



World Swimming Coaches Association Newsletter

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Where is World Swimming Heading?

by John Leonard, October 22, 2015

I want to start by noting that this is an editorial, not reflective of the WSCA Board, and strictly my own thinking.

As many of you know, the last couple of years have seen a series of bizarre and detrimental actions/decisions by FINA. Many of us have commented at length on them and our unhappiness with the way FINA is run and what it currently stands for. Bill Sweetenham politely and publicly asked FINA to conduct an independent review of itself, a procedure both Swimming Australia and USA Swimming have undertaken repeatedly, and have both agreed was highly beneficial to their function. When the two leading Swimming nations in history do something, you would think that FINA might take notice and consider the same. But no. No response.

Right now, FINA stands for being soft on doping if not outright accepting the doping... see comments by the FINA Executive Director that “*we can’t hold a few doping incidents against the swimming stars*”. FINA stands for refusing to allow any athletes in FINA competition to speak on a political issue while the FINA executive gives its most grand prize to the most highly controversial political figure of our time. FINA stands for putting athletes at risk in Open Water competition, and not caring about their health and safety. Most seriously, FINA stands for fake democracy... 211 nations vote on rules to run our sport, then the Executive Director and President ignore those same rules in running the sport.

Calling FINA a democracy is just flat wrong. It is not. It is a fake democracy run by one or two people, pretending to be democratic. It does not operate by the RULE OF LAW, it operates by the RULE OF CORNEL. Is this what “we” as the coaches and athletes of the world, want?

I believe it is not. I never “signed up” to be a member of FINA, and neither did you. Yet FINA portrays itself as being in governance over all of us in the sport. Illegal, immoral and grotesque.

The organization where I earn my living, the American Swimming Coaches Association, its Board of Directors in September 2015 voted to work to **replace FINA**, since clearly attempts to reform it, have been ignored. WSCA actually had taken that stance four years ago. It is now supported by ASCA.

We have decided to work to build a “**World Swimming Association**” (WSA) on the principles that we all began the sport with: “**athlete-centered, professionally-run, transparently organized**”.

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Survey request:

As WSCA plans the World Swimming Association (WSA), should Open Water be in the plan, or should we focus completely on pool Swimming?

Send responses to Matt at mhooper@swimmingcoach.org

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Where is World Swimming Heading? *[continued from p. 1]*

On the WSCA website you will find the “bare bones” of the WSA constitution. **We are seeking input** from all interested parties and you can do so, at that location. We will be working on this process over the next twenty months and in September 2017 we will form a “Constitutional Convention” in Washington, DC, USA to make the WSA a real functioning entity. By then, we expect hundreds or perhaps thousands of Swimming people (athletes, coaches and friends) to have had input into the document.

Many of us are completely fed up with FINA and its fake democracy. Now, instead of complaining, it is time to build something better.

Please go the website above. Please contribute.

All the Best and THANK YOU for what you do for the world’s young people every day.



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The Clear Leader

by Bill Breen, *Fast Company*, March 2005

Marcus Buckingham spent two decades studying great business leaders. His conclusion: true leaders have a unique ability to make things simple.

Dip into most corporate or business-school curricula on leadership and you will find a mind-numbing list of skills that the aspiring leader must master, from motivating to communicating to counseling to managing conflict, and on and on. Corporate America has vastly overcomplicated the role of a leader, says Marcus Buckingham, and that is a shame, because those disciplines, while important, fail to get to the heart of true leadership.

For the past two decades, Buckingham, 39, an engaging Cambridge-educated Brit, has had a front-row view of great leadership in action. He spent 17 years researching the world's best leaders and managers for the Gallup organization. Drawing on Gallup's studies of 80,000 managers and 3 million employees, he wrote two best-sellers: First, Break All the Rules and Now, Discover Your Strengths. Eighteen months ago, he decided to dig deeper. He left Gallup, and instead of focusing on the many, he set out to find the very few leaders who truly excelled. "I became more interested in the vividness of what excellence on the front line really looks like," he says. "By studying one person deeply, you might learn as much if not more than studying 10,000 broadly."

Buckingham sought out old-line outfits such as Walgreens, Best Buy, and Rio Tinto Borax—companies that, lacking the advantages that come with product innovation, must gain an edge by mastering the disciplines of managing and leading. He distilled his key findings into a new book, due out this month: The One Thing You Need to Know... About Great Managing, Great Leading, and Sustained Individual Success. Here, in his own words, Buckingham maps out the core concepts that mark superior leadership.

Leaders are Compelled by the Future

There is something unique and different that makes a leader, and it is not about creativity or courage or integrity. As important as they are, you can have those attributes and still fail to be a great leader. A leader's job is to rally people toward a better future. Leaders cannot help but change the present, because the present is not good enough. They succeed only when they find a way to make people excited by and confident in what comes next.

Four years ago, I was at a dinner with Bob Nardelli, who left General Electric after he was passed over for Jack

Welch's job. He had just become CEO of Home Depot, and all he talked about was how exciting it would be to take on the challenge of building a better future for Home Depot. And I remember thinking: 'This guy has not had retail experience in 20 years, he is going into a situation where people are expecting him to fail, and he is following two founders—Arthur Blank and Bernie Marcus—who were beloved. Why is he doing this?' But listening to him that night, I realized that once he had seen a better future for Home Depot, every other consideration became irrelevant. He could not stop himself. With leaders, the future calls to them in a voice they cannot drown out. The future is more real than the present; it compels them to act.

Turn Anxiety into Confidence

For a leader, the challenge is that in every society ever studied, people fear the future. The future is unstable, unknown, and therefore potentially dangerous. So in order to succeed, leaders must engage our fear of the unknown and turn it into spiritedness. By far the most effective way to turn fear into confidence is to be clear—to define the future in such vivid terms that we can see where we are headed. Clarity is the antidote to anxiety, and therefore clarity is the preoccupation of the effective leader. If you do nothing else as a leader, be clear.

Be Clear about Whom You Serve

Leaders can be wrong. They cannot be confusing. If we are going to follow you into the future, we need to know precisely whom we are trying to please. It is a scary thing to please all of the people all of the time. So to calm our fear, we need you to narrow our focus. Tell us who will be judging our success. When you do this with clarity, you give us confidence—confidence in our judgment, in our decisions, and ultimately in our ability to know where to look to determine if we have fulfilled our mission.

Denny Clements, the general manager of Toyota's Lexus Group, understands this implicitly. Clements says that the only people Lexus is trying to serve are those for whom time is their most precious commodity. Everything that Lexus does—from how it builds the car to what it puts in the car to the way it services the car—is based on time. Clements knows he does not have to

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be right, because there is no one right answer. But he does have to be clear. If he is clear about which audience Lexus serves, his clarity will infuse his people with the confidence to face the future. In the end, his followers will make him right.

Be Clear about Why You're Going to Win

I am struck by how often leaders come up with four or five core strengths. We hear it all the time: "Our strengths are our people, our productivity, our creativity, and our efficiency." Somehow, many leaders think their job is to analyze the world's reality and complexity and reflect it back to their people. Not true. As a leader, your job is to make people more confident about the future you are dragging them into. To that end, you need to tell them why they are going to win. There are many competitors out there. Why will we beat them? There are many obstacles in our path. Why will we overcome them? The more clearly you can answer these questions, the more confident we will be, and therefore the more resilient, the more persistent, and the more creative.

Even if it does not incorporate all the reality of the world, find the edge—one edge—and talk about it all the time. The more you talk about it, the more it becomes true. So it goes with Brad Anderson, CEO of Best Buy. Best Buy's success over the past few years lies in its ability to identify its core strength and act on it. These days, Anderson is charging around the country telling anyone who will listen that Best Buy's strength lies in the quality of its blue shirts—its employees in the stores. Anderson believes that Best Buy will win if its frontline people are better—better selected, better trained, and better equipped to help the customer. Anderson is different from most leaders in that once he has decided on Best Buy's core strength, he does not really talk about anything else. He understands that his job as a leader is to distill the world's complexity and ambiguity—and out of that comes the notion that Best Buy will win because its frontline people are better.

Keep Your Core Score

Having told his people that their strength lay in the intelligence, insight, and creativity of the frontline employees, Anderson took the required next step and identified the one score that would track their progress toward a better future: number of engaged employees. Although Best Buy's success could be measured in a variety of different ways, the company uses twelve simple questions to measure just that. Scoring is even more vivid than saying frontline employees are really

important. From a leadership standpoint, a score is actionable and unambiguous.

That clarity is lost if you end up looking at 15 different metrics. It is a terrible leadership failure to tell your employees that all of these measurements are important. When followers are presented with numerous scores, they get confused. The job of a leader is to say, "Of all the things we measure, this is the most important."

If You Want to be Clear, Act

Of course, a leader must take action—action leads to impact. But actions also possess a separate, equally powerful quality. Actions are unambiguous. If you, the leader, can highlight a few carefully selected actions, then your followers will no longer have to infer the future from theoretical pronouncements about "core values" or your "mission statement". We will simply look to see what actions you take and found our faith and confidence on these. But be aware that we respond best to two types of action: symbolic action and systemic action.

Symbolic action is just that: a representation of what the future can look like. Symbolic action grabs our attention; it gives us something new and vivid on which to focus. When Rudy Giuliani was elected mayor of New York, he decided to get rid of squeegee men—street people who demanded payment for cleaning windshields. His action was heavily symbolic: it did not change New Yorkers' day-to-day lives all that much, but it was a powerful demonstration of what Giuliani meant when he talked about a better quality of life.

Giuliani also instituted a twice-weekly meeting in which more than 100 senior police officers would gather to explain the city's daily crime data and defend their response to it. Giuliani declared that these meetings encouraged accountability and transparency. But the meetings' real power was that they disrupted routines. For a leader, it is important to disrupt routines. Systemic action changes behavior. It makes people realize that the world is going to be different because they are doing different things. The future becomes clearer, and out of that clarity comes confidence.

Effective leaders do not have to be passionate or charming or brilliant. What they must be is clear—clarity is the essence of great leadership. Show us clearly who we should seek to serve, show us where our core strength lies, show us which score we should focus on and which actions we must take, and we will reward you by working our hearts out to make our better future come true.

The Development of Michael Phelps

outline of talk presented by Bob Bowman at the 2002 ASCA World Clinic

I. Introduction

- A. Started in swimming because of his sisters
- B. 1996 in Baltimore
 - 1) 11-years-old and “raising hell” around the club
 - 2) Raw talent
 - 3) Needed stroke development
 - 4) Fiercely competitive
- C. In 1997, Bowman was given a coaching opportunity with North Baltimore Aquatic Club (NBAC)
 - Today, he sees himself involved in the career management for Michael Phelps.

II. Introduction (7-8 years-old)

- A. Born into the program
- B. Phelps’s parents were athletes, themselves, and valued athletics
 - 1) They raised girls who were older than Phelps
 - 2) They had a family environment that understood the demands of high-level swimming
 - 3) The family moved closer to the pool once Phelps started swimming
 - 4) The family placed an emphasis on education and discipline
 - a) Mother was an educational administrator
 - b) Father was a police officer
 - 5) Although Phelps’s parents divorced, the parents came together and got involved in running the swim meets
- C. Stroke clinic with Cathy Lears
 - 1) Once a week for 60 minutes
 - 2) Didn’t want to put his face in the water
 - 3) Did a lot of backstroke
 - 4) Participated for 12 weeks and then started the swim team
- D. Level 1 with Julie Gorman (who was a great competitive swimmer, herself)
 - 1) Three times a week for 60 minutes
 - 2) Foundation in butterfly
 - 3) Tough coach
 - 4) Played baseball, soccer and lacrosse
 - 5) Swimming has the highest priority in the family
 - 6) Phelps never missed swimming for another sport

III. Basic (9-10 years-old)

- A. Level 2 with Keith Shertle – four times a week for 75 minutes
- B. Level 3 with Tom Himes
 - 1) Five times a week for 90 minutes
 - 2) Played baseball, soccer and lacrosse

- 3) At NBAC, emphasis is on improving times
- 4) Phelps was trying to achieve Top-16, national and world rankings

- C. 1995 short course yards (SCY) – age 9
 - 1) 50 fly – 28.79 – 1st in nation for age group
 - 2) 100 fly – 1:03.96 – 5th in nation for age group
 - 3) 100 IM – 1:08.69 – 15th in nation for age group
 - 4) Rankings: just because an athlete works hard from one year to the next does not mean that he/she will move up in the rankings. The very best swimmers will always be at the top. Rankings are relative markers.

- D. 1995 long course meters (LCM) – age 10
 - 1) 100 free – 1:06.32 – 9th in the nation for age group
 - 2) etc.

- E. 1996 SCY (age 10): 100 back – 1:02.21 – 1st in nation for age group, tied National Age Group (NAG) Record

- F. 1996 LCM (age 10): top-3 in nation for age group in most events

IV. Transition (11-12 years-old)

- A. Level 4 – five times a week for 120 minutes
- B. Level 5 – seven times a week for 150 minutes
- C. Career planning meeting (age 12)
 - 1) Bowman met with Phelps, his mother and his father
 - 2) They discussed what high school Phelps would attend
 - 3) The high school Phelps was supposed to attend did not complement each other well
 - a) It was a private school that was too regimented with a student-body that was too homogenous for Phelps
 - b) The public school offered no high school swimming
 - 4) They discussed that the more accomplished that Phelps became and the higher he went in the sport, the more isolated he would become and the less like everyone else he would be
 - 5) Bowman was not close to the parents and this was the first time that they all sat down to talk and discuss the future
 - 6) Bowman felt that the meeting was very good and that planning for the future was very important

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D. Stroke development

- 1) Breaststroke
 - a) Phelps open to improving his breaststroke
 - b) It was important to him because he wanted to improve his IM
 - c) His goal was to be Top-16 in breast as an 11+12 swimmer.
- 2) Freestyle
 - a) Bowman had Phelps add-in a big kick
 - b) Bowman tried to get Phelps to do his big kick all of the time
 - c) Bowman did not allow Phelps to do a two-beat kick in practice. If he did do it, he was kicked-out of practice.
 1. Bowman found that Phelps really hated to miss practice, therefore this punishment served as good motivation to kick well.
 2. Bowman found that positive reinforcement did not work as well for Phelps.
 3. With this punishment, Phelps was only able to make 400 yards on the first day, 800 yards on the second day, and the whole workout on the seventh day without getting kicked-out of practice.
 - d) Phelps showed that difficult stroke technique change is possible
-Bowman finds that the best kids sometimes have a hard time with difficult changes

E. Phelps training at this time took a quantum leap.

F. Attitude, discipline, fly development

- 1) Phelps used to have a hiccup in his breathing timing in fly
- 2) Bowman called this hiccup stroke his “baby stroke” to push his buttons
-Phelps did not train any fly when he was younger
- 3) Bowman knew that Phelps was mentally ready to do more fly in practice and to do it well
- 4) This was a new development in Phelps’s training
- 5) Phelps’s performance goals were to set National Age Group Records
 - a) He did not set any that season
 - b) Bowman says that Phelps did not set any NAG records because he was not the same size as the record holders

G. 1997 (age 11)

- 1) Phelps showed good threshold swimming
- 2) Phelps had great endurance at the end of the race
- 3) Ranked in the top-7 in his events.

H. 1997 (age 12): ranked in the top-8 in his events.

I. 1998 SCY: ranked in the top-14 in his events

J. 1998 LCM: ranked in the top-11 in his events

V. Breakthrough (13-15 years-old)

- A. Vitals: went from 5’9” and 128 pounds to 6’3” and 165 pounds
- B. Senior group
 - 1) Seven times a week for 150 minutes and twice a week morning practice for 90 minutes (for 6 weeks only)
 - a) Phelps tried to add morning practices in the Fall, but it did not work
 - b) Phelps was able to add the morning practices later in the season
 - 2) Summer practices: ten times a week for 120-150 minutes
- C. Summer 1998 – age-up blues
 - 1) 12-13 years-old
 - 2) Growth spurt
 - 3) First Junior National cut at 13, unshaved
 - 4) Mixed results at Junior Nationals in St. Louis
- D. 1999 Summer Junior Nationals
 - 1) Spring goal setting
 - 2) Summer goals:
 - a) 200 fly NAG record
 - b) 500 IM NAG record
 - c) Break 16:00 in the mile
 - d) Goals posted on Phelps’s refrigerator all Summer long
 - 3) First shave at Junior Nationals
 - 4) First National cuts in those three events
 - 5) Mistake to go to Nationals in Minnesota – if Bowman had to do it again, he would not have taken Phelps to Nationals right after he made the cuts for the first time
- E. 1999 SCY (age 13): ranked in the top-9 in all his events
- F. 1999 LCM (age 14):
 - 1) 200 fly NAG record
 - 2) Ranked first and second in the rest of his events
 - 3) Moved from hot-shot 10-year-old to a good National-level swimmer
 - 4) Phelps loved to swim and to improve
- G. 2000 Spring Nationals
 - 1) Good training starting in December; Making great progress
 - 2) 200 Fly in prelims: 1:59.60
 - a) Things have not been the same since that moment
 - b) At that moment, Bowman knew Phelps would make the Olympic team
 - 3) 200 Fly in Finals: 1:59.00, 3rd place
-At Finals, Phelps was relaxed, went through his normal routine, and was comfortable in the environment

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H. Bowman began assembling a support team for Phelps at this time

- 1) Dr. Peter Roe for general medical and health needs
- 2) Physical therapist

I. Homecoming after Nationals

- 1) Red, white and blue decorations all over the Phelps house
- 2) Phelps's mother was over-excited and Bowman did not think that the time was right to discuss things with her
 - Bowman simply took all the decorations down
- 3) Bowman feels it is important to downplay Phelps's success so that he can stay motivated to achieve higher goals
- 4) Bowman allowed Phelps's mother to put a celebratory sign on his bedroom door for 48 hours – that is it!
- 5) The Michael Phelps secret is out: publicity and expectations of others really grew.

J. 2000 SCY (age 14)

- 1) Ranked in the top-7 in all his events
- 2) Four NAG records
- 3) Sets: pain for racing with muscles under stress, short rest, use aerobic to hold his stroke together
 - added more butterfly to his workouts

K. 2000 LCM (age 14)

- 1) Ranked 1st in 400+800 free, 200 back, 100+200 fly, 200+400 IM
- 2) More fly in training
- 3) In competitions, getting best times every time he swam

L. Bowman said that it takes time to develop an athlete like Phelps. Coach must stay with it, even if the athlete is not showing immediate progress.

M. Mental preparation

- 1) 30 minutes, once per week
- 2) Life and preparation discussion with Bowman
- 3) Media questions
- 4) Progressive relaxation

N. Scheduling

- 1) Rest in time with the Olympic Trials schedule
- 2) Awake at 7:00 a.m., in bed at 10:00 p.m.
- 3) Nap in the afternoon

O. 2000 Olympic Trials

- 1) Phelps's world blew up!
- 2) Bowman commented how amazing it is to see how many people want to be involved with an athlete when they are at the world-class level

VI. Sydney 2000

A. Planning – drop .98

B. Pasadena and Brisbane

- 1) Bowman had access to Phelps thanks to US Olympic coaches
- 2) Great training through the training camp
- 3) Phelps was still getting best times every time he swam
- 4) Phelps stayed relaxed even when he had to return to the Athletes Village to get his credentials before his race

VI. Refocus

- A. Phelps is just at the beginning of his career
- B. Phelps was back in training two days after the Olympics.
- C. Phelps is focused on World Records
- D. High performance
 - 1) Kicking and pulling sets
 - 2) Rankings
- E. Spring Nationals 2001
 - 1) IM
 - 2) World Record: challenge self in the middle two 50s
 - 3) World Championships team
- F. Summer 2001
 - 1) World Championships
 - a) Change tactics
 - b) Bowman let Phelps live with his angst over race strategy for a little bit, so that Phelps could grow and learn a little bit
 - c) Bowman is not there to make everything perfect for Phelps
 - 2) Clovis: 100 fly, 200 IM, 200 back

VII. Turning Professional

- A. For 99.9% of swimmers, college swimming is the best opportunity
- B. Phelps is trying to do something that no one else has done before
- C. Training long course meters all the time
- D. Focus on Fort Lauderdale [Nationals] and the Pan Pac team
 - 1) Shaved for short course Sectionals because never gets to swim fast short course
 - 2) Little rest and into training after Sectionals
 - 3) Altitude camp: Phelps got a lot out of the training
 - 4) Janet Evans Invite: Phelps second to Erik Vendt in 400 IM
 - 5) In Fort Lauderdale, Phelps had 11 swims in 5 days
 - 6) Set American and World records
 - 7) Reaching potential in event program

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E. Pan Pacs

- 1) Required Phelps's emotional energy because Fort Lauderdale had been so emotional
- 2) Phelps swam 9 events in 5 days in addition to relays
- 3) Set American and World records

F. The future

- 1) Athens 2004
- 2) Day-to-day consistency
- 3) Peak of emotional, mental, physical energy
- 4) Bowman helping Phelps manage his energy and his recovery
- 5) Maturity

Questions:

How does Bowman manage the needs of the rest of the swimmers on the team?

Bowman said that Phelps's success benefits the entire team, and their support helps Phelps achieve success. Phelps follows the normal team program, so he is not requiring a lot of additional attention. Now NBAC has eight swimmers qualified for Nationals.

Does Phelps experience any jealousy from other swimmers, parents or social contacts?

Phelps says that no one treats him any differently and everyone on the team works toward his or her own personal goals. Bowman says that Phelps is a fun, mellow guy. In Bowman's experience, it is the parents who create the jealousies. On NBAC, the parents must be a part of the program and buy-into the team philosophy, or they are out.

What percentage of kicking does Phelps do with and without a board?

80% of Phelps's kicking is done with a board, so that the coaches can talk to and motivate them

What is Bowman's dryland and strength training program for Phelps?

Bowman does not use any weight training because he wants the kids to be able to swim fast in practice every day. Bowman uses more general athletic training like the Barrowman medicine ball routine. Bowman will use with weights with Phelps when he begins plateauing.

Does Bowman teach Phelps to use dolphin kick off of the walls?

Bowman said that he does teach dolphin kick. He believes that it is the fifth stroke and he wants Phelps to use it 12 meters off every wall.

How did Tom Dolan react after Phelps broke his 400 IM World Record at Nationals this summer?

Phelps said that Dolan was very gracious and came up, shook his hand, and congratulated him right after the event.

What is Phelps's social life like outside of swimming?

Phelps said that his school schedule allows him more time to train. He said that he does participate in school activities, just not as frequently as other students.

What does the physical therapist help Phelps with?

Bowman explained that Phelps had some nagging growth issues and some minor joint pain. The physical therapist gives Phelps strengthening and stretching exercises that reduce the pain and keep Phelps in the water training. The therapist uses neural and bone manual therapy. Phelps has not missed a practice due to injury or illness in the last five years.

How has your Age Group program changed in relation to male participants now that Phelps has been so successful?

Bowman explained that NBAC has an all-boys training group for the 9-11 year-olds. The boys on the team have more opportunities to socialize. Phelps serves as a good role model for the boys, and they are able to see Swimming in a different light with Phelps success.

What was going through Phelps's mind during the last 100 of the 400 IM in Fort Lauderdale?

He knew that the underwater dolphin kick off the wall was his secret weapon.

What does Bowman think about the Junior Nationals meet?

Bowman said that Junior Nationals was a good meet for Phelps, and that it was a good preparation step before Nationals. Bowman feels that Junior Nationals was not that much different from their Sectional meet, since their Sectional is quite competitive. He also feels that athletes and coaches can use any meets to achieve anything that they want.

Race Pacing Strategy Fundamentals

100s

25 –	Light, easy speed	What is “lightened” is legs. At the end of the season, you will have 75 of great legs. You want them to last 75.
50 –	Blast!	Big legs.
25 –	Long and legs	Focus into the wall. Touch long and on side.

200s

75 –	Control	This does not mean “grandma” speed. It means that you have some play left in the accelerator. What you are really controlling are the legs.
50 –	Build	Build evenly over the entire 50; not all the first 5 yards or the last 5 yards. What you are really building are the legs. You should finally hit full speed at about the 120.
50 –	Blast!	You end the race at the 175. You do not (really) pass people in the last 25: they did back to you.
25 –	Long and legs	Hold your stroke length. Keep big legs.

500s

100 –	Control	Just like the first 75 of the 200, but a <i>little</i> more so.
3x100 –	Descend	You want a very slight descent in each 100.
100 –	Strong	Six-beat kick the whole way. Not a big kick, but short, fast kicks. White water for the entire 100. Everybody does it the last 25; second place does it the last 50.

Underlying Themes

Legs: That is what you really control and build. **The legs set the temp for the arms.** The legs “shift gears” for your aquatic race car. You learn this from *precise* descents and negative splits.

Splits: How does this relate to 50 or 100 splits? Always add 2 seconds to the first 50 or 100 split (to erase the dive). From that point, every other split should be *slightly* faster than the one before it.



The Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association (ASCTA) has confirmed that [asctaCONVENTION 2016](#) will be held at the luxurious Sofitel on the Gold Coast (Australia) from 4-11th May. With the 2016 Olympics next year the focus of the event is the road to Rio. [More information on the ASCTA website.](#)

It's the Environment, Stupid

by John Leonard

One of the world's most famous coaches, Forbes Carlile of Australia, had a plaque that hung over the door to his swim team entrance. The statement on the plaque began as follows:

"Our object is not to produce A champion, but to provide an environment where champions are inevitable."

That was not all there was to it, but it certainly set the tone.

The wisdom in that statement is immense. Champions are not created from any one bit of "magic dust" that an individual sprinkles on them. They are created from a complex (yet rather simple!) set of factors that allows, encourages and guides them into championship behaviors. And whether an individual is inspired and able enough to be a champion at the Olympic Games, or if their championship is simply over their own ability to focus and achieve best times, it is that environment that either nurtures or defeats the desire to exceed past accomplishments.

Each of us involved in a swim team contributes to that environment. It starts, not surprisingly, with the coach. As the leader of the team, the coach lives and breathes what the expectations are of and for and by the team. Coaches, you need to LIVE what you expect of your athletes and want to see in your environment. Walk the talk, or just plain forget about moving the environment forward. If it is about commitment, dedication, hard work and attention to competitive detail for you, then you must live those qualities every day. Your athletes will (eventually) mirror you and your behavior.

The athletes contribute every day to the team environment. If they push people up rather than pull them down, if they encourage, applaud and expect hard work and achievement from themselves and others; they contribute to the good environment.

If the "lane talk" is about how hard it is, how impossible it is, how "unfair" it all is, the environment is toxic to good performance and achievement. Conversation among athletes needs to be "we can do this, we can go harder, we love this stuff... turn up the pressure on us!" Then you are on the way to a championship environment.

Moms and dads contribute to the environment in the same way. Good information is like sowing in fertile ground. Bad information (from sources lacking credibility and objectivity) is like tossing that good seed

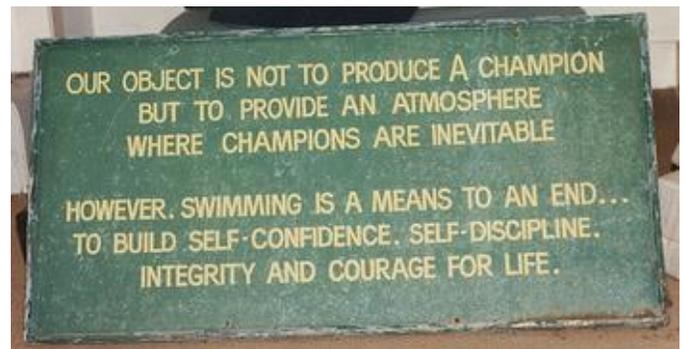
in the desert: nothing good is going to happen except you will feed the buzzards! When parents come to the coach to ask coaching questions, they contribute to the good environment. When they seek out disgruntled parents who lack the real info on topics of interest, they contribute to the desert.

Children follow adults. A good swimming environment comes from parents and coaches working together and sharing information in a joint effort to help the children advance. Talk to each other regularly!

Finally, club volunteer leadership (where it exists) is critical to the successful environment. If I was to select the "top-5" commandments to a volunteer board for success, this is what I would pick:

- 1) Let the coach(es) coach!
- 2) Realize that programs take time and continuity to thrive and perform. Patience is key.
- 3) Become obsessed with "large scale planning". What big dreams can you help create for the team and then "make real"? People only get excited about "big dreams", so, dream BIG.
- 4) Encourage parents to directly communicate with coaches; encourage coaches to directly communicate with parents. Make sure it happens.
- 5) Develop continuity within the volunteer leadership. Three-year board terms, only turn over a third of the board each year. Keep meetings short, sweet and to the point. Make it so volunteers want to serve with you.

It is the environment, stupid, and each person in the program can plan an important role in making it a "championships environment".



More Signs of the Apocalypse

by John Leonard

I may be the last person on the planet to realize this, but you can (very easily) BUY (as in PURCHASE) "likes" on the internet for anything you want. For pennies, you can get tens of thousands of folks from very odd places unfamiliar with either the western world OR western commerce, to LIKE your comments, your website or your products.

Frightening. Especially considering the fact that too many of our young people use the number of likes to equate to the importance of "anything".

I suppose this is redundant considering my ignorance of the topic, but ASCA does not, nor will it ever, engage in the process of artificially inflating its circulation numbers or social media reach through the purchase of names or "likes". Our policy mirrors that of responsible sport journalist sites such as [Swimming World](#) and [SwimVortex](#), whom we consider to be leaders in ethical advertising practices.

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