

GOALS AND MOTIVATIONAL TOOLS

PHILOSOPHY OF GOALS

Setting goals is absolutely necessary if a swimmer wants to reach his/her potential. Each year we wish to reach higher, and achieve more, than in the past. That means we have to work harder and more intelligently to improve our strengths and rid ourselves of weaknesses. Here, goals will help us in two important ways.

First, goals give us a clear destination so that we can better determine what path to take in our training. Once we know what we want to achieve, we can set a plan of attack. How much practice time will be necessary? What do we need to do in practice? What meets do we attend throughout the season? What techniques do we need to improve? All these types of questions have fairly easy answers when there are clear goals to direct us.

Second, goals act as our main source of motivation. If we know exactly what we want to do, we're more likely to get up and do it. However, the goals have to be important to the individual. Each of us must have a strong personal desire to reach his/her goal. Day in and day out, individuals will face "key moments" when we can back down and take the easy way out, or tough it out using the motivation that comes from the desire to reach our goals. Because Schenectady-Saratoga is a team of champions in many ways, we will receive much more important encouragement from our teammates than would members of most other teams. This encouragement helps, but it cannot replace an individual's desire. We can only conquer our "key moments" if the goals are ours. Not a coach's, not a parent's, not a friend's, not goals that are cool, but goals that are ours individually. Not concentrating in practice, loafing a hard set, skipping practice, getting behind in school work, and not getting enough sleep are examples of mistakes that are made when a swimmer approaches a "key moment" without a real desire to reach his/her goal.

What is an appropriate goal? Any goal that an individual can achieve by extending oneself further than ever before is appropriate. The further the individual must extend, the better, as long as he/she is willing. If a goal can be reached without pushing yourself, it isn't doing its job. Remember, goals are meant to help us reach our potential. Don't be afraid to dream big. If you extend yourself and fall short of a goal, you'll still have achieved more than you would have without a difficult goal. You'll also have learned more about yourself than you would have otherwise. The more you know about yourself, the more you know about what you need to do to reach your goals for the next season.

Finally, once you've determined your goals, decide what you must do to reach those goals. Your coach will be the one who can best tell you what you will need to do. Now, you must be honest with yourself and your coaches. If you are not willing to make the

necessary sacrifices, STOP! Your goals will only be a source of frustration for you and your coaches if your desire for reaching the goals isn't there. Readjust your goals in this case and be ready to accept a lower level of achievement.

Whatever your goals are, write them down, let people know what they are, and believe that you will reach them. Don't let anyone get in the way of your achieving the goals you desire. People will put you down and try to convince you that the sacrifice isn't worth it. Almost without fail, those people have never extended themselves like you are. They don't know the joy of significant achievement, the satisfaction of a job well done, the camaraderie of a group of people that has toiled hard for similar goals. If you want to know if it is worth the sacrifices you're making to reach your goal, ask the people who have reached that goal, instead. You'll get a more positive reaction.

Remember this: Dream it, Believe it, Decide what it takes, then JUST DO IT!