



World Swimming Coaches Association Newsletter

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World Sport in Disarray

by John Leonard

Since our last newsletter, it seems the entire world of Olympic sport has imploded. Since we have sent important news via our daily WSCA news, I will simply summarize here, then conclude with some good news on the World Swimming Association (WSA), then we can move onward to some actual swimming talks, versus swimming governance in abysmal condition.

1. FIFA – Since our last newsletter, a total train-wreck. Every aspect of the organization condemned as corrupt, resignations of practically the entire board and over 16 arrests under Swiss and American law, court cases to be ongoing for years. The reports all casting huge doubt about all of Olympic sport, the IOC and related bodies, including FINA.
2. Russia – Dick Pound and his independent investigation committee of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) prints out 320 pages of excruciatingly documented ways to beat the anti-doping doping system in Russia, which, it turns out was really a state-run doping system, extorting money from Track athletes to NOT REVEAL their positive tests which were a result of the drugs the anti-doping agency provided for them! Pound’s report makes clear that other sports, Swimming in particular, are implicated and much of the work of the independent committee has been turned over to Interpol for criminal investigation. Clearly, the entire anti-doping system in Russia is state run, entirely corrupt and now Track & Field is suspended from Olympic competition. Will Swimming be next?
3. IAAF – The world Track & Field body, itself, implicated in the anti-doping scandal from Russia, with federation assistance in covering up anti-doping crimes. Completely topsy-turvy upset in IAAF leadership.
4. FINA, 11 months too late, tries to finally remove samples for the World Championships out of Russia, despite WSCA warning Cornel Marculescu in January 2015, that the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) was not to be trusted. Suddenly, months after the warning, FINA is “deeply concerned”.

As usual, too little, too late, too bad for clean athletes. One can only wonder how many FINA delegates and members are concerned, watching their International Federation counterparts head off to jail.

The Word on the Street... is that every international federation operates the same way... the only difference is that FIFA has some extra zeroes in its bank account that the rest lack.

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On the Better News Side:

1. [WSA constitution](#) is being built by YOU today. Click in, leave your suggestions and ideas. WSCA is shepherding the development of the constitution until September 2017, when, at a constitutional convention in Washington, DC, USA, the world can vote-in a constitution and a leadership team that reflects the values of: athlete-centered, transparent governance, and professionally-managed sport.
2. WSA discussion debates have related so far to:
 - a. Inclusion of Open Water Swimming? (consensus so far: YES).
 - b. Inclusion of Swimming for the disabled? (consensus not clear yet).
 - c. Allocation of votes by nation, and, additionally, keeping the size of the Board manageable.
 - d. Expectation is that an Athletes Association WILL VOTE to elect its own representatives, rather than the absurd "appoint them" idea operated by FINA. When you "appoint" someone to represent a constituency, whom do they truly represent? Surely not the athletes!
3. Anti-Doping – strong moves since the RUSADA scandal to remove ALL anti-doping testing from ALL federations and add it to the TO-DO list for WADA. Potentially better, certainly not air-tight yet.
4. The International Olympic Committee is BORN AGAIN and is suddenly on a major kick towards "good governance". One of the pillars: AGE- and TERM-limits for International Federation officials. This in a year when the FINA Bureau decided to elect an 80-year-old as President, change our rules on both age and term limits to do it, AND put in place a Vice President assured to succeed the 80-year-old on resignation or demise. Once AGAIN, FINA just cannot get it right!

That is the highlights and lowlights of recent months.

Remember, FINA, WE ALL DESERVE BETTER!

FINA Just Can't Get It Right by John Leonard

When, in early 2015, Coach Bill Sweetenham, supported by WSCA and the American Swimming Coaches Association, asked FINA in an open letter, to undertake an entire audit of itself, financial, operational, and organizational, (a call oft repeated and magnified by both SwimVortex and Swimming World) FINA IGNORED his/our requests. Clearly, such a thing was beneath their "stature".

Now yesterday, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), itself, said "Given the continuing evolution of good governance practice, the IOC... has asked the world renowned International Institute for Management Development in Lausanne, and its Global Board Center to undertake research into good governance at the IOC itself. A first assessment has been presented to the Executive Board."

GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE IOC, but not for its "creature" FINA.

FINA, WE ALL DESERVE BETTER.

The Case for Taking Anti-Doping Out of FINA Hands and Heading the Hunt Down New Path

by Craig Lord, *SwimVortex*, December 10, 2015

The striking thing about the FINA out-of-competition drug-testing figures highlighted by *The Australian* today is not that Dolphins were more checked than the rest in 2014 (as unfair as that may well seem), nor that Katie Ledecky was tested twice, nor that James Magnussen was not tested at all in 2015. The conclusions we reach from the figures for 2014 and 2015 are both disturbing and helpful to those who argue the case for a much overdue review and overhaul of a system widely seen as letting clean athletes down:

- a vast budget running to millions is being spent on an industry that appears to be a surface program raising more questions than it provides answers;
- the international federation is not the appropriate authority to be in charge of anti-doping.

Hard to know where to start as we rummage through the anti-doping flotsam and jetsam on a day when the International Olympic Committee (IOC) is pressing on with plans to grant the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) more powers, remove doping testing from international federations by 2018 and have WADA run an intelligence unit overseeing the Rio 2016 Olympic anti-doping program.

The FINA stats point to why. Take Brazil, a nation with over twenty positive tests in Swimming since Rio was declared the winner for 2016: it had just 17 swimmers tested by the FINA program halfway through the current Olympic cycle on the way to a home Games. Then there is France, with the biggest men's sprint force in the world: just 11 swimmers tested in 2014, while this year, Florent Manaudou alone is checked five times while some of his key rivals headed to Rio get checked, well, not even once. And China and Japan, with vastly different populations and folk in their sports systems, had 33 swimmers each tested in 2014, the year Yang Sun tested positive but was caught not by FINA and International Doping Tests & Management but the Chinese Anti-Doping Agency before many months of negotiation past WADA-Code deadlines galore unfolded on the way to action being taken with a great deal of reluctance on the part of some in the mix.

Sun's stats are fascinating: 5 tests this year, 4 last year, including one by FINA that found nothing just 12 days after the domestic test that found him to be taking a banned heart stimulant.

Then there is 2008, in the season Zhesi Li, a 16-year-old sprinter tests positive for EPO: FINA visits her once, in February, and finds nothing. Hit and miss. A focus on needles in haystacks while haystacks get away with needling clean sport.

In the swamp of stats, we find no fewer than 17 European Swimming nations with fewer than 5 swimmers tested in 2015 – and most of those visited just once, some of that in nations that have no domestic testing program to speak of. In the soup, we find nations that have shown clear progress in the pool, even if that has not translated to major podium places, have “1” and “1” sitting next to their names in the columns headed “people” and “missions”.

Take Turkey, a nation on a clear curve of progress: just one swimmer visited for one test. No others merited a visit despite significant gains on the clock in a year in which a Turkish swim coach was stopped and searched on a trip to the Bergen Swim Festival back in May. The police found “a large quantity of testosterone injections and tablets”, according to anti-doping sources. Turkish swimmers were subjected to anti-doping tests by the Norwegian anti-doping authority; no positives. Turkey's anti-doping agency was informed. There is no news as yet as to whether signatories to the WADA Code intend to sanction the coach involved.

Is the Clean Athlete Protected?

The overall picture in the FINA statistics leads us to an uncomfortable conclusion: that the system supposed to allow athletes to say “here is my passport – I am a clean athlete” is falling shy of offering any such protection. How could it? Is it the case that all those likely to make a final in Rio next year will have been tested often enough to have hefty athlete passports in their name that they can hoist above their heads as proof of pudding?

Or are we looking at a Nanny McPhee scenario where the cook rocks in her chair grasping a note declaring her realm out of bounds to children who “wouldn't dare”... just before they do indeed dare and she finds herself bound, gagged and hostage to mischief and more?

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Reporter Nicole Jeffery notes with a nod to 2014: “The total number of out-of-competition tests completed last year was the lowest in more than a decade, just 894, and only 285 of those involved blood testing. After 1,240 tests were conducted in 2012, the testing tally dropped in 2013 (936) and again in 2014 (894)....” She then says there has been an encouraging increase in testing this year on the way to the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, noting that of the 1,094 tests conducted so far this year, 631 included blood-testing, while greater focus has been placed on China (100 tests on 52 swimmers), Italy (85 tests on 58), Russia (78 tests on 38), Britain (48 tests on 35) and Brazil (51 tests on 21).

We should not get too carried away. The statistics show that vast shoals of world-class swimmers are hardly being checked at all by FINA, while the development stage from promise to world-class elite is like a borderless country. The number of athletes tested once a year accounts for a high percentage of all those on the list (at a glance, a high percentage of top-100 swimmers in the world across all Olympic events do not make the lists at all).

Examples of the troubling and the anomaly abound, including the absence of any test for Wenyi Qing, a double China Youth Nationals champion who died in the night on a training camp and was cremated with no autopsy, according to Chinese reports, the day after her death. That Qing did not show up on the radar comes as no surprise in a system that skims the surface and is not proactive but reactive. One test on Florent Manaudou the year before London 2012; five tests this year; and four on Adam Peaty, apparently in reaction to his breakthrough year in 2014, when he was tested twice (and far more times at home in Britain, domestic testing, of course).

That pattern is repeated time and again, while in the case of some swimmers, it would not take a genius to work out what times of year the testers are most likely to show up, given the consistency of dates inherent in the profiles of some athletes, regardless of whether that is coincidental or intentional.

In the mix of the statistics are things that appear neither designed to get the job done nor to protect the clean athlete nor any whose achievements are on the kind of curve that sparks suspicion in a world that knows cheats to have prospered.

That Australians were more tested than Americans and Chinese in 2014 raises a red flag in the realms of decision-making, even though domestic testing figures might show a distinctly different picture, with Ledecky tested twice by FINA but many more times at home and

Australian Anti-Doping Agency publishing no figures to show what swimmers say is the case – that they are tested very often.

Ledecky shows as one test on the FINA website although *SwimVortex* has it on good authority that the federation stats are missing a second test, requested last month. FINA also shows the whole of 2013 with the 2014 statistics. Accidents can happen. Ledecky, tested 5 times in 2014, was also tested by USADA 14 times last year, 6 of those out-of-competition and spread randomly throughout the year. In contrast, others tested by FINA once or not at all may well have gone the whole year with no domestic control undertaken: zero check, zero balance.

And then there is the date of testing. Katinka Hosszú is a swimmer whose federation has turned to the system for support of late when declaring “look, tested, clean, no issue”. It would be good to think that such things provided a shield when in fact they barely provide a fig leaf. This year Hosszú has been tested twice by FINA, both occasions in July on the cusp of a World Championships (and at precisely the same time that Kanako Watanabe, the Japanese medley podium placer, was tested, too). Certainly a count and a timing that might cause Siobhan-Marie O’Connor, Elizabeth Beisel, Hannah Miley and Mireia Belmonte, among others, to wonder why their main rival for podium places on the big occasion was tested half as much as they were and not in nearly as random a fashion on the calendar.

The entire African continent: only 7 swimmers tested the whole of this year.

None of the above is the fault of the athlete, of course. The same cannot be said of blazers who point to the budget and testing regime as evidence that Swimming is clean while surely knowing that the system is, as Jeffery puts it “like a Swiss cheese”.

It is time, says the IOC and many others, for anti-doping testing to be removed from the control of international federations such as FINA, the roles of promoting the stars of the show and the forensic fight required to ensure clean sport incompatible.

Jeffery recalls the ides-of-March warning issued by Australian head coach Jacco Verhaeren this year: swimmers were losing faith in the anti-doping system. He called for greater transparency from FINA. There has been no sign of any such things since he spoke, the statistics now out for 2015 simply the latest overview of the same we have seen for many years, while the cases of past doping offences have been removed from the

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FINA website for legal reasons that hang on a need to be nice to folk given a second chance (no mention of those banned for life, who escape any form of register and public record where FINA is concerned).

Meantime, for the past year and more, FINA has sat on an “internal issue” that is anything but and will now face British Swimming at the Court of Arbitration for Sport next week as an international federation bent on denying clean athletes their name against a global standard and led by a director, Cornel Marculescu, who said of Yang Sun’s positive test in 2014: “You cannot condemn the stars just because they had a minor incident with doping.”

Australian Swimmers Association president Marieke D’Cruz tells Jefferey that the testing system seemed “a long way from an even playing field”. She added: “Australia is very well-governed but some countries have a lot more corruption and I would support a move to WADA doing all the testing. That is possibly the only way to make it more even.”

The leaders of WSCA and domestic counterparts around the world have backed the same call for testing to be placed in the hands of WADA, following a request for that to happen from the IOC. Much discussion has focused on how it would all be funded. The answer rests in part with greater cooperation and support from governments, not only in terms of funds but in the realm of imposing fiduciary and criminal penalties on those who push and pimp for performance-enhancing sport. Germany is among nations that has taken steps in the right direction, the GDR past a catalyst for change. Even then, someone forgot the box marked EPO when it came to anti-doping tests for the Berlin 2014 European Championships and not a single blazer nor expert noticed until it was too late.

The answer rests, too, in the existing budget: FINA handing over control of anti-doping testing should be no obstacle to it paying for the services the sport needs. WADA would bill FINA and other federations already spending the big bucks: the money, to a large degree, is already flowing in the system.

If transfer is to happen, it must come with new resolve at WADA too: the frontline budget need not be a bank-breaker, say experts still trying to persuade the anti-doping body of the lessons already learned from different forensic realms.

D’Cruz spotted the weakness in the FINA system that WADA would have to sweep with a clean brush: the testing pool focuses mainly on world top-12, those who have been suspended and those freshly out of retirement.

That is the tip of an iceberg of potential Olympic teamsters and medal aimers at international events galore, Senior and Junior, with every passing season.

Time to Harness the Spirit of Post-GDR 1990s

Meanwhile, swimmers and coaches could do more to fight the good fight, too. Take the Duel in the Pool this month. Both teams have swimmers in their midst who have tested positive for banned substances, served time out (one a partial pardon granted) and returned to the sport. In one of those cases, that of Jessica Hardy, a court accepted that the product the swimmer had taken that triggered a positive test had not listed among its ingredients the banned substance that it turned out to contain. The swimmer was not only doped by the product but duped by it, too. Hardy paid a high price, including instant removal from the USA 2008 Olympic team, “case pending” never in the mix owing, in part, to the view that the deadline for Olympic entries had passed (technically it had passed for more than Hardy) and there would be no time to handle the case and have the swimmer either reinstated or banned. Europe has two swimmers who have served time in the sin bin: Aliaksandra Herasimenia, of Belarus, and Yuliya Efimova, of Russia, both cases are different to that of Hardy.

Some years ago, not long after Herasimenia made it back to the pool after serving two years out after norandrosterone and noretiocholanolone, metabolites of nandrolone, were found in her system, I had an email exchange with a member of her entourage. Could I please stop referring to her ban. It was unfair. I replied that I would be happy to hear more about her case, like *how did the banned substance get there, what was the explanation for the positive test; had someone actively provided the banned substance to the teenager, a minor; did her coach play a role and what did he have to say about it; had the swimmer removed herself from the influence of all those who played a part in her positive test...* and so on. No reply. No transparency. No genuine attempt to tell us what happened nor provide any detail of the folk who might have played a part in the swimmer’s downfall.

In recent years, Herasimenia raced to the best form of her career, taking silver in the 100m Freestyle at London 2012 in 53.38 at 27 years of age, having first cracked 55 seconds for the first time at 22. Yi Tang was 15 when she first cracked 55. In 2012, still a teen, she took bronze in 53.44 after a 53.28 in heats. All of which locked out Mel Schlanger in fourth. The Australian’s best is a 53.38 from London 2012 semis, while this year she clocked a high of 53.50 at 29 and eight years beyond

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a best of 54.70, each passing season layered with small steps forward, small setbacks and more small steps forward, absent from her profile the stuff of steep drop and dip.

Back to the Duel and we find Efimova racing against her Trojan teammate Hardy, one for Europe the other the United States, both bound by difficult circumstances and the common support of a club program but divided by the detail of their stories. Where one tin had more in it than the label suggested, the other tin rattled out the name of the banned substance it contained. Oh dear, silly girl, never mind, 16 months (actually just 14 months because you raced at European titles two months after you tested positive but the sin bin clock starts on the day you pee in the bottle) and you can come back just in time for a home World Championships and... yep, win again. Meantime, during your suspension period you can keep training and enjoy access to all the support you have had all along and we will make sure you return to world #1 within weeks of your ban ending. What is more, we will make you feel most welcome on our Europe team at the Duel in a season that found you being heavily criticized on Eurosport and elsewhere for suggesting a doping suspension is like a road-traffic offence: break a rule, get your license taken off you and then you get it back, all sins forgiven, life back to how it always was.

Actually, it will never be the same for Efimova, the * forever attached to her name and status in the sport. It will never be the same for Trojan coach Dave Salo, either, USA Swimming having made a move that deserved praise and encouragement: no registered U.S. coach may work with a banned athlete during their suspension, upholding the spirit of the same intention in the WADA Code.

There is a tendency in the pub-talk on doping to treat all cases alike: cheats or “all doing it because they have to”. Neither end of that spectrum reflects a complexity of experience. It is, however, all the easier for the pub-talk to take hold as common view where there is a perception of tolerance or at best acceptance, such as that widely attached to Trojan (among those in the world beyond Trojan), regardless of whether the truth rests somewhere else.

The USA Swimming rule change is a good one but the spirit inherent in it does not stretch to the courage of organizers of events such as the Duel to say “this is an invitation meet and we do not intend to place swimmers in the difficult position of having to race on teams with those from other nations who have tested positive”.

Where is the attempt to press the healthiest culture and message on anti-doping? A secondary thought, at best.

Spirit of the Nineties

Compared to the 1990s and a time when Yuan Yuan and her Chinese teammates needed a police escort through Perth airport, athletes and coaches are a timid lot when it comes to speaking their minds on anti-doping (with some notable exceptions). Some of that is driven by a spirit of censorship in team agreements that call on all to “speak only of your own performance and answer to nothing else”. There is good argument for such things when it comes to the bonding of happy and successful teams but there is also a tendency to stifle when control is worn like a thick winter blanket supplied and sponsored by those who see benefit in a world happy to give the impression of being at peace with itself and others when clearly it is not.

One of the main reasons FINA sat up and took note of warnings similar to those from Jacco Verhaeren 2015 back in 1998 was the weight of pressure it felt from its main stakeholders speaking to the media and insisting that their home federations took up the fight to have the international federation wake up to GDR mark II and much else. WADA is now making it possible for anyone in the know to speak to investigators on a confidential basis. A good move, one that is already drawing courage in the ranks and bearing fruit, *SwimVortex* understands. It has been a mechanism that has served the world of criminal investigation well for a long time; the thing that, with the drive of journalist Andrew Jennings and others, has brought the rotten houses of FIFA and the IAAF to their knees.

It is time for FINA and event organizers to feel that 1990s pinch once more. If you want clean sport, stand up for it – and let us know if anyone out there tries to stop you.

This article also available on the *SwimVortex* website at:

<http://www.swimvortex.com/the-case-for-taking-anti-doping-out-of-fina-hands-taking-the-hunt-in-a-new-direction/>

The Six Measures of a Great Leader

by Michelle M. Smith

Note: When first I read this fine piece, my first inclination was to ask myself: how many of these does the leadership of FINA get right? Perhaps you will ask yourself the same question. -JL

The business world is changing at a blistering pace.

In years past, a leader's success was measured purely by the size of their organization's balance sheet. Today, a leader wanting to achieve excellence must also excel in a number of intangible factors, as outlined in *Follow Your Conscience*, by Frank Sonnenberg.

- **Operating according to sound business ethics;**
- **Empowering and appreciating** their workforce;
- **Communicating in an open** and honest manner;
- **Improving business processes** and eliminating waste;
- **Developing and maintaining** an impeccable reputation;
- **Creating a work environment encouraging risk-taking** and discouraging fear;
- **Unifying the organization** around an aspirational mission and share values;
- **Continuously promoting** the personal and professional growth of their employees;
- **Nurturing trusting, long-term relationships** with employees, suppliers, partners and customers.

Great leaders are effective because they are knowledgeable, admired, trusted and respected. These qualities help them secure buy-in for their goals without requiring egregious rules or strong oversight designed to force compliance. Great leaders hire great people, train them well, inspire them, and then get out of their way.

Six traits of great leaders

1. Vision

Great leaders are visionaries with a “can-do” attitude. They take on the impossible, confront issues and obstacles head-on and make decisions that position their organizations successfully for the future. Their decisions may not always be popular, but they will be considered deliberate and fair; short-term results won't always be stellar, but long-term investments will secure a brighter future.

2. Conviction

Great leaders have backbone. They make every effort to gather information, weigh alternatives, secure buy-in from their constituents, and determine the best course of action. They focus precious resources in areas that provide the greatest opportunity, rather than trying to please everyone or making arbitrary, across-the-board decisions.

3. Humility

Great leaders do what is right – period. They recognize their stance represents something much larger than the whim of any one individual and put their egos and self-interest on hold. They do what is in the organization's best interest rather than trying to win a popularity contest, playing politics, or advancing their own personal agenda.

4. Integrity

Great leaders operate with integrity at all times; they are passionate about protecting their personal integrity and the reputation of their organization. They understand that trust takes a long time to develop, but can be lost in the blink of an eye. They know instilling a strong culture and promoting ethical core values are instrumental measures for success. In today's volatile times, everything is subject to change except an organization's core values.

5. Credibility

Great leaders maintain a balance between short-term performance and building a better future. They know short-term wins enable them to build trust, instill confidence and maintain momentum. This provides them with enough credibility to make strategic investments and tackle the long-term challenges that ensure success. They understand the importance of motivating others to accept personal sacrifice to benefit others.

6. Collaboration

Great leaders achieve success by setting high standards, remaining true to their beliefs and values, and listening to their conscience. They never stop trying until they do themselves proud. They encourage teamwork, promote win-win relationships, and demand everyone's best effort. Everyone earns trust and respect the same way because earning trust and respect is priceless.

What We Can Learn from Chinese Diving

presented by Rett Larson at the 2015 ASCA World Clinic

[introduction, by Tim Welsh]

Let me say *good morning* one more time before it is afternoon and we are moving on. We are at the Doc Counsilman Lecture; this is our annual, out-of-the-box-thinking lecture. What happens is that John [Leonard] invites a speaker who is not a Swimming coach, but is in a related discipline, to come and talk to us about things that will stimulate a little out-of-the-box thinking. Because, you know, it is one of the paths of wisdom to leave your culture, to cross-over into another culture, to learn things, and then to come back into your own culture with some renewed insight, some renewed energy, some creativity, some out-of-the-box thinking. That is what we are about for the next hour.

Now like Doc Counsilman, Rett Larson began life as an exercise physiologist. He went from his exercise physiology degree at the University of North Carolina, and worked with Velocity Sports Performance with people and individuals and teams of all ages in California. And then he was invited to go to China. Now imagine this: imagine you have been invited to coach a new team in a new country. And imagine that that team in the past four Olympiads has won 24 of 32 gold medals—three out of every four. Imagine that at a recent World Championship, they swept the podium: one-two in every event. And imagine that this team, in this culture, has a long tradition of hard work and extreme discipline. And imagine on top of that that this is West meets East. What are you going to do?

I suggest that one of the things that you are going to do is a whole lot of out-of-the-box thinking. So would you please welcome Rett Larson to talk to us about what we can learn from Chinese Diving.

[Larson begins]

Thank you; thank you so much. Thank you, Tim, for that kind introduction, and thank you all for coming and hearing me talk about something that I definitely love to talk a lot about. Which is my work over the last four years with Chinese diving, as well as working with many other Olympic teams.

Now in my first week working with the diving team, actually my first week in China, the first group that I was given was not all the all-stars, it was the junior divers. And just one sub-set of the Junior divers: about four junior divers, all in that 10-12 [age] range. They were called *the tadpoles*. The Tadpoles and I would work together from 6:00 in the morning until 8:00 in the

morning, every day. We did that for the first like month-and-a-half that I was in China.

They are at that perfect age; that age where, like, the pre-pubescent boys are fearless but they are kind of cool and goofy. Their English is terrible, but it is better than my Mandarin. And we just kind of get to know each other, really slowly. We have our own little stupid handshake. But they made my mornings great.

Well after like a month and a half these kids—whose names by the way are Hu Du Lu and Lian Jie—Hu Du Lu and Lian Jie come up to me and say, “Coach Rett, you’ve never come to watch us practice. We see you every morning, but you never come to watch us dive.” *Guys, that is my fault. Assistant, please clear my schedule this afternoon so I can go watch Hu Du Lu and Lian Jie get after it in the pool.*

So this first video that I am going to show you is a little shaky, but this is where I first walk in and I am seeing little kids that are on the 10-meter board. I am sure I am about to see a death or something; I am just trying to get some video footage. This second video is at the exact moment that I realize that Hu Du Lu and Lian Jie are actually women—and not boys—and I start thinking about all the millions of times that I inappropriately spotted them on exercises. Thus began my four years in China.

What I will be talking about with you today are the things that you can glean from my experiences in China. Working not only with the Chinese diving team, which as Tim said has been an enormous powerhouse for the last two decades in Diving—arguably, maybe the most dominant team in any sport. But it is important also to realize that it is not just going to be about that team; it is also going to be about some of the other experiences I have had. And not just my experiences; these are the cumulative experiences of all the coaches that I have gotten to work with over in China, as we prepared the Diving team—and about 10 other teams—for the [2012] London Olympics; and then since then while we have been working with athletes preparing for the National Games and now working towards Rio [2016 Olympics].

In-fact, this guy (right here, in the middle) *[on slide]* is a guy named James Finn, who is a U.K. coach for strength and condition that we brought over just to work with women’s Table Tennis—another juggernaut in their sport. If James were here right now, he would make me

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tell you the story of the first time he and I walked in to do a consultation with women's Table Tennis; where we sat around a huge, mahogany table while table tennis coaches chain-smoked and told us about what they wanted for the table tennis team. Now as we looked around that foggy conference room, you saw all of the photos of the gold medals that they have won, and all of the World Championships that they had up on the podium. It was pretty inspiring.

But not as cool as when you walk into the airplane-hangar-sized cathedral to Table Tennis that is their training center, where hundreds of table tennis tables are perfectly lit in an antiseptically clean environment. But when you walk in there, they have also tons of big glossy photos, but they are only from one competition—they are only from one. They are from the 2011 World Championships; the last one where China came in 2nd to Singapore. And that is what the Chinese Table Tennis team looks at every single day when they train. Not any of their dozens of gold medals, but of the time that they failed. So take that, positive reinforcement.

What I will attempt to do today is talk about a bunch of stories from China, but also, from those stories I am going to tell you about the methodology and some of the training stuff that we did to make the divers a little bit more robust and ready for the Games. And also talk about some of the opportunities and challenges [of] just being a coach working in China—for the two people out there that might be considering taking-on that kind of adventure. And lastly, maybe more importantly, I will just talk to you about why you should care; like what you can glean from what we do over in China that might be able to make your training a little bit better.

Now, when I got the gig to go over to China, I was probably filled with all the preconceived notions that you have today. I had gone on YouTube, and I had seen training videos of automaton-like divers and rigid, strict training methods and personality-less robots. And sports schools, of course; the Chinese sports schools where young athletes are put and trained at a very early age to make sure that they have the flexibility, the work capacity, that you guys are all probably familiar with.

I wish I could tell you this is not true; this is absolutely happening right now in sports schools across China. What looks appalling to us... and I know what you are thinking. This is everything I was preparing myself for. This even happens at the national team level. But what I am going to try to express to you is that I see this now through a different lens. That much like a lot of things happening in China right now, this is a stage of evolution in China.

Their fitness training is archaic, but... and their training methods seem so severe. But I am guessing that if I could take a time machine back to 1950s America and go to some Midwestern high school football practice, I would see a coach maybe chain smoking, maybe denying his team water on the hottest day of the year as a punishment, maybe slapping a kid in the ear-hole when he does not do very well. That is the kind of stuff, like mad men kind of stuff, that is shocking to us now, because we know better. The Chinese just don't.

You have to remember the Chinese are behind the curtain: we do not have Facebook over there, we do not have access to YouTube; they do not understand that stuff. They do not know any better; it is not malicious. This is simply an evolution of where they are going. It makes China a very fun and interesting, dynamic place to be working right now; if you can take deep breaths and remember that they are simply still just evolving.

Now of course it made big news when, after the Olympics, the diving girls, Wu Minxia—I do not know if it was... it was certainly big news in London—that it came out that... after her third Olympics and won her fourth gold medal, that her parents for the last year had kept from her the fact that her grandparents had died and her mom had developed cancer. Horrible stuff, right? Everyone got a lot of media, especially in London. Do you know where it did not have any effect; where it was not even a blip on the radar? China. Where everyone said, *Of course you wouldn't tell her. How selfish would her parents be to bring that kind of distraction on their daughter when she is trying so hard to do well.*

By the way, when you think of girls or any young athlete being taken away from their parents... I will tell you, I have trained national team gymnasts who when they call their parents on the weekend have trouble understanding their mom's and dad's accents because they have not been around them for so long. It sounds terrible, but the alternative is not awesome. It is not like their alternative is to go to school and be a normal kid, like you think of school and being a normal kid. Being in school in China is no picnic. And that is a best case scenario.

There is also: you could come from Mongolia, or an agrarian town, where the alternative to being an Olympian and having your legs bent, is actually that you work on a farm, all your life. And that helps; when you have that perspective it explains a little bit more of my longevity in living there.

And there is a little bit of science to back this up, by the way. There is a growing amount of research that talent and trauma are pretty-well interrelated. If you read the

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book *The Talent Code*, he talks about how if you go into the encyclopedia and you find an encyclopedia entry that is over a half-page long on a person, that there is a great chance—like something like 60% chance—that that person had a parent killed before they were 20. Like in a serious amount of trauma. When you have a serious amount of ignition trauma like that—at a young age—you either can create John Lennon or John Wilkes Booth, but something is likely to happen.

Now I am not saying that we need to start assassinating parents in order to achieve athletic greatness—although I am sure you can probably think of a parent or two that might deserve it. But there are actually ways, and people thinking about ways, to manufacture trauma, at more Disney-like levels, that will let kids achieve greatness without being in quite as perilous an environment.

And you cannot argue with the results: as Tim said in the introduction, China is pretty well dominant in Diving. You know, they have 24 gold medals compared to 8 for the rest of planet Earth since 2000. They have swept that last two World Championships, winning every single medal they tried for. When we sat down with China Diving, around the big mahogany table just like we did with Table Tennis, and we asked *So what are your plans and what are the goals for the London Olympics?* They said, “Every gold medal of course.” And that is realistic for China Diving.

Now you can see, also, when it comes to total medals, they are even more dominant. But, as you might know, China does not care about any medals that are not gold—that is never even discussed. When I worked with the Chinese Judo team, the Chinese judo athlete that I worked with gave me a t-shirt before I went to London that just said: *Silver Sucks*. I wore it a lot until, very ironically, she got a silver medal; and now it is not quite as funny. But it does punctuate the point: they do not care about silver at all there. And it is actually kind of sad.

So my challenge in China becomes: how do I mix the stuff that is making China amazing—high volumes of training, early specialization, crazy hours and dedication—with what I know will make them better—which is Western approaches to physical therapy, to strength and conditioning, to regeneration and nutrition.

This is one of the biggest problems. The company that I used to work for is Athletes’ Performance—now EXOS—and they have these four pillars of: regeneration, mind-set, movement and nutrition. The Chinese do not buy into all of those. There are some things they get; there are some things they do not want

to even worry about—like nutrition would be a whole ‘nother presentation to talk about with regard to China.

But we believe in working... you know, you have heard it: *smarter not harder*. That is tough in a place like China that measures hard work purely in hours put in. And so we quickly, as a team, adopted a kind of philosophy of training the Chinese athletes which was that we were going to be able to bend with this stuff as long as we did not break. That... I think as Ovid said, that the drip of water does not bore a hole in the stone by its force but by its persistence. That our key to changing things in China was going to be in being there long-term.

And for that we were going to have to compromise on some things I never thought I would compromise. Allowing exercises that I fundamentally know are not good for athletes, because a coach loves them. And with the huge communication barrier, that does not make life easier to explain why, why, why we want to be able to implement something. Especially with a team that could at any point be like: *Yeah, we win all the medals as it is, and the U.S. never beats us; so, why am I listening to you?* Which to their credit, they never did.

There are some things that they get; which is something like data collection. We are big into measuring and managing as... if I walk around the exhibit booths, you guys are too—you guys get this part. The Chinese have a good proverb too; it says: *Talk doesn’t cook rice*. So the more-more we talk about things, it does not matter as long as we can show measurable results.

We do that through a bunch of different ways. We not only do regular physical testing, like for the divers doing jump profiling where we see how well they jump out of a non-countermovement versus a countermovement versus stepping off a box and being reactive. So I can customize a program for those athletes that is exactly looking at their weakness. We do that. We also do things like movement screens, to make sure that all the joints that need crazy mobility have mobility, all the ones that need to be stable have stability.

If that is a foreign concept to you, a really easy example of that would be—that you could probably do at your seat—is if you put your knees together and lock them in tight, then if you put your hand over... (You don’t have to do this. And, good, because it doesn’t look like any of you are.) Put your hands over your shoulders, and you turn as far as you can with your knees up at 90°. All of our athletes have to be able to get 60° of T-spine—thoracic spine—rotation.

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If you are not doing that and you are going into a dive, then that rotation is coming from somewhere and it is probably going to be your lumbar spine. And then over the years, if you keep doing that, your lumbar spine is going to start hurting. So when we find people that do not have the 60° degrees of rotation—necessary for, by the way, running, for swimming—then we slam on the breaks and individualize that program to make sure that those athletes are getting mobility that they need to have in order to keep the lower back safe, cervical spine safe—things like that.

Now I will tell you that when we did this with the Chinese team, we found a couple of interesting things. The Chinese divers were complaining, when we would do simple screens about knee pain. We always ask: does this hurt? does this hurt? *Yeah, my knees are kind of hurting*, you know. And I was like, “What in the world? Your knees hurt?” You get to bounce off the springiest thing that I know of in sports—unless you are a platform diver, in which case you get to just do one little jump—and then you get to spin in the air and you get to land in water, usually head first. Why do your knees hurt?

So I go and I watch their dryland training. And, sure enough, it is like Disneyland for your knees: it is foam pits and crash pads and trampolines; like no chance this is going to hurt knees. Until I went to go watch them dive one day. I looked at their sheets and said, “Alright, how many dives you guys are going to do today?” And they said, *Well, we usually do between about 115-130 dives*. Wait a second. “How many stairs is it to the top of the 10-meter board?” *Like 65*. So they are doing 115 dives, there are 65 steps to the top of the 10-meter board... I am not good at math in front of large groups, but that is well over a million steps. Or at least enough that it is a lot; it would absolutely hurt knees. So no joke your knees hurt.

So now as their strength and conditioning coach, in order to make them better able to do plyometric jumps that will let them be better jumpers, what I have to do is make them have no knee pain by making them better at climbing the ladders to get up to the 10-meter boards. That becomes... that is the fun puzzles that we get to figure out every day in China.

By the way, as a footnote: there is an elevator. There is an elevator that takes you to any board you want. And when you go to the Chinese coaches and say, “Hey, guess what, just let them use the elevator.” You get the... what every coach in China knows—as every Western expat coach in China knows—you get the *It’s not the China way*. We are not going to... athletes do not use the elevator; coaches use the elevator. Not the China

way. We do not care if it is hurting their knees; we will get new athletes.

It is this kind of yin and yang that I fight against all the time, because it is my job to make sure that they stop breaking so many eggs making the Olympic omelet. And this *not the Chinese way* bleeds into everything. This... theories about Eastern medicine have told these athletes, at an early age, that they cannot drink cold water. Which, during summer months, leads to my athletes getting dehydrated because they are sweating a ton; and when I send them to water breaks, they only take a small sip because they are drinking hot tea or hot water. Because they have been told by their Chinese doctors that, whereas Western bodies run hot and are good with water, Eastern bodies run cold and need hot water in order to neutralize them. No amount of me pleading with them gets them to drink more water, much less tell an athlete to get into a cold plunge.

If you were to tell a girl to... in order to do regeneration for her sore tired muscles, to get into cold water, she will tell you that will keep her from ever making a baby. And, honestly, who am I to talk to the Chinese, they are pretty good about making babies. So you have to just take a step back, over and over again.

But there is a part of this that I do not compromise on. That is kind of the yin-and-yang effect of positivity, and, kind of, the art of coaching. Because what you can see in the sports schools is true; there is another Chinese proverb: *the strict teacher makes the best student*. And I had people tell me: you need to be probably pretty strict with this team. But if you are like me, that is not the reason you got into coaching—to be that guy. That is not my personality; that is not why I love doing my job. I actually will not even hire anyone to come over to China and help me who will not... is not committed to being the best part of their athlete’s day, every day. And making them love strength and conditioning, and making them love rehabilitation. That is a part of this that I am really passionate about.

Fortunately for me... I initially got some pushback on this because I am a goof ball as a coach, and I love to have fun—that is just the way I like to spend my day—they have a couple of superstars that feel the same way. Li Na walks-on-water in China, because she has excelled in a sport [*Tennis*] that for years the Chinese have been told their body-type will never be good at. So when she won two Grand Slams, she now... well even before that, when she started getting some success, she got the ability to get a Western coach—the Chinese Communist Party allowed her to go and get Western coaching. But she had been raised in the Chinese system for the first 9-10 years of her life.

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So when she wrote her book, she was brutally honest about the differences between Western and Eastern coaches. In that book, she said, “Coach Yu”, her Chinese coach, “Her impact on my personality and thinking was enormous. During the nine years that she coached me, I never heard one word of praise. Ever since I’ve been trying hard to build confidence and acceptance of myself.” As opposed to what she appreciated most about her Western coach; about how positive he was. It is the way the Westerners do things, giving you confidence and affirmation, constantly reminding you that you can do better, praising players without restraint.

If it is good enough for her, it is good enough for the athletes I train. Coaches are starting... and it is pioneering people like Li Na and the other coaches that come over and are working with us in China from other countries, are showing that we can get a lot of success being; while also making an environment that the kids thrive in and look forward to.

I have actually begun a company in China, recently, where it is based purely on this; on the fact that we do not have to be strict in order to make a system that gets utter compliance because it is so interesting and fun. I wholeheartedly believe that if you show me a great program, but it is no fun, and you compare it to a program that is not as effective but is a ton of fun; I will take that fun program all the time. That is the one the kids are going to stick with, that is the one that they tell their friends about; that is the one that... that is the environment that we want to work in and that athletes survive the most in. (But that is another presentation.)

The elephant in the room is probably this communication thing. Everybody always asks me: how in the world do you work in China where you do not speak any Mandarin—because I went over there speaking not a word. Fortunately, I made a crucial, the great, call of... even though my initial stint over there was just going to be for the one year leading-up to the London Games, I decided that my coaching style necessitated me learning some Mandarin, so I started taking classes pretty much immediately. I think that has been a key to my longevity there; that very quickly I learned how to at least coach in Mandarin. That has kind of made all of the difference with being able to live comfortably over there and not make every single interaction you have with a Chinese person stressful.

You guys know. Being able to not have to worry about a translator every time I want to tell an athlete just *please speed up* or *please squat deeper* or *please keep your back straight* or *please keep their shoulders back and down*. If I do not have that buffer, I get quicker

communication. It also helps build relationships; where I can tell an athlete that I love their stupid socks—or whatever it is. I can make fun of them for liking the terrible Chinese music. All of that helps me build relationships. It also helps show them that I respect their culture enough to not be that guy that always is getting everything translated for them.

It also helps, as you know—speaking of communication—almost always, athletes love when you use their names. Back in the [United] States... when coaching anybody back in the States, young athletes, I would go out of my way to learn their names as quickly as possible because it is the sweetest sound to anybody’s ear: the sound of their own name. Welcome to China, where every name is three names, and you cannot abbreviate any of those name—you have got to use all three. They are gobbledygook to you when you first come there; but that is China and it is definitely one of the hurdles.

When you first go there, your cell phone will never stay in your pocket for more than about 20 or 30 seconds at a time as you walk through the weight room because you will see things that will blow your mind. Exercises that would have you fired and... they would be outlawed in the West, are done every day in China among their teams. In the United States right now in strength and conditioning circles, there are spinal experts that are all-the-rage talking about how to spare spines. They would not last a minute in China, seeing the things that we see every single day with regards to the way that the athletes, the mobility of these athletes are capable of. I mean freakish feats of strength, that are hard to imagine, are stuff that they just kind of play around with as party tricks.

This [on screen] is on a testing day, where she ends up doing 24 of these. I do not know how many I capture, but I am going to let the thing run to the end because I love the way she dismounts. If I even had this skill, it would not be close to the way I would choose to do it. This is a synchronized swimmer who now works for Cirque du Soleil—surprise, surprise. (And we are done.)

So freakish, freakish, stuff aside, you see that and you might be convinced into thinking the Chinese are way ahead of us in the way they do strength and conditioning; that is not the case. The Chinese have an extremely low training age. Like I said, they do not have YouTube, they do not have Facebook, they do not see the way that people are; they do not go to these conferences very often.

This on the left, that is the national Badminton team; that is another powerhouse that rarely loses. They do circuits

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like I remember my high school coach designing for us, that are just a bunch of exercise done kind of poorly for 30 seconds and then switch. That is not strength and conditioning programming at the US Olympic center—I just know it is not. And my other favorite on this side, you also have basketball players front-spotting by straddling each other chests on bench press, while another guy helps him out with a 90 pounds that he is trying to get up and down—it is pitiful. This is not an anomaly: this is the way the entire team spots each other—by straddling each other’s chests. It is ridiculous, but it points to the fact that the Chinese are succeeding in a ton of sports right now, almost in spite of the fact that they have archaic notions of strength and conditioning.

And please remember: the Chinese are the best in the planet at the Olympic lifts, right? At the clean-and-jerk and the snatch, they are amazing. But the guys that run the clean-and-jerk and snatch never teach that to any of the other teams. They instead let them bask in that nonsense. And you learn that they are succeeding right now in spite of this due to things like early specialization.

Early specialization has to be one of the hottest-button topics of working in China, because it is so popular to say that early specialization does not work. And I go to conferences and I listen to podcasts—while I am over there in China—of experts telling me that the worst thing... that every athlete what he needs is... that, you know, Tiger Woods is an anomaly, and that the best thing you can do for athletes is to have them play a myriad of sports and then decide, eventually, to specialize. I wish I could agree, but China is proving daily that when it comes to sports that are highly specialized, that early specialization works. I am telling you that there is a way we can do it better.

The Chinese know what Malcolm Gladwell is talking about with 10,000 hours of practice, and the myelination of your nerves so that you develop motor skills that are perfect at an early age. You get those 10,000 hours in, and then you can start building a bigger engine and just be an amazing athlete. Well that is what they’re doing; they know that.

And as... and I do not want to paint the picture: you look at the sports schools and it looks miserable. I will tell you that outside of training, most athletes are super-happy little kids—they are super happy. And I say *little* because even like the 18-year-olds are like in a state of arrested development where they seem to all love Hello Kitty and stuffed animals and Korean pop. But all these kids are normal, adjusted... pretty-normal, adjusted ones. But they come out of this early specialization that I am

telling you works. And, by the way, male or female, you tell me: it is not easy when they are that age.

There is a Chinese proverb about early specialization that all Chinese people know, and that is that: *An elephant’s tusks cannot grow out of a dog’s mouth.* We have got to find our elephants early, and from there we start training them to become the superstars of tomorrow. And it works. In these sports like Weightlifting and Gymnastics and Diving, Table Tennis—you could add Shooting to that—where it is just about technical proficiency, it is har... the Chinese are hard to beat. This is no accident.

Back when the Chinese started caring about the Olympics—which was not until the late ‘80s, early 90s, when they started caring—they sat down and said, *Where can we get the most gold medals?* Because why put a ton of money and resources into the basketball and soccer teams or baseball, when at-best they net you one medal; when you could pour all your money into these sports that net you 12-14 medals? They also made a calculated decision to go after women’s sports because the rest of the world does not care about women as much as men, and when you only want gold medals, you put money in the women’s sports.

The flip side of this, of course, is team sports, where the Chinese are awful—the Chinese are traditionally bad. It could be because of the Chinese one-child policy, that keeps them from growing-up with brothers and sisters that help them develop cooperation skills and teamwork. But, right now, the Chinese kind of do not care, but I am telling you: more and more, Western coaches are coming over. Coincidentally, I am one of those coaches now that is just starting to work with some of these teams.

If you ask me where I was last week, it was in Japan, in Nagano working with the Chinese volleyball team. The women’s Chinese volleyball team is their best team; it is their best hope for winning an Olympic gold. Last week, on Sunday—just a few days ago—they shocked the world by winning their first World Cup. They... (and I can see my mom looking at me right now) we won, but the one game we lost was to the United States—wooh! I see a lot of American flags out there; I still bleed a little red, white and blue—let’s not get this wrong. We lost to them, but fortunately we were able to beat the two teams that they lost to, to have a huge upset win.

This is the first time China has won a team sport championship in 11 years. They dominate in everything; they do not do team sports well. At least not until they got enlightened coaches like the coach of the team. The coach of the team is “Jenny” Lang Ping, she is different

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than most because she spent the Beijing Olympics coaching the United States team to a silver medal. And out of that experience, she learned the impact of her Chinese method of kind of long hours of training; but mixed with Western philosophies of physical therapy, and strength and conditioning. So she has brought us in to help them with that, to kind of create a perfect storm of training.

When I talked to the USA teams when we were on the road at the World Cup, they are always... their jaw is on the floor at the amount that the Chinese team trains. In volleyball, it is four hours in the morning, three hours in the afternoon, six days a week; and that is minimum. Two to three hours of nap in the afternoon; but it is four and three. And it is lights out; like cell phones are regulated, everything is regulated, on these girls.

It is this high volume of technical training that is the real key to Chinese dominance. Early specialization and this high volume of technical training. Like I said, the Chinese divers are doing like 100+ dives a day; that is almost twice as much as a lot of other programs that are competitive.

The Chinese will freely allow you to come to their practices; they will freely allow the United States Diving coaches to come and spend a month watching the way they train Chinese divers. And they do all the time: there is always coaches watching and athletes participating from other countries. And the Chinese do that because they know there is no way that American or any other country's athletes will put-up with this volume of training. And this level of feedback that they are getting; the high level of coaching that they get with the high volume of training. Because it is not easy for an athlete to be diving over and over again, but it is just as hard for a coach to have to be zoned-in and giving feedback and coaching-up those athletes, which the Chinese coaches do.

Unfortunately the downside to all this volume of training is that you start losing some of the passion for your sport. (Qiu Bo is in the middle there.) Qiu Bo is a superstar of Chinese Diving. If you have never heard of him, Qiu Bo during the 2011 FINA World Cup had an unprecedented 25 perfect 10s—that's ridiculous. There was a string where he just simply never lost, for years and years and years. And

Tom Daley (the smiling guy, the smiling Brit to his right, your left), Tom Daley famously said leading up to the Olympics, "It's hard to beat Qiu Bo because he's a freaking robot." To an extent, that is true: Qiu Bo is a robot. When he heard about that, Qiu Bo in a press conference said, 这只是我的工作，我不在乎—*It's just*

my job, I don't care. And you know what: it sucks to be Tom Daley, losing to that guy, because it does not feel like it is in the spirit of the Olympics, does it? To go in, completely passionless about it; it does not feel right.

But you guys did not ask me to come here and talk about how to create a passionate Olympian, you asked me to talk about gold medalists. Whereas it is a tradeoff, because Qiu Bo is a delightful, fun, silly kid, otherwise. When he gets on that platform, when he is standing up at the edge of that platform with everything on the line with more dive to seal a gold medal, I am pretty sure his heart rate is at about 65; he does not care. You ask him where that gold medal is, he will be like, *Man, I don't know. I give it to my coach, give some to my parents, some to my province; I guess I probably have one in the room.* He does not know. That is hard for us to stomach.

But to some extent, as a strength coach when I am training movement in athletes, you are probably the same way: you are trying to get your athletes, your swimmers, to a state of almost unconscious competence. Where their hand hits the water in just the right way every time without you having to scream at them to make that happen. I am doing that all the time designing drill that eventually I back off, back off, until those movements get unconscious. Well, that is a "robot"; that is what we are dealing with.

You know, we celebrate it in other ways. I love Charlie Parker—Charlie Parker, the jazz musician. He has such a great quote that says almost the same thing: *you master your instrument, you master your music, and then you forget all that bullshit and just play.* That is it. You become a robot, and he has the passion.

My girl Li Na backs me up on this too. She had a huge game early in her career, where she was like the #10 in the world and she came from sets behind to defeat Aleksandra Wozniak—I think. The big thing at the press conference was: *how did you do it; what did you think about; what was your motivation, your incentive to turn this game around and defeat Wozniak today.* She made headlines when she said "prize money". Another thing that the West said: *oh my gosh, they are just awful, these Chinese; they are robots.* And the Chinese said, *Well, duh. Why else; it's their job. We're super proud of them.* They are doing this to give money to their parents, to their province.

As tough as it is being taken out for the sports school, you are taken from a family that... and this is more about that lens that you see this through, the Chinese family is not the family that you are used to. When I poll my

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Chinese athletes and say *How many of you have ever gotten a hug from your parents?* I did this after the first time I walked-up to an athlete after she did something great and gave her a hug—which is the way I like to do things—and 17 cell phones went out and *Oh, oh my god, we have to take a... do that again, Rett, that's amazing.* Like no one hugs anybody in China; like I was going to have to propose to this poor girl after I hugged her.

So I was like, “How many of you get hugs from your parents?” Not a hand. “How many of you have ever heard your parents tell you that they love you?” *Do parents in the United States tell you that they love you?* Yeah! It is a different... it is a different dichotomy, it is a different system, there. So it is not like they leave this loving household, sometimes; they go to these sports schools and all of a sudden have 17 sisters that look out for them.

There are other problems besides the lack of passion to early specialization and voluminous training, and that is that you develop a lot of overuse injuries. We already talked about knee problems, with regards to the way the athletes are climbing the ladder. But the most prominent problems with my divers are lower-back... that is thoracic spine, but lower-back injuries, wrist injuries from hitting the water, a little bit of knee, now; and a lot of *this [physical motion]* when we start having to uncover trying to make athletes more robust. Because really, like I said, my job is mostly about just trying to make them robust and bulletproof enough to survive the technical practice that gets them so many gold medals.

So when I am looking at this, and diagnosing it, I have to always be thinking what... I have to be mirroring... I have to be always thinking: I need to give them what they want to see, which is a lot of exercises that look a lot like diving, with the exercises I know are going to protect their spine to allow them to be stronger and better able to withstand practice. So it is a mixture of rotational and anti-rotational, of extension and anti-extension, flexion and anti-flexion. So that we train their body not only to be able to use these muscles to turn violently and quickly, but also to be able to throw-on the breaks when they need to protect their lower backs. I have a couple of videos that I will show some of the stuff that we do, where you will see examples of that.

This just kind of starts with a guy that has fantastic, what we call, diaphragmatic breathing... a lot of you guys know this. But then we go into the weight room and see some of the stuff that we do. There is Qiu Bo [*on screen*].

We take boring planks and do things that make it fun and competitive. Again: I am not going to compromise on making training interesting. And so I bring hula hoops, and I teach almost every athlete to juggle, we do cup-stacking; all kinds of things to try to keep the athletes engaged. And we do more traditional things: these are more anti-rotational, where we are working on just making them able to throw on the breaks. And then mirror... coupled with some exercises that look a lot like Diving—where we are doing all kinds of right twists, piking. We take piking competitions, where we see how far we can throw that ball; sometimes how high. (We have multiple gold medalists here, by the way.) Anti-rotation stuff—coaches love this one. As well as a bunch of traditional stuff. More twisting, looking like Diving.

We use a lot of these Keiser machines. The Keiser machines are ideal because, if you have never used them before, they operate on air not traditional weights. He [*on video*] is on a Keiser right now, where we are trying to see who can get the highest power output. So we set a certain air resistance and then it measures the speed at which he is using to see how much power he can get in that pike.

The Keiser is great because the Diving team has an abject fear of anything that looks heavy. You could put a weight out and if it looks heavy and you just told them, *Hey, all you're doing is just kicking it down the track; that's all I need you to do,* they would be like *Uh, I'm out.* They think if like one centimeter of muscle hypertrophy they put on will be that much more splash in the pool. And who am I to say otherwise. So the Keiser machine then allows me to change resistance really easily without them really understanding how much 20 is as opposed to 15—it is just a little number.

For other strength coaches in the room—if there is anybody that likes strength and conditioning—here are some other stuff. Typical things like kettlebell swings, using our Keisers in sport-specific ways. We work on how they explode backward; you know, when they have to do dives going off the platforms backward as opposed to forward. Push pressing. We measure the joint angles that athletes are getting into during their descents, and we have them get strong in those joint angles, specifically. We do our... even our energy-system development needs to be a little bit jump specific.

This brings us to kind of the main section, maybe, of what you guys can learn from this. (Hopefully/maybe there is stuff before this you might have learned.) But some of the secrets from this gold-medal factory that I will go into in a little bit more detail.

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One of which I was talking with John about when I first got here is the Chinese insistence on mixing the ages of athletes. Where gold medalists like Wu Minxia are next to 17-year-old kids, training alongside them every single day. Here you see another junior diver that is training right next to... in a two-person group with Chen Ruolin, who has more gold medals than she knows what to do with; so that those young athletes can start to mirror what it looks like to be successful at the Olympic level.

And it is not just in training. They are often times roommates, they are often times at least on the same hall together, they eat meals together. You get to see... if you are a young athlete, you get to see how a woman that has won four gold medals, how she eats, every day. You get to see that. It is an important part of the Chinese philosophy of training.

There is also: sticking to fundamentals. The Chinese do hundreds of dives a day, but the first 30 of them might be something as simple as... I think that is Chen Ruolin about to just fall backward into the pool. Or sit down on their butt and fall in. Not every dive is one that is competition-worthy. I mean Wu Minxia spends an inordinate amount of time just bouncing off the end of the board and going in feet-first, every single practice.

And they do this with a ton of feedback coming from their coaching staff, even on the most simple dives. From the coaches that are sitting by the platforms to all of the televisions. Everything they do is caught on tape, and being seen at a ten-second delay, so those visually-stimulated athletes get to see exactly what the coach is talking about in his feedback.

You can look at all those coaches along the side *there*. Each one of them is assigned four different athletes that he is watching. But it rotates through, so that you are hearing that feedback on every dive from a familiar voice or a new voice. And with the guy there, who is in-charge of making sure that it goes up on the big screen.

The dryland training is probably what the Chinese coach would say is the biggest reason China has been so successful. That it is not just that they have these wonderful dryland training areas, but that they coach the hell out of it. These athletes will have like their diving sheets of what dives they will do that day. They have their 50 or 60 things that they are going to be doing in dryland training, moving from one coach to the next so that different coaches have a different eye on them and so that they can continue to grow through a bunch of different feedback.

This [on screen] is modern day. One of my... (that was Lian Jie—she is one of the Tadpoles who now looks a

lot like a girl and I feel silly). They have a lot of fun in here; the dryland training is probably the place where the athletes are allowed to cut loose the most. When they get on the diving platforms, it is all business; but here, they are a bunch of little fun kids. Little fun kids who win gold medals.

They also are becoming acutely aware of the fact that China Diving has succeeded for the last couple of decades because they are so much more technically proficient than the rest of the world. But they see that that is changing; that they are starting to lose medals to athletes that are simply more athletic than they are and are able to do dives that they cannot.

So I was at diving practice one day, and usually it is a cacophony of people diving and splashing on the springboards, on the platforms—it is madness. All of a sudden things stopped. I was like: what's going on? (But thankfully I got it on my phone. I started filming.) I come to find out, this was one of our athletes who was attempting to be the first diver every to start in a handstand, do four flips, land hands first—right, land in a dive. Four flips starting from a handstand, never been done before. So everyone stopped to watch him try this.

Ow! Yeah, that hurt—that hurts. He does not remember that; he does not remember anything about it. He does not remember the probably two-minute standing ovation he got from everyone on the pool deck as he spit out blood on the side of the pool. He had a big black bruise and did not have to train with me for a week because of that. And could not wait to try it again.

But they are continuing to push the envelope; the Chinese are set on not being complacent with how aggressive they are in the way that they are going to be diving.

The last thing (before I get to my final slide): one-hand counting. Do you guys not know about this? This falls in the category of stuff, like the metric system, that I am like: *why don't we just all know how to do this?* The Chinese can count 1 to 10 on one hand. Like *that* is not “hang loose”; that is the number 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. So simple; why isn't everyone doing this? If you guys learn nothing from this, please take home one-hand counting, so that when I decide to stop training in China I can come back and be like *Eight sets everybody. Hey, let's get seven seconds over there; Guys, six of you over here.* So much easier than *this* garbage. So one-hand counting, alright. (By the way, in case you are wondering: it is still 1, 2, 3, 4, 5—that stayed the same, even in China. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Three plus three, six—you got it; four plus four; who knows? You got it—that is 8, 9, 10. You heard it here first: one-hand counting.

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The last thing I will talk to you guys about is kind of China's future. And I tell you this, not that I think you have really any true interest in China's future but because I hope that somewhere in here you have been able to glean pieces of what they are doing that can be applied to how you are running your program or how we might evolve programs in the United States. Because, honestly, these are the prog... as foreign coaches are getting more success over in China, as we are starting to do things like win a Volleyball World Championship, have success with the Diving team, have success with some of the powerhouses and keeping them more robust; we are getting asked more and more to give presentations to the Chinese of what other advice do you have?

That is where I start talking about a future where kids are still measured for limb length, still looking for those Michael-Phelps arms. They are still looking at an early age for anthropometric measures and how big your parents are. But then they are also looking for where not only where your aptitude is but where your interest lies. And maybe, if you have a body type that is good for basketball, they allow you to start practicing basketball and volleyball and handball, and all the other sports that you might be good at.

And maybe they make sure that you have autonomy in not only just your choice of sport, but... it was like Bob [Bowman] said in the last presentation how Phelps gets to choose one exercise after the Olympics he does not have to do anymore. That is something I do with my Chinese athletes and it is unheard of in China.

But imagine that these kids that are taken out of their schools, that there is a sports psychologist that is working in the sports school that makes sure that they have time with their parents so that they grow-up better adjusted. And they are put with older athletes, so they can mirror and have a mentor to come after. And maybe, if they are great at swimming, maybe they are also exposed to other sports that might even work well with swimming. Maybe rock climbing or something else that is not completely just in the water all the time, but could be something different and something to keep them engaged. And it is a nutrition program designed to keep them fit and energetic. It is Western-styles of recovery, where we give them weeks off. And that strict yang coach is accompanied by a coach like me, or you guys, who is the yin; who is the best part of their day. Who is making sure that they feel like they are confident and they are awesome, every day.

Because that is the future of China; that is the presentation I am giving most often over there. My hope is that we also back in the West can learn something from some of the great things that they are doing. Because it is the coaches that go over there with blinders on, thinking that *I've been hired to come over here because I know everything*, are the ones that are missing-out on some of the truly amazing things the Chinese do to promote greatness.

And that is it; thank you guys.

Upcoming Clinics

(January-May 2016)

Australia

[ASCTA Convention 2016](#)

May 4-11 • Broadbeach, QLD

Hong Kong

[ASCTA International Conference 2016](#)

February 26-28 • Wan Chai

Germany

[45th DSTV Conference](#)

May 11-13 • Trier

Sweden

[3rd World Aquatic Development Conference](#)

January 7-10 • Lund

Learning How to Teach

presented by John Leonard at the 2010 ASCA World Clinic

First of all, thank you for being here late in the afternoon. It is 4:00: I expected either to have six of my closest friends in the room or six people who were mad at me. So it is nice of you all to be here. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

A couple of you asked me what this talk is going to be about. It is pretty much exactly what is on the screen. We are going to talk about teaching. I hope some of it is going to be new to some of you, and I hope some of it is going to be reminders to some of you of things you may have known in the past and forgotten. But I hope, hopefully, everything will be useful and entertaining to you. If you have questions in the middle of the talk, please just raise your hand and I will be happy to take up that question then. I will have more fun if you ask questions, and you will get what you want out of this faster if you are going to ask questions. If you ask me a question, and I know I am going to cover it a little bit later on, I am going to ask your permission to go ahead and we will cover it at that time. Otherwise, we are going to take up the questions right then and there. Fair enough to everybody?

Okay, let's do a couple of little, quick, survey things. How many of you predominantly coach 12 and Unders? Raise your hand. Most of the room. How many of you coach predominantly 13 and Overs? At least a third of the room. Alright, pretty good split. How many of you have been coaching less than five years? How many of you have been coaching between 5 and 10 years? How many have been coaching more than 10 years? How many of you are like me and older than dirt? [laughter] Okay, alright; good start.

Alright, what do I do besides working for ASCA [*the American Swimming Coaches Association*]? I have a team at home because I love coaching, and after about five years of trying to figure out how the phones work at ASCA and do all the menial tasks that it takes to figure out how to run an office, I said to my wife: *I want to go back on deck because I really don't like doing this job if I don't have some contact with kids.* So for the past twenty years in the job, I have had my own team, of one form or another; actually, three different teams. When the first couple grow up and they get a little bit older and more mature and they have too many kids and I do not want to deal with it anymore, I sell it to somebody else, move on to another pool, start a new team. I am in my third iteration of that, and right now we are a nice size: about 70 kids.

When I am in Fort Lauderdale, I coach 5:00-7:00 in the morning, and I coach between 4:00 or 5:00 and 7:00 or 7:30 at night. And who am I coaching? I am coaching novice swimmers predominantly: knee-biters from 6 or 7, up to seniors in high school. I have some of the worse high-school-aged swimmers in the country and I have a couple of the best; and I like working with all of them. I especially like working with novice swimmers and that is where this talk is coming from.

This talk is coming from how does a 62-year-old guy who's been coaching for 40 years relate to young children and how do we teach? Does that make sense to everybody? So I am doing what most of you are doing every single day that I am home in Fort Lauderdale. I absolutely love it; it is the best part of my day. It is what keeps me sane, and I am going to do it until I go permanently horizontal, okay? So that is where we are.

Let's plunge. Why are we talking about this? Don Swartz... how many people know who Don Swartz was or still know who Don Swartz is? Okay, only a handful of the greybeards. Okay. One of the great coaches of all time, people coaches of all time.

"No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care." Better figure that out right away. First thing your kids need to know is why are you here and what does it mean to me, and what do you care about because I need you to care about me. Once they know that you care, then you get the opportunity to teach well.

The corollary to that: *no one cares how much you know if you can't teach it.* So you may be one of the most knowledgeable coaches in this room, in this building, on the planet; if you cannot teach, so what? You cannot make anybody any better. Our role in life is to help make other people, or help other people get, better. So that is a lot.

John Wooden, recently deceased; the most famous coach in the planet in any sport: "I am, first and foremost, a teacher." If you do not believe that, I believe you wouldn't be in this room right now. *I am, first and foremost, a teacher.* There are some teachers we know: Jerry Holtrey, the famous Jim Counsilman, and a gentleman by the name of Bob Bowman—who I am sure all of you are familiar with. James Counsilman, one of the great teachers of time. Jerry Holtrey, quintessential (got to be the quintessential) club coach, going to be in

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the ASCA Hall of Fame—we are going to induct him tomorrow night. One of the great teachers; as most club coaches are.

12 Rules of Modern Coaching

What I am going to talk about this afternoon is 12 rules of modern coaching. Now there could be 200 rules here, there could be 4 rules here; I am picking 12 that I think are interesting.

Why am I talking about modern coaching? You all know the reason. Children are radically different. The children I coached in 1970 upstate New York in Syracuse, near the Arctic Circle, are radically different people. First of all, now they are 55-60 years-old, alright? But the second thing is they were radically different people.

How do they spend their days? They went outside in the summertime on their summer vacation. They left shortly after breakfast in the morning, said *See you, Mom*; maybe come home for lunch, maybe did not. Ran, walked, rode bikes, got into all sort of enormous trouble of the misdemeanor variety. Right? Physically active all day long, alright. At night, they had maybe ten channels of TV to watch; the generation before them had three channels of TV to watch—that was my generation. And it was hard to hear that TV with the dinosaurs stomping around outside. [laughter]

So the kids have changed; you know that. They have changed in the last 10 years. How are kids fit now? You have got two things that are fit: their tongue muscles and their thumb muscles. And nothing else—nothing else. They spend a huge percentage of their day looking at a what? At a screen of one form or another, alright. Of one form or another, it is a screen that is there in those kids' lives. Tremendous impact on how they have changed and how they need to learn.

So if we are teaching children from the '70s or the '80s or even the '90s, we are not teaching very well. And those of us who grew up in those eras have to constantly change and recognize who we are teaching today because we need to teach the children who are in front of us now, not the children who were in front of us 10, 15, 20 years ago.

However, not everything has changed. Children still have a burning desire to fit in. They have a burning desire to be part of a group and a crowd. They have a burning desire to be something bigger than themselves and more meaningful than themselves. They have a burning desire to have mastery over something, to be good at something. Young ladies develop it generally

far earlier than young men, but those things endure. They are still there, but many other things have changed.

You need to know your material, alright. You need to know what swimming is about and you need to know what the children are about. And if you are in love with coaching and not in love with children, I suggest you go sell insurance because you have got to love children. There are people in this building, there are people in our profession, there are people in this country, who coach and they love coaching but they do not love kids. Most of them will not be in it very long. So examine which it is you like.

Rule #1: If you are going to educate, educate and entertain. What does that mean? Kids today have attention span of gnats, alright? You already know that, alright. All the young people you know have very short attention spans, and the high school kids are not much better. So you had better be able to entertain as well as educate.

Your personality is everything. What you bring to the table is what captures the child's attention, and you better be willing to entertain as well as educate. But you have to do it in your own way. You have to use your style. Obviously, do not try and be somebody else; make sure you are yourself. Let me be... as good an example as I can give you, alright?

We have lots of people who are fun and games and smiles. We have people whose faces are smiles, right? Your face is constantly a smile, am I correct? Right, it never changed. It is always a smile, right? Alright, kids love that. That is wonderful, right? Your face is always a smile, right? Kids love that: laughs, grins, having a good time, okay? That is a style. Some people are loud, some people are soft; that is okay. That style works; every style can work.

I am grandfather-age—thank God not a grandfather yet, but grandfather-age. I am not kindly, gentle grandfather on the pool deck. I am harsh, alright. I am tough and I am demanding, and it works. I do not lose novice kids. They hang around forever until team gets too big and I decide I have got to leave because I do not want to deal with a big team, alright. I do not lose kids, and I am very hard, I am very demanding.

I have parents regularly, every day, who think I am harsh and other parents say *Well, you really ought to watch your kids. Your kids are having a great time.* Do not react to how you react to them; react to how your kids react to them, alright. It is not the kindly-grandfather routine at all, but it works. So my point here

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is educate and entertain within your own style. Do your own thing, it will work just fine. Be the real you.

Second piece, **Rule #2**. This comes from the gentleman who is going to be our Councilman speaker on Saturday: Steven Farr. The book is called Teaching as Leadership, and he is talking about praising effort and not talent. We will come back to the *why* in just a second.

We all know: if we are going to educate, people have to be motivated. We cannot get new information that is going to affect anybody into an unmotivated person. They have got to be motivated; they have to be ready to learn. You know that every day you have children come in who are not ready to learn into your practice, and part of our job is to engage them, catch their minds, get a couple of brain cells pointed in our direction and engage them and get them ready to learn something that day.

The Law of Repetition, second part of learning: the more we do it properly, the better learned it is going to become. (We are going to come back to that in a little bit later.)

And the last one I call the *Law of Results*: if we repeat something and we repeat something and we repeat something, and it works and it makes us happy and we feel good about it, we repeat it. Let me repeat that: if we feel good about it, we repeat it. If we do not feel good about it, we do what? We avoid it, right?

So three key laws: readiness, repetition and results. So we repeat what feels good.

Now, let me make one parenthetical comment here: coaching is about sales. No matter who you are coaching, you are selling ideas. *This is the way we get an early vertical alarm*—vertical forearm in freestyle. *This is the way we sweep our hands in backstroke*. *This is the way we do a good backstroke*.... You are selling ideas.

If you cannot sell, you cannot coach; and a critical piece of understanding sales is first you make a sale with emotion and then you back it up with logic. So when you teach, you have got to transfer what you know with emotion and then you back it up with logic.

And we go back to results: people will look at results to see if what they are learning is what they want to do. How do I feel about it? Emotional. Whether the results look like intellectual logical. Does that makes sense to everybody? Okay.

Alright: praise effort, not talent. Why? This is really interesting and it is a great point of Dr. Farr's. His point

with this, with the book, is this... I have always kind of intuitively known this but I never understood why. If we tell somebody they are smart and now we give them a set of problems, and they start pretty easy and then it is a little harder problem and then a little harder problem and a little harder problem, the people we have told are smart are going to do what? They are going to stop at the problem they cannot solve. Why? Because they do not want to put the label of being *smart* at risk.

If we tell a swimmer that they are talented, they are going to accept the challenge at step A and at step B and at step C. Then, when they do not think they can do step D, they are going to stop because they do not want to put at risk: *what happens if I get a C on this test? Oh, my god! I'm not smart anymore. What happens if I don't win this event? My god, I won't be talented anymore.*

Ladies, this is going to hit home a little bit; I do not mean it as a stinger. When you were young, if you were told *Oh, you're so pretty*, what is your identity? "Oh, I'm so pretty." Right? Which means when you are in the weight room in high school, you say: *I can't really sweat. Pretty girls don't sweat. We don't do that.* Right?

Do not praise qualities like talent or smart; praise effort. What happens when we praise effort and working hard? You learn that new stroke really, really well; you did a great job at working hard to learn it. There is nothing at risk. So when the hard problem comes along in Math, the person who is praised for effort works on that hard problem because if he fails, he screws it up, so what. He is going to go back, he is going to try another approach, because he has been praise for what? Hard work.

Makes sense to everybody? Praising people for smart, talented: not going to work. Praise people for effort, hard work, persistence, going back at things again: that is what makes great learners and great achievers. Otherwise, people stop far short of what they are capable of achieving.

Questions, comments, thoughts? Ah, there is a hand! Thank you, sir.

[audience member]: With low self-esteem athletes, does that still apply?

[Leonard]: Mr. Farr will tell you it applies to everybody. "Low self-esteem athletes" before they need anything else, they need visible proof that they actually have done something. Not somebody saying *Oh, you're so talented*, but somebody who says: *Last week you went your 10x50 and you averaged 38.4; and this week you went your 10x50 and averaged for 37.2.*

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Congratulations on your hard work; keep it up! What do you think you can do next week? Does that make sense?

Alright, **Rule #3**. Coaches all know this. What is better: external motivation or internal motivation? I think we all say *internal motivation*, right.

We have a young man on my team; his name is Sal Squartino. Sal is sort of a round guy, and he is 7 years of age. And Sal is sort of lethargic—I think would be a nice way of putting it. Alright? We once found a pulse in Sal, but it was fleeting. He is a really nice kid. His older sister... and this is hard. His older sister is the fastest girl in JOs, in our part of the county, in a mile [1500 free]. She is pretty much the opposite: she is energetic, hardworking; and Sal's sort of lethargic.

A little while back Sal's grandfather, sort of an old-style guy who wants rewards for effort and achievement and so forth, Sal's grandfather looked at him and said, "Sal, you win this next heat in the 53 and this is yours." And he pulls out a nice, crisp, brand-new hundred-dollar bill.

Now, Coach Guy and I... now I have got to tell you, Coach Guy actually coaches this kid and I just watch him, so hands off, alright; it is Coach Guy's kid. Alright? We are watching this go on and I am thinking, 'Guy is going to have a hemorrhage', alright. 'Guy is going to offend this grandpa like you wouldn't believe and he is going to go absolutely nuts and wacko.'

And, in fact, Guy takes two steps towards grandpa and then I see the wheels turning in Guy's head—he and I have worked together for 40 years, I can hear him go, alright? He takes two steps back and I know: he is getting control over this. He is just sitting there and we watch this.

It comes time for Sal's heat. Sal goes up to the blocks, does not look any different going to the blocks. Gets up on the blocks. Now, Sal's best time at this point is something over a minute in the 50m freestyle. I told you he barely had a heartbeat. [laughter] Sal dives in and takes off like somebody shoved a rocket up his butt, okay? And Sal's in the high 40s; he is like 47-48, beats his heat by 20 yard. Hits the deck—now, remember, he walked kind of lethargically over to the blocks—and comes running back at top-speed over to grandpa. "Give me the hundred! Give me the hundred!" And grandpa hands him the hundred, alright.

Now, I am looking at Guy and I am thinking, 'Everybody in my team has seen this. What do we do?' So I wandered over to grandpa, who is a horribly-old guy—he is probably my age—and I said, "Sal..." who is

Sal Senior, by the way—there is Sal II and Sal III. I said, "Sal, what are you going to give him for the next one? A new car?" And I had a big-old grin on my face like I do right now. Sal looked at me and he says, "Wrong thing, huh?" And I said, "Yup!" So now we made a joke out of it.

Does external motivation work? You know it does. And you also know how limiting it is: where do you go next with external motivation? Does the ribbon mean anything? How many of your kids take those first couple of ribbons, and they take them home and they put them on a refrigerator? A couple of weeks later, they are where? They are in the drawer, right? A couple of weeks later, they stop. And about the tenth meet they go to, they stop picking up the ribbons. They don't give a damn, right. Everybody familiar with that syndrome? External motivation is self-limiting.

What are we trying to do? Good coaching today, good teaching, we are trying to teach internal motivation. Three components of internal motivation. This, by the way... the book is called Drive [by Daniel Pink] and it is all about internal motivation. I would recommend it.

Three keys to creating internal motivation. Number one, you have got to have autonomy or freedom. The person has got to have some choices. They have got to have the choices of what their goals are; they have got to have the choices of what they are trying to achieve. They need some autonomy.

Second piece, they have got to have the feeling that they can master something; that they can become really, really good at it. You all know the ordinary 11-year-old girl loves to master anything. They are in swimming to see, to prove, that they can do something absolutely correctly. I come into the pool correctly, I get my gear bag correctly, I put it in the proper lane, I line my equipment up correctly, I do all of my drills correctly. Right? I stay properly spaced in my lane so I am nowhere near anybody else's feet. They do everything correctly and they are masters of mastery.

And the ordinary 11-year-old boy wants to come in and beat the crap out of the 11-year-old boy next to him. Right? That is all they want to do, is pound on each other and have fun. There is a big difference. A couple of years down the road, that 11-year-old boy turns 14 or 15, all of a sudden that mastery starts to emerge. Boys are just slower than girls. So mastery is the second piece.

The third piece: purpose. They want to be part of something bigger than themselves. It is internal motivation, but that is why they want team. That is why

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they want gangs, that is why they want to be part of a group: they want to be part of something bigger than themselves, just like you do and just like I do.

Those same three keys apply to whether we are internally-motivated as coaches versus whether we are externally-motivated as coaches. Or whether we are athletes learning new skills.

Okay, **Rule #4**; this comes from The Talent Code by Daniel Coyle. We are talking about the magic of the myelin sheath, which means that life is actually about correct chemistry, alright. What Daniel Coyle talks about in this book is part of the age-old law that one of the ways we learn is repetition, but he talks about why we have repetition that works. He talks about the chemical fact that every time we send a signal down a set of neurons—the more frequently we send that signal down there—we start to wrap a fatty sheath called *myelin* around that neuron. As we do that, that myelin, or that fatty sheath, acts as an insulator so that neuron does not pick up other random twitches of impulses being sent by our body. So now, all of a sudden, that nerve, that impulse, starts to move more quickly. The more myelin we lay down with good repetitions, that becomes a very easily replicable movement. Does that make sense to everybody? The myelin sheath.

Now what that means is when we teach correctly and we have a magic number of repetitions, we start laying down myelin and we get to be better swimmers. Less interference, more consistent movements, more consistent strokes. It also means, ladies and gentlemen—and you should be scared stiff of this because I am—it means that just what we have always known as coaches which is there is some magic number of strokes that we take, at which point we are not really ever going to change that child's stroke. If it is with poor technique, that kid is cooked because the myelin sheath does not go away.

So now we've established the myelin sheath. Now, can you then paper it over? When you get that child at age 12 who has had a four-five years of swimming with a bad technique, and you have changed the technique... yeah, you can. You are going to take different neurons and you are going to lay down a myelin sheath.

Now we get down to the last 25 of a 200 freestyle at the Olympic Trials at age 22, and we have got two sets of myelin sheath already laid down. What do we see happen? The same stroke flaw that we had at age 12 is there at age 22 because we still have got two equally wrapped sets of myelin sheaths down to the muscles. Makes sense to everybody?

You have got to teach right in the beginning. The most important people in American Swimming are the teachers who teach learn-to-swim. If they do a good job, our job every day is easy; if they do a poor job and the myelin sheath gets laid down on the wrong neurons, we are cooked. If you are an Age Group coach and you are not involved in learn-to-swim, you are missing the boat; get on it.

So we all know the first one: practice does not make perfect, it makes habit. So we need to be practicing, if not perfectly, damn well. Anders Ericsson, who was our Counsilman speaker last year at this clinic, has a thing that says: *10,000 hours of purposeful practice to master full performance*. 10,000 hours. If you work that out and you figure out what the ordinary swimmer's going to be doing from age 8 to about age 18, you will get to approximately 10,000 hours. It does not work out to 2,000 hours a year, obviously, because at 8&Under, they are not practicing much. But go through the entire year, figure out what an ordinary good swimmer would be doing and as we increase them out of training, they do all the time, it comes out ridiculously close to 10,000 hours, alright. So it does take ten years to make a swimmer, a masterful swimmer.

By the way, Dr. Ericsson is doing a whole lot of research right now because we have him hooked up with the USA Swimming in their database. He is doing a lot of research on Swimming, and he is very excited about it. The thing we are trying to get at is: do people learn at differential rates in Swimming? And if they do, what do their practices look like? What should a great swimming practice look like?

He would argue, and I would argue, that very few of our swimming practices as most of us run today, including myself, looks like purposeful practice. Can we improve that? Can we, with purposeful practice, get better performance with a lot less time in the water early on in life, and, therefore, have a lot more enthusiasm later in life? We do not know the answers to those things.

Sooner or later, I think with the research with USA Swimming, we are going to be able to tell from Dr. Ericsson's research what kind of practices actually work best with Age Group swimmers because, as you know, we have a gigantic number of times in improvement rates in that database.

Moving on, **Rule #5**. Let us talk about Dr. Ericsson's *purposeful practice*; what does it mean? First point, it is focused, concentrated effort. It is not happening swimming 500 free to warm up—that is not purposeful practice. 20x25 working on one thing at a time with constant feedback, that is purposeful practice.

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Accurate, understandable feedback every time you do it. A musician sits down to play a piece; they can tell right away, as soon as they start performing, when they miss a note. They do not need a teacher to tell them; they can go right back and go *Oops, that was a mistake, do it again*. The intensity of that effort is gigantic. That does not look much right now like a swimming practice, in most of our cases.

So they need purposeful practice, which consists of accurate feedback. They also need to move from mindful—thinking about every movement I am doing—to mindless—which is called: get up the blocks, turn your mind off and go race. We all know the best performances come from when we turn our conscious mind off and we are running on our subconscious. We need to be able to do that.

Three rules of purposeful practice:

1. It has got to be focused, has got to be concentrated, has got to have a huge amount of effort;
2. has got to have accurate, understandable feedback; and
3. it has got to be moving from mindful to mindless.

Think of those items. Think of those things that most human beings learn. (Maybe not to learn the violin; certainly not me, alright.) What do we do with all of those? We move from mindful to mindless.

How many of you can remember the first time you drove a car? You thought about every single thing. And today? You go from the pool to home and you do not even know you are driving. Right? The car drives itself and *Oops, I'm home. How did that happen?*

Rule #6. This really relates to modern children: when you are developing focus... which was the first part of what we just had up on the screen before. When you are developing focus, pace, rhythm and tempo is everything. Our minds absorb much faster than the ordinary person speaks. I have been told that is not true with me because I talk too fast, but for most of us, our brain goes a lot faster which means there is a lot of space in between those words for the brain to go drifting around. A lot of the children that we teach, we have that situation.

We need to teach with rhythm. We need to teach with pace, and the tempo needs to be fast. It needs to be demanding. Your speed of speaking needs to be relatively fast because their speed of comprehension is going to be fast. Now, if you are staying there on the side of the pool deck and you are trying to teach a small group—let us say 20 novices at the same time—teach them a skill and you are giving them information, that information has to be delivered in appropriate-sized bites with the appropriate-sized speed.

It needs to be small, sharp and fast. Here is one of the keys, folks: do not wait for anybody to say: *Huh? What? I did not get that*. Just go. Alright? Some of your 20 kids are not going to get it—probably 10 of them.

The second time you get down the other end of the pool... I start at this end of the pool. I am teaching freestyle; I am teaching what I call sailboat drill, alright. Sailboat drill is designed to put the weight in front of the center of buoyancy. So we are going to have 20 kids go here and my instruction's going to be *sailboat drill: 6 kicks, switch; elbow in front of the ear*, which means that this elbow is in front of this ear. So I am leaning forward and my next words are: *Ready, go!* Not *Okay, everybody got it?* It is *Ready, go!* And we go.

We go to the other end of the pool, alright. We get down here, I say, "One more time, same thing." I give them a little feedback first, by the way. So on the way down I will say, "Susie, is that your elbow, because it doesn't look like it. I can't see an elbow right now. Elbow in front of the ear. So we will go again, sailboat drill: 6 kicks, switch, elbow in front of the ear. Ready, go!" And the *ready* is not *Are you ready?*; it is a command: ready. "Ready, go!" Alright?

We get down to the other end, I am going to start my next instruction: "Alright, sailboat drill: 6 kicks, switch. Make sure you're switching from your hip and not using your hand to switch—switch from your hip." It is the shorthand. "Sailboat drill, 6-kick switch, switch from the hip. Ready, go!" And we are down here.

Now, what is happening if you are not paying attention? You are lost. It is okay for them to be lost a couple of times because it will what? It will focus the brain. Does that make sense to everybody? There is nothing wrong with a kid feeling lost. Then if you have a kid who is lost after six or seven of those, you tell everybody, "Alright, easy 100, sailboat drill, 6-kick switch. Ready, go" and you take Susie and Billy out of the water and say, "Guys, what's the problem? You're not getting this. I'm not repeating it; get on it. Watch the people in front of you; pay attention and learn."

Yes?

[audience member]: How do you handle the kids with learning/understanding issues?

[Leonard]: I put them in a different group, because that... I mean them trying to get along with a group of normal speed, not going to happen. Right? Not going to happen.

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Now I am not going to do it right away. I might force it because... well, today there are a lot of kids who are diagnosed with a lot of bullshit that has nothing to do with reality, okay. [laughter/applause] 60% of the young male population in the United States does not have ADHD, okay. They are just boys. Alright? They are just boys, and all you have got to do is say *Guys, shape up* and off you go.

I am not trying to make light of your question; I am being serious, okay. It is go-go-go until they prove they cannot handle it. When they cannot handle it, you have got to put them in a situation they can handle, alright. That makes sense to everybody?

[audience]: I just don't have that luxury because I coach them and I have got two lanes and that is it.

[Leonard]: I cannot solve it for you, sorry. That makes sense to everybody?

So pace is everything; tempo is everything.

You want to get attention? *Go!* You will get attention. Kids want to be part of the group; that is the motivation. They want to keep up; they do not want to get behind. They want to be with the rest of the group. If the rest of the group does not have to ask questions, if the rest of the group's mind is engaged, they will go. Okay?

Fast-paced learning environment, obviously promoting focus.

Rule #7: Quality and meaningful feedback is critical to success. I wanted to employ/report/talk here about the Wooden method. There was a great article in *Sports Illustrated* right after Coach Wooden died. One of the things it said in there was Coach Wooden did not make speeches; he did not even really use sentences. At practice he used a phrase here, a phrase there; short, crisp, to the point. Descriptive, evocative, get an emotion when he needed it. Quick, constant, never stopping; talking to different people all the time.

Is that a hard coaching work? You bet it is. If you signed up for *Easy Coaching 101*, go somewhere else; it does not happen in our sport. It is going to have to be hard work coaching.

Now, let us translate that to the pool. What I use, and I put a big word in here: *Socratic method*. I do not actually talk like that to anybody; I just kind of like throwing in a big word here too, so I look a little more educated than I am, okay. What that means is I ask questions.

We talk about what freestyle should look like. So when children come in to the wall, I will ask a simple, short question; it will be: "Susie, where's your elbow?" Susie knows what that means because there is a spot your elbow that is supposed to be at a given place. Or I will say, "Pete, switch from your hip." They know what that means. Short, concise. Or I will say, "Bill, what is supposed to move first: your hand or your hip?" Short questions, because if you are asking questions, people have to do what? Pay attention, right? Pay attention. They never know who is going to... who you are going to ask.

You have to set this up beforehand by giving them the language, simple language. I have got a bunch of 8-year-olds in front of me: *How are we going to swim freestyle?* Eyeballs on the bottom of the pool, body rotating, hand enters just outside the shoulder line, elbow up, index finger going in first, reach out, reach and roll. Pull fingers down, elbow up. Push through, thumb your thighs, spin your hand out. Little finger first, elbow up, hand close to the body, close to the water on recovery.

There is a whole description that I am going to teach 8 year-olds. Is that world-class freestyle? Hell no. But it will lead to it. I am not teaching world-class freestyle to 8&Under; I am teaching good stuff that will put them in position later on to do... add things on that and make and get better. Okay?

Now, when we do that, when we are asking questions, I am saying: "Is your fingers down or your fingers pointing across? Where are your fingers pointing? Where's your elbow?" Next stage of that is, I am going to add-in the fact that we are going to lift that shoulder; got to elevate the scapula and put the shoulder in the ear when we are at full extension. So I am going to ask the child: "Is your shoulder in your ear?" Does that make sense?

Alright. When we are talking about butterfly, I have got a whole other set of words for butterfly. Whole set of words for backstroke, etcetera. I make those words evocative and good pictures. We talk about butterfly timing; I use the idea of *butt-breathing*: you have got to breathe through your butt. Alright? Hands go in when the butt goes up; if you cannot breathe through your butt, you have not got your butt high enough. You have got to have butt-breathing.

Will any of you forget the words *butt-breathing* in the next two weeks? Hell no. [laughter] Do any of my 8&Unders every forget the word butt-breathing? Hell no. When I ask that question, does every single child respond *Butt-breathing!*? You bet you they do. And Mom is going: *Aggghh....* [laughter]

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Rule #8: Mindful to mindless. Every physical learning act begins as mindful. Literally, your mind is full of stuff. And then, every great physical performance is mindless; it is without thought, it is all reaction. So when we are teaching, we have got to be moving from potentials or possibilities in practice, from doing it mindfully to doing it mindlessly. We want to get to the point where we can say *Turn your brain off and go race*. State of the empty mind; freeze one to allow the subconscious to exert itself.

If that mind is full of crap, you cannot get the subconscious involved. It just says: *Uh-uh, not me. I'm not invading there. Look at all that nasty stuff. It's going to mess me up*. Your subconscious has a video playing of what your perfect race is going to be, if you have taught them properly; but it is not going to intrude as long as your conscious-mind has priority. Ask yourself those two questions, alright?

When you learned to walk, you made about 12,776 mistakes—unless you are a girl, in which case you did it the fourth time. [laughter] The point is: you did what? Nobody said *Oh, my god! I made a mistake. Oh, that's terrible*. Your parents said, “Oh, isn't that cute? It's wonderful. The child is learning to walk. Oh, great.” And that went on for any period of time, as long as it took, until you could walk. Nobody ever smacked your butt and said, “I want you to learn faster to walk.” Never happens.

It all comes from what? Trial and error, trial and error, trial and error. Right? An endless repetition until you are no longer thinking about trying to walk, trying to swim or trying to drive a car. So it has got to be a lot of good repetition.

If you get good feedback, that helps. Racing, obviously, has to be the same. Then when we are racing, we are old enough to be athletes who are racing, being mindful is going to be harmful to that final performance. But, we have to be mindful as a step on the way to getting there; we have got learn mindfully. You have got to go back to Ericsson's purposeful practice.

#9, from my old friend Yoda. Many of you are too young to remember who the hell Yoda is; it is from *Star Wars*, alright? The older folks in the room will remember that. And Yoda's quote is: “Do or not do, there is no try.”

The problem with *try* is you have got a weak excuse: *I'm trying*. So what? Everybody tries. That is what we expect; we expect you to try. You do not get any awards for trying. You get a little bit of praise, say, *Good job*.

Keep working at it. But that is not the goal. The goal is to do it; do it.

The other thing that happens with trying is that trying presupposes that at some point there is the possibility of you not trying anymore. If you want people to learn, you have to remove that possibility. You have to say: *We are going to learn this*. Now some of you are going to learn it in the next two 25s, and are some are going to learn it in the next two months, and some of you are going to learn it in the next year; but we are going to learn this. Alright?

Try is a nasty word when it comes to educating people to do things.

#10: Sales is the transfer of the emotion. Teaching is a sale. You have got to have energy, effort. You have got to create excitement, and that makes the sale to people who are new or young learners.

Folks, if you cannot be energetic when you are teaching your new, young swimmers, it is going to be really, really hard. You have got to be energetic. Again, we go back to that first one, within your own personality.

But if you are sitting, you are going to have a hard time—I pretty much know that. If you are trying to give people a drill to do, and then read the newspaper, they are watching you read the newspaper, then you can forget it. You have got to be actively-engaged with them, eyeball-to-eyeball. No matter how many kids you have got in the pool, eyeball to eyeball. They know that you care about what you are teaching, and they know that it is important to you. It is going to be, therefore, important to them.

Rule #11 most of you are already familiar with, but let me talk about it a little bit, different depth. Everybody today... remember we talked about that screen thing? Everybody is a visual learner, alright. Kids need to watch. They are not learning from talking; they are learning from watching. So you have to be careful what they are watching, that they are watching the model you want them to follow and not another model.

And those next two words are important: *age relevant*. Taking your 17-year-old in practice to do a drill, to show your 8-year-olds, is just about almost as worthless as just not doing it, because a 17-year-old to an 8-year-old looks like a what? A grown-up. That is their older brother or sister who takes them to the mall. They are a grown-up. There is no relationship between a 17-year-old body and the 8-year-old who looks at the mirror and

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says *My god, I don't look like him or her; I can't do that drill.*" And yet, sociologically, we all want to be like the big kids.

Who is a big kid? When we are 9, a big kid is 10 or 11. When we are 11, a big kid is 13. When we are 13, the big kids are 15 and 16. When you are 15 and 16, the big kids are 20. When you are 20, the big kids are 30. When you are 30, the big kids are 50. When you are 50, the big kids are 85.

When you are 62, they are Peter Daland. I watch Peter Daland to figure out how I am going to live when I am 90 years of age. Because if I can make it and look like him and act like him, I am going to be a happy dude. Does that make sense to everybody?

Be careful who you use as these models. The most powerful models you have in your team are not necessarily your best swimmers. They are the best swimmers that are within a relatively-close age category of the people you are trying to teach, because those are the ones those kids are trying to be like. So good demonstrations really matter; very little talking really matters.

Last one [**Rule #12**]: the whole thing about teaching is about purpose. You have to ask yourself what keeps you from doing an effective job of teaching. You know and I know there are a lot of school districts around the United States where the teaching is more about having kids feel good than really learning something; it is fake learning, fake teaching. You cannot fool kids—they know that. In lots of cases, they come to you expecting to be praised for minor achievements or no achievements just because they are good enough to be warm and breathing, and that is not the case. So your expectations and your purpose sets the tone for how well you are going to teach and how well they are going to learn.

You need to make your expectations and your purpose in being there, and your intent for them, absolutely clear. When that purpose is clear, everything else will flow from that. My comment to my novice kids all the time is: "We will have fun when you are not in the water and I am not standing here on the side of the pool deck teaching. When we are in the water, we are dead serious about learning new skills; that's what we're here for. There's a time for laughs, giggles and fun; and there's a time to learn. And when we get in the water, it's time to learn." That intent is absolutely crystal clear, and I would suggest to you that is the place to start when you have a group: make sure the intent is there.

Okay, a couple of final things. You already know this but it is always good to have a reminder and you cannot have too many. Your impact is absolutely enormous. After 40 years of coaching, I am still getting letters from people who are now 55 and 60 years of age and so on, saying *My god, I can't believe that I still remember this lesson that you taught me way back when.* And each of you has gotten those letter or will get them too. It is an awesome responsibility.

Casual words that come out of our mouths as coaches will be remembered by those children for the rest of their life. Therefore, the second paragraph up there, alright? It is not what you are going to take with you because not... many of us are going to take much with us. But you are going to leave behind memories, thoughts and philosophies that are going to last forever because the kids you teach are going to teach their kids, who are going to teach their kids, and it goes down through generations.

I watched two gentlemen last night before the presentation take a picture with Coach [Mark] Schubert and it was obviously important to them, and it should be—the greatest swimming coach in history. When Mark got done taking that [picture], I said, "You know, that's going to wind up a 100 years from now in somebody's trunk; and somebody's grandfather gave it to somebody else, who gave it to somebody else; and that will last in that family and it will be important for a long time." It is not the photo, folks; it is what you teach every day. It is what I teach every day. It is long-lasting; it is impactful. Sometimes it takes a hundred times to do it.

And the last secret is be just as persistent as you ask your children to be. Never give up. Sometimes it is the thousand-and-first time you tell somebody something that the message gets through.

That is all I have here for you for this afternoon. Questions? Comments? Thoughts? Please, anybody? Thank you.