What are they committed to? What does that commitment mean to them?

