**THE ABC'S OF CHAMPIONSHIP GOAL SETTING**   
Let's say that you want to go on a road trip for your vacation. Would you just simply pack up your things, hop in the car and then take off without having a clue as to where you were going? Of course not! You would have to have a *specific destination* in mind for your travels, ***a place that you'd really like to get to***, otherwise, you'd end up spending all your vacation time driving aimlessly around. However, having the desired endpoint for your trip isn't enough to guarantee that you'll get to where you want to go. Just as important, ***you also need to have very clear directions for the specific routes all along the way*** that will eventually lead you to where you want to go.

This is how goals work for you. First, you should have a big, scary/exciting far off destination, a ***long-term goal***, that you'd *really* like to get to somewhere down the line in your swimming career. Second, you need to know what “routes” to take along the way to turn that dream into a reality. That is, you must have smaller, more immediate ***short-term goals*** that when achieved, will systematically lead you to your dream. To go as far as possible in swimming, you must learn how to effectively use both kinds of goals.

Your long-term goal is what I call a “**BIG ENOUGH WHY.**” It's the ***primary reason*** why you train and compete in the sport. Your “big why” provides you with the “fuel” or motivation to keep on keeping on through setbacks and hardships. This long-term goal can be as varied as making the Olympic team and medaling, getting a college scholarship, breaking a pool record, qualifying for Zones, or getting a AA cut.

There are two important rules to follow when picking out an effective long-term goal. The first is ownership. ***Your long-term goal must belong to you***, and not your mom, dad, or your coach. Swimming is far too difficult a sport to do for others. Second, you need to ***be sure that your long-term goal really excites you***. It needs to be ***something that you really want to achieve***. On a daily basis, your long-term goal answers the question, “Why am I doing this?” If that big goal is exciting and meaningful enough to you, then you'll have a good reason to regularly train.

If your long-term goal is the destination, then ***your short-term goals are all the roads and highways that you must travel along the way to get there***. Your short-term goals provide you with both direction and a source of ongoing motivation. Because your long-term goal may be so far off, it's easy to lose sight of your progress week to week and month to month. By setting smaller, intermediate goals that you can work on during the year and then breaking those down into even smaller monthly, weekly and daily goals, you will have a better perspective of the progress that you're actually making. The successive achievement of these short-term goals keeps your motivation to train high.

One of the important differences between your short and long-term goals is that very often, your short-term goals are more about the process while your long term goal is about the outcome. That is, the achievement of these short-term goals provides you with the “how “to reach that long-term goal.