

Personal Reflection on Swimming and Faith

My calling, my passion has been a long time in formation. As a multi-sport athlete in my youth, I was blessed with "potential" but was provided little direction and some of the attention I did receive would be considered abusive by today's standards.

At the tender age of 15, after making a mistake as a pitcher on a baseball mound and being publicly berated and humiliated by my coach, I made a prayer/promise to God that if I ever became a coach, I would always remember what it was like to be on the other end of that stick. I had no intention of becoming like that person, a coach, and ended my affiliation with that sport. I promptly forgot my promise and went on to college to pursue a swimming career and an education in engineering.

God has a much better memory than I do. While suffering through another coaching experience in college, two executives in suits contacted me about an opportunity to coach a small no-name summer league swim team that had not won a swim meet in two seasons. My only experience at this point was with a series of sports played with indifferent, inept or worse coaching.

They must have been desperate because they hired me after a brief interview in a college dorm parking lot. In hindsight, that one thin thread was a reminder of my promise. That little swim team won 5 championships in a row with 3 undefeated seasons. Much to my dismay God had use for me as a "coach".

Despite my early success on deck I still fought the idea being a coach and just worked enough doing swimming lessons to pay for an extended stay in college while I tried to figure out what serious career to pursue. Starting a business, getting married and having children, I completely walked away from any form of coaching.

But God has a better memory than I do. A couple of decades later, in a new city and after a few seasons of doing parent volunteer work with a small summer league swim team, I was once again approached about coaching. That team has doubled in size, has a waiting list and has won 7 championships in the last 11 seasons. That led to forming a year-round team which led to helping to create a high school team at St. Dominic Savio HS which has risen in 5 years from non-existent to district and regional champions and contenders for a state championship. I still have childhood scars associated with the word "coach" but I am going to continue to rely on the fact that God has a better memory than I do.

Coach Chris Kjeldsen

Reflection on Swimming and Faith in a Cup of Tea.

My cup of tea?

Training of the body
Education of the Mind
Adoration of the Spirit

God has 3 forms (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). Water too can take 3 forms as a solid, liquid or vapor (gas). Water is also a powerful symbol, it is what we are baptized in and it must be consumed regularly in order to stay alive.

Every individual is a unique creation of God and yet we all must adapt to the environment we immerse ourselves in. The water does not care what kind of day you are having, how good your attorney is, political affiliation or even what your parents want. It is a neutral medium with 100% accurate physical feedback on what an individual can do or will not do, mentally.

Success in swimming requires getting out of your comfort zone mentally, physically and spiritually to learn, accept, adapt and practice.

A body of water is bigger than you and never gets tired. Fight the water and you will lose. To me, the truths that can be learned from total immersion in a fundamental element of earth in its liquid form is life giving and can be life changing. It is a real world example of the power of God. Every step of the way a swimmer has the same freedom of choice and the same temptations of looking for a short cut or an easier way to replace the focused, dedicated hard work required to create good habits. Good habits create good character. Good character creates good decisions.

It is my belief that the more we mentally learn the non-negotiable truth already laid out for us to live by, and the more we practice good spiritual and physical habits the more successful we will be in the water and out. Stay thirsty. Have a cup of tea.

Coach Chris Kjeldsen