

TOP TIP #1

Being an athlete is like riding a see-saw.

Much like riding a see-saw, being an athlete is a balancing act, characterized by ups and downs. No career in sport is linear, or indeed a continuous path of evenly spaced steps upwards towards goals (See TOP TIP 10).

In the athletic see-saw, the board represents your athletic performance. On one end is injury – a part of sport every athlete tries to avoid – and on the other end is peak performance – the part of sport every athlete works hard toward to achieve (Arvinen-Barrow & Clement, 2019). In swimming, particularly as you get older, achieving peak performance is typically limited to taper meets (see TOP TIP 2). The rest of the time you will ride the see-saw somewhere in between, with a goal to spend more time on the peak performance side of the board.

The base triangle is made up of three distinct, yet complementary sides: technical/tactical side, physical/biological side, and psychological/sociocultural side. Each side is equally important in maintaining a healthy balance and needs to be consciously worked on. If one side is neglected, or overworked to outweigh the other two sides, the base triangle will become lopsided (or scalene, as you have learned in geometry class 😊). A base triangle with unequal sides will disrupt balance, and will increase the likelihood of tipping over to the injury side.

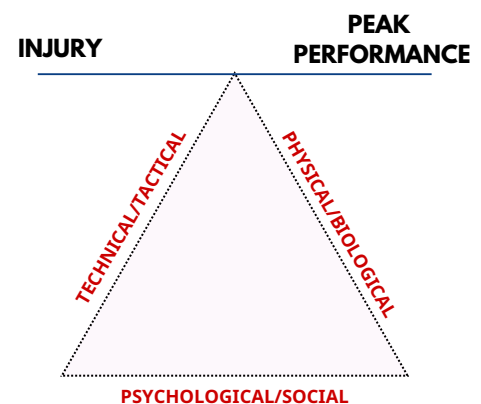
When considering your athletic performance board, ask yourself:

1. How much time do I spend on the injury side of the board? Is it because of illness? Injury? Other?
2. During a typical season, what factors help me stay on the peak performance side of the board? What factors are likely to move me towards the injury side?

When considering your athletic performance base triangle, ask yourself:

1. How much effort do I invest on my technical/tactical side? What are the areas I could improve on?
2. How much effort do I invest on my physical/biological side? What are the areas I could improve on?
3. How much effort do I invest on my psychological/sociocultural side? What are the areas I could improve on?

FIGURE: The Athletic See Saw



Examples of Key Technical/Tactical Factors in Swimming

- Swim Economy (how much energy is used to swim a certain distance).
- Swim Technique
- Stroke Efficiency (how many strokes are used to swim a certain distance).
- Race Experience
- Race Strategy
- Practice Attendance
- Practice Efficiency
- Practice Intentionality
- Coaching

Examples of Key Physical/Biological Factors in Swimming:

- Biological characteristics (e.g., age, biological sex, height, puberty)
- Physical characteristics (e.g., endurance, power, strength, maximal oxygen consumption)
- Training intensity (in and out of the pool, including muscle care)
- Fatigue and energy levels
- Sleep
- Nutrition
- Hydration

Psychological/Sociocultural Factors

- Personality (i.e., who you are as a person)
- Thoughts (e.g., your attitudes, beliefs, expectations)
- Mood and emotions (e.g., anxiety, excitement, fear, stress)
- Behaviors (including intensity and effort)
- Social interactions (including coaches, parents, teammates)
- Culture (e.g., swimming, team, training group)

