

# Winning Starts with Today

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### By Wayne Goldsmith

Everyone wants to win on race day. Everyone stands behind the blocks wanting to win. Some hope. Some pray. Some cross their fingers. Some rub their lucky swim cap.

Some, not many, enjoy the quiet confidence of knowing that winning is possible because of the time and effort spent preparing for race day.

Everyone wants to **WIN THE RACE**.

How many want to **WIN EVERY WORKOUT** just as badly?

National Youth Coach **Bill Sweetenham** often says to swimmers, "Winning tomorrow starts by winning today. To win *tomorrow's* race, first win *today's* training session. Will you be a better swimmer tomorrow because of what you did in training today?"

### Here are a few tips on how to "win" workouts":

1. Arrive earlier than everyone else. Stretch for 15 minutes before anyone else arrives. If traveling or school commitments mean you can't get to the pool early, stretch in the bus, train or car on the way to training.
2. Make sure you have a drink bottle containing clean water or sports drink at every session. Drink regularly throughout the workout.
3. Be the first swimmer to get in the pool and start training. Start the first lap with a race quality dive or race start. Ask the coach to grade your dive out of ten for technical excellence.
4. Finish every repeat (including drills) with a legal, race quality touch. In free and fly this means no breathing inside the flags. In fly and breast this means an explosive, two-handed touch. In backstroke this means a powerful touch on a full stroke without looking at the wall. If swimming in a lane next to other swimmers doing the same stroke, make a conscious effort to race them from the flags to the wall on every repeat to practice your ability to win close race finishes.
5. Swim your warm up (and swim down) with the same attention to detail as you demand in the main set. Quality, explosive starts, aggressive turns, no breathing inside the flags, never breathing first or last stroke in fly and free, full underwater pull with every lap of breaststroke etc. Warm up and swim down means "GREAT SKILLS AND EXCELLENT TECHNIQUE DONE SLOWLY".
6. Challenge someone faster than you to a race every workout. It could be a kicking race. It could be a challenge based on skills and speed (ie who can swim the fastest lap with the fewest breaths-time added to number of breaths=total score and the lowest score wins). It could be a technique challenge (ie ask the coach to rate your drill efforts out of ten, then try to do it better and achieve a higher score). If you are a strong backstroker who is a weak butterflyer, challenge a strong butterflyer to a swimming (or kicking) race. Work on your weaknesses.
7. When swimming an effort in training, ask yourself four questions:
  - Could I do this with fewer strokes?
  - Could I do this with fewer breaths?
  - Could I do this with better technique?
  - Could I do this with better starts, turns and finishes?Challenge yourself to do it better every time.

8. If you want to be the best swimmer in your club, your state, Australia or the World, you must be the best swimmer in your **LANE** first. You must set yourself a higher standard than anyone else in your lane is prepared to. You must set a higher standard and more challenging goals than even your coach thinks possible.

9. Aim to do it to faster, with better skills and excellent technique **ESPECIALLY** when you are tired. Race day success will require you to swim fast when you are tired, under pressure and hurting. Make training *more* demanding than race day. Deliberately make training *tougher* than the toughest race. Ask your coach if you can do a time trial at the end of training.

10. Believe that anything is possible. You *can* do PB's in training. You *can* swim 25 meters at maximum speed without taking a breath. You *can* kick 40 meters in your 50 meter PB swim time. You *can* do it. The words "I can't" usually mean "I am not prepared to try in case I fail".

There are no guarantees to success. You can however increase the *likelihood* of success by making training more demanding than you ever thought possible, attempting to do the impossible everyday and aiming to **win every workout**.

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