

PATRIOT PULSE

We're excited to host another prelim/final invitational at HOME this weekend! Best of luck to all our swimmers as they compete, and a huge thank you to everyone who helped make this a great experience for our swimmers and visiting teams.

Good luck to the PAC Dive Team as they travel to Schroeder in Brown Deer, WI—we can't wait to see what you accomplish!

Best of luck as well to our NIPC teams competing this weekend, with a special shout-out to our high school-level athletes heading to ODP Regionals in Dallas, TX. Go get it!

Here are a few important reminders and updates:

- **PAC Footwear:** The deadline to order is SOON, January 15th! Here is the site to purchase [PAC footwear!](#)
- **GOODBYE TEAMUNIFY.....HELLO CAPTYN!!!:** Today we are officially announcing our transition from Teamunify to CAPTYN for our team management software. We will continue to use TeamUnify until the end of our Winter season. More information will come over time but here is the timeline...
 - January 2026 New site published.
 - February 2026 Spring Registration opens on the new site!
 - April 1st 2026...Goodbye Team Unify completely.
- **Locker room Access and Security Reminder:** Locker rooms can only be accessed from the pool deck. Please enter the pool area through the southeast corner near room 5044. We've had ongoing issues with people opening locker room doors, which has unfortunately led to thefts. Do not leave personal belongings unattended in the locker room — please lock them up or bring them onto the pool deck.
- **ParentSquare:** We still have families that have not switched from GroupMe to ParentSquare. Please follow this [LINK](#), fill out the form and select all of the relevant groups you need to be a part of. This is for PARENTS and ATHLETES! If you have any questions please reach out to Coach Kevin Zakrzewski.
- **Google Calendar:** All practices are listed in our team Google Calendar. We highly recommend adding it to both your and your swimmer's phone to stay up to date with practice times and any potential schedule changes.
- **Practice like a PATRIOT Program:** Still going.....Check it out on Instagram!

The Secret to Outracing Your Competition

by Dr. Alan Goldberg//Contributor

In 1988, at the age of 17, Eric Namesnik achieved his lifelong swimming dream and qualified for the U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming in the 400-meter IM in preparation for the Seoul Olympics.

Erik had told me that before this, he had never really thought about a goal to medal at the Games. He just wanted to qualify for Trials. That had always been his "big enough why." So going into this huge meet, Erik put absolutely no pressure on himself, having already reached his dream!

Leading up to prelims, he was totally oblivious to the other seven swimmers in his heat as well as who was in any of the other heats. Feeling relaxed and confident, he ended up swimming the race of his life and the second fastest time of the morning, qualifying him as the second seed going into finals!

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1/13/26 FALL/WINTER

Support all levels and abilities to their given needs, according to our vision as a coaching staff.

Provide encouragement, knowledge, and opportunity to strive for goals, e.g. goal setting opportunities, coaches meeting with athletes to discuss goals and progress.

Build success through commitment and hard work.

Use the sports of swimming, water polo, and diving to develop growth and personal accountability

We are committed to Safe Sport and providing a safe, healthy, and positive environment for all our athletes.



Of course, between prelims and finals, swimmers always have a lot of time to think — and Namesnik, like many other athletes, made “good” use of this time! First he thought, “All I have to do is swim the same time and at 17 years old, I'm going to be on the Olympic Team!”

Then, when his excitement of that possibility started to fuel his nervousness, he started thinking about the other seven swimmers who had qualified for finals. One of these was a previous bronze medal winner. Several others were NCAA finalists in that event and all seven were older and bigger than he was.

By the time finals rolled around, he didn't want to swim against these guys, he wanted to get their autographs! He told me before finals that he was totally in awe of them. As a consequence, in finals, he swam over 3.5 seconds slower than he had in prelims! Of course, the good news here is that by the time the next Olympiad rolled around in 1992, not only did Namesnik make the team, but he came home with a silver medal in his event. And then he did the exact same thing in 1996 at the Atlanta Olympics.

However, Namesnik's story in 1988 is a classic one and representative of a very common mental mistake that swimmers frequently make when they're racing under big-meet pressure. He lost control of his focus of concentration and spent way too much time thinking about his competition!

When you, as a swimmer, allow your focus to “leave your lane” mentally either before or during your race, you'll get nervous, lose your confidence and set yourself up to choke! In fact, this is THE primary cause of swimmers getting intimidated and psyched out pre-race: Focusing on other competitors! In order to swim your best when it counts the most, you need to learn to discipline yourself to keep your focus on what YOU are doing; on the feel of YOUR movement both before and during your race!

This means that pre-race, your focus needs to be mainly on YOUR pre-race routine and on nothing and no one else. When you stretch, jump up and down, swing your legs back and forth or whatever else you do behind the blocks to loosen up, your concentration needs to be on the feel of that movement.

Similarly, during your race, your focus needs to be on what you're doing between your two lane lines, on the feel of your movement thru the water. This could be the feeling of staying long each stroke, how much water you're pulling, feeling your hips high in the water, your breathing pattern, under-waters, pace, etc.

Far too many swimmers get totally distracted by what's happening in other lanes and get too caught up concentration-wise with needing to beat their opponents or not lose to them. This causes you, as a swimmer, to begin to think too much which then takes your focus away from the feel of your movement. The instant this happens, you will tighten up and slow down.

The secret to beating specific opponents is what I call a paradox! That is, the more you focus on your competition and needing to beat them, the lower the chance there is that you will actually do that! The more you focus on executing YOUR race strategy and the feel of YOUR movement thru the water, the greater chance you'll have of beating your opponents! The way I like to break this down is as follows: 95% of your race focus needs to stay between YOUR two lane lines on the feel of your movement, and the remaining 5%, way in the background can be peripherally on your opponents.

If you really and truly want to beat certain other swimmers, do not allow them to have a lot of “air time” in your head either before or during your races. They are NOT your toughest opponent. You'll always find your toughest opponent looking back at you in the mirror, first thing in the morning!

As a Sports Performance Consultant, Dr. G works with swimmers at every level from Olympians right down to age groupers. A popular presenter at coaches clinics and clubs around the country, Dr. G specializes in helping swimmers get unstuck and swimming fast when it counts the most. Dr. G. is the author of [Swimming Fast When It Counts The Most](#), [DMTS \(Developing Mentally Tough Swimmers\)](#), and his newest mental toughness training program, [Swimming With The Competitive Edge](#).

Interested in more tips?

<https://www.competitivedge.com/mental-toughness-tips-swimming/>

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

PAC:

SWIM:

- **Jan. 16-18** - Patriot Pride Meet @HOME. Entries are closed.
- **Jan 30-Feb. 1** - RISE A+ meet at Libertyville High School. Entries are closed.
- **Feb. 6-8** - North Suburban Splash @HOME. Entries are closed.
- **Feb. 27-Mar. 1** - ISI Regionals @HOME. For qualifiers, entry deadline is Feb. 22.
- **Mar. 5-8** - ISI Senior Championships at UIC in Chicago, IL. For qualifiers, entry deadline is Mar. 1.
- **Mar. 7-8** - ISI 10 and under State Championships at Glenbrook North High School. For qualifiers, entry deadline is Mar. 1.
- **Mar. 12-15** - ISI 11-14 State Championships at the RecPlex in Pleasant Prairie, WI. For qualifiers, entry deadline is Feb. 28.

WATER POLO:

- **Jan. 17-18** - ODP Regionals in Dallas, TX.
- **Jan. 18** - 14U games at Lyons.
- **Jan. 24** - Premier level is at York.
- **Jan. 25** - Premier level is at Stevenson. Futures level is at Lyons.

DIVING:

- **Jan 17-18** - Schroeder Winter Invitational in Brown Deer, WI.

Patriot's Nutrition Corner with Coach Chandra:

PAC has prelims-finals meets over the next couple months where race-day nutrition can make a big difference in how swimmers feel and perform from the first heat to the final race. The goal is to keep energy steady, digestion comfortable, and fueling simple. Between heats, focus on easily digestible carbohydrates like fruit, applesauce, pretzels, rice cakes, or granola bars, paired with small amounts of protein if tolerated. When nerves are high and appetite is low, liquid or soft options—such as smoothies, sports drinks, or chocolate milk if tolerated—can be easier to get down. Continue sipping fluids and electrolytes throughout the meet to stay hydrated and prevent fatigue. Avoid trying new foods on race day and resist the urge to under-eat early; consistent fueling helps prevent energy crashes and keeps you strong, motivated, and ready to race.

GROUP UPDATES

SWIMMING

ELITE - Coach Kevin
kzakrzewski@d125.org

This week we take another step in our rebuilding process as we continue to build our base and volume. We will be doing A LOT of leg work. So far I have been very pleased with the focus on energy at dryland. This will definitely help set us up in the future to help build more power and speed.

PATRIOT PLUS - Coach Carolyn
cgrevers@d125.org

We are preparing for the Patriot Pride meet for this weekend with more race effort in practice. We need to focus on the little things, like starts, breakout and turns as we regain control of our speed. All PAT+ swimmers should feel confident that the training they put in over the last 3 weeks will be a great base for reaching some of our goals at this point. Good luck!

PATRIOT - Coach Kee
keehng@gmail.com

A small group of Patriot swimmers swam in the Winter League Series at Mundelein High School gaining experience with some good swims. The group will continue to focus on building up stamina and strength. To prepare for our host meet this weekend, we will include race pace and strategy training along with race details in starts, turns, and finishes.

JR PATRIOT - Coach Thomas
tschwingen@d125.org

During Jr Patriot practices this week, we will be focusing on preparing for our prelim/final meet. We'll be including everything from an event race that is critical in remembering not just to do, but to do correctly. Details during the race, like starts, finishes, fast turns, dolphin kicks off the walls, and maintaining tight streamlines, all make the difference. So, doing them correctly in practices over and over is important in perfecting them. Looking forward to a great meet!

LIL PATRIOT - Coach Megan
mosullivan@d125.org

This week we are focusing on the details that can make or break a swim. We are really pushing on the underwaters, turns, breakouts, and finishes. As a reminder please make sure your swimmer has a water bottle for practice, they really need to be staying hydrated.

WATER POLO

HS Water Polo - Coach Rose
rwimer@d125.org

HS Girls: Regular practice Schedule this week, no practice Sunday due to the Swim meet, Good Luck to our athletes competing at ODP Regionals in Dallas, TX this weekend

HS Boys: Good Luck to our athletes competing at ODP Regionals in Dallas, TX this weekend

Age Group WATER POLO:

14u games Sunday 1/18 at Lyons check schedule!

ParentSquare: Please follow this [LINK](#), fill out the form and select NIPC Age Group.

10u WATER POLO:

No Practice Sunday due to the swim meet!

ParentSquare: Please follow this [LINK](#), fill out the form and select NIPC Age Group (yes, same as age group).

PAC Social Media
INSTAGRAM:

[@patriotaquaticclub](#)
[@nipc_wp](#)
[@pac_diving](#)

FACEBOOK:

Patriot Aquatic Club -
Lincolnshire, IL

YOUTUBE CHANNELS:

Patriot Aquatic Club
Northern Illinois Polo
Club

DIVING

COMPETITIVE DIVING
Coach Jonathan - jroby@d125.org

Schroeder Winter Invite this weekend, good luck to all heading up north to compete!!!

DEVELOPMENTAL DIVING

Practice on weekdays this week (including Thursday), swim meet this weekend, so no Sunday practice.

LEARN TO DIVE

No practice this weekend, enjoy your weekend off, stay warm!

MOTIVATION OF
THE WEEK:

**"Nobody who
ever gave his
best
regretted it."**

George S. Halas