

The World Swimming Coaches Association Newsletter

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This month, I have several things to note for you.

First, we have the assurance of FINA that they will put on the GOLD MEDAL CLINIC in 2008, specifically in Singapore, dates being Oct. 28-29-30, 2008.

This came about because we had no viable candidates to host the event outside of FINA, it being a very risky financial venture that has in fact lost money in almost every iteration since its inception in 1992. Global financial uncertainty absolutely played into the reluctance of any one city or federation to be a host. We are grateful to FINA for picking up this ball and running with it. FINA will pay for one delegate from each international swimming federation to attend, and others are welcome to attend at a cost yet to be determined.

We hope that FINA will ask the FINA Coaches Commission and in particular, WSCA Board members Alan Thompson (also Secretary of the FINA Coaches Commission) Osvaldo Arsenio (FINA Coaches Commission Chairman) and me to lead the organization of the clinic. We have no definitive word on that decision at this writing.

In any case, the Gold Medal Clinic tradition will continue in 2008!

In an important development, FINA will host an extremely important calendar planning meeting with the Head Coaches or National Team Directors of every Federation during the Gold Medal Clinic in order to work on a better international competition calendar for the next quad, with a special emphasis on how to get the best swimmers in the world to the FINA Short Course Championships, where so much money and effort is going into promoting our sport on a world level.

In the past, the calendar has worked against us and in a historic adaptation to reality, FINA is now asking the world's coaches for their opinion on when they will be willing to support the FINA competitions at a world level. We are very pleased to have this be so.

In addition, I want to report that WSCA and the British Swimming Coaches & Teachers Association put on a very fine small coaches seminar in concert with the World Short Course Championships in Manchester in early April. Special thanks to BSCTA Executive Brian McGuinness and to BSCTA Chairman Terry Denison for their efforts in this successful event.

Preparations for Beijing are in full swing in all nations. Best of luck to all in our coming Olympic Games. All the Best for Swimming.

John Leonard

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Federation News

Submitted by: Gregory Eggert

Compiled from information posted in the WSCA Newsletter, Swimming World, FINA and SwimNews. Special thanks to Matt Hooper for all his efforts to keep information flowing to coaches throughout the world.

MAURITIUS – Doreen Tiborcz, the new president of the Mauritian Swimming Federation, la Fédération Mauricienne de Natation (FMN), has two main goals for the organization: reassemble and rebuild. The statement followed the seating of a new Executive Committee for the organization, following over a year of disputes regarding the leadership of the organization. The new FMN Officers are:

- President: Doreen Tiborcz
- Vice President: Dicken Rao Sudhoo
- Secretary: Prakash Banarsee
- Treasurer: Anil Nawjee

Further information on the new aim of the organization, as well as a full listing of the new Executive Committee, are available online [in French] here: http://www.lexpress.mu/display_article_sup.php?news_id=103165
http://www.lexpress.mu/display_news_dimanche.php?news_id=103339
http://www.lexpress.mu/display_article.php?news_id=103097

MADAGASCAR – A report from Madagascar indicates that the activities of the Madagascan Swimming Federation, la Fédération Malgache de Natation (FMN), were temporarily suspended by the nation's Minister of Culture Sports and Leisure,

in January. FMN awaits an impending decision which is expected this week. Since January, the suspension has caused the country's short course nationals to not happen. This has affected the training of the country's two swimmers headed to the 2008 Olympics on wild card invitations: Eric Rajonhson and Tojohanitra Andriamananjatoarimanaa. Further information is available online [in French] here: <http://www.lexpressmada.com/index.php?p=display&id=15239>
<http://www.madagascar-tribune.com/La-federation-suspendue,4952.html>

PAKISTAN – The Pakistan Swimming Federation held a March meeting of PSF's Executive Committee and General Council, which included athlete representatives. It was the first time an athlete has been represented at a Pakistan federation meeting, pursuant to International Olympic Committee rules. Further information about the meeting is available online here: http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=30430&Itemid=1

GREAT BRITAIN – British Swimming has announced a plan to offer incentive pay to coaches of Olympic medal winners at this year's Games. Payouts for the coaches are: gold-£10,000, silver-£7,500, and bronze-£5,000. <http://www.sportcentric.com/vsite/vcontent/content/news/0,10869,5157-183729-200947-40069-283304-news-item,00.html>

LIBYA – The Fédération Libanaise de Natation has announced its new Board. The position of Chairman is now held by Marclle Bourgi, while the position of Vice-Chairman has been to Mohamed CHaker. Michel Habchi is now the Federation's Secretary, and Issam Aly Hassan takes on the role of Treasurer.

TAJIKISTAN – The Tajikistan Swimming Federation held an election on February 22, 2008 that resulted in a new Executive. Subsequently, the Federa-

tion is pleased to announce that Mr. MIRZOEV Muhamad has been elected President, Mr. ABDULLOEV Muhamadsho is the new Secretary General, and the new Vice President and Executive Director is Mrs. LYASHENKO Ludmila.

GUAM – The 2008 Executive for the Guam Swim Federation is as follows: Gregory W. Schulte is President, Greta M. Duenas is now Vice President, and Sandra Low holds the position of Secretary. Inquires can be directed to opus@ite.net.

GUAM – The 2009 Junior Pan Pacific meet will be held January 5-13, 2009 on the Western Pacific island of Guam.

VENEZUELA – The Venezuelan Aquatic Sports Federation, la Federación Venezolana de Deportes Acuáticos (FEVEDA) has sent a 22-swimmer delegation to the Cuban Olympics this month. The event runs April 12-24, and features multiple sports and disciplines; FEVEDA has also sent diving, water polo and synchro teams to the event.

JAMAICA – The Amateur Swimming Association of Jamaica (ASAJ) held elections for its executive officers at its annual meeting on March 11. Official announcement can be found online here: http://www.swimjamaica.com/Press_2008/031208%20-%20SAJ%20Press%20Release%20-%20New%20Executive.pdf

Elected for the 2008-10 terms were:

- President: John Eyre
- First Vice President: Locksley Todd
- V.P. – Swimming: Dr. Brian James
- V.P. – Synchro: Marjorie Scott-Anderson
- V.P. – Water Polo: Garth Henriques
- Treasurer: Richard Hopkins
- Honorary Secretary: Faith Palmer
- Assistant Secretary/Treasurer: Mark Jones

PANAMA – Reports out of Panama indicate that the Panamanian Swimming Federation, la Federación Panameña de Natación (FPN), has suspended all domestic competitions. The decision appears to be so that the Federation will remain in compliance with FINA rules, and stems from the forced re-instatement of a club team which FPN had suspended for violating FINA rules. The club team, Club Delfines Azules, was suspended by FPN for allowing non-FPN swimmers – or FPN-approved swimmers – to swim in an FPN meet, violating FINA rules. Subsequently, the Panamanian government sport entity, el Instituto Panameño de Deportes, earlier this month overturned the suspension, allowing the club to compete again. FPN’s suspension of domestic competition appears to be to avoid any further reoccurrence of FINA violations. FPN has recommended that its team seek to participate in events outside the country until domestic competitions resume. FPN will hold off all domestic competitions pending a review of the situation by FINA. Information is available online [in Spanish] here: <http://www.prensa.com/hoy/deportes/1247105.html>

SEYCHELLES – The Seychelles Swimming Association has announced it has new Committee Members. They are as follows: Chairperson is now Mr. Mervyn Austin, Vice-Chairperson is now Mr. Paul Fanchette, Secretary is Ms. Priscilla Kinloch, Treasurer is Mr. Alain Alcindor, and new Members include Ms. Wendy Didon, Ms. Ule Reinschmidt, and Mr. James Didion.

FIJI – The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has agreed to provide a grant of A\$5,500.00 to assist Fiji Swimming’s ongoing work in Coaching Education and Development. This project has the following main objectives:

1. Develop coaches who serve the needs of the community
2. Develop coaches who serve the needs of the sport
3. Provide documented evidence

of progression along a coaching “knowledge pathway”

4. Allow Fiji Swimming to ‘control’ the standard, development and number of coaches
5. Provide a source of income for the owners of the certification process
6. Facilitate older swimmers to obtain a source of income by becoming registered coaches

As expressed on their website (www.fijiswimming.com), Fiji Swimming has been placing high emphasis on coach education and accreditation programs over the past two years and is very appreciative of this latest grant.

FIJI – Through funding assistance from FINA, Swimming Australia and the Oceania National Olympic Committees, a swimming coaches seminar was held in Nadi, Fiji from February 27 to March 1. The clinic was conducted by Leigh Nugent, Australia’s national junior coach and head coach of the 2004 Athens Summer Olympics Australian swimming team, which tallied 15 medals, its best ever haul at an Olympics outside of Australia.

Leigh’s clinic was comprised of a basic coaching course, followed by a more advanced course for Fiji national squad coaches designed to help them lead the developing Fiji team to Olympic qualifying standard by 2010. Fiji Swimming President Dennis Miller said, “This clinic was a great opportunity for our local coaches and swimmers to hear from one of the world’s leading coaches. We need to learn from coaches like Leigh to lift Fiji Swimming to higher levels of performance. We are very grateful to FINA, Swimming Australia and ONOC for their support for this clinic, which is one of a series of similar swimming coach education events being held in Oceania this year to mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of FINA in London in 1908. Participating coaches all commented on how valuable the clinics were. Everyone agreed that it would be useful if Leigh could come back again next year.

COLOMBIA – The Federacion Colombiana de Natacion has announced its Executive for the year 2008. The position of President is held by Edgar Ivan Oritz Lizcano, Javier Lopez Chavez is Vice President, Maria E. Gomez Pineda holds the position of Secretary, and Treasurer is Dr. Nelson Osorio L.

NETHERLANDS ANTILLES – The Nederlands Antilliaanse Zwembond has announced their 2008 Executive. President is Ms. Jacqueline Hurtado, while the position of Secretary will be held by Mr. Francis van Eijndhoven. Treasurer is Ms. Valerie Sylvania, and the Executive Member for Water Polo is Mr. Giovanni de Freitas. The Member for Synchronised Swimming is Ms. Indra Ogenia.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA – Under the FINA Centenary Oceania Development Program, Papua New Guinea Swimming Inc (PNGSI) is conducting a coaching clinic from February 16-19 in Port Moresby. The clinic is open to invited coaches and teachers who are seen to be actively involved in either coaching or teaching of the sport. Australian Level 3 Coach Bernie Mulroy will be the course conductor. Mulroy coached in Perth from 1968-2007, as well as at the Australian Swimming Institute in Canberra, where he spent four years as Sprint Coach. He has coached swimmers of all levels, including the national team, and has helped athletes reach a variety of international meets, such as every Olympic Games from 1980 to 2004. He currently works part time as a mentor coach with Swimming Australia.

Mulroy’s clinic will educate Papua New Guinea (PNG) coaches and teachers to become more effective, thus addressing an important area of athlete development in the Pacific Island region as recognized by Oceania Swimming Association: to improve the level of coaching to a recognized standard that allows athletes to develop via proper stroke technique, planned training phases, and improved workout design, starts and turns, racing strategies, stroke-efficiency, drills,

etc. PNGSI acknowledges the support received by the Oceania Swimming Association, Swimming Australia, Oceania National Olympic Committee and FINA to enable the course to go ahead. "Our goal is to provide our swimmers with the best coaching available; to do that we need to educate our coaches, providing them with the latest and best information available. The FINA Centenary Oceania Development Program is providing the ideal opportunity for all to improve in coaching theory and skills," says Elizabeth Wells, President of PNGSI.

Australian coach Leigh Nugent will also be visiting South Pacific countries in February and March. PNG will be the first stop for Mulroy, followed by Guam, Saipan and Palau, while Leigh Nugent will be conducting coaching workshops in Fiji, Samoa and American Samoa. For more information, contact Elizabeth Wells at: wells@daltron.com.pg.

AUSTRALIA – FINA Bureau member Lynne Bates, and former CEO of the Canberra Raiders, Kevin Neil, have been appointed to the Board of Directors of Swimming Australia. The pair will fill the places left vacant following the resignations of dual Olympic gold medalist Kieren Perkins and Commonwealth Games silver medalist Tim Ford.

Bates, an Olympic swimming silver medalist in Mexico in 1968, previously served on the Swimming Australia (SAL) board between 1997 and 2004 and brings a wealth of swimming expertise to the current board. She is currently on the Executive of the Australian Olympic Committee and served as the Chief Operating Officer at the successful 2007 FINA World Championships in Melbourne and as competition manager of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

Neil, 52, is the current ACT (Australian Capital Territory) manager for Australian Air Express and is regarded as one of the Australia's most respected sport and business administrators. He

was also responsible for the successful negotiation with the ACT Government for a 10-year hiring agreement for the Raiders use of Canberra Stadium.

Swimming Australia's CEO Glenn Tasker today thanked both Perkins and Ford for their contributions to the SAL board, saying their input over a number of years was both significant and substantial in the future strategic planning of Australia's most successful Olympic sport.

Meanwhile former SAL President and Australian Olympic gold medalist John Devitt has been awarded the FINA Prize for long and unstinting services to aquatic sports. Devitt is one of Australia's most respected Olympians and sports administrators who has served the sport from his days as a budding swimmer at Parramatta before becoming one of the sport's golden boys of the 1950s and 60s – an Olympic gold medalist both in 1956 and in 1960. He was named captain of the Australian team and later retired to become a respected coach and an international executive with Speedo. Devitt has also been inducted into the International Hall of Fame.

ETHIOPIA – The Ethiopian Swimming Federation has submitted their 2008 executive postings. The position of President is held by Degarege Siyoum, while Vice President is Mesele Mekonnen. Treasurer is Alemu Sime and the post of General Secretary is held by Semahegne Wubu.

GUYANA – FINA FUNDED COACHING CLINIC: The Guyana Amateur Swimming Association (GASA) is better-equipped to meet the challenges of training swimmers following the successful completion of a nine-day, FINA-funded intermediate coaching clinic in Georgetown, Guyana (February 29-March 9). Facilitator of the programme, which attracted 12 participants, was Gerd Nottelmann of Germany, who said he believes that he hoped that what he taught would assist in the development of the sport

in Guyana. "The wish always from the World Swimming Federation is that seminars enable the improvement of the sport."

President of GASA, Phillip Walcott, said the clinic was excellent and fitted precisely into his Association's plan of swimming expansion. Walcott noted that some time ago the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Dr. Frank Anthony, had challenged them to increase the country's swimming base, but couldn't have done so at the time because they did not have enough coaches. "Now we have a significant number of coaches so we can carry out the expansion we are planning... we will now put the mechanisms in place to launch out."

Prepared by Ms. Karen Pilgrim, the clinic was held at the Guyana Olympic Association and exposed participants to both theoretical and practical sessions, including technical drills and physiology and training methods. The Colgrain Pool facilitated the practical sessions. To show their thanks for his services, GASA presented a plaque of appreciation to Mr. Nottelmann. Reporting courtesy of Kaieteur News: www.kaieteurnews.com

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO – Preliminary information about the inaugural Caribbean Games that will be held in Trinidad and Tobago in 2009, can be found online at the link below. Aquatics is one of 5 disciplines named as being part of those games. http://canoc.net/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=36

ZAMBIA – LUSAKA, ZAMBIA – A report out of Zambia indicates that the organizers of the 2011 All-Africa Games plan to construct two new pools for those Games: the main competition pool and an adjacent warm-up facility. The Games are to be held in Zambia capital Lusaka, and feature 26 sports. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-02/18/content_7625383.htm ■

Athlete Opportunity Theorem

Chuck Slaght AA, BSB, MA, MEd, EdD/ABD

As in love and war, work and play, sports and living all present opportunities. The beginning of life is the opening door to multiple and monumental opportunities. What we do next in between life and death are all opportunities: many wasted, many taken. Every time you do something it impacts the opportunity of that moment and forever changes the direction of one's life. It is essential that we should always try to make the most of every opportunity. Sports, education, business, friends or family, and social interaction provide the most potential and are thus interesting yet intense opportunities. The issue is how are you and those around you creating and using all opportunities? As all of life provides vast opportunities, I will try to touch on some small yet important opportunities.

Setting the stage, a strong work ethic and proper time management skills, especially regarding athletes and coaches, are both critical to enhance opportunities, and sports provide a great developmental platform to many successful opportunities in all aspects of a fulfilled life. Athletes and others either take advantage of or throw away opportunities; most don't even realize that "every moment" is an opportunity and therefore generally miss out. We learn from both good and bad experiences in life. What and where are opportunities? Opportunities are everywhere and always happening; it's a matter of perceiving and acting upon all these complex events!

Life is full of opportunities, they exist but only as and, if we can perceive and take advantage of them (recognizing, learning and using them). We are born then grow some, are blessed with better circumstances but all with environmental, behavioral, and opportunity factors presenting new elements and the opportunity to change frequently. Opportunities and using these opportunities are critical and life changing especially, between the ages of birth and 5 years as one develops life, social, and coping skills: behavior patterns and discipline are also critical during this phase (hopefully

properly guided opportunities). Communication skills are developed and finally individuals have the opportunity to begin the institutional and social educational developmental process. Institutional education is one of the most critical opportunities as it sets the foundation for one's life and the ability to become financially productive as well as providing sustainability: most people have to daily earn a living (sort of like training daily). The next opportunity comes with an individual's professional endeavors and family opportunities - so many choices, so little time. All of this falls within the first 17-22 years of our existence. There are opportunities to choose your path regarding God, what sport do I want to participate in, what political party makes the most sense, where do I want to live, what do I really want to be, and on and on: so many opportunities? How we choose and use these opportunities and eventually what becomes really important is critical during these stages as this will directly impact the rest of your life.

Sports offer the most diverse opportunities. I will focus on swimming (because I have over 40 years experience swimming and coaching) as well as a few other sports. Normally, every day a swimmer attends a workout and most just show up and swim whatever the coach assigns; there is little thought to the meaning and the purpose and little time and energy is devoted to making the most of this opportunity. Now if that swimmer would apply the opportunity theory, they would show up, ready to train (nutrition, rest, emotions/attitude all perfect, "Right!") and concentrate, demanding excellence on each element of the workout as another opportunity to excel. It is an opportunity to train at various levels of intensity, an opportunity to make stroke corrections, an opportunity to psychologically prepare, an opportunity to perform, all opportunities. Now, it is agreed that many swimmers develop their own styles which physiologically makes them superior in performance against others but the basic elements of swimming are the same: strokes must be performed

with certain criteria. Then there are the opportunities to compete but the decision is, when, where, and which meets are the best opportunity to excel. An example of creating opportunity to excel is seen in the practice habits of the phenomenal Michael Phelps practicing 6 days a week (mostly twice daily at 2+ hours plus dry land/weights/flexibility training). Michael was asked by his coach Bob Bowman paraphrased as, "Why not practice on Sundays; that will offer you 52 more workouts a year than anyone else?" Now that's creating opportunities. As we grow older the opportunity to change becomes much more difficult as we become ingrained with good or bad habits, so we must continually strive to develop proper/efficient mechanics. Practicing on one's own time creates huge benefits, as sometimes "quantity creates quality" as swimming requires a huge base/foundation on which to enable/empower other opportunities.

Coaches are responsible for creating opportunities during each workout. They must be creative yet scientific in the development of each workout, each training goal for each swimmer, each segment (short/long course, foundational period, special training elements, taper segments, etc.), and maintain an athlete's interest. Coaches need to plan an annual and secondarily a seasonal format for each team, each developmental aspect, and with each swimmer (goal setting and frequent interviews with each athlete need to be held updating the training plan). Attention and communication with each athlete are also extremely important: how do they feel each day, how did school and their social life go, maintenance of health through proper eating, supplements, proper hygiene, plus many other factors. Continuous education on the part of a coach is also critical to self and athlete development but many coaches are part-time having other jobs to sustain them (membership in professional organizations having access to professional literature and annual clinics/conferences is critical). A huge perceived problem lies in the "shot-gun" approach to coaching

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where everyone is doing basically the same workout (one workout applies to all with little modification), this leads to rapid athlete digression and eventual loss. Coaches are mentors responsible for motivating and providing the widest array of opportunities for all their athletes.

Intuitive communication (verbal and non-verbal) is also needed by both the coach and the athlete to ensure proper unencumbered workouts are focused and devoid of emotional hindrances. This means knowing your athlete and feeling their mood (look at their faces when they come in, talk with them for a few moments, and be involved in their life outside the facilities). As school is so pressure-oriented now, checking on grades every reporting period can ensure athlete stability (modify the number of workouts per day/week if necessary). Stability at home can also be an issue: hold parent conferences or educational seminars quarterly getting feedback from the home front. Other issues that dampen opportunities are girlfriends/boyfriends, the freedom given transportation at 16, and social peers and these are very touchy subjects; warn athletes and parents early about these opportunity inhibitors. The bottom line, "know and communicate with athletes!" Charisma, a special illuminating personality drawing and influencing others, is also a factor in coaching through leadership and the ability to develop unlimited opportunities for athletes.

Another sport that offers an insight into opportunities is golf. What you do with your training time is critical. Learning golf is one step, getting good coaching is the next, but the real opportunities come when an athlete as an individual takes their game to the next level, self-coaching. Actual practice offers many opportunities to develop the game. It actually depends on the level of dedication. One could practice daily for 30 minutes on driving, then 30 minutes on the short game, pitching, and sand trap work, and finally 30 minutes on putting for about two plus hours of practice. But, how many athletes are willing to put this kind of effort into this opportunity. Maybe look at what Tiger Woods did under his father's coaching which created opportunities (Johnny Carson Show at six years old). Perfection is an allusive situation or

companion but here is what I have found: "Perfect practice makes perfect." Now let's take opportunity to the course and actual play. "Each" shot is an opportunity, a chance to challenge yourself to hit the best shot possible. Even if the preceding shot places the ball in the worse possible situation, it is an opportunity to challenge your skills to excel (again look at the challenges Tiger Woods has had and the remarkable recovery shots he has made). As you can see there is a pattern: it takes hard work, volumes of time, dedication, and tremendous heart and mind-set, all directed to provide the most from all opportunities.

Other sports can apply this same "Opportunity Theorem." Each sport requires opportunity and consistent practice. The application of exceptional training habits, behavior (nutritional and recovery), and principles of excellence all lead to great performance expectations. The "focus" of an individual or a team on recognizing and utilizing available or creating opportunities is critical. The awareness of opportunities and the utilization of these opportunities under normal situations leads to success.

The most monumental moments in my memory are the ones where it was the worst possible situation creating varied opportunities! This is the opportunity to choose which road you will take, hopefully the one least traveled yet eventually offering the most diverse opportunities. It is the challenges that make life interesting (dealing outside the box, outside one's comfort zone) that brings the most beneficial opportunities as well as panicked excitement. Trying performances and even downright disappointing situations are all learning tools providing opportunities to grow beyond one's comfort zone. I say drink it all in and move on and don't forget what happened: learn from all failed opportunities.

Another aspect of opportunity addresses the "extinguishers" of opportunities or good training behaviors/habits. Life is a finite line, always going in one direction, there is only so much time to eat, sleep, work, play. It all depends on an individual and priorities: God, family, academics or work, sports and life, one must prioritize. The window of opportunity for sport

development as a child is limited to the approximate ages of 8-22 years of age (this can be extended in both directions look at Dara Torres/Tiger Woods; she/he have used opportunities and mindset to the maximum proving there are few limitations). The daily grind needed to be the best is oppressive and the year-round athlete dedicated to one sport is rare. Most sports have a season but what could an athlete do given the opportunity to train year-round at an intense level in their one sport? The highly successful athletes must do this to be at the top of their game: all great athletes train wisely year-round! Can you imagine another sport putting as much time and effort as what we will now talk about.

A few sports require so much continual foundational type training that it seems crazy; swimming is one of those requiring intense dedication, sacrifice, and an overwhelming schedule; they must also have a pool to train in. Swimmers at an early age need to develop proper stroke mechanics then develop workout stamina and expertise and finally develop total dedication attitude. Two workouts a day Monday through Friday before school and after (plus Saturday workouts or swim meets), go to school and excel academically (swimmers are built that way, always the top performers at all they do), eat (nutritionally as well as for fuel), sleep, and maintaining a positive productive friend/family relationship HA! Many athletes are now "home schooled" to create opportunities to train and excel academically. Most people collapse just thinking about this schedule but what it demands positively is teaching individuals how to manage time, how to be successful against all odds and excel in this opportunity we call life. I will not even go into the logistical aspects of all this from a parent's viewpoint; it further staggers the imagination.

Now apply the previous work ethic and schedule to any other sport (the workplace or life in general) and you have the formula for total success. So few are capable, let alone able to hold this schedule, and accomplish all else on their already overloaded schedules. This creates the pyramid opportunity formula where the base is large and the pinnacle is small due to attrition or sheer brutal-

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ity of the dedication required. I have yet to meet an unsuccessful (at life and in business) ex-athlete who was near the top of their sport. They understand how to create opportunities and grow them. All success is predicated on the principle that one must create opportunities, or opportunities must become present, to achieve the status of success, and so why not create the opportunities?

There are also the “developers of opportunities.” These are the support groups for athletes: parents, coaches, teachers, friends, and acutely managed personal freedom; all these elements can either help or hinder. The Chinese have created the ultimate “Opportunity Training Cosmos” as eco-spheres for their potential great athletes: we are finally beginning to create this concept for USA swimming. There are so many distracters and negative influences affecting athletes, just watch the news. Life is hard enough without making things harder. How to ease negative situations with the factors we need to seek out for successful opportunities. Many parents hinder athletes from developing opportunities and reaching their potential but without parents there are NO opportunities: nurture your children. Coaches also can be a huge limitation on athletes where they fail to continually develop and learn, becoming satiated in their comfort zones. Coaches’ and managers’ ability to see opportunities, and failure to steer athletes in that direction staggers the imagination: some are even territorial and possessive, thus damaging an athlete’s potential opportunities. Coaches, every day there are opportunities for a coach to learn something about an athlete and something new or technical about their sport. Teachers, there are 3-5 other teachers working with the same athlete, what teachers do during the time where an athlete is in direct contact with them is a critical opportunity: pay attention, listen carefully as overload is very common to these high performers. Athletes, your responsibility is to learn and perform in the academic setting just as you do within your sport. Also, eliminate blockades to opportunities by doing what you are told to do at home; don’t waste energy on misbehaving (do your chores): we all have someone who is in authority over us. Now as to friends, true friends don’t demand your

time; they actually support your efforts. Athletes, choose your friends carefully a girlfriend or boyfriend can certainly demand time and attention (too much attention); therefore be careful and communicate your needs to train/study/work. As to freedom, it comes in many packages: an automobile can be a tool and help an athlete and their family but it also can lead to real opportunity crushers. Create your opportunities; make the most of everything you do, help enhance every possible opportunity.

Next we have to develop the individual and the team opportunity concept. While an individual athlete needs to always try and do the most “good” for themselves (intrinsic motivation), they also must do the most “good” for the team (extrinsic motivation). Swimming is an individual sport, one athlete against the clock over the prescribed distance using a specific stroke, but there are times when the swimmer must compete in a weaker stroke for the benefit of the team (strategy swimming in dual meet or team championship situations). While the opportunity for the individual swimmer may not be advantageous, the opportunity for the team may be the higher cause. In other sports this is much easier to understand (baseball/football) as individuals and the team as a whole organism must work together for the opportunity to win (if the offensive part of the team is down and the defense is performing at a high level, there can still be victory but very rarely). Back to strategic swimming, this can be very stressful yet exciting. High school seasons can be a great release from the everyday or seasonal pressure mill as individuals can at times fill in and swim different events, checkmating another team’s normal strategy of swimming power against power. College swimming is similar except that these athletes are receiving resources in return for performance; still this can make swimming off your normal stroke both extrinsically and intrinsically motivating. Most of the time the focus must be on the individual opportunity, but team goals must also remain a major consideration for coaches and swimmers.

Athletes go through some crazy opportunities or stages of learning, training, and performing to become great athletes but they are pretty consistent with the follow-

ing patterns. First, athletes perform for their parents, seeking approval, attention or love via a sport. This time can overlap all the other stages in that athletes seek to obtain parental attention. Parents can really mess this stage up by creating pressure or even living vicariously through their kids. Secondly, athletes perform for the coach and this may be the final stage for many if not most athletes. Coaches can dominate their athletes, demanding performance: this type of coach better be a great coach or great damage will ensue. Team sports are the only place where this coach-led effort will work with some consistency, but imagine if you had a team loaded with the third-stage athletes connected with second stage/level athletes. The third and final stage is where the athlete performs for themselves taking responsibility for their own levels of training, knowing their own limitations and developing their own knowledge base (athlete as coach). This third stage is where the highest level of performance comes: self-actualization. This third stage is where you will find the Olympians and the Tiger Woods and Dara Torres of the sports world. Here every opportunity is explored and utilized by the third stage athlete. Every stage and every experience is an opportunity tool to enhance training and performance and sometimes to get “seasoned” psychologically.

In summary, “great athletes” have learned to always make the most of all their opportunities. When the right door opens they see the opportunity and take advantage of it. Some opportunities are created by individuals, always knowing that they must do something on their own to enhance their chances for success. Those that train the best and the most benefit with the most opportunities in life and in their sport. If you are waiting for an opportunity you have already missed many other opportunities: seize your moments. What you do between birth and death is your personal opportunity, take responsibility and make the most of all opportunities.

All in all, every moment is an opportunity: see it, take it, and grow. If you want to be the best, at whatever, than be the best: stop throwing away opportunities use them! Work harder and smarter than others. It all pays huge dividends. Go for the GOLD! ■

Laszlo Kiss

By John Nadler

POOLMAN Laszlo Kiss was very disappointed when he failed to win a medal at the 1960 Rome Olympics. The 19-year-old Hungarian swimmer came up empty in the 200-m backstroke, but he got an unexpected consolation prize when U.S. gold medalist Mike Troy shared some of his training secrets with him. "I immediately saw the difference between the way Mike prepared and the way we did," says Kiss, now 67. "They trained more and harder, and the dry [land] training was very focused." For Kiss--and eventually for the world of swimming--that insight changed everything.

Three years later, Kiss quit competitive swimming to focus on coaching full time, hoping to develop new ways to build tougher, swifter swimmers. He has not stopped since. Today Kiss is head of the Hungarian national swimming team, and he is turning his country from a fringe player in competitive swimming into a global force, one that's won aquatic medals at every Summer Olympics since 1988. In the process, Kiss is establishing himself as perhaps the most imaginative coach in the history of the sport.

One of Kiss's first successes came in the mid-1980s with 12-year-old Krisztina Egerszegi. Kiss had long wanted to try incorporating elements of the speedy crawl stroke into the pokier backstroke, but he never had a swimmer with the right flexibility. He recognized that Egerszegi was the talent he'd been waiting for and began teaching her the moves. That, however, required making minute but crucial changes in her technique--a very big deal in a sport in which fractions of a second count. So Kiss came up with inventive ways to help her learn.

"First we had Krisztina swim in a very narrow lane along the edge of the pool," Kiss says. "Since she had beautiful nails that she didn't want to scrape on the side, she learned to extend her arms as straight as possible in front of her head."

To fine-tune Egerszegi's posture, he developed other exercises like having her swim the backstroke with a cup of water on her forehead. She ultimately won seven Olympic medals--five of them gold--from 1988 to '96. Kiss believes her most noteworthy success came in a non-Olympic event in 1991, when she set a 200-m-backstroke world record that was not broken until this year.

Kiss's other champions include Agnes Kovacs and Karoly Guttler, and he's hoping for more in Beijing this summer. But he won't take too much credit for all this success. "Swimming is teamwork," he says. "When you go to a meet, you see a lot of swimmers compete, and they all have their own techniques. You come away with ideas every time, but you're not stealing from anyone because it is all a team." ■

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