

Blue Group Update April 24, 2020

I hope you all are doing well. Not much has changed since I last communicated with everyone. I'll continue to update you as I can.

I've been reading a lot of information about swimming now that I am not spending as much time on deck coaching. I've found a couple of articles that I thought were interesting. This first one was on the USA Swimming website and it deals with the coach/athlete relationship.

<https://www.usaswimming.org/news-landing-page/2020/02/19/olympic-swimmer-share-how-coach-behavior-affected-their-development>

I thought this was a really interesting take on what Olympic caliber athletes wanted or expected out of their coaches. There are a lot of qualities that I try to instill in the athletes that I coach. I'm very in tune with and believe in holding swimmers accountable for all aspects of their swimming. This can include many different variables including the most basic variables of consistent effort and commitment. Building confidence has always been something that I try to incorporate into my coaching. Confident swimmers can achieve so much.

What does empowering an athlete mean? It means laying out a set of choices and letting the swimmer decide which way to go. As a coach, I believe letting the swimmer decide how they need to train, what events to swim at a championship meet, what set's they would like to do during a specific workout, or what meet they'd like to taper for gives the swimmer a feeling that they are in control of what they are working for. Empowering an athlete lets them know that the coach and athlete are working together on a plan. Overall, my job as a coach is to support you and help you build your confidence. I hope this is how you perceive the athlete coach relationship that each one of us has built.

I've included another article on mental training and what you can do to improve your approach to the mental side of the sport.

[There Has Never Been a Better Time to Work on Your Mindset](#) - Oliver Poirier-Leroy
(article is also on page 2-4 below in this document)

Now is the time to reconsider how you prepare yourself mentally for the season and competition. There are some very good ideas in here. Take a look at how you prepare mentally for your races. Writing down and journaling are some good ways to creatively work on improving all aspects of your performance and practice habits.

One last thing-please let me know what you'd like in our Zoom meetings. Coming up with content for our meetings is something I will be working on this weekend,

Thanks and stay safe-

Coach Mike

There Has Never Been a Better Time to Work on Your Mindset



By Olivier Poirier-Leroy//Contributor | Friday, April 17, 2020

With pools closed and swim meets canceled, there is a remarkable lack of chlorine in the air. My swim bag has never been drier, my hair has never less chlorine-damaged, and I am having swimming dreams on a nearly nightly basis.

But although we are all experiencing some kind of withdrawal from the pool, and we are all limited in the kind of physical training we can do, there is something that can be done to stay sharp.

And that's taking advantage of this golden opportunity to build a stronger, more focused mindset.

Maybe you've dodged mental training in the past because it seemed confusing. You didn't know where to start. Or the all-time chart-topping classic—not enough time.

Here are three simple mental training exercises you can do at home to get started on improving your mindset.

Journal out your most excellent performance.

Swimmers tend to approach race day with a combination of superstitions and fly-by-the-seat-of-my-pants.

Now that you have some time on your hands, it's worth looking back at the times where you crushed it and break down what led to those performances.

Grab a piece of paper and pen and write down quick bullet-points of:

Your mindset on race day. The emotions you were feeling. Your pre-race routine. The things you were focused on as the minutes ticked away until you raced like a chlorinated monster. Where your mind was at while you were swimming—blank? “In the zone”?

Being aware of what doesn't help is key too!

When things didn't go well, when you under-performed or choked or left the pool dissatisfied, what was your mindset like on those occasions? Were you distracted by other swimmers? Getting caught up by the expectations of others? Simply unprepared?

With these two columns of notes you will have a blueprint for the mindset and emotional state that works best for you.

Having this blueprint gives you a target, something to work towards in training and as you get closer to competition.

Visualization and mental imagery.

We all use visualization in some degree. Generally, it is in a disorganized manner, daydreaming about false-starting during class or picturing your scary competition swimming scarier than ever.

But visualization is a powerful tool that you can use for everything from improving technique to building self-confidence. It's no wonder that [countless Olympians from Michael Phelps to Katie Ledecky](#) use visualization as part of their preparation.

Here are some tips for making your visualizations more real:

- Picture the environment. The bright lights of the pool. Your coach standing on the pool deck, heat sheets rolled tightly in his hand. The tiles at the bottom of the pool. The black line whizzing by. The flex in the bulkhead when you push off.
- Hit all your senses. The smell of chlorine. The gritty texture of the block under your feet. The chilly pool water when you dive in. The churning ball of pre-race nerves in your belly. The adrenaline as you march out onto the pool deck.
- Use performance cues to “feel” your race. Write out performance cues for each stage of your race and use them to guide your visualization. For example, you could use the cue, “Explode!” for the start. Visualize yourself exploding out of the start. Same for the first 25 or 50, where the performance cue may be “Easy speed!” Use this cue to visualize yourself with easy speed.
- Consistency is king. Banging out a couple quick visualization reps and then dropping it won't help you improve. Treat it like a skill. The more you do it, the better you will be able to control the outcome of your mental imagery, and the deeper they will sink into your brain (making them feel more and more like “real” experiences).

Gratitude journal and prompts.

We are going through strange, surreal times. The roads are deserted, pools are shuttered, and there is a very real fear that we or someone we care about will become ill. The stress and uncertainty and feeling of helplessness can become crippling.

An antidote is to regularly exercise gratitude.

To be clear, gratitude—feeling appreciation for things in your life—is not the same as pretending everything is fine and dandy.

The road ahead is going to be difficult.

But gratitude prepares you for adversity by keeping your mind clear and unclouded from excess stress and anxiety.

When we are able to give things perspective, and make more rational decisions, we are better equipped to meet the challenges and hardships ahead.

Tonight, as you are sitting in the quiet of your bedroom, open a text file on your phone, crack a notebook, open your journal, and write out a couple things you are grateful for.

You might not be able to go to the pool and crank out the laps like you used to.

But you can do something to stay mentally sharp and prime yourself for when life returns to some sort of normal and swimming re-enters your life, and that's investing time into building a healthy and high-performing mindset.