

## 2017 YMCA Short Course National Championship Devotion Offered by John Day

Fear, it can be the emotional force that drives us forward or paralyzes us where we stand. When we're afraid to stand out, we hide in the crowd. When we're afraid of being caught, we run faster. When we're afraid of losing, well, we can do a few things. We can play it safe and settle for what we have, or we can stand up to the challenge, take a shot in the dark, and maybe even do something great.



After yet another poor race, a weekend that was supposed to be filled with success was sadly coming to close, half empty with disappointment. I was crushed. I didn't know what to think. What had I done wrong? Had I actually dedicated months of discipline and determination to fall just short of everything I wanted? To just **fail**? It didn't make sense. All I needed was one YNAT cut, just one, and I couldn't even do that. By Sunday, after a weekend of demoralizing shortcomings, I had accepted defeat. There was nothing more to do. I had one more night of racing, and none of my swims that night had serious potential. I had simply missed my chance.

However my mom wasn't convinced. I had come close to my cut in one event two days before. If I time trialed the event, she said, maybe I could swim it fast enough this time. It was tempting, very tempting. There was just one issue. The event was the 200 yard butterfly. I was conflicted, I was nervous, I was afraid. I wanted to get the time standard, but I didn't want to swim the race again. With how the weekend had gone, I had no reason to think I had a chance, and I didn't want to fail one more time than I had to. I had a decision to make, to settle, or to rise up and take a chance. So, after a long, emotionally draining, heated internal discussion, I said "Sure. Let's do it."

Meredith Grey, fictional character of the hit medical drama, Grey's Anatomy, says "When we follow our hearts; when we choose not to settle. It's funny. Isn't it? A weight lifts. The sun shines a little brighter. And, for a brief moment at least, we find a little peace." As I was lined up behind the blocks waiting to swim, this simply did **not** apply. I was a nervous wreck and began to rethink my decision. I was afraid again. The pain, the failure, it all came rushing in and filled the pit of my stomach.

Three short whistles, silence, a long whistle, I stepped up. It was routine, the same as it had always been, but it felt different. "Take your mark." I gripped the block and waited. Then in a sudden rush of motion, the starter had buzzed and I was in the water. What goes through a swimmers mind during a race is unique to each swimmer and each event. What's important to note though, is that the pressure, the fear, and the pit in my stomach were not what I was thinking about. All that mattered was that I finished. As I hit the 100, I came up for air at the wall to see twenty of my closest friends behind the block cheering for me. At that moment, a thought came to my mind. "You can do this, so why don't you just do it?" It was that moment when I felt the weight lift, I felt the sun begin to shine, and

for just a moment, felt peace. To be honest, the rest of the race is a blur. All I remember was touching the wall, hearing cheers roar around me before I could even look at the clock, and just knowing. I had done it. I hadn't failed, for the first time that weekend, I had succeeded. Even though I knew it, I couldn't believe it. I went from drowning in disappointment to drowning in excitement.

Fear can play a major role in our lives, but being afraid is not bad. Everyone is afraid. Being afraid is normal. It is how we choose to react to our fear that defines us. You can either cower from it in the masses of mediocrity, or stand up and face it in the company of greatness. In Deuteronomy 31 verse 6 Moses says "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you." At some point, everyone here has risen above, has overcome, has defeated the obstacles that hold them back from greatness. So my question for each of you is, what fear is holding you back, and how can you overcome it this week?

Dear Lord,

Thank you for blessing everyone here with the talent and opportunity to fellowship here doing what we love. I pray that this week in some way furthers your kingdom and provides more opportunities to bring others to you. I pray for fast swimming, fun races, fears conquered and memories made. In Jesus name I pray Amen.