The American Swimming Coaches Association

Developing High-Character Athletes and High-Character Teams

"Character is the basis of happiness and happiness the sanction of character."

Santayana

Don & Ron Heidary
Orinda Aquatics

Developing Leaders

Empowering Cultures

A very sincere thank you to,

The American Swimming Coaches Association,

and John Leonard

for supporting this truly invaluable message, a message that transcends swimming *and* coaching.

Preface

It is certainly not common for a swim coach to sit in a lengthy lecture or read through a handbook which has – well, nothing to do with swimming. We would argue though, and hope that these pages reveal, that this topic may very well be the most important thing of all.

We sincerely hope that through these pages, we can offer you something that can be of value to your team. We truly believe that coaches change lives in a profound way. You, as coaches, have a passion for people and human potential like no other profession.

We would ask the question, where does our (children's) leadership come from? Where does personal growth come from? Who has the ability to challenge kids to grow physically and emotionally in ways that they never thought possible? We would argue that it is you, as coaches, in your unique and influential role, providing invaluable inspiration, motivation, and guidance. Of course academics educate, business generates material gain, but athletes and their mentors explore the physical with the emotional, the perseverance and the triumph, the individual and the team.

Athletes are unique individuals who give everything they have to a demanding process – that offers no guarantee. And **while most pursuits in life are quantifiable, the personal growth through athletics is immeasurable and without limit**. And it is coaches who facilitate that process and growth. It is an honor to be a coach, and to present this to you.

What we are offering are general, age-old concepts, concepts that while simple in nature and understanding, are becoming threatened in an increasingly complex world – **a world that seems to be closing in on our youth.**

We would look at this as more of a top-down, macro view – a rising tide concept that lifts all boats, from a competitive and from a life perspective. And although it may seem divorced from athletics (as some parents and coaches might suggest), we would argue that they are inextricably tied and therefore it is not only relevant, but should be a prerequisite.

Our starting position is to help develop high-character young men and women (regardless of age or ability), and high-character athletes who will be leaders and difference-makers, here among their peers and teammates, and in the world.

As time and years go on, we become more convinced that what can and should be gained from sports, is truly invaluable and can be life-changing. For the countless hours committed, the physical, emotional, and financial commitment, and the sacrifices made, **there has to be more than a time at the end of this process.** We see these kids as not only wrapping their lives around a sport, a team, training, a process, and a coach, but in many ways, their emotional development, college path, and the person they become will be shaped as well.

In swimming, we see too many careers unravel from overzealous parents, kids obsessed with times or ego, children pulled down destructive social paths, or coaches simply looking for the next "star". These perspectives miss the big picture and they ultimately lose out in the broader areas of personal development and team environment. **Parents ask their kids who they beat in practice rather than who they helped in practice and seem to care more about their kid's time and place rather than their effort and attitude.** Too few kids want to be a character role model. And while parents like the idea, they generally want results. The process is getting lost and with it, so are the virtues of team commitment, work ethic, sacrifice, humility, and on and on.

We have tried to deeply embed some general, character-driven concepts into our program so that there has become a blending of swimmer and team, athletes and people, and of sports and growth, AND this becomes more a by-product of ***a life process.***

And as our swimmers leave the program and move into the world, we remind them, ***"all you have is who you are."***

We have maintained an *aggressive* position in this regard in all programs (summer league, high school and United States Swimming), at all levels and ages over the past thirty-five years. The teams have all been successful **and we believe the philosophical backdrop has been a critical component of that success.** It also supports the notion that ***we can have both success and culture supporting one another.***

"Success is always temporary. When all is said and done, the only thing you'll have left is your character." Vince Gill

"Every relationship in your life has the fingerprints of your character all over it." unknown

Authors note:

In a sense, this has been thirty-five years and thousands of swimmers in the making, and definitely not something that we ever felt would be expressed on paper. It is certainly hard to convey the essence of this pursuit as it is embedded in relationships and personal interaction with children and young adults on a daily basis. Our "research" has simply been a relentless motivation to bring out the best that lies within each child, both personally and athletically. To that point, there has been no *research* done, and this is simply a collection of our thoughts, beliefs, and convictions, and the culmination of what we truly believe can be a fulfilling, if not life-changing path for any child as they pursue their athletic and human potential.

This handbook has come out of a PowerPoint presentation, which will explain the formatting. Included with our comments on various topics are relevant and supporting articles, letters, and quotes. It may very well be possible that just a few pages, letters (yellow shade), articles (lavender), or quotes (beige) can change your swimmers lives, and even your own. That has certainly been the case with us.

Again, we wish you the very best and hope this provides some value to you and your swimmers.

Very sincerely, Don & Ron Heidary

Note: if you are reading this in conjunction with ASCA TV, the handbook will not follow exactly as it has been amended slightly.

"Don't compromise yourself. You are all you've got."

Janis Joplin

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Don/Ron Summary

- **Over thirty-five years of coaching experience**
  - **20 years, summer league**
    - Ran programs aggressively with discipline & integrity as a foundation
    - Technique and relationships were keys to success
    - Coached all ages (4-18)
    - Taught lessons (in-water) throughout career
  - **25 years, high school in the North Coast Section (NCS)**
    - Ron – Campolindo, Don - Miramonte
    - Focused on culture/tradition, maximizing talent
    - Bridged USS/club, high school swimming, and water polo
    - Understood teenage mindset
  - **19 Years , Orinda Aquatics (Ron & Don founded)**
  - Emphasis in all programs has been discipline, character development, technique, and supporting long-term swimming careers
  - ASCA Level 5 USS, High School
  - National winner of Positive Coaching Alliance Double-Goal Award, 2013
  - On Pacific Swimming and ASCA Board of Director's
  - Have spoken nationally and internationally to clubs and coaches
  - Gave USA Swimming on-line clinic on "Putting Character First" (2011)
- **Orinda Aquatics (has averaged 125 year-round swimmers)**
  - Organization is a 501(c)3 with a Board of Directors
  - Home pool is the Soda Aquatic Center at Campolindo High School
  - Perennial Silver Medal Club (USA Swimming Club Excellence)
  - Club Recognition – Level 4
  - A perennial top team in the Virtual Club Championships (for smaller clubs)
  - Average between 8-10 Junior National+ swimmers each year
  - Average over thirty Sectional qualifiers each year
  - Average 25-30 college swimmers (OA alum)
  - Have had virtually no coach turnover (Matt Ehrenberger has been with club since inception)
  - Ninety percent of graduates swim in college (see culture)
- **Personal**
  - Sought personal growth early: Life Spring, Course in Miracles, Conversations with God, etc.
  - Read countless books, articles, quotes (have over 1,000 articles)
  - Greatest achievement has been supporting young men and women to grow into leaders and high-character people

Success

To be clear, we as coaches are driven to be successful and to produce elite swimmers. This has consumed us throughout our career. We have come to know and experience that the character of a program will impact its performance and that, in the bigger picture of life, it is far more important. The following is a recap of achievements over the years. This is offered to illustrate that a "character-driven" culture is in no way an escape or an alternative to being "competitive", but more that it can very well be its foundation.

- **Summer League** – The Orinda-Moraga Pool Association -2,000 swimmers (OMPA), and the Contra Costa County Swim Championships. These are among the most competitive nationally.
  - 12 OMPA Championships
  - 10 County Championships

- **High School** - North Coast Section – nationally competitive
  - 19 NCS Section Championships
  - Over 50 top three NCS team finishes (of over eighty schools)
  - (OA) swimmers currently hold nine NCS Records
  - Had thirteen top ten events in the NISCA national All-American rankings in 2012 and 2013
  - 2013 season: Medley Relays – 1:30.5 (Campo), 1:32.5 (Mira), 400 Free Relay times 3:01.7 (Campo), 3:05.5 (Mira) with splits (both schools): 44, 44, 45, 45, 45, 46, 46,48
  - National Record broken – Steven Stumph (Campo)100 Breast 53.39, with Charlie Wiser (Mira) also eclipsing the record at 53.57 (top two *all-time)*
  - Current backstroke times: Men – 47.6, 50.1, 50.2, 50.4, Women – 55.4, 55.7, 55.9

- **USA Swimming**
  - Team has won Junior Nationals (West-Anchorage), Sectionals, Far Westerns, J.O.'s
  - OA had twelve current or former/collegiate swimmers at the 2008 Olympic Trials
  - Silver Medal, USA Swimming Club Excellence
  - Finished third at 2012 long course Junior Nationals (men)
  - At 2012 short-course Juniors, Steven Stumph broke the meet record in the 200 Breast at 1:55.88
  - Team consistently finishes among the top teams nationally for clubs under 150 swimmers in the VCC rankings

Culture

(75 teenagers in the Senior Group)

- **Great** environment – positive, *humble*, caring (coaches are regularly thanked after workout)
- No disrespect or bad language (ever)
- No discipline problems or improper attire
- Great attendance (no issues – they want to come)
- Very positive workout environment – a coach is not needed on deck
- Kids care deeply about each other (a family feel)
- We never travel with chaperones (and don't do bed checks) – Senior travel is all coach-run and supervised, two coaches/75 kids and have no problems (discussed later)
- No burnout (retention is near100%) – the kids love swimming
- No senior (high school) swimmer has ever left the team for competitive or coaching reasons (in a very competitive area) in 19 years
- Every swimmer (really) wants to swim in college. The history is available on the website.
    - One year the team had 35 collegiate swimmers (in total).
- Kids set up a 50 meter pool every day/morning (covers, lane lines, flags, clocks – with no coach on the deck)
- A very positive meet environment – *no* anger, negativity, ego, or behavior issues (meets and races are kept in context)
- No parent problems
- Parents/Board supports staff unconditionally
- Kids do all swim meet set-up, take-down without supervision (we don't know how)
- A very strong academic culture. Senior group GPA (of 75) is near 3.5 at top CA high schools. All swimmers are academically driven.
- Great coach/swimmer friendships (with every kid)

OA – College 2013-14

Regarding college, below is a recap of OA swimmers in collegiate swim programs (again, from a team of less that 150 swimmers) in 2013. A positive culture has without question lengthened the careers of our senior swimmers.

- 29 swimmers competed in college in 2013
- 20 had lifetime best times
- 11 of the 14 Juniors and Seniors had lifetime best times
- 3 of the 4 Seniors, and one Junior are Team Captains (Cal Poly, Washington State, Columbia, and Dartmouth)
- NCAA Champions: Cal Women's Associate Head Coach, Kristen Cunane, Emory – D3 Women's Champions
- The list below reflects colleges currently attended by OA graduates and includes 2014 signings/commitments. All are competing or will compete for these schools.

USC
Boston College
Naval Academy
U. Of Indianapolis
U. Of New Hampshire
Puget Sound
Rider
Pac Lutheran
Washington State
Hamilton
Diablo Valley

Pomona
Pitzer
U.C. Berkeley (2)
Duke
Brown
San Diego State
Tufts (2)
Emory (2)
Middlebury
Notre Dame
Fordham

Dartmouth
Cal Poly (4)
Claremont McKenna
UC Santa Barbara (3)
Lewis & Clark
Carleton
Williams
Grinnell
Georgetown
Columbia
Franklin & Marshall

"The happiest people I know are those who find purpose and meaning pursuing a grander vision of a good measured life in terms of worthiness, not net worth. Virtue is not a tactic. It is a life philosophy." Michael Josephson

Before beginning a dialogue on character in athletes and teams, it is important to explore the following questions. In today's society and athletic environment, the answers to these questions have been difficult to articulate – by parents, coaches, and athletes.

What makes a great (excluding talent) swimmer?
What makes a great athlete?
What makes a great teammate?
What makes a great team?
What makes a great culture?
What makes a great person?

And why are these so seemingly illusive? We pose these questions to our swimmers, and help to define them.

Of the thousands of (high school) programs, why do the vast majority under-produce?

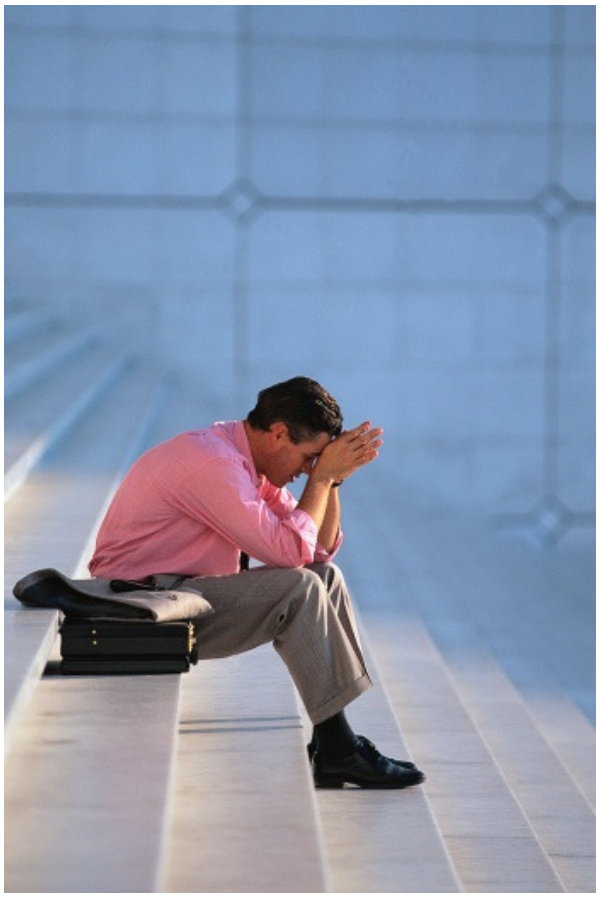
Why is a lack of discipline & respect such a prevalent theme?

The following pages reveal cultures at all levels of competition, with an absence of character to some degree. While some people may suggest that these are isolated examples, we would argue that they are becoming all too common and trending to an epidemic in youth sports.

These incidents should never happen.

Everyone loses –

athletes, teammates, coaches, parents, administrators



Olympic "Toxic Environment"

Their London Olympics swimming team was beset by "culturally toxic incidents" including misuse of prescription drugs and bullying that highlighted a failure of culture and leadership, a report said. A culture existed within the team which "did not appear to assist or support high-level performance for most people."

"There were enough culturally toxic incidents across enough team members that breached agreements (such as getting drunk, misuse of prescription drugs, breaching curfews, deceit, bullying) to warrant a strong, collective leadership response that included coaches, staff and the swimmers," the report said. "No such collective action was taken."

The review recommended creating an ethical framework of what the (Olympic) team stands for, updating internal codes of conduct and implementing better processes for managing issues around standards and expectations.

"It has been a time of reflection and review and a time to be honest and open about how we can take the right steps towards future success. Before we look at winning gold medals, we want to win back the admiration of the nation."

Disciplinary issues affected the team's unity in London and some swimmers were pursuing their own goals rather than those of the squad, the news paper reported, and that some swimmers behaved more like schoolboys than Olympians at a pre-games camp. (no team concept)

"Poor behavior and disrespect within the team were not regulated or resisted strongly by other team members, and it was left unchecked or without consequence by staff and coaches on a number of occasions," the Review said. (no leadership)

This is not an "Olympic" issue. It is a club issue, an age-group issue, a high school issue, and a societal issue.

Collegiate environment – 2003 letter from an OA graduate

Ron,

I know I emailed you last night, but I have new news. I am not going to swim here. The main reason is because of the team. In just the five short days I have been here with the team, I have been totally turned off from swimming by the overall demeanor and attitude of the team. In the freshman class, while there are some wonderful guys, most of the freshmen are arrogant, cocky, obnoxious, and rude.

They also seem to have no interest in academics and learning, even though they are attending one of the finest universities in the nation. The guys talk about partying constantly and all the different drinks they know how to mix, and trying to get with girls even if the girls are drunk. Maybe I am making a hasty decision, but the fact that I feel very strongly about this even though I have only known the guys for five days scares me very much.

Apart from them all having negative, even repulsive attitudes, they are cliquish in what they do outside of swim practice. They always move in packs. It is all well and good that they enjoy each other's company, but it goes beyond that. It is either you're in or you're out of any kind of activity.

I now have a huge appreciation for the quality of all the kids' characters and attitudes concerning life and swimming on our team. I now also know that the personal and responsible coaching that you conduct is far from the norm, including a highly respected, competitive intercollegiate program. I want you, the other coaches, the swimmers, all the parents, and anyone else involved to know that what they are doing is truly something special. I am going to miss swimming terribly, and this break is going to make me miss you and the rest of the team terribly also.

Good luck with the team this year, see you at Thanksgiving.

A family visit/college recruit trip

We as a family really liked the school and had a very good impression with everything on the first day. On the second day of the visit we (the parents) toured the campus while our son joined the team for a social function. As soon as he entered the room he saw more than fifty bottles of beer and a beer fountain. He was shocked and did not know how to react since he and his parents had to sign some paperwork regarding no use of alcohol or drugs during the recruit weekend. He was in disbelief in seeing how the team provided the athlete/recruits with so much beer. He left the room and made a decision to not attend that school (a top school).

Collegiate Issues

Hi there, I hope all is well! I just had to share this with you both. You may or may not have heard that several players on our child's college team were released for Code of Conduct violations (quite serious and multiple offenses). While we were driving home the other night, our youngest child was asking why the players made the choices they made, with such serious consequence, and their sports careers and the team so deeply affected. We, as parents see how critical values are in our children. With gratitude.

Hi Coach,

Something I want to run by you if you get a chance: The "National" group here has had a plague of discipline problems and it has come to a head. In general, the problems with the group are:

- lack of leadership
- general lack of respect
- attendance issues
- very little team concept
- Immaturity

What should we do now?

The most moral guy on a Division 1 collegiate team (and the fastest) is not selected as a captain because <u>he</u> is the (character) outcast.

High School Environment – Fantasy Sex League

- Led by team captains
- Drafting girls to have sex with
- Part of a "bonding experience"
- Involved alcohol and pressure
- Teammates intimidated to "not tell"

Is this what parents hoped for when they started their kids in sports, and drove, paid, watched, hoped, cried, waited?

Is this the end result of their athletic evolution?

Note from a club swimmer (a daily dilemma)

Coach,

I wanted to write to you briefly regarding a dilemma I had today. I'm practicing with the National Team.

We have been running for dry land and many/most of the guys are cutting the run short or not running at all.

Today, I didn't want to have to run by myself, and I was tired and a little frustrated, so I went along with others and did the shorter run. I didn't feel right about it and was wondering if I should have just finished it myself.

I'm already an oddball in the group for not drinking, hazing, and participating in other activities that I consider to be destructive. But for some reason I still wanted to not get in trouble with these guys, because I still consider them to be my friends!

I felt as if I had to choose between choosing the path of integrity/pursuing maximum athletic success (following coach's directions) and choosing the path of social acceptance (in effect abusing the coach's trust). The way I framed this dilemma made the choice kind of obvious, but somehow I ended up doing neither.

Do you have any advice/thoughts on choosing between the two paths? It makes me sad that such a choice even has to be made.

(not confined to sports)

Why I left the Investment Bank

- Toxic environment
- Motivated by greed and money
- Integrity is gone
- Little concern for value or the customer

Note: Most ethics courses in Business Schools begin after the financial crisis.

Someone has to draw the line in the sand.

And coaches are the ones to do it.

We would also make an argument that had these individuals been groomed by role models in a character-driven culture, most if not all of these, would never have occurred.

Your line

What areas can you/will you, draw a line in the sand on with regards to developing a stronger character culture in your program?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Can your commitment be to lives and times, to happiness and performance?

Can a child's life center around the need to make a difference vs. the need for social acceptance?

Can these transfer into a better athlete and a better team?

The answer to all is, yes.

“Integrity has no need of rules.”

Albert Camus

“My life is my message.”

Gandhi

“Our lives teach us who we are.”

Salman Rushdie

“Character is what you are in the dark.”

Dwight Moody

Cute kid!

Who and what will he become?

- Bully?
- Drug addict/alcoholic?
- A discipline problem?
- Social elite?
- Apathetic/lazy – path of least resistance?
- Average? Underachieving?
- A non-athlete?
- A great "athlete"?
- *A great leader/a difference maker?*
- A collegiate athlete?
- A collegiate leader?
- An inspiration?
- An Olympian (AND an inspiration)!

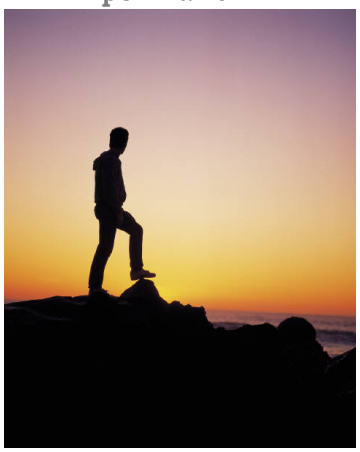
What will be the driving influence(s)?

- Luck
- Destiny
- Self-esteem
- Parents
- Siblings
- Social friends
- Community
- Teachers
- Teammates
- Coaches
- Team culture

Introductory/Macro View

"Come to the edge, He said.
They said, we are afraid.
Come to the edge, He said.
They came.
He pushed them,
and they flew."

Apollinaire



We would equate this to the "edge" of humility, work ethic, sacrifice, compassion, and virtues that become a leap of faith for many teenagers.

"Wisdom is knowing what to do, and virtue is doing it."

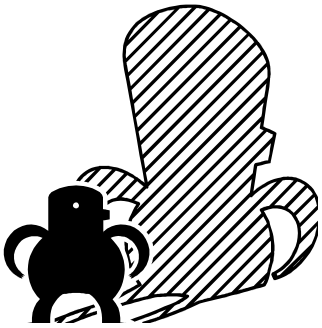
D.S. Jordan

Most kids know…

Top Down

This is a top-down, macro view of coaching. While a micro, or bottom-up approach, would simply equate to "times", this is more a rising tide concept that lifts all boats, from both a *competitive* and from a *life* perspective.

"It is good to have an end to journey toward, but it is the journey that matters, in the end." U. LeGuin



It would equate to:

The better the person
The better the athlete
The better the swimmer
The better the teammate
The better the culture

This formula is irrefutable.

So, it is not a coaching philosophy.
It is a life philosophy.

How can you be a high-character athlete without being a high-character person?

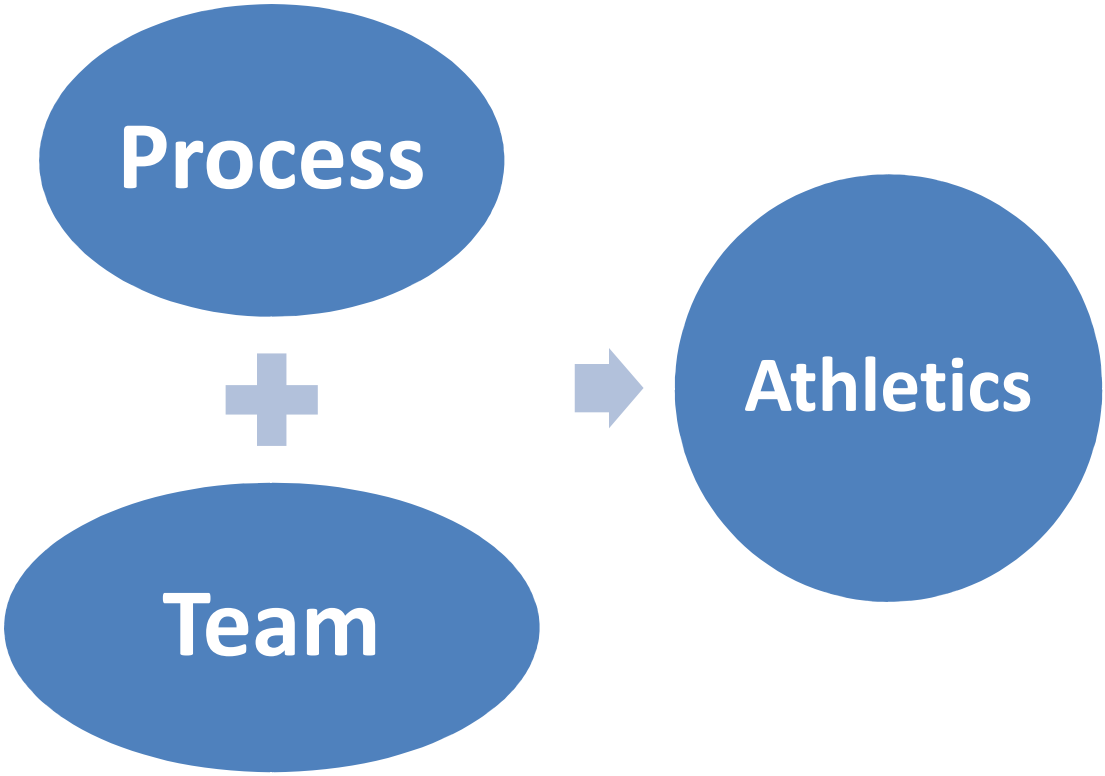
How can you be a high-character team without high-character people/interaction?

Name one business, college, OR TEAM that does not want character, humility, work ethic, team commitment, and to implicitly trust its members.

"It's just lip service." said one coach about their Mission Statement.

A Simple Formula

Before we move on to social issues, we would like to present a very simple and succinct view of the athletic process. Sports can and should break down into a simple formula. The athletic process is really based on two main things, 1) performing the activity (the sport), and, 2) the people you perform it with (the team). Far too many kids, regardless of age or ability, make a commitment to *neither*. This must be understood and embraced at the outset. This will become the platform to build a character culture from.



Nowhere in this formula is there room for ego, disrespect, apathy, laziness, (*or drugs and alcohol*), which only plague performance, careers, teams, and cultures.

Implied Consent

Once this is understood, and a child commits to the process and the team, there should be a few implied elements (stated below). In an ideal world, every athlete embraces them, *and* the privilege of being an athlete. We explain these to every new member.

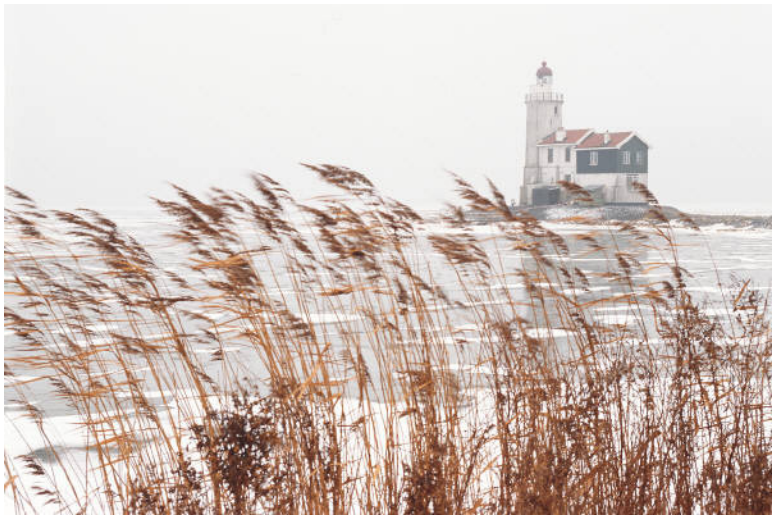
Inherent in the athletic process – *make a choice.* If you sign up – you have *made* the choice.

- Embrace the work
- Commit to the team
- Act with integrity
- Add value

With these things, EVERYTHING is EASY

Without them, EVERYTHING will be a CHALLENGE

The Societal Headwind



From the article; *Why is it so Hard to Become a better Person*,

"The sad irony is that while goodness is the thing that we most want from everyone else, few want it most for themselves."

Challenge the (societal) Status Quo

Key to understand…

Where in our culture do we celebrate character and humility? We would argue that society is anything but character based.

How does one become humble, self-confident, positive, and selfless when marketing tells us that we are not good enough and society tells us success is the only measure of achievement? It is either self-doubt (marketing) or EGO (winning to be fulfilled), and neither support a healthy athlete or team.

Why are so many teens depressed? Were they at 6, 8, or 10?

Teachers and coaches are "noble", but…

- Pro athletes are idolized (with so many ego- driven, materialistic, and poor role models)
- Wall Street executives are envied for their money, power, etc. (not ethics)
- Celebrities are worshipped for their popularity and lifestyle (how many are really happy?)
- Why are there so many character breakdowns in politics, business, etc?
- How many teen magazines are character, or service based vs. fashion, or appearance based?
- How many character-based video games would sell?
- How many kids get into a great college because of character, compassion, or leadership?

- How many TV Shows are character-based vs. attitude, materialism, sex, promiscuity, language, alcohol, appearance, etc.

- And with Reality TV, it is conflict that sells

- "the EDGIER THE BETTER" says a popular TV network when they orchestrated 57 "F bombs" during a prime time awards show. The goal, "bring in the younger viewers".

- Even music (the language and the message) "explicit" vs. "clean" purchased at10-1 (if that!)

- Musicians as role models?
  - One was asked to pull his saggy pants up prior to boarding a plane, His response, "F – that".

- Pro Athlete – "grows up" (at age 28). One of the greatest football players admits that he "had it all wrong", that after spending his career focusing on himself, he now realizes it is about the team. This could have happened when he was 10!

Recent News Articles

This is a short list of articles from our local paper.
As a society, we almost become numb to it.

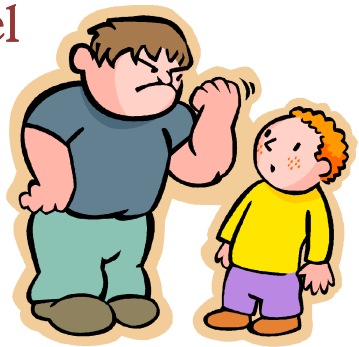
- The Demise of Guys: On-line porn and video games
- Using Drugs to Get an Edge in high school
- Theft, vandalism at (upscale) middle school
- (middle) School a Dangerous Place, Teachers Say
- Parents Defend Pranks and Vandalism
- Drug Dogs to Patrol high School
- Teen Marijuana on Rise
- Water bottles banned at middle school
- Three abuse cases in local paper in one day
- Three-year-old obsessed with looks
- A superintendant and twelve teachers indicted on cash for grades scam

The Destructive Model in Today's Teen World

We talk to kids about this model and how "socially aggressive" kids can dominate and destroy a culture. One concept that has to change is that 95% of the kids (who do the right thing) will protect the few who care nothing about the well-being of the group or team. They do not want to be a "snitch" and lose their friendship or respect! (see quotes next page)

- Social Elite (leaders/bullies)
  - It is their identity
  - Live by reputation alone
  - Must push the envelope to perpetuate
- Those who aspire to be, will follow the social elite
- Draws in the vulnerable
- Intimidate/threaten the weak

- Again, the destructive few are protected by the majority, who know it is wrong and watch programs and people unravel

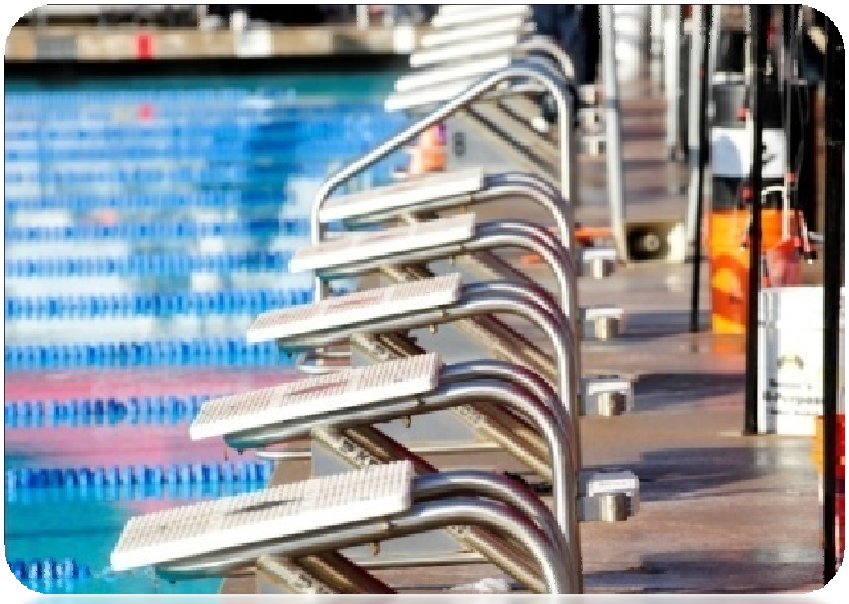


"The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing. Albert Einstein

Strong character is not derived from not doing wrong but rather from actually doing right.

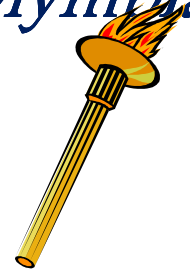
The Urantia Book

In an age where media and celebrity seem to create more false identities than products or music, we ask them to not follow the masses or the trends; but their heart and their conscience. *DR*



Quintessential Questions

- Why can't the most successful people be the most humble, and appreciative?
- Why can't athletes instinctively put the team first and look to ensure the success of others even ahead of their own?
- Why can't kids welcome and embrace every challenge?
- Why can't kids' best friends be their parents?
- *And, why can't a child dream of being a leader as well as an Olympian?*



The Teen Landscape

- Facebook obsession/depression
- Video games (time/content)
- Destructive TV shows (Jersey Shore, Skins, Bad Girls Club, Love in the Wild, etc.)
- Texting
- Sexting
- Tweeting
- Twerking (sex dance)
- Deck changing
- Drugs
- Prescription drugs
- Alcohol
- Language (BAD)
- Cheating in school/academic pressure
- Music (language, message)
- Social Pressure
- Media/Marketing – you're not good enough
- Parental Pressure (too hard)
- Overprotective parents (too easy)
- Depression, anxiety, self-esteem
- Bullying
- Struggle for acceptance
- Need for "things" (to be happy)

It would be possible for a teenager to deal with *most* of these in a day.

Swaziland, Africa

Has no need for character development.

What can we learn?

- No entitlement
- No materialism
- No false idols
- *Nothing* is easy
- Appreciate everything

How Not to Raise a Deluded Narcissist

By Dr. Keith Ablow

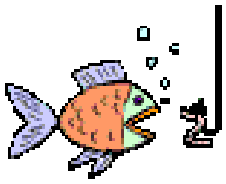
As I recently wrote, forces of technology and media are conspiring to deprive children, teenagers, and young adults of their genuine feelings, intentions, and empathy — essentially, making them trade in reality for logging into a Facebook fantasy of having hundreds or thousands of friends, launching a flurry of narcissistic Tweets about their comings and goings, playing at being pro athletes on Xbox and watching "reality TV" shows about people just like them, who are faking being real.

This prepares a whole generation to join our Entitlement Nation, where untold millions don't believe in their genuine abilities anymore, and don't even know how to go about finding them, because there is no GPS system that will map out a path to self-esteem and no app that tests your courage.

What the Heck is Water?

"Two young fish swam by an older fish. As the older fish passed, he said, "Hey boys, how's the water?" One of the younger fish looked at the other and said, *"what the heck is water?"*

Unknown



Do most kids even know what their culture is and what it represents?
Or when they're hooked?

Life Skills and Character?

Has society blurred the lines? Yes.

- Good life skills vs. questionable character –
  - One has good time management skills but has an ego
  - One has a strong work ethic but is highly disrespectful
  - One has strong academics but uses drugs/alcohol
- Good character vs. questionable life skills?
  - High integrity but poor work ethic
- Can you differentiate between:
  - A good athlete
  - A good person
  - Good social decisions

- Can the kids (see through contradictions)?
  - Social elite (but use alcohol), good GPA (but cheats), athletic success (without effort)
- Can the parents?
  - GPA, success, achievement, perception, college admission

"Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value."

A. Einstein

Are we raising resumes or high-character individuals?

Two sides of the same coin

(back to life skills or character)

The *resume* of a high school athlete

- 3.8 GPA
- Eagle Scout
- School Officer
- Popular
- Volunteer
- All-American athlete
- Polite and respectful in public

The *character* of the same high school athlete

- Heavy drug/alcohol use (and thinks it is OK) *on campus/at competition (a "train wreck")*
- Lies to parents, coaches
- Cheats in school
- Self-absorbed/self-destructive
- Drove kids while under the influence
- Losing identity/needs acceptance

How Many Parents Even Know if Their Child….
(or want to know)

Really works hard?

Really cares?

Respects others?

Is at risk?

Has any leadership skills?

Deals with adversity?

We , as coaches, do.
We quite possibly have the most critical information as to their child's overall well-being.

An all too common story

(same person)

- A Great swimmer
  - Innately talented
- An average athlete
  - Poor attendance
  - Poor work ethic
  - Little focus
  - Comes late
  - Just cares about winning

- A *bad* teammate
  - Doesn't help
  - Doesn't cheer
  - Doesn't mentor or lead (in a positive direction)
  - Doesn't really care

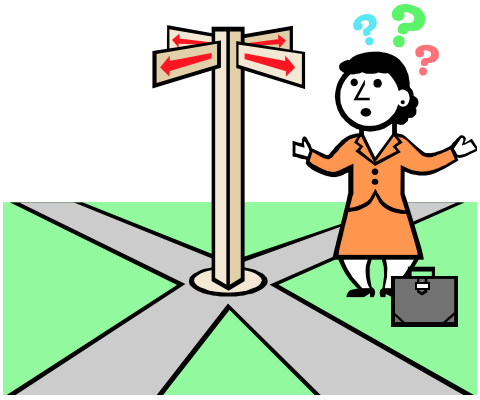
"Prepare the child
for the path,
not the path
for the child."

Unknown

In an increasingly protective parent society, this becomes much harder. And parents may unwittingly contribute to the problem.

Why Pursue This

as a coach?



Develop an Olympian and you are acclaimed.
Develop 100 high-character, inspirational athletes/leaders, and you are…

From an article: Life in Perspective, Contra Costa Times

"Today's teenagers are the future leaders in business and politics. People in such positions of authority encounter ethical dilemmas on an even grander scale. It is imperative for teens to learn about ethics and wise decision-making today in order to equip themselves for tomorrow."

Parent Survey?

Do parents really care?

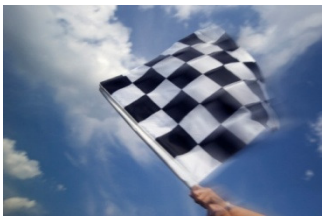
If you asked parents why their children are doing sports, or what they hope their children would get from it, *how many would say…?*

- Work ethic
- Humility
- Perseverance
- Sacrifice
- Team (first) attitude

(the most important life virtues)

Parental Priorities?

Parents and kids have become almost singularly performance-driven and not process-driven.



- Grades/scores
- Times (rec, high school, "cuts")
- Status/standing (groups, jobs)

The challenge is to sell the benefits of the process (and the real growth).

Are Parents Setting Kids Up for Failure by Pushing Too Hard for Success? By Lylah M. Alphonse,Yahoo!

Are parents harming kids by focusing on the wrong definition of success? No matter your socioeconomic status, as parents you want your kids to have a better life than you do. But instead of launching a generation of happy young adults who feel driven to succeed, parents who are hyper-focused on doing everything "right" have created a country full of kids who are stressed-out, burned-out, and depressed. According to psychologist and author Madeline Levine, "Our current version of success is a failure."

In her new book, "Teach Your Children Well: Parenting for Authentic Success," Levine says that parents are preoccupied with "a narrow and shortsighted vision of success," and that we rely on our kids to "provide status and meaning in our own lives." It's a harmful combination, weighing kids down with serious issues -- "stress, exhaustion, depression, anxiety, poor coping skills, and unhealthy reliance on others for support and direction, and a weak sense of self," Levine says -- when we should be trying to teach them to be resilient and independent if we really want them to succeed in life.

When people are too caught up in finding the "right" way to parent, they can end up being physically present -- perhaps too much so -- but emotionally disengaged. "While you think you're giving your kids everything, they often think you are bored, pushy, and completely oblivious to their real needs," Levine writes. A child's ability to succeed in life doesn't necessarily correlate to a parent's well-intentioned efforts anyway, says Bryan Caplan.

"Today's typical parents strive to mentally stimulate their children and struggle to protect their brains from being turned to mush by television and video games" pushing them instead to strive for academic success, he told Yahoo! Shine. "Yet by adulthood, the fruit of parents' labor is practically invisible. Children who grew up in enriched homes are no smarter than they would have been if they'd grown up in average homes."

But as parents push kids to succeed -- and try too hard to shield them from failure --their kids are soaking up the stress and increasingly unable to do anything without their parents' input.

"In the name of love, we parents have gutted our kids' sense of self-reliance and independence," David Arthur Code, author of "Kids Pick Up On Everything," told Yahoo! Shine in an interview. "It's as if we run out in front of our children, removing every obstacle from their path, or else showering them with positive reinforcement if they stumble. Sure, they feel safe and protected and loved -- for now -- but they never learn how to confront failures in childhood when the stakes are low, so when they become adults, they fold like a house of cards at the first adversity."

Where does character fit into coaching?

- You don't get paid for it.
- You don't get (professionally) recognized for it.
- You will get push-back early in the process from parents and the "ruling class."
- The time you commit to it will cut into pure coaching.
- For the most part, colleges don't recruit character.

So who really cares, and at what level does it really make a difference?

Because…

Character is more important than success.

People are more important than athletes, &

Life is more important than sports.

(and) "Character is the only secure foundation of the state."

Lyndon Johnson

And the real benefit may very well be in the unseen…

- Self-esteem
- Self-awareness
- Accountability
- Connectedness
- Improved academics
- Saying no to a drug, alcohol, or sex introduction
- Choosing role models over social models
- A better/healthier family life
- A more productive college experience
- Being a better employee
- Dealing with a life crisis
- Becoming a true leader
- Making a difference in the lives of others

And quite possibly in becoming a better swimmer and teammate.

And how does it translate into a better team?

- More drill focus/better technique
- Better warm-up/warm-down
- On time
- Positive in the locker room
- Train harder
- Train with focus
- Positive workout environment
- Better meet culture/team focus
- More positive travel
- Better coach-swimmer relationship

Why it is so Vital

And Why you are so important

Who can really influence kids in such a significant way?

- Teachers – 1 hour a day, 1 year, limited interaction
- Parents – in high school they rarely see their kids. And with kids now having all the media content in the world in the palm of their hands, parental supervision is limited.
- Coaches – 2 to 4 hours a day, six days a week, for years

Years ago, I was having a conversation with a parent about my frustrations with social pressures and I said, "I don't know how much longer I can do this." And she said, *"You can't quit."* *"Don't you understand, you are the last line of defense for these kids."*

She is right. We are the last line of defense to help these kids. That is our great role.

"Character is doing the right thing when nobody's looking."
unknown

"There are too many people who think that the only thing that's right is to get by, and the only thing that's wrong is to get caught." ~J.C. Watts

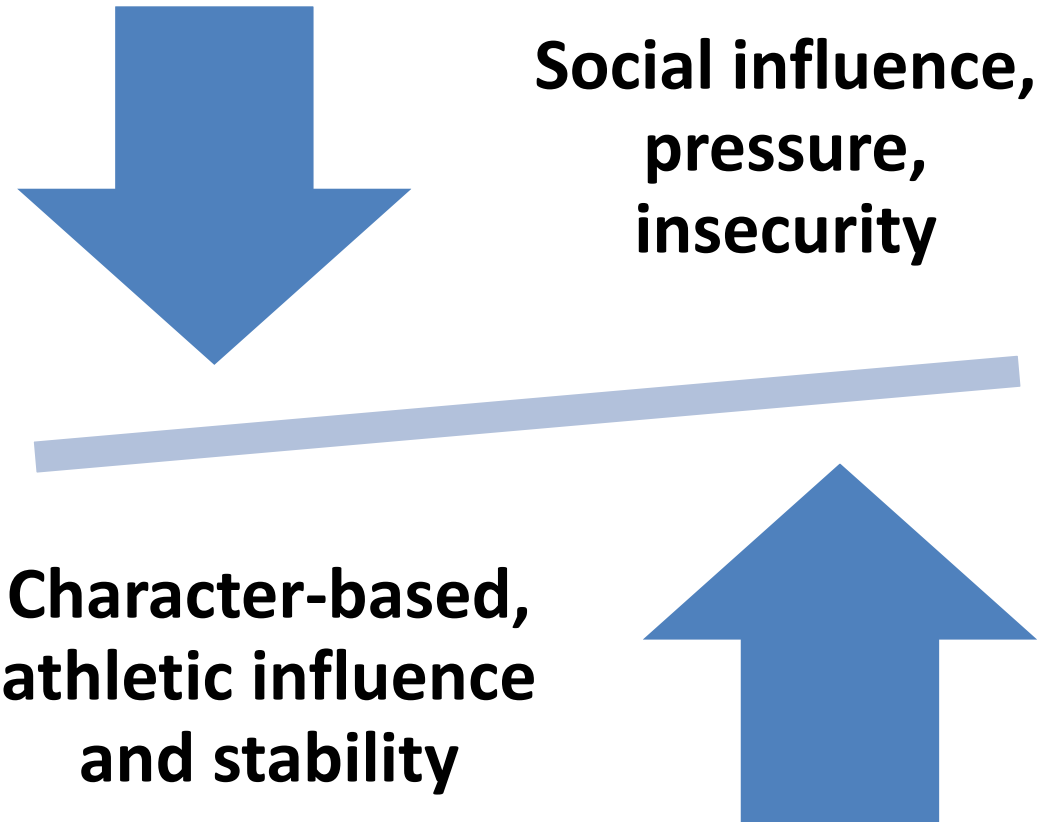
"Don't try to be different. Just be good. To be good is different enough." Arthur Freed

Quotes on Children and Purpose

by Margaret Mead

- "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
- "Children must be taught how to think, not what to think."
- "There is no greater insight into the future than recognizing... when we save our children, we save ourselves."

A Stabilizing Force



A disciplined, life-oriented process of accountability through athletics may be the only avenue to combat the pressures and forces of society and teen life, and you, as coaches are the facilitators of that process.

Mitigating "Burnout"

From *Swimming Science* –

Why Do Young Swimmers Burnout?

Posted: 27 May 2013 12:30 AM PDT

Why Do Young Swimmers Burnout?

Swimming thrives on a "survivalist" culture. Those who survive to senior age group, college, or professional swimming have emerged via survival-of-the-fittest. But many swimmers voluntarily drop out years before they're cut from a higher level. I don't have any statistics comparing swim dropout rates to other sports, but there's no doubt that early dropouts can be problematic for all levels.

Unfortunately, many promising young swimmers leave the sport on negative terms and have been soured by their experience. Dropouts usually are not seen as a failure of the system, but rather as validation to coaches that the swimmer dropping out lacked the mental fortitude to continue in the sport. There's undoubtedly some merit in that conclusion as not everyone is meant for the elite levels. But it would be delusional to think the swimming institution is not at least partially responsible for driving away young talent.

CONCLUSION

Unlike many football players or basketball players who won't retire "until they rip the uniform off my back", a more common refrain in swimming is swimmers never wanting to see a pool again. It's not an easy problem to solve. And if you have the answer, I'm sure USA Swimming would pay handsomely for it. This simplest approach is to admit we can all do a little better, which starts with an honest look at why many swimmers leave the sport long before reaching their potential.

By Allan Phillips. Allan and his wife Katherine are heavily involved in the strength and conditioning community, for more information refer to Pike Athletics.

The easiest way to reduce or eliminate burnout is through a positive culture and team environment. Yes, consistent improvement will keep kids in the sport, but it does not always keep them happy, and improvement is not linear. Young athletes need to connect with something bigger and something meaningful, and have strong relationships based on *respect.*

Notes from coaches

I took “Character First” values as part of my purpose in life. It has given me a clear direction in my coaching career and given a different perspective in my life. I am very grateful for this changing my life. I hope someday, we can meet each other so I can hear about your experiences and challenges.

I have found so much more meaning, direction, and purpose in coaching, and that has translated into feeling far more happiness and fulfillment in my life. For all of that, I offer my heartfelt thanks.

Note from a coach March 2013

Hi Ron and Don,

Thanks for letting me visit your team and for spending time with me talking about your team's culture and values. It is inspiring to see 50+ teenagers (at 5:30 in the morning) behaving respectfully, doing what needs to be done, and having pleasant attitudes. It is also inspiring to see how much you enjoy being around the kids and how much they enjoy being around you. I am getting a lot out of the ASCA Life Skills course notebook you gave me! Thanks for being models of character for your swimmers and for the swimming community. We hope to improve the culture on our team and we are using OA as a template for what is possible. Looking forward to seeing you both at meets.

A Swimmers Note/Thank You

Five years later

(this swimmer was a challenge at times, and had five Olympic Trial times)

I realize that this letter probably should have been written a few years ago. I just want to let you know how much I appreciate all that you have done for me and the positive influence you have had on my life. Through my experiences after OA (national champion), I have gained perspective on what an amazing team OA is, an appreciation which may be lost when it is all you have ever known. I can honestly say I have never met anyone who puts as much energy into building not only amazing athletes but extraordinary young adults as you do, and for that, myself and so many others will be forever grateful for you. Not only are you a great role model but you ensure success of the people you work with by demanding excellence, giving them the tools they need to be successful, helping them see the potential they hold within themselves, and most importantly you ensure success by caring about your swimmers outside of the athletic arena. I remember when I was swimming, I always wanted to be my best because I never wanted to let you down. I know that I was not the easiest person to coach, but I am so thankful you never gave up on me. You gave me the tools and showed me how to be successful both as a swimmer and as a young adult, and I owe so much of my past and future success to you.

Other Reasons

This may be the only secure aspect of a child's life

From the coach of a "diversity" program:

"For most of the kids in our program, they receive very little, if any, positive feedback in their lives – at school or at home. We want to, and need to, provide that."

Letter to Ronnie re: Parents (Why times don't matter in the big picture)

So..., what can I tell you. My parents are both stunted. Each of them dealt with difficult childhoods, and I cannot tell you the number of times I have looked at them as far more immature than I. **Physically, I've been given everything I could want, though emotionally the hole is far too big to fill. My father's father was apparently so verbally abusive** that my aunt left their home at 16, and my **mother's parents had problems with alcohol and public infidelity.** My parents have hardly had a moment throughout their marriage that they are not fighting about something, and the fights are most often severe and character offending, as opposed to mere "tiffs" over what's for dinner etc. They've threatened divorce more times than I can count, and spent days intentionally apart more frequently than I'd care to remember. **I have been their counselor, errand runner, and babysitter since I was 8**.

My dad is extremely critical, compulsive, overbearing and persistent. I believe he is fearful every second of every day and thus acts in every way possible to control various situations/people. I believe my father's father was abusive, perhaps even physically, and that my father drives himself so hard because he is still trying to escape that household/lifestyle in his mind. The sad part is, I don't think he's broken free from it in many ways. I can remember instances in high school when my brother and father would be physically at arms with each other, and let me tell you...that was very hard to watch. Additionally, perhaps because he is so driven, the disparity between the way one is treated when one succeeds, and when one does not succeed, is HUGE.

My mom is sweet, but **is harsh with her words, and often distant and unforgiving. She doesn't know how to deal with emotions, nor conflic**t and merely incites conflict in order to feel something (I believe). **I have never been able to have a real conversation with her about a situation I need help with, or my fears.** Case and point, according to my mother, "[I] will never succeed or get a job because I was an English major."

So, long story short, I think my parents are both very catastrophic and fearful thinkers, who have pasts of their own that they will never choose to deal with. Their lives need to stop affecting me at some point, because I've wasted too many years and too much energy focusing on their needs and their issues, most often because they brought them directly to me.

A Letter from an OA Graduate (one year in college)

Dear Orinda Aquatics, I can only imagine where I would be today, right now, if I had never joined this team back in seventh grade. I see myself spending this Saturday night in my parentless house with a dozen members of my high school's top partiers, already a few drinks deep in my parent's liquor, behaving like a sloppy mess. I see myself dancing with boys I don't even like, breaking my mom's glass top coffee table, and getting into a car with a girl who swears she's safe to drive but clearly isn't. And I wouldn't even care. It would just be another typical Saturday night. Instead, I'm here sitting on my couch writing a letter to the team that changed the entire course of my life, the team that I owe everything to.

In middle school, I found myself, like so many others do, at a crossroads of sorts. The girls I considered my best friends were making choices that made me uncomfortable on all kinds of levels, but I could still feel myself slipping down with them. Looking back, I can see just how far I was about to fall. After joining Orinda in seventh grade, I made the choice to stop hanging out with those girls. Over time, I began to categorize my friends, as so many other swimmers do, as "school friends" and "swim friends." It wasn't long before "swim friends" was shortened simply to "friends". My life went from slipping downwards, and slipping fast, to something entirely different, something positive and life-changing.

A reflective letter from a swimmer

... But there was more to swimming than mere memories, there are the (now excuse my triteness) life lessons that swimming teaches you. I will be brief with these because you yourself have taught me many of them. Swimming teaches dedication, dedication towards achieving your goal and preventing yourself from giving up. All athletes, not just swimmers face those moments when they're ready to throw in the towel and give up, but there is something, for some it may be their personality but for many it is a lesson that was taught to them by their mentor that keeps them engaged and motivated to stick with it through the tough times, bury your head and endeavor on and succeed. Another key lesson I learned was that precision occurs through repetition, something that I grappled with as well.

I have enough perspective now to appreciate how much you have helped me throughout life. It's rather astonishing how a little boy with a single mother from Hercules has become, dare I say, the man I am today. While my mom has much of the credit of my successes, you Ron, have much as well. Without swimming my life would be quite different. I wouldn't have swum in middle school, so I never would have wanted to go to Campolindo and I never would have been accepted by Columbia. Swimming has opened the most incredible doors in my life and offered remarkable opportunities that I never would have had. It was my success in swimming that has allowed to me to be where I am now; it is because of you that I am where I am now. I am utterly clueless how I can ever repay you. I know at times you wished that you could throw granite boulders instead of pull-buoys at me while I swam. I was quite a piece of work. But you, the expert sculptor, never gave up even when I had. I can only imagine the woe I caused you all those times I neglected to be focused on swimming, pushing you to you limits. I'm sorry for the countless gray hairs I have caused.

Despite all of this, you never waivered in your faith and dedication to not only my swimming career but my life as well. You never gave up, as so many others would have. Growing up with only a mother you've been as much of a mentor and father figure as anyone could wish for and for that I am forever indebted to you. You have been and continue to be an endless source of wisdom and hope in my life. My life is but one of many that you have touched. You've led so many youth to places that would have been unreachable without your guiding hand. The Character First program that both you and Donnie have created is remarkable. It has left a great impression upon not only myself but also many others of the importance of a strong and positive attitude towards all undertakings in life. It took my departure from swimming to make me comprehend all of this and I hope that you take pride in yourself, your incredible program, all the good you've accomplished and you unparalleled ability to have such a positive impact upon peoples' lives. Grateful for everything,

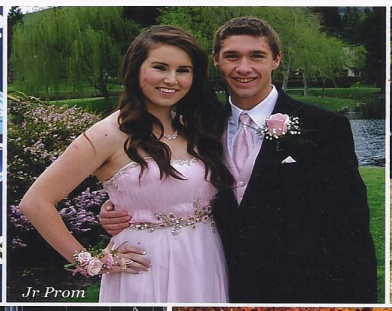
Shane, Columbia University, Economics-Political Science

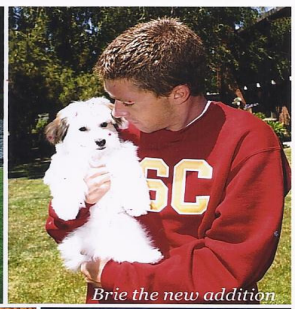
Testimonial From a Parent

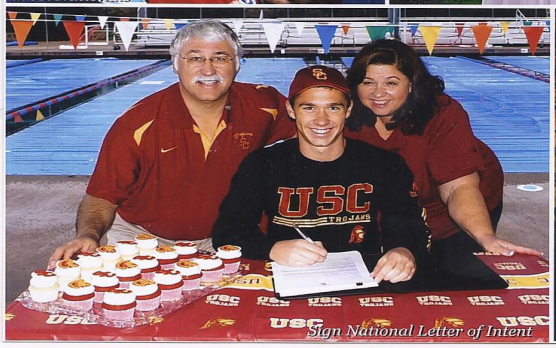
Character was never modeled for me as child, but in the past two years I have worked to build it for me and my child – in life and in swimming. The benefits are a closer family, solid relationships, and a future that looks much brighter than the past. This team impacts not only the lives of the kids but people like me (a parent). Keep up the good work.

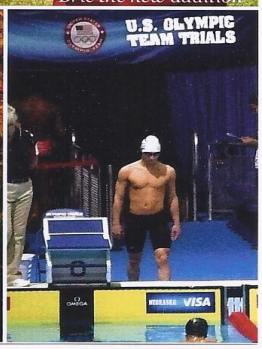
From a parent after her daughter graduated college.
"I can confirm that this is true, one day you really can't remember their times."

Better Swimmer/Better Parent









Dear Donnie,

Warmest thoughts and wishes

are with you this Christmas!

We are deeply grateful for all you have done to help Steven reach his goals. What I didn't say, but wanted to, at Steven's signing is that you made parenting so much easier because of your ethics & character first program. You also made Fred & I, better swim parents. With immense appreciation. Fred, Debi & Steven

Why we do it?

We don't demand integrity because we simply want nice kids.

We want:

- Leaders
- Elite "athletes"
- People who put the team first
- People we trust implicitly
- Swimmers who maximize their potential and their careers
- Healthier, happy kids
- And better people

"If everyone were clothed with integrity, if every heart were just, frank, and kindly – the other virtues would be…useless. " Moliere

Can you define your teams culture?

- **How would you define your character culture?**
- **What are the strengths and weaknesses?**
- **Is it influenced more by the institution/organization, coach, talent, social groups?**
- **Where does the leadership and inspiration come from – more the coach or more from the locker room?**

Questions continued…

- **Are there ebbs and flows based on personalities or is there continuity?**
- **Does the environment add or detract from the competitiveness of your team?**
- **To what degree do you trust your group – left alone at a workout, an activity, or a hotel?**
- **To what degree do the older swimmers seek to mentor?**
- **To what degree do the younger swimmers seek to lead?**

Key Concepts

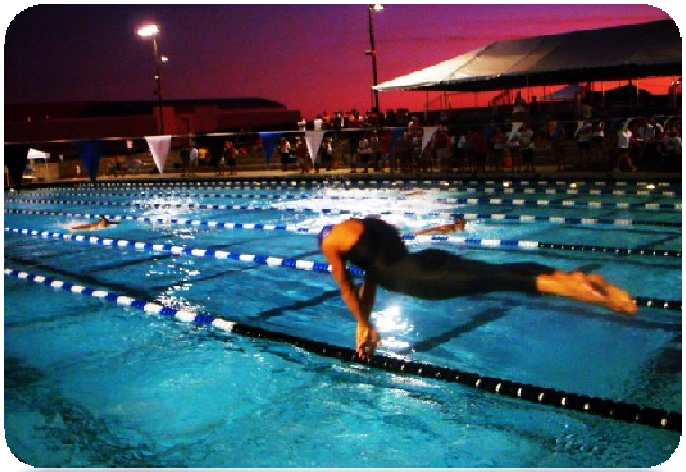
(that we employ & enforce daily)

"As the sculpture devotes himself to wood and stone, I would devote myself to my soul." T. Kagawa

The following are concepts that we talk about on a regular basis and try to embed into the team and the swimming process. The reinforcement of each encompasses many avenues including: team meetings, articles, quotes, lectures/guidance, aggressive discipline, parent meetings, and regular swimmer dialogue.

The more the concepts and the message are sold, the more they become a part of the team culture, and ultimately a part of the athletes life.

At the end of each concept section, there will be some discussion questions for thought or to make notes on.



We try to relate everything from swimming to life and from life to swimming.

"Character is the sum total of a persons choices."

P.B. Fitwater

Concepts

1. The essence of sports
2. How you do anything
3. Real success (for all)
4. Create partners
5. The team concept (not a roster concept)
6. Only positive
7. No complaints (ever)
8. Embrace the work
9. Service (serve first)
10. People first
11. Compassion
12. Celebrate the success of others
13. Implicit trust
14. Humility (no ego's allowed)
15. Leadership (from the beginning)
16. Team attire/team pride
17. Team travel
18. Academic focus
19. Appreciation (of everything)
20. Little things are a big deal

1) The Essence of Sports

As mentioned earlier, as soon as sports become "competitive", there should be inherent assumptions, responsibilities, *and* accountabilities:

1. Work/effort
2. Commitment/dedication
3. Teamwork
4. Integrity in all aspects
5. Embrace challenge/adversity

Let's Summarize

1. Sports is a privilege and not a right
2. Sports is athletic(s)
3. Athletics is process (of effort)
4. That process is challenge
5. Challenge is growth as an athlete
6. (real) Athletic growth is life growth
7. Life Growth is the only thing that *really* matters (in the end)

What if every athlete had accountability to these things?

The Life Classroom

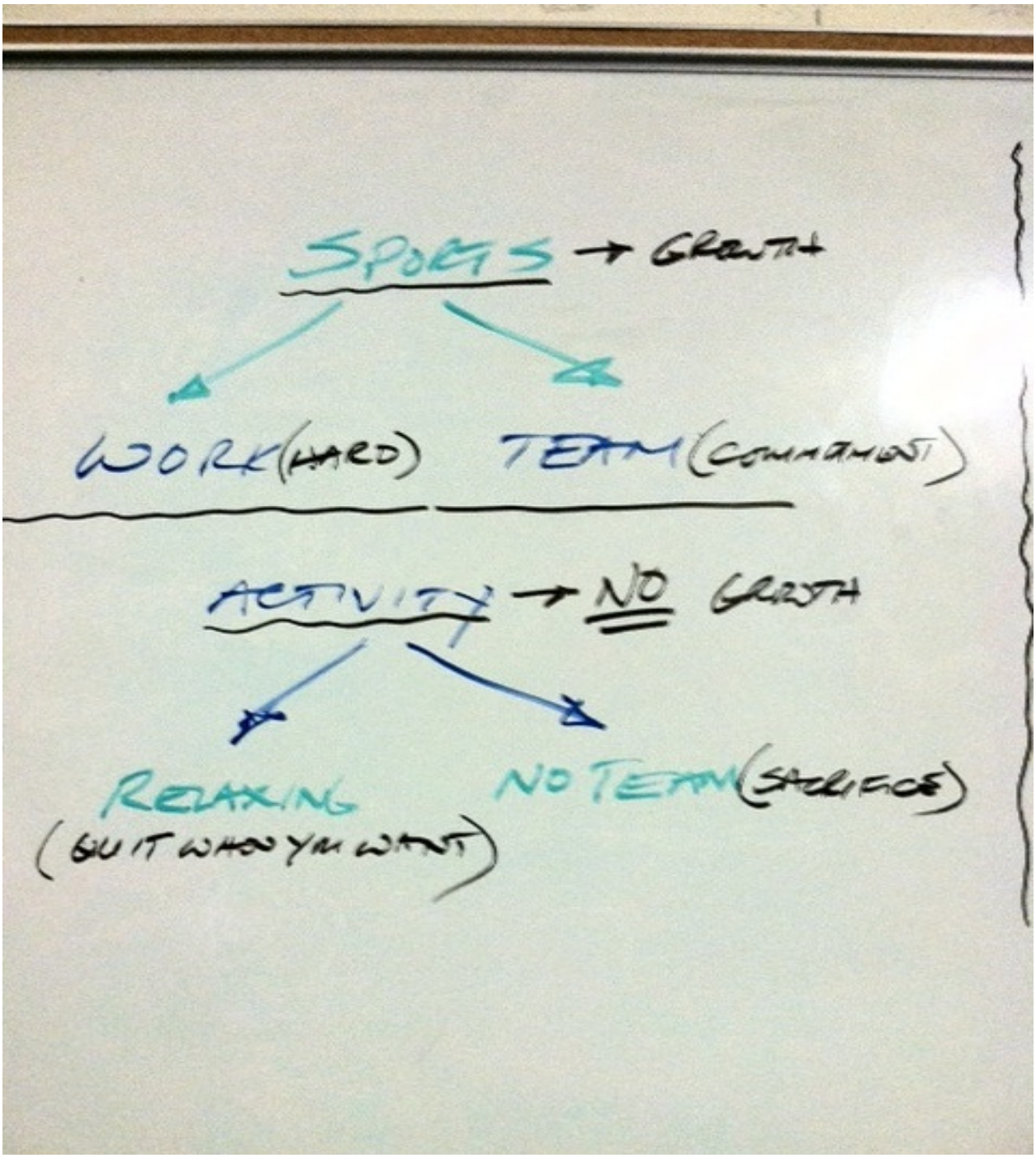
The mental and physical nature of sports magnifies these concepts.

- Work ethic
- Sacrifice
- Humility
- Resilience
- Teamwork
- Focus
- Repetition
- Attitude
- Adversity

Swimming/sports may very well be a young adults best and only learning ground.

Message to Team

(from a recent team meeting – a reminder)

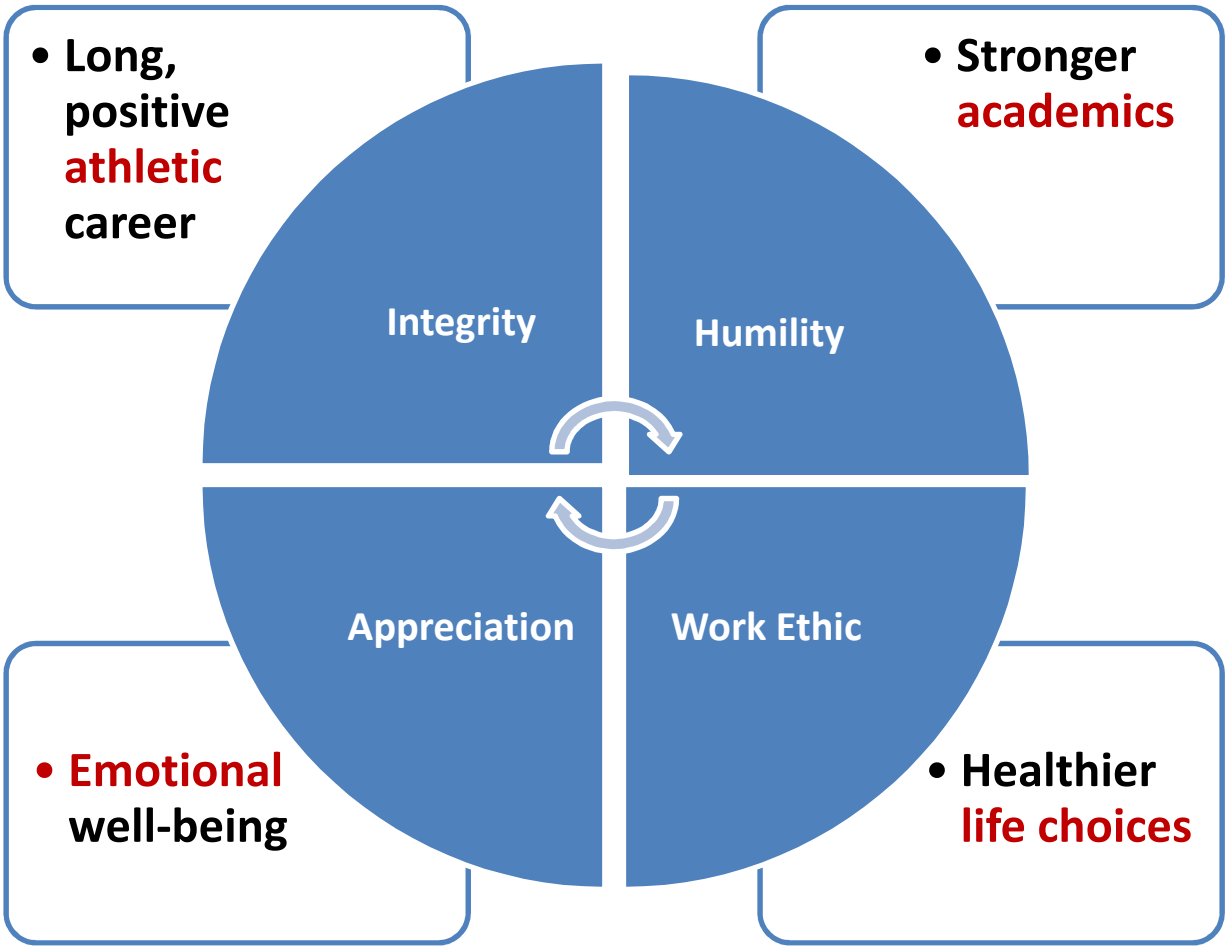


Do your athletes understand the nature, process, and true value of athletics?

How do you see that in your athletes?

Do they see this as simply an activity, or do they see a real growth "process" founded in "effort" and "team"?

2) "How you do anything…



is how you do everything."

This is a constant reminder and reinforcement of the way life should flow – values create experience *and* results. It applies to greater things such as compassion and to specific things such as helping set up the pool. There is clear crossover and transference to all aspects of ones life from they way they do "anything".

Do your athletes understand and see how life virtues and values translate into other areas of their life?

How?

Which virtues?

If no, why not?

Have you seen athletic circumstances transform a swimmers personal life?

3) Success may be a zero sum game, but character, inspiration, and leadership are not.

Megan Liang is a "disabled" swimmer on our team and one of the most inspirational people you will ever meet. She lost her leg to cancer at age seven.

EVERY athlete can win at the personal growth, leadership, and inspiration game. That is the great gift of sports. They need to know it, believe it is possible for them, and pursue it everyday.

"Mutant Message Down Under"

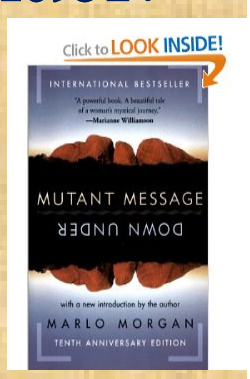
Book by Marlo Morgan

"We don't celebrate getting older. It takes no effort."

"What do you celebrate?"

"We celebrate getting better, becoming a wiser person than the year before."

"Why would we play a game that only one person can win"?



While we do not want a "give everyone a trophy" athletic culture, there are life lessons inherent in this process that everyone can enjoy (and should). This book does a beautiful job of illustrating that concept.

Brian O'Hara - Reflection

Brian was the weakest swimmer on the team when he joined (humble career)
We haven't spoken to him in three years, and recently received this note.

Hi Ron and Don!

This is Brian O'Hara, I hope you are both doing well! I am at UC Santa Cruz currently and graduating this March. I wanted to let you know that when I went to the athletic facility on campus this past weekend and noticed some familiar logos from other teams I remember competing against, SRVLA, PASA, etc. I had this huge bittersweet feeling overwhelm me standing on the deck seeing kids warm-up, others huddled within their groups chatting to pass time, hearing the announcers trying to gather timers for finals, coaches around the pool under the pop-ups; all the memories during my five years at OA came back while taking in everything happening, I wanted nothing more than to be a part of that swim meet. I decided to talk to some swimmers to find out about the meet and then I began telling them how lucky they are and how jealous I am because I really miss being part of a team. They thought I was crazy.

With all of that back story, I just wanted to tell you that I am forever grateful for the Character First attitude that Orinda Aquatics demands from their swimmers. During my time I was focused on my swimming and I thought the life messages were nothing more than a reminder for being positive (whether we were talking as a group before a meet about properly warming up and warming down or in the community room talking about everything from helping others to managing finances). I have begun to realize that I was surrounded by amazing people who helped encourage positive values: the coaches (helping push me to new limits in the pool and developing my character outside of it), my teammates (motivating me in practice and cheering me during meets), and the parents (helping run the meets, and taking responsibilities/volunteering for positions that would look like jobs to many others). OA has an incredible community and since then I haven't been able to experience the positive influence and structure that OA provided to its swimmers. Despite that I am no longer going to practices anymore your influence in my life is enduring. Orinda Aquatics has instilled a lasting motivation to become a more fulfilled person for myself a positive influence for others, thank you for helping me become the person I am and for continuing to help and coach others to become more prepared and successful, in the pool and in life. I will try to stop by after I graduate in a couple months and say hello!

Do your athletes truly believe that there is a powerful “winning at life” process here that they can attain”?

Do they embrace the powerful growth/leadership opportunity that lies beyond performance?

If not, why not?

4) Partners

"The welfare of each is bound up in the welfare of all."
Helen Keller

Coaches *and* swimmers should take ownership of the program and the environment. They should feel and act as if they are a partner or a shareholder. We tell our swimmers that they are all co-owners of the team, like it or not, want it or not, "you are a stakeholder, and thus accountable".

You must move swimmers from participants/customers to…

Owners/stakeholders with accountability and a vested interest.

Customers will take.
Partners will sacrifice.

Do your swimmers feel as though they are "partners" on the team with a vested interest and accountability?

Yes – how?, No – Why not?

What do you do to create a true "partnership" culture - in dialogue, giving responsibility, sharing successes and accountability?

5) The Team Concept

(It's not a roster concept)

- The team concept is a life concept and there is no better place to learn it than in an athletic setting.
- Team is life – your very existence is a display of teamwork, of family, friends, neighbors, classmates, those you like, don't like, community, co-workers, etc. It is co-existing and co-producing. Learn it!
- It requires empathy, sacrifice, and an unconditional commitment to a greater cause.
- It requires an unyielding view that team always comes first.

This ability and understanding will serve athletes long after their careers have ended.

Team over Individual

Swimmers must place the team above themselves at all times. We suggest this is analogous to having the wind at your back as you move through a demanding season. From a coach's and an individual's perspective, decisions and policies should reflect only one thing, the greater good, and the team as a whole. Sacrifices become easy and automatic when individuals care about the team (and their teammates) unconditionally.

I (Don) had a conversation with several senior (high school) swimmers recently. The conversation centered on choosing championship meet events. I posed the question simply, with no angle or supposition, wanting to hear from them what they felt their two best events were. I asked, "What would you like to swim at the League Championship Meet" (a shave meet for most)? Not one answered the question directly, i.e., "I want…". This was the typical conversation.

Coach: "What would you like to swim at the league meet?

Swimmer: "What would you like me to swim?

Coach: "No, I am asking you what you feel your best events are."

Swimmer: "Whatever the team needs."

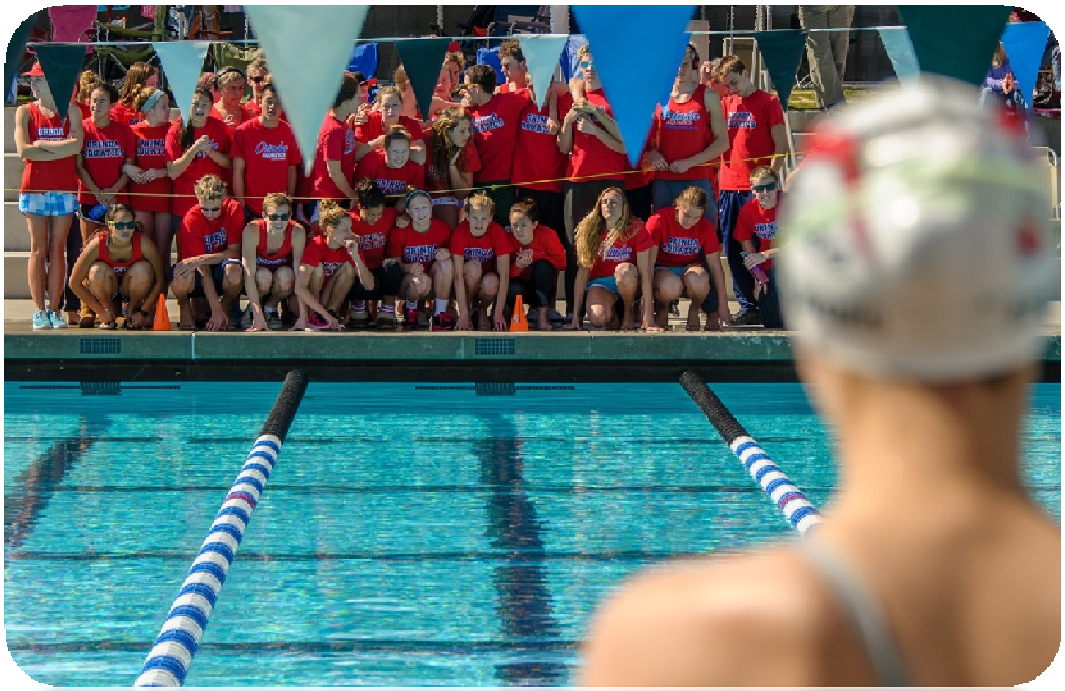
Coach: "No, again, what is best for you?"

Swimmer: "What is best for me is what is best for the team."

Each swimmer basically answered the question the same way.

When kids feel one with the team and connected, sacrifices become welcomed opportunities.

Are you the type of person/teammate that others would want to cheer for, support, or care about?



"No man can become rich without himself enriching others." Dale Carnegie

Always put the culture ahead of the individual

Pursue the culture – always

Reinforce each athlete's influence on the team as a whole, the culture, and their impact on younger swimmers.

"We become just by the practice of just actions, self-controlled by exercising self-control, and courageous by performing acts of courage."
Aristotle

"When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion."

Ethiopian proverb

"Teamwork takes work.
It is not created for you. It is created BY you." DR

"None of us is as smart as all of us."

Japanese proverb

"The whole is the sum of the parts.

Be a good part."

Aristotle

A Letter of Recommendation written for Zach Disbrow, one of the finest leaders in and out of the pool.

"One of my favorite quotes from all my years' of coaching came from the wall of a business executive. It simply says, "Do the right thing." Zach is the epitome of this quote.

Zach is everything I would want an athlete to be. He has a relentless work ethic. He is a consummate team person. He is positive. And he cares.

An example of his leadership and character (one of many) came at the end of a workout one day. We had four groups doing different main sets. As the first group finished, they were allowed to get out and they did. Zach was in that group but stayed in and kept swimming. The second group finished and got out. Zach kept swimming. The third group finished and got out. The fourth group, which had a harder set, finally finished with Zach swimming side by side with them. I thought I knew why he stayed in but I wasn't sure. Maybe he needed a longer warm-down? The next day on the deck, I asked him why he stayed in until the last group finished. He matter of factly stated that he did not think it was right for him to get out, even though he finished his workout, while his teammates were still swimming.

I told Zach that I appreciated that and, with our young team, I needed him to continue to do leadership things like that. He looked at me and said, *"If I ever don't, will you tell me?"*

Zach went on to be a leader and two-year team captain at West Point, and, as a senior in college, after ten years of hard work, he qualified for the Olympic Trials. His leadership has gone from the pool, to life, to protecting this country.

"When he took the time to help the man up the mountain, lo, he scaled it himself." Tibetan Proverb

Your greatest success may very well be in creating success for others. DR

From a letter of recommendation for Nader (1996). He was a great teammate

"When I think about Nader, I have to reflect back to last season, my first at Campolindo. I didn't know anyone on the team. The first week's practices were demanding and the swimmers seemed motivated to work hard to impress me. I would often call out swimmers' names to acknowledge their efforts. After a few days, Nader got out of the pool after practice and approached me. He was working hard and I was sure he wanted some feedback about his efforts. Maybe I hadn't acknowledged him and he wanted to know why. He started by saying "I don't know if you've noticed ..." I was right; he wanted feedback. But he concluded his sentence with "... Marc has been working very hard and you haven't mentioned his name. It would mean a lot if you could acknowledge him." He was making sure I was aware of his teammate's effort. He said it quietly, making sure no one heard. I assured him that I had been watching Marc and would acknowledge him soon. As Nader walked away I stood there absorbing what had happened. I had never seen anything like this. Three days later Nader came to me after practice. With great anticipation, I couldn't wait to hear this. He said, "Have you noticed Bryan in practice. I think he has a lot of potential but he's never been pushed. If you push him he might become a top swimmer." I assured him that I had noticed Bryan and recognized his potential and I would be pushing him. I watched Nader walk back to the locker room and felt so excited about the opportunity to get to know this young man. Nader's interest and concern for these two teammates proved somewhat prophetic. Marc was indeed one of the hardest working swimmers on the team and I chose him as our Most Inspirational swimmer at the end of the season. Bryan became the most improved male swimmer on the team and broke into the elite level of top high school swimmers. While I consider these observations by Nader somewhat extraordinary, the most remarkable thing is that they are not for Nader. That's just the way Nader is. In Nader's world you just care about other people. You look out for your teammates. You go out of your way for others. The following quote by William Wordsworth is one of my favorites and exemplifies Nader's personality closely. "The best portion of a good man's life is his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love."

Nader wrote the following after his graduation: "I must say thank you, from the bottom of my heart. I know when I look back on my life, I will always reflect on these years as among the best I ever had. I came into this program feeling like a nobody and maybe I still am, but I don't care because you taught me how to respect myself and be satisfied with who I am. The lessons I learned from you will carry through the years and help me be the best person I can be. Please keep up the special work you do with the young men and women who come through Campo."

Eight years later, Nader is a doctor.

"Companies that solely focus in competition will ultimately die.

Those that focus on value creation will thrive."

Edward de Bono

Do your swimmers understand commitment to a greater cause? Do they put the team first? Always?

How do they show "team" commitment?

When have they made a (welcomed) <u>sacrifice</u> for the team?

6) Attitude

"No pessimist ever discovered the secrets of the stars, or sailed to an unchartered land, or opened a heaven to the human spirit."

Helen Keller

On the team, there is zero tolerance for negativity, in any form. Again, this relates back to the athletic concept, or work and challenge.

There is no reason or room for negativity in the life of a real athlete.

Swimmers/athletes must change their perception about: work, pain, training, long sets, etc. as positive, value-added things.

"The only disability in life is a negative attitude." Helen Keller

"A thing is not good or bad. Only your perception makes it so." unknown

Cheering in the rain (a "positive" thing!)

From an OA graduate

(insight on attitude and burnout)

I hope you are doing well and the team is good too. I'm so sorry I've waited this long to e-mail you. I always meant to write. It's no excuse, but I hope you can forgive me anyway.

I've really missed the team, and having swum in college has really made me see how unique OA is and what a huge difference that it, and the coaches, have made on my life. Positivity is something so easy to exude when things are going well but so many of my teammates default to complaining and negativity when swimming isn't going well. These are also the same people who let that negativity into other challenging aspects of their lives and I can see exactly how that makes everything harder. In trying to gently persuade them to try and always look on the brighter side of things, I really, finally appreciate how hard the coaches jobs are! I've also realized how the program that you and Ronnie have built really fosters an appreciation for the sport. Even through the challenges, I have never fallen out of love with swimming. But here, I have teammates who have stopped enjoying the sport and are "burnt out" from their teams at home - it kind of breaks my heart a little. I'm sure that you have heard this many times before, but even on the other side of the country, I have yet to encounter a team that rivals OA in dedication, team pride, a love for the sport, and most importantly, character. Hope to hear from you soon.

An article from "Healing Words for the Body, Mind and Spirit" by Caren Golman:

Bad Luck, Good Luck. Who Knows?

An old Zen story goes like this: An old Chinese farmer had a mare that broke through the fence and ran away. When his neighbors learned of it, they came to the farmer and said, "What bad luck this is. You don't have a horse during planting season." The farmer listened and then replied, "Bad luck, good luck. Who knows?"

A few days later, the mare returned with two stallions. When the neighbors learned of it, they visited the farmer. "You are now a rich man. What good fortune this is," they said. The farmer listened and again replied, "Good fortune, bad fortune. Who knows?"

Later that day, the farmer's only son was thrown from one of the stallions and broke his leg. When the neighbors heard about it, they came to the farmer. "It is planting season and now there is no one to help you," they said. "This is truly bad luck." The farmer listened, and once more he said, "Bad luck, good luck. Who knows?"

The very next day, the emperor's army rode into the town and conscripted the eldest son in every family. Only the farmer's son with his broken leg remained behind. Soon the neighbors arrived. Tearfully, they said, "Yours is the only son who was not taken from his family and sent to war. What good fortune this is..."

How would you describe your swimmers general attitude? Under duress or discomfort?

Why/when are they negative?

What can you as a coach do to shift their perspective?

7) No Complaints

Swimmers are not allowed to complain – a*bout anything! Again, it is inherently counter to everything athletic.*

We ask them:
"How many of you know someone who complains? A lot? Do you like to hear it? Does it help, anything?"

This sheds light on the negative effects of complaining, and also that it serves no productive purpose. We ask them to first eliminate the verbalizing of a negative thought and then to reposition it internally as a growth opportunity.

"If you complain about anything, you will complain about everything." unknown

From Life's Little Instruction Book, "No one wants to hear you complain, not even the people who love you."

"Any fool can criticize, condemn, or complain, but it takes character and compassion to be understanding and forgiving." Dale Carnegie

"Thoughts lead on to purposes; purposes go forth in action; actions form habits; habits decide character; and character fixes our destiny." Unknown

Better keep yourself clean and bright; you are the window through which you see the world."

George Bernard Shaw

"The greatest revolution of our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives."
unknown

Optimism is essential and it is also the foundation of courage and true progress. Nicholas Butler

"Nothing splendid has ever been achieved except by those who dared believe that something inside of themselves was superior to circumstance." Bruce Barton

Keeps the kids' focus on possibilities

"People with great minds talk about possibilities.

People with average minds talk about things.

People with small minds talk about other people." unknown

"It's not about *you*."

Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Life

Do your athletes complain? A lot? About what?

Can you teach them the destructive nature of complaining, and get them to:

- ***Commit to not doing it?***
- ***Reverse their mindset?***
- ***Find the value/growth?***
- ***Take a challenge for one instance, a day, a week… their life?!***

8) Embrace Work & Challenge

- If challenge creates growth and opportunity, why *ever* resist it?
- Take the path of "most resistance" is a theme we ask the kids to embrace.
- They should welcome the most challenging aspects of swimming and their life, and reposition them as a positive, growth process. (visualize – cold, hungry, crowded pool, bad swim)
- Movie – The Ultimate Gift (the first lesson was work ethic)

Visualization/Trigger

How can you be at your best at the finals of a four-day meet, in the wind and rain, not feeling well, if you haven't dealt with a great deal of challenge? And handled it well.

Let the Butterfly Struggle

(unknown) – a parable on the benefits of struggle

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly
One day a small opening appeared
He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to squeeze its body through the tiny hole
Then it stopped as if it could go no further

So the man decided to help the butterfly
He took a pair of scissors and snipped the remaining bits of cocoon
The butterfly emerged easily but it had a swollen body and shriveled wings

The man continued to watch it expecting that at any minute the wings would enlarge and expand enough to support the body.
Neither happened
In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around
It was never able to fly

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand:
The restricting cocoon and the struggle required the butterfly to get through the opening was a way of forcing fluid from the body into the wings so that it would be ready for flight once that was achieved

Sometimes, struggles are exactly what we need in our lives
Going through life without obstacles would cripple us
We will not be as strong as we could have been and we would never learn to fly

"Adversity introduces a man to himself." unknown

"You will never be the person you can be if pressure, tension, and discipline are taken out of your life." James Bilkey

"Life affords no higher pleasure than that of surmounting difficulties, passing from one step of success to another." S. Johnson

"Don't ask for a light load but rather a strong back."

Sven Campbell – one of the hardest workers on the team and one of the most disciplined workout swimmers (1:43.88 - 200 Back, 43.6 100 Free split)

"Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful."

Joshua J. Marine

"If a man has any greatness in him, it comes to light, not in one flamboyant hour, but in the ledger of his daily work."

Beryl Markham, English adventurer and author (1902–1986)

If I can do this (well)...

We ask kids to change their mindset about typical things that may normally feel like a challenge, and adopt a mindset of, "if I can do this (well), I can do ANYTHING! Create a visualization and a trigger phrase.

- Crowded warm-up
- Poor weather
- Long set
- Work through a tough race

(this list can be endless)

"Followers see the hard work in climbing the mountain of success, while leaders see the success in climbing the mountain of hard work." unknown

"Character is a by-product; it is produced in the great manufacture of daily duty."

Woodrow Wilson

On "Doing Less" ...a Story

BY JOHN LEONARD

Once upon a time, in a swimming pool in the far north, near the arctic circle in upstate New York, I learned a lesson.

There was a lane we called "the national team". Some of these 8 or 9 bodies had national cuts and others just aspired to have the national cuts, and were close. They all thought they were special. They came early, they stayed later, they were "the National Team".

They weren't the only ones I had in the pool during this time, and I moved from group to group, so periodically, I'd pass them by and say something like "Nice Job. You guys are working hard, keep it up, Good Work". They improved when they went to swim meets and swam faster and faster.

One day as I walked past, I heard Lynn Scully say to Amy Richards, "hey, cut me some slack here, slow down, I can't go that hard right now." (for purposes of full disclosure, Lynn is a male, Amy a female) Amy looked at him in a quizzical way, and went hard again. I ignored it and walked away.

The next day, I walked past, said "good job, Good work, makin'progress". Lynn and two other male swimmers didn't look me in the eye. Later in that practice, I heard Pete say, "Amy, I'm dyin' here, give me a break hey?" and heard Lynn chime in, "Yeah, no need to go this hard". And a third male say "Crap Amy, you're makin' us all work too hard to keep up with you!".

I learned from this that we can be two kinds of people.. the kind that encourages everyone around us to work hard and achieve more, or we can be the kind that says "we don't have to work that hard to achieve more."

Amy slapped her hands on the water with frustration, gave up, stepped aside and moved to the middle of the lane to let Petelead.

Our nationals Sucked.

I learned from this that we can be two kinds of people....the kind that encourages everyone around us to work hard and achieve more, or we can be the kind that says "we don't have to work that hard to achieve more". We each of us have both people within us. And everyone who has ever coached or ever swum or ever competed knows this is the truth.

If just one person backs off, it lets the next weakest person do likewise. Its a disease, and it spreads fast.

After that lesson, I always paid attention to the "lane talk" in workouts. And I'd talk to my teams about how to encourage each other to be achievers and how no one person in the group can achieve more than the group aspires to achieve. The group has got to get it right, and none can have the attitude that says "we don't have to work that hard".

And if they didn't want to be their personal best selves, they didn't want to train with me. They could train somewhere else and float through with some other coach. Life, and this sport, does not reward those who "float through"...it rewards those that enjoy the work for its own sake.

I would say for awhile that I was "amazed" at how much satisfaction the swimmers took from encouraging each other to do more than they thought was possible.

Now, I look back and know it was not amazing at all. It was normal. Because, you see, we can all chose to be the person who says "lets do less" or the person who says "lets swim faster". And once the team decides to only accept the positive input, there is nothing amazing about it. Its normal.

Since 1974, that experience left an indelible mark on me. It marked me with the knowledge that just one person who thinks they can "do less" can ruin a team, or a group, or an office, because we all have the capacity to sink, or to rise to leadership.

Think about that when your team is swimming up and down that lane.

Do your swimmers fully understand that work ethic (effort) is the ONLY <u>true</u> path to development, and *is* a life skill?

When do they resist it? Why?

When have they embraced challenging situations?

Pain and Suffering

are not the same, Neale Donald Walsch
"Conversations with God"

It is within this larger context that *pain is an objective experience, and suffering is a subjective one.* Pain is a physical phenomenon, and suffering is our thought about it.

Put another way, pain is simply pain, but *if we make a judgment* that it is not okay, not welcome, not acceptable in favor of a larger good, *then it becomes suffering*. Yet if we make the *opposite decision*--that it *is* okay, that it *is* welcome, *that it is endurable for a larger good*--then our suffering ends, even as the pain goes on.

Nothing changes, but everything is different. NDW

"Life begins at the end of your comfort zone." NDW

9) Service over Success

Service is the key to humility, character, and ethics. It is found in the "daily duty" of supporting one another, giving back, and in random acts of kindness.

It is humble and selfless leadership

- First one to arrive and set up the pool
- The ones who always clean up
- Cheering for teammates before an important swim or after a bad swim
- First to offer goggles or a suit to one who needs them
- Getting equipment for the lane (leaders do it!)
- Fixing a broken lane line (that they did not break)
- Or simply (always) looking for a way to help

Forty cheering for one

How can you help?
Who can you help?

"In the final analysis, there is no solution to man's progress but the day's honest work, the day's honest decisions, the day's generous utterances and the day's good deed." Clare Booth Luce

"I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know; the ones among you who will truly be happy are those who have sought and found how to serve." A. Schweitzer

A story that captures the powerful effect pride in work and attention to detail.

The Uncommon Professional

I went to the dark end of the inventory shelves, pressed my forehead against the wall and indulged myself in a few moments of quiet despair. Was this the way it would be for the rest of my life? Here I was, two years out of school, working at yet another mindless, low-pay, dead-end job. Up to this point, I had avoided the question by just not thinking about it, but now, for some reason, the awful possibility had come crashing down on me. The thought sucked every bit of energy from my body. I clocked out sick, went home to bed, pulled the covers over my head, and tried to forget about tomorrow and all the tomorrows that would follow. By morning I was a little more composed, but no less depressed. Listlessly, I went back to work and resumed my hopeless drudgery. **There were several new guys on the job that morning** - temporary workers even lower on the totem pole than I was. **One of them caught my eye.** He was older than the others, and wearing a uniform. The company didn't issue uniforms - in fact, the company didn't care what you wore as long as you showed up. But this guy was decked out in smartly pressed tan trousers and work shirt, complete with his name, Jim, embroidered on the pocket. I guess he supplied himself with the uniform. I watched him all that day and the rest of the days he worked with us. He was never late or early. He worked at a steady, unhurried pace. He was friendly to everyone he worked with, but rarely talked while he was working. He took the designated breaks at midmorning and afternoon with everyone else, but unlike many others, he never lingered past the allotted time. At lunchtime, some of the crew brown-bagged it, although most of us got our meals and drinks from the vending machines. Jim didn't do either. He ate his lunch from an old-fashioned steel lunch box and drank his coffee from a Thermos bottle - both of them well-worn with use. Sometimes people would be a little careless about cleaning up after they ate. Jim's place at the table was spotless, and, of course, he was always back on the line exactly on time. **He wasn't just odd; he was outstanding - admirable! He was the kind of worker managers dream of. Despite that, the other workers liked him**, too. He didn't try to show anybody up. He did what was asked of him, no more, no less. He didn't gossip or complain or argue. **He just did the job - common labor - with more personal dignity than I had believed was possible with this kind of low-level work. His attitude and every action proclaimed that he was a professional.** ***Labor might be common; he wasn't.*** When the temporary work was finished, Jim left for another job, but the impression he made on me didn't. **Even though I had never talked to him, he turned my head completely around. I did the best I could to follow his example**. I didn't buy a lunch box or a uniform, but I did start setting my own standards. I worked like a businessman fulfilling a contract, just the way Jim had done. To my great surprise, the managers noticed my new productivity and promoted me. A few years later, I promoted myself to a better-paying job with a different company. And so it went. Eventually, many companies and many years later, I started a business of my own. Whatever success I've had has been the result of hard work and good luck, but I think the biggest part of my luck was the lesson I learned from Jim so long ago. ***Respect doesn't come from the kind of work you do; it comes from the way you do the work.*** *by Kenneth L. Shipley, from Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work*

Humble Servant

First one in the pool, laser focused
Organizes set-up of entire pool for workout
Runs meet set-up with 60 kids
Stays two hours after host-meet to clean up
Deflects attention/painfully humble

Steven Stumph (an uncommon professional)
Broke Jr. National Record 200 Breast 1:55.88 (2012), and broke the National High School Record in the 100 Breast 53.3 (2013).

How do your swimmers try to be of “service” to your team and their teammates?

Can you name ten things or ways? Getting equipment, setting up, giving rides, etc.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

10) People over Times

If people feel and know that you care about them as individuals first, they will do virtually anything for you and for the team.

We ask kids to be defined by compassion, service, effort, integrity (internal) as opposed to appearance, things, status, grades, success (external). The gift vs. the wrapping.

Unconditional, *mutual* respect must drive the coach-athlete relationship. This eliminates or minimizes lying, deceit, disrespect, etc.

"A mirror reflects a man's face, but what he is really like is shown by the kind of friends he chooses." Proverbs: 27:19

- There must be a perspective that every member is significant, adds value, and contributes to the strength and success of the organization
  - Eliminate class, status, and stereotype
  - From the individual perspective
  - From the team perspective
- Value may be:
  - Athletic
  - Academic
  - Compassion
  - Leadership
  - Being really nice
  - (not "popular")

"Humanity looks like bowing in the presence of kings and peasants, knowing there are no peasants in the eyes of God, and that we are all royalty." Neale Donald Walsch

Who adds more value?

A – A really fast swimmer

B – A “hard worker”

C– Someone who “fiercely” cares about swimming and the team

Value-added, daily inspiration

Colleen O'Brien (middle) – in pain everyday, kicks most of the workout, never misses, works on stroke, and inspires us daily with an incredibly positive attitude.

Megan Liang, (mentioned earlier) – lost a leg to cancer, is a hero and an inspiration to all who know her, is always positive (made USA Paralympic Emerging Team)

An inspiring story of reaching out.

What Stella offered went beyond fair trade

More Than I Bargained For

by Jean Bell Mosley
Cape Girardeau, Missouri

It was an ordinary school day. I was in the fifth grade. Children like me who didn't live close enough to go home for lunch brought their paper-wrapped meals and gathered under the shade of a tree.

Such lunches usually consisted of a sandwich, hard-boiled egg, pickle, cookie and a piece of fruit. Bartering prevailed. If a schoolmate's sandwich or cookie appeared to be more appetizing than your own, you tried to negotiate a trade. I always tried to trade something I didn't want anyway—a mashed-bean sandwich or an overripe banana. It never occurred to me to trade a slice of Mama's Old Kentucky walnut cake for my schoolmate's offering of a boring-looking molasses cookie, even though I could see longing in the barterer's eyes.

Sometimes Mama put two pieces of fruit in my lunch package, one to be eaten at morning recess if I was hungry. Quite often, though, I saved that piece of fruit as my bargaining chip to trade for a sugary doughnut or fried apple pie.

Unabashedly, I always examined the looks and quality of my fruit to see which piece was best and then offered my classmate the poorer, less-attractive piece. I felt no pangs of selfishness. It was just good trading sense.

That autumn day after the lunch-bringers had eaten their food, disposed of the wrappings and dispersed to various parts of the playground, I lingered under the shade of a maple, watching monarch butterflies drifting lazily southward. I was still hungry and Mama had put no fruit in my lunch that day.

I saw my classmate Stella Downing coming up a path. She was returning from her home, one of the lucky ones who lived near the school. The sunshine glinted on Stella's black curly hair. Her blue dress matched the color of her eyes. She had something in each hand. When she drew closer I saw she was holding apples.

Stella noticed my interest and asked, "Want one?"

"Yes," I replied, simply and truly. "But I've already eaten," I added, to indicate I had nothing to trade.

Stella held up the two apples, much as I would have done to appraise my trading fruit. One was perfectly shaped, red and shiny, stem intact. No flaws. The other one was smaller, slightly shriveled and dented on one side.

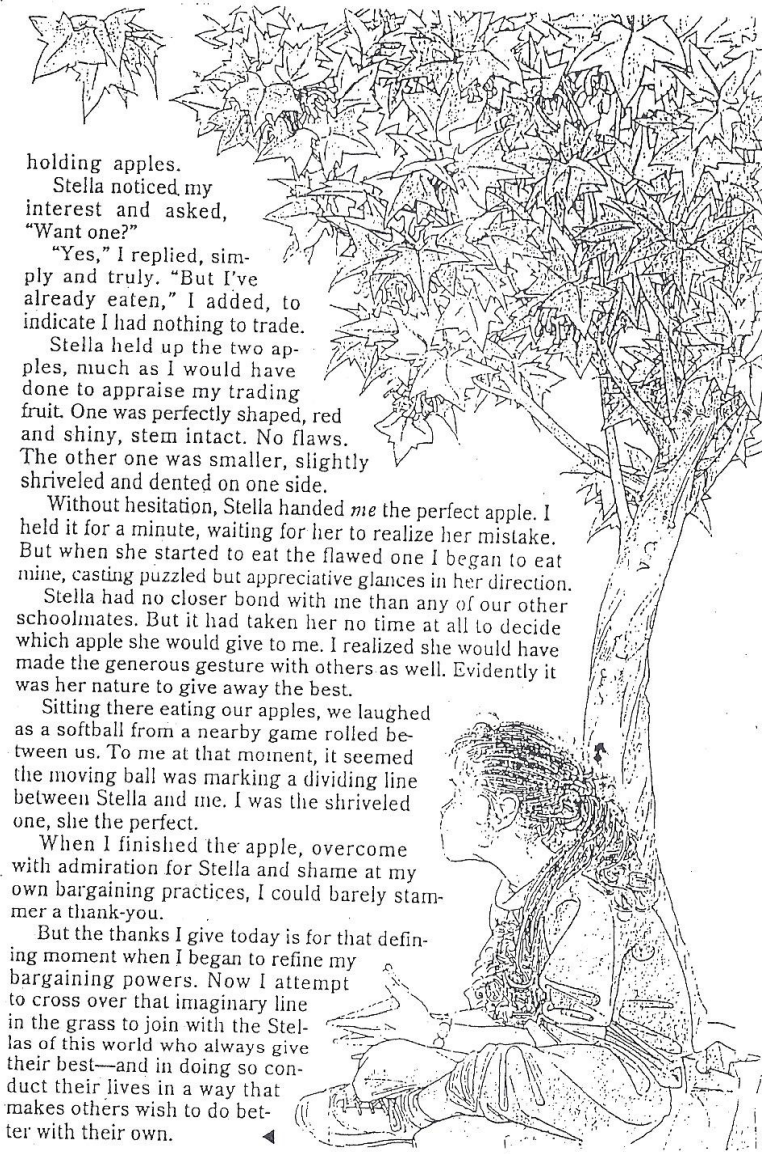
Without hesitation, Stella handed *me* the perfect apple. I held it for a minute, waiting for her to realize her mistake. But when she started to eat the flawed one I began to eat mine, casting puzzled but appreciative glances in her direction.

Stella had no closer bond with me than any of our other schoolmates. But it had taken her no time at all to decide which apple she would give to me. I realized she would have made the generous gesture with others as well. Evidently it was her nature to give away the best.

Sitting there eating our apples, we laughed as a softball from a nearby game rolled between us. To me at that moment, it seemed the moving ball was marking a dividing line between Stella and me. I was the shriveled one, she the perfect.

When I finished the apple, overcome with admiration for Stella and shame at my own bargaining practices, I could barely stammer a thank-you.

But the thanks I give today is for that defining moment when I began to refine my bargaining powers. Now I attempt to cross over that imaginary line in the grass to join with the Stellas of this world who always give their best—and in doing so conduct their lives in a way that makes others wish to do better with their own. ◀



"If you go looking for a friend, you're going to find they're very scarce. If you go out to be a friend, you'll find them *everywhere.*" Zig Ziglar

"The greatest good we can do for others is not to share our riches, but to reveal theirs." Anonymous

A swimmer letter about a compassion and a humble Leader

I'll conclude with a story that manages to transcend the many thousands of cherished memories from my experiences as a part of OA. After clambering aboard the bus home from the 2008 rafting trip, my friends and I (recent graduates of the 8th grade) found ourselves seated behind one of the seniors. He leaned over the seats and introduced himself as Shane Tutass. When we realized we were going to be two hours late, he offered his cell phone for us to alert our parents. However, I was only able to get a hold of my parents as we reached the parking lot-- and they were stuck in traffic. Rather than climbing into his car and driving off, Shane sat with me for 45 minutes on the bench outside the Soda Center, discussing everything from my potential to qualify for JO's that summer to navigating the social dynamics of high school to his qualms about entering Columbia in the fall. His act of selfless generosity and true compassion shocked me at the time. However, after my five years on Orinda Aquatics, I can say that I am not the least bit surprised that someone from this team would take the time out of his day to do a good deed, even when no one but a shy eighth grader was around to see it. Alexandra

Do you look for the strength, power, and *value* that each swimmer brings to the team? Do the kids look for it as well?

Can you name ten (non-elite) swimmers and their non-swimming attributes or contribution?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11) Compassion

"If you don't care, why should I, or they"? Is a question we ask the kids. Compassion is a driving force of team culture. The culture should support compassion and vice versa. The more kids care, the better everything gets.

"The object is not to see through one another but to see one another through." P. DeVries

"There is more hunger for love and appreciation in this world than for bread." Mother Teresa

"Be kind, remember everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." T.H. Thompson

"Look into the eyes of your worst enemy and see your eyes looking back." Anita Moorjani

"Always put yourself in another man's shoes. If it hurts you, it probably hurt them too." Unknown

"All judgment, hatred, jealousy, and fear, stem from people not realizing their true greatness."
Anita Moorjani

Forgiveness Quotes

"To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner was YOU." Unknown

"Never does the human soul appear so strong as when it foregoes revenge, and dares forgive an injury."
E. H. Chapin

"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong." Mahatma Gandhi

"One of the secrets of a long and fruitful life is to forgive everybody, everything, every night before you go to bed."
Bernard M. Baruch

"If we don't properly deal with offense through forgiveness, roots of bitterness grow and destroy relationships." James Robison

"Forgiveness is the greatest healer of all."
Gerald Jampolsky & Diane V. Cirincione

Heart Test (an incredible story of compassion)

As she stood in front of her 5th grade class on the very first day of school, she told the children an untruth. Like most teachers, she looked at her students and said that she loved them all the same. However, that was impossible, because there in the front row, slumped in his seat, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard. Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he did not play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy and that he constantly needed a bath. In addition, Teddy could be unpleasant. It got to the point where Mrs. Thompson would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold X's and then putting a big "F" at the top of his papers. At the school where Mrs. Thompson taught, she was required to review each child's past records and she put Teddy's off until last. However, when she reviewed his file, she was in for a surprise. Teddy's first grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is a bright child with a ready laugh. He does his work neatly and has good manners.... he is a joy to be around".

His second grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is an excellent student, well liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle." His third grade teacher wrote, "His mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best, but his father doesn't show much interest and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren't taken."

Teddy's fourth grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is withdrawn and doesn't show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and he sometimes sleeps in class." By now, Mrs. Thompson realized the problem and she was ashamed of herself. She felt even worse when her students brought her Christmas presents, wrapped in beautiful ribbons and bright paper, except for Teddy's. His present was clumsily wrapped in the heavy, brown paper that he got from a grocery bag. Mrs. Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the other presents. Some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing, and a bottle that was one-quarter full of perfume. But she stifled the children's laughter when she exclaimed how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on, and dabbing some of the perfume on her wrist. Teddy Stoddard stayed after school that day just long enough to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my Mom used to." After the children left, she cried for at least an hour.

On that very day, she quit teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. Instead, she began to teach children. Mrs. Thompson paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded. By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class and, despite her lie that she would love all the children the same, Teddy became one of her "teacher's pets."

A year later, she found a note under her door, from Teddy, telling her that she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life. Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy. He then wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class, and she was still the best teacher he ever had in life. Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while things had been tough at times, he'd stayed in school, had stuck with it, and would soon graduate from college with the highest of honors. He assured Mrs. Thompson that she was still the best and favorite teacher he had ever had in his whole life. Then four more years passed and yet another letter came. This time he explained that after he got his bachelor's degree, he decided to go a little further. The letter explained that she was still the best and favorite teacher he ever had. But now his name was a little longer.... the letter was signed, Theodore F. Stoddard, MD.

The story does not end there. You see, there was yet another letter that spring. Teddy said he had met this girl and was going to be married. He explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was wondering if Mrs. Thompson might agree to sit at the wedding in the place that was usually reserved for the mother of the groom. Of course, Mrs. Thompson did. And guess what? She wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestones missing. Moreover, she made sure she was wearing the perfume that Teddy remembered his mother wearing on their last Christmas together. They hugged each other, and Dr. Stoddard whispered in Mrs. Thompson's ear, "Thank you Mrs. Thompson for believing in me. Thank you so much for making me feel important and showing me that I could make a difference." Mrs. Thompson, with tears in her eyes, whispered back. She said, "Teddy, you have it all wrong. You were the one who taught me that I could make a difference. I didn't know how to teach until I met you! "

(Teddy Stoddard is the Dr. at Iowa Methodist in Des Moines that has the Stoddard Cancer Wing.)

"Whenever I despair, I remember that the way of truth and love has always won." Gandhi

Houssaye wrote:

"Tell me whom you love and I will tell you who you are."

Do your swimmers look to forgive and understand first or resist?

Can you remember situations when you have seen them "rise above", reach out, or forgive.

12) Celebrate the Success of Others

As if it were your own, or EVEN *more* important.

A positive culture cannot exist without swimmers valuing and supporting their teammates success as their own. Individualism, ego, fear will always jeopardize this concept. Great team members will even give up key relay spots or race opportunities for teammates that they love and respect.

"Breakdown came from my focus outward, the comparisons made, and the competition and greed this creates." Anita Moorjani

What is your swimmers response to their teammates' success?

Inner? How do they feel?

Outer? Do they cheer them on, congratulate them, etc.?

How does it affect the team?

Does healthy competition exist within the team? In workout and at meets?

13) Trust

While this appears to be a basic concept and should be implied, it is not the norm in high school sports. The goal of any coach and any coach-swimmer relationship should be implicit trust between all parties. We have maintained an aggressive position that we can't/won't coach swimmers (people) that we do not trust. We will make a commitment to swimmers to support them both personally and athletically, but only if they are unduly committed to the team and to integrity.

With it,
we have everything
Without it,
we have nothing.

"To be trusted is a greater compliment than being loved."

George McDonald

"Wise men, though all the laws were abolished, would live the same lives."

Aristophanes

Do you have implicit trust with your swimmers?..to be left alone in workout or on a travel trip?

Which swimmers do you trust implicitly and why?

Which swimmers do you not trust and why? And what can you do to reverse this? *(they <u>should</u> know that you do not trust them)*

14) Humility over Ego

- An environment based on ego is *toxic*. We let kids know that if they have an ego, they have a problem (need attention) and that their need for attention will not be satisfied or tolerated.
- This reason alone would prevent swimmers from moving up into higher training groups on our team. We ask that they do not walk a path that draws attention but rather gives attention.
- The clear example of this is the immature response to success. We ask kids to become MORE humble as they become MORE successful. We monitor this daily – at all ages.

"Humility finds those who credit themselves, and credit finds those who humble themselves." unknown

"Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less." Rick Warren

"Don't talk about yourself; it will be done when you leave." Wilson Mizner

We help keep them humble with:

- Perspective on swimming and life
- Asking that success translate into appreciation and gratitude
- Focus on what earns real respect
- Challenges that lie ahead
- Not being defined by success, but by service and effort
- Relating success back to work (not glory)
- Keep focusing on the race and process
- As coaches, we do not overplay success
- Turning their success into a mentoring opportunity

How do your swimmers handle success?

Appreciate it?

Identify with it/act out?

15) Build Leadership

A character culture and high-character athletes cannot exist without a perpetual development cycle. We cannot assume that leadership and character will appear at some point in the life of a team or an athlete. This must begin as soon as athletes come into a program. They must see that there is only one growth path. If we want extraordinary and inspirational leaders in the future, they must see that play out in front of them and aspire to be that. Young athletes must see a demonstration of work ethic, integrity, and a resiliency that inspires. We must develop in young athletes, the moral foundation that drives the culture, the day to day expectations, and the success of the program.

- Every team and athlete must know that the younger members are future leaders and role models.
- They should be nurtured from day one. Young swimmers are made aware of the standards and responsibilities and what is expected of them now and in the future. *"If I don't see a leader in you…"*
- Through swimmers (captains, seniors, and anyone of influence) and coaches, young athletes must not only see role models and leaders, but they must aggressively look to move in this direction.

"The first great gift we can bestow on others is a good example." Thomas Morell

"We reform others unconsciously when we walk uprightly.
Anne S. Swetchine

Leadership continued

Build a leadership model that creates an even better future. Make that your legacy. DR *(on Clovis travel handout)*

On our summer-league teams, we began this process with 6 & under's. We talked about future leadership, and that we would only hire role models on our staff, and that their training (to become a coach/leader) began now.

Hazing

Hazing **or "tradition" as it is euphemistically put, that makes people feel less or inferior, is not tolerated in any form and *has no place in building young leaders*. It simply becomes a rite of passage that allows individuals to "give back" what they "took". It is a cycle that builds on itself. It is a negative feedback loop that can be replaced with guidance, motivation, mentorship, leadership, and support.**

We tell the kids: **"The ONLY reason someone does this is because they desperately need to feel bigger/better." and ask, "how little do you think of yourself that you need to do this? You should know that grounded self-confident people NEVER do this. They don't need to."**

Senior College Essay 2012

Sam S, an 18 year old, chooses to be a leader

The team motto "character first" had been printed on my swim cap for the past three years (prior to joining the senior group) and I hadn't stopped to think about it. It was on my head, but not in it. The head coaches of Orinda Aquatics, changed that. Every Friday they held a meeting in which they shared articles and anecdotes regarding character models. Over the past four years of Friday meetings, grueling workouts, and tough meets, I have grown not only as an athlete, but also as an individual.

From an athletic perspective, I have developed from a barely "B" time standard swimmer, to a Sectional qualifier. More importantly, however, I have become the dedicated, determined, disciplined, humble, team oriented, and integrity-driven person I believe I am, and try to be, today. From four years ago, I have matured from a shy freshman to a team captain. This transformation, however, is just a small step in what I want to accomplish.

Just as my coaches have done for me, I want to exemplify a character-driven individual in order to make a difference in the lives of others. I want younger swimmers to be able to look at my teammates and me, and strive to emulate our sense of integrity and self-discipline.

As I grow up and leave the program, I want to bring the philosophies of Orinda Aquatics with me, continuing to spread the team values is essential, in my mind, because although I have applied them in a swimming sense, they are a way of life that can, and should, pertain to everyone. "Character first" may be a swim team motto, but it sure doesn't need the disclaimer, "just add water."

The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not followers. R. Nader

A good leader inspires others with confidence; a great leader inspires them with confidence in themselves. Unknown

If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader. John Quincy Adams, 6th president (1767-1848)

If you are not a good follower, you will never be a good leader. Unknown

Swimmer Letter on a Leader/Mentor

When I was a freshman, I looked up to Kris Kao. I strove to emulate Kris; *he was a beast in workout and the nicest guy you could ever meet.* Kris drove me to morning workouts my entire freshman year. During the summer, Kris scheduled for us to meet in Orinda at 5:20 for the 6 o clock workout because he "liked to be early". Every day, for two and a half months, Kris would drive me to the pool and then we would wait in his car for practice to start for about 25 minutes. Neither of us mentioned changing our meeting time so we could glean another few minutes of sleep. Rather, we bonded. We talked about swimming, baseball, and life in general, developing a legitimate friendship. On days when I didn't have a ride home after practice, Kris offered to drive 15 minutes out of his way to bring me home. When I thanked him for his kindness, he brushed me off. He say, "I'm happy to do it", or "Don't worry about it". I respected Kris's humility, but I still wanted to return the favor to him. Kris was just too generous, and I didn't know how to repay him.

"Just make sure when you're a senior, you pass it on." That statement stuck with me to this day. For the next three years, whenever someone on the team needed a suit for practice, they could have mine. When someone needed a ride, they got one. I was repaying Kris.

Kris Kao's attitude epitomizes the strength of character possessed by the entire Orinda Aquatics swim team. He put the team's interests ahead of his own. His unselfishness was, and continues to be, contagious. There is no freshman hazing on Orinda Aquatics, nor are parent chaperones needed on travel trips. The coaches are confident that every swimmer will "do the right thing". Sean Haufler, Yale University

A letter from a parent regarding the swimmers on this team …

"My children have always had a love for swimming and have improved under your guidance, but this program is something much more than that. *The peers and upperclassmen on this team have …*

- Demonstrated healthy and positive leadership
- Been a nurturing influence
- Conducted themselves with integrity
- And have lived with character
- and ultimately, have had a profound influence on my child."

This reinforces parent support

Questions asked by an OA coach:

To younger swimmers, "Who wants to be a leader on this team?" (all raised hands) "Then don't ever leave a swimmer alone waiting for workout."

To an older swimmer: "Do you want to make a difference? (yes) Then find five people you need to know better and make an impact."

Can you define your leadership model?

Who are the leaders and <u>why</u> (was it earned or self-designated)?

How are younger swimmers mentored?

Does hazing exist in any form?

Does leadership improve year after year?

16) Team Attire

- Team attire is and should be a statement of team pride and not a policy in and of itself.
- Your team attire is your representation of the team.
- Our swimmers *do not compete in a meet or travel* with the team if they are not in (visible) team attire.
- ON travel trips, they are in team attire the entire trip.
- Coaches should lead the way in this regard.
- "It is less that you are not in team attire and much more that it was not important to you." DR

17) Team Travel (Team Integrity)

Senior travel is always coach-run and managed. We do everything together.

Swimmers should travel with the absence of attitude, ego, or indiscretion. Our travel policy is very simple and very aggressive.

- *If you (swimmer) need to be watched (or babysat), you need another team. This really can define the character of your team.*
- Swimmers should carry themselves as mature, dedicated athletes (and individuals) on a "business" trip (parents have paid). It is NOT a social trip.
- If you as a coach, or your parents, feel that you need chaperones, you already have a problem.
- The travel expectations should be made very clear – on time, team attire, supportive (cheer), POSITIVE, purposeful.
- Penalties should be severe (as in removal from the team)
- Room Captains and (coaches) meet management are critical to the leadership process and accountability.

Travel cont.

again, "Integrity has no need of rules." (*or chaperones*)

- Make no mistake about this. This is the ironclad, irrefutable test of integrity, respect, and team commitment. Again, this goes back to implied trust.
- Those who do not respect this *WILL* have problems in other areas of their life.
- We *aggressively* let them know the ignorance and idiocy of someone who would damage:
  - The organization
  - The team
  - Their parents
  - The staff
  - The reputation

Clovis 2013

- 75 Swimmers (one bus, two vans)
- No chaperones/parents (2 coaches) – there was no coach on the large bus (and none needed)
- No bed checks
- No one was ever late, out of team attire, or in the hallway of the hotel, negative, or problematic
- We swam *very* well
- And had a very strong presence on the deck (photo below)

Dear Ron and Don: I want to thank you very much. It is to me a wonderful joy driving and being involved with these kids and both of you. Their aliveness and kindness to each other, and your leadership toward them is an inspiration for me and my job as driver- trainer. It all makes this job great. Craig (the Clovis Bus Driver)

How would you define your travel culture?

Main issues/concerns?

How strong is the leadership?

How do they follow rules?

Is there trust?

What is the general atmosphere? (attire, cheering, attitude)

18) Embrace Academics

Athletes *are* Student/Athletes

- Our process and objective is to foster and support student-athletes at the highest level. Our team *must* commit to both. Our college history supports this.

- A diligent student represents a great deal more than his or her academics. Academics and athletics work hand in hand and support and compliment each other. The more an individual commits to either, the more the other is strengthened.

- This is also critical to support the college process (academic and athletic).

- Athletes that do not *embrace* academics are generally not leaders (in the student-athlete sense) and can become one-dimensional.

- This is often a red flag for a larger issue.

- We offer extensive college support. (see website)

How is your team's academic focus?

Do they embrace the "student-athlete" concept?

How do they balance academics and athletics?

Are they talking about college early in high school?

19) Appreciation (of Parents)

- This is probably the most significant sign of character. "Gratitude is the mother of all virtues." G.K. Chesterton
- A young adult who does not appreciate the unconditional commitment and support of their parents would typically be unappreciative of other key support functions.
- A sincere awareness and gratitude for that which supports an individual is a critical component to a well-rounded athlete, person, and team.
- We devote meetings to this topic and make it clear that this is a part of our culture and mission.
- We do a visualization – Shine a spotlight on you (the kids) and you can't see those around you. Then shift the spotlight from you to those around you, and live your life that way.

We ask the kids,
"if your family is a team, how good of a "teammate" are you?

Regarding Your Parents

There is a story of a baseball player making it into the Major Leagues. *His father calls and says, "You did it," to which the son replies, "no, we did it".*

Your success is a "we",

and your life is a "we".

- Thank them
- Appreciate them
- Respect them
- Love them
- Include them, and make them your best friends (as you are theirs).
- Do this Everyday!

A Mother's Day Article

We are sitting at lunch one day when my daughter casually mentions that she and her husband are thinking of "starting a family." "We're taking a survey," she says half-joking. "Do you think I should have a baby?" "It will change your life," I say, carefully keeping my tone neutral. "I know," she says, "no more sleeping in on weekends, no more spontaneous vacations."

But that is not what I meant at all. I look at my daughter, trying to decide what to tell her. I want her to know what she will never learn in childbirth classes. I want to tell her that the physical wounds of child bearing will heal, but becoming a mother will leave her with an emotional wound so raw that she will forever be vulnerable.

I consider warning her that she will never again read a newspaper without asking, "What if that had been my child?" That every plane crash and every house fire will haunt her. That when she sees pictures of starving children, she will wonder if anything could be worse than watching your child suffer.

I look at her carefully manicured nails and stylish suit and think that no matter how sophisticated she is, becoming a mother will reduce her to the primitive level of a bear protecting her cub. That an urgent call of "Mom!" will cause her to drop anything without a moment's hesitation.

I feel that I should warn her that no matter how many years she has invested in her career, she will be professionally derailed by motherhood. She might arrange for childcare, but one day she will be going into an important business meeting and she will think of her baby's sweet smell. She will have to use every ounce of discipline to keep from running home, just to make sure her baby is all right.

I want my daughter to know that every day decisions will no longer be routine. That a five year old boy's desire to go to the men's room rather than the women's at McDonald's will become a major dilemma. That right there, in the midst of clattering trays and screaming children, issues of independence and gender identity will be weighed against the prospect that a child molester may be lurking in that restroom.

However decisive she may be at the office, she will second-guess herself constantly as a mother. Looking at my attractive daughter, I want to assure her that eventually she will shed the pounds of pregnancy, but she will never feel the same about herself. That her life, now so important, will be of less value to her once she has a child. That she would give herself up in a moment to save her offspring, but will also begin to hope for more years, not to accomplish her own dreams, but to watch her child accomplish theirs.

I wish my daughter could sense the bond she will feel with women throughout history who have tried to stop war, prejudice and drunk driving. I want to describe to my daughter the exhilaration of seeing your child learn to ride a bike. I want to capture for her the belly laugh of a baby who is touching the soft fur of a dog or cat for the first time. I want her to taste the joy that is so real it actually hurts.

My daughter's quizzical look makes me realize that tears have formed in my eyes. "You'll never regret it," I finally say. Then I reached across the table, squeezed my daughter's hand and offered a silent prayer for her, and for me, and for all the mere mortal women who stumble their way into this most wonderful of callings. ***Do something special for your mother this Mother's day (and every day!)***

"You won't be happy with more until you are happy with what you have."

Viki King

"Another shortcoming of desire is that it leads to so much that is undesirable."

Lama Rinpoche, The Door to Satisfaction

Are your swimmers genuinely appreciative? How do they show it?

To coaches?

To teammates?

To parents?

To siblings?

To others? (bus driver, hotel worker, pool staff, etc.)

20) Little Things ARE a Big Deal

(The Butterfly Effect – see article next page)

- If one bad word is acceptable, then why not two?
- If one minute late is acceptable, then why not five?
- If one act of disrespect to another is tolerated, then why not to a group, or a coach?
- If it is acceptable to "cheat" on a lap, then why not a set, or a season?
- If casual drug use is OK…

Ethics and character are black and white.
There is no middle ground.

This is where the line is drawn.

(or crossed)

The Butterfly Effect

by Ron White

It was 1960 and meteorologist Edward Lorenz was working in his lab. He was entering data into his computer in the hopes of modeling weather patterns when he stumbled upon a theory that is known as 'The Butterfly Effect'. He was entering wind speed, air pressure and temperature into three separate equations that were linked in a mathematical feedback loop. This equation allowed Lorenz to predict weather patterns. One day Lorenz was in a bit of a hurry and opted to take a shortcut when entering the data. He rounded the numbers to the nearest one thousandth rather than to the nearest one millionth (for example, .407 instead of .407349). As a scientist, he knew this would change the result – however he expected only a minor change. Lorenz was astounded to discover that this tiny change made a profound impact on the final resulting weather pattern. This discovery led Lorenz to ponder: *Does the flap of a butterfly's wing in Brazil cause a tornado in Texas?* – Thus you have 'The Butterfly Effect' theory.

This theory has been applied to all areas of science since Lorenz's 1960 experiment.

What does it mean for your life? It means that every decision or action that you make - no matter how small – could potentially dramatically alter the course of your life.

ACTION POINTS

Realize that 'The Butterfly Effect' is very real and small decisions or actions can make a huge impact on your life. Take responsibility for your decisions, actions and friends – even the tiny decisions – realizing that they can dramatically alter the course of your life.

Do your swimmers understand this concept?

What "little" things do they do that cross the ethical border?

- ***Training/team:***
- ***On deck:***
- ***Personal:***
- ***Friends:***
- ***Other:***

Application Implementation

"It was never what I wanted to buy that held my heart's hope. It was what I wanted to be."

Lois McMaster

"Laws and regulations tell you what you *can* do, but values tell you what you *should do*…

There is a difference between doing that which you have a right to do and doing what is right to do."

D. Seidman

Applications Areas of Note

Some areas we will look in the application and development of a character-driven culture are:

1. General/vision
2. Buy-in/support
3. The coach's role
4. Connection
5. Expectations
6. Discipline
7. Training
8. Meetings/activities
9. Goal setting
10. Travel
11. Recognition
12. Parent communication
13. College support

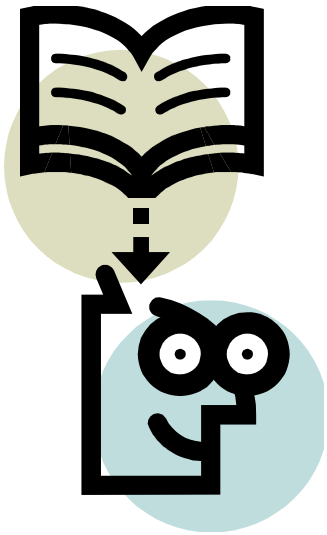
How it "works"

Every day
Every minute
Every word
Every thought
Every lap
Every one
Every thing
Every where

It <u>must</u> go from print to life.

Why These Don't Work

- Mission statements
- Policies
- Rules
- Laws
- Contracts
- Parents
- Chaperones
- Threats, pleas, requests
- Character books, courses



It is our view that an intellectual, or rule-based, approach to developing character and positive social decisions in youth is less effective than <u>imbedded</u> integrity & life skills reinforced in daily activity and experience.

And you can do that.

There must be an overriding anchor to your philosophy and it must link life and happiness to sports and performance.

It must be an organizational mandate (a "we" concept), a blanket wrapped around your team. (not by "stars" or "the social elite")

There must be a vision
It must be sold.

We (OA) made a proclamation many years ago that "we will be a team driven by character."

Complete Buy-in

- *The team must feel its presence*
- *It must be imbedded in all aspects*

  - Vision
  - Mission
  - Board
  - Committees
  - Head Coach – lynch pin
  - Staff (sites)
  - Captains
  - Seniors
  - New (be selective/screen)
  - Parents (individually and collectively)

The message is reinforced at…

- Every team event – banquet, etc.
- Team meetings
- Group meetings (weekly)
- Parent meetings
- Workout meetings

- Swimmer meetings (on deck in the wind and rain – learn discipline)
- Swimmer progression criteria
- Daily quotes (on workout)
- Email articles to parents
- Self-police – part of ownership

You *must be all-in.*

Don't gamble with your teams future!

Can You See It?

"Leadership is all about painting the vision, giving people something worthwhile to follow."

The mediocre leader tells.

(don't bully…)

The good leader explains.

(bullying is…)

The superior leader demonstrates.

(have you felt the pain…)

The great leader inspires.

(You can be a great leader if you…)

William Arthur Ward

Can you create a vision of integrity and humility?

Our Vision

Each year, we as a team and a staff, try to get better at:

- Culture/environment
- General integrity
- Swimmer interaction
- Team spirit
- Swimmer attendance
- Team discipline and respect
- Swimmer development/performance
- Team development/performance
- Team humility and appreciation

It is an ongoing process and an endless pursuit.

Quotes Relevant to Coaching

"This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being a force in nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. unknown

Matt Ehrenberger, OA Head Age-Group Coach

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die. For the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to the next generation."

George Bernard Shaw

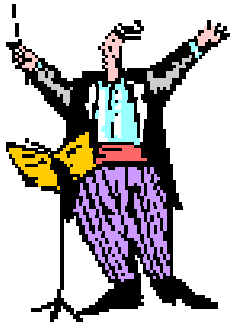
Don't Push on a String

- As coaches, it can be easy to focus on the wrong thing. Many try to win a battle when the "war" is not even understood.
- Rather than draw people into the process of cultural pursuit, we may actually create more separation by not fully understanding their position and our (coach–swimmer) connection.
- We too often try to:
  - "Mold" kids who have nothing invested in the team.
  - Get upset with someone arriving late when they don't understand the virtue of being early.
  - Reprimand someone for not helping the "team" when they don't feel a part of it.
  - Try to fix a stroke in someone who doesn't work hard.
  - Condemn a parent without trying to bring them into the process.
  - Try to win a meet with a team that has no identity, or criticize a group for not caring when they don't know what to care about.

It is <u>critical</u> to know at what level the individual *and the team* resonate or connect to the mission of the team and the goals of the coach.

The Coach's Role

as a character leader

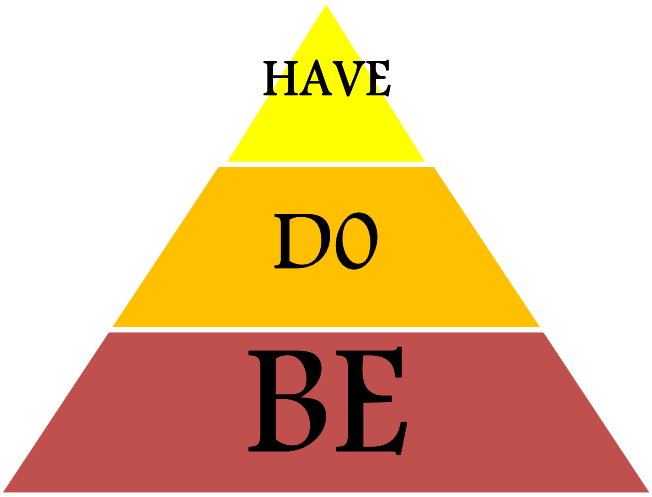


From the big (character) picture to the "bigger" picture (your character)… then to the little picture (everything).

Again…

"When the people lead, the leaders will follow." Gandhi

The Biggest Picture



That is the Be part of the pyramid.

If it is your life's work, and you are fully committed to the team's culture, then everything you think, say, and do will move you and your team in that direction. (The Secret, Law of Attraction, Karma, Universal Laws, etc.)

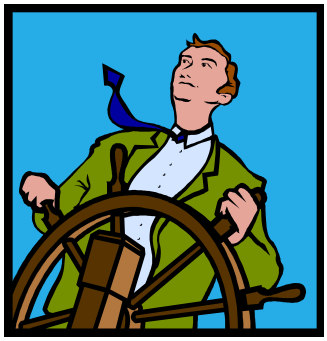
In our early years of coaching, after tremendous personal growth experiences, it became the most important thing in the world to us.

Our personal growth is important so we can transfer what we learn to our swimmers. You can't teach what you don't know.

It is a daily pursuit.

Be a Person of Impeccable Integrity

- The kids and parents will be aware of your values and what you stand for.
- Then you have the credibility to expect and *demand* character from your athletes.
- Kids will respond.



- Think and do things "outside of the (support) box". Set yourself apart.

Be the Role Model

- Arrival
- Attire
- Demeanor
- Maturity
- Language
- Dialogue
- Deck presence
- Travel presence
- Be transparent/fair/team-oriented
- Take a stand on ethics and team only

"No one will question your integrity if your integrity is not questionable."

Nathaniel Bronner Jr.

Try to be right all the time, or as much as possible.

Only speak of what you are sure about.

Follow through aggressively.

Honor your commitments.

Their perception of you has to be that you know what you are talking about and they should trust you unconditionally.

Building that credibility and trust is very important.

*Never s*acrifice respect for friendship. They will "like" you more for defending integrity over self-interest.

We tell kids:

"I will always act in your best interest, whether you agree with me or not. Know that in advance."

"The best way to lead people into the future is to connect with them deeply in the present."

James Kouzes and Barry Posner

Question posed to a graduating Senior:

Don: What makes this (culture) work?
Swimmer: "The coaches lead by example."
Don: "Have you ever read the mission statement"?
Swimmer: "No"

How Much Do You Care?

- Is it important to you?
- Is it important to the team?
- What will your role be?
- Your caring will have a more significant impact than your coaching.

Caring and/or Coaching

What to do if a swimmer:

- Has a noticeable weight drop
- Has a serious family problem
- Is overwhelmed academically
- Is thinking about quitting swimming
- Appears "down" or quiet
- Does not appear to connect socially
- Is "hanging out" with a bad influence
- Is rumored to be drinking
- Drives too fast around town

Coach/Swimmer Partnership

- A 51/49 partnership
- "We're in this together"
- "For the long haul"
- "I need to know what you know…"
  - Frustrations
  - Training
  - Stroke
  - Some personal (family, school, etc.)
- Trust me/I trust you

Engage (aggressively)

- Arrive early
- Connect with the kids (positively)
- Use warm-up to challenge a kid or an issue
- Watch demeanor, interaction on the deck very closely
- Look for leadership deficiencies
- Look for focus in warm-up, stroke specifics, turns, SL's, etc. (it sets a workout tone)
- Watch swimmer interaction in the water (lanes, dialogue, etc.)
- Sell culture daily (training, technique, team)
- Address ANYTHING that detracts from kids or the team moving forward

Ask Rhetorical Questions

- Do you understand that I care about you as a person infinitely more than you as a swimmer?
- Do you know what my real vision for you is? Do you care?
- Can you appreciate that I am responsible for the culture and every member?
- Can I have a conversation with you about something you may be uncomfortable with or disagree with?
- Do you want to be respected by this team and the staff?
- Do you want to be a part of moving this team forward?
- Do you want my unconditional support – for the rest of your life?
- Would you like me to help you with the college process?
- What do you think the team and the coaches think when…
- Do you think people will like you more if you wear $250 jeans, or you care about them?
- How do you want to be remembered when you leave this team?
- Do you think following a drug and alcohol peer group will really move your life forward in a productive way?
- Do you fully realize what your parents do for you?
- Are you upset with me for any reason?

What Matters

- There are a few things that really matter in life and in "your" life.
- Know what they are and fully embrace them.
- Make sure your daily actions are aligned.

Letter from Ron to a graduating senior:

Swimming fast is very important to me. But I always keep it in perspective. Personal growth and development are so much more important. Swimming fast is great for now but making yourself a better person will last you a lifetime and I feel you have grown in other, important areas. And it is for those reasons that I am very proud of you.

In a world where everyone wants to look good, be popular, or fit in, we need to just be sincere, care about people and try to make a difference. Whether its jealous school friends or issues with your parents, the answer is always love and forgiveness.

The Inside Out

To understand your athletes better, look at them from the *inside, out – the real cultural definition.*

- Body language
- Behavior
- Choices
- Attire
- Language
- Interaction with others
- Relationship with parents
- How they treat siblings
- Arrival/getting in
- Pool covers/set up
- Where they sit in a team meeting
- Response to success/good swim
- Response to "failure"/bad swim
- Etc.

Have Atypical Conversation

(some topics have included)

- Economics
- Politics
- Religion
- Gay Marriage
- Buying expensive clothes–$250+ jeans
- Bad TV – Disney Channel
- Why they make bad TV … $
- Teen Stardom and its tragic consequences (REHAB)
- Facebook – value vs. addiction (some kids have actually quit).
- The millions of $ of construction cost lost on a bridge project because of a rare salamander. *Kids remembered that conversation six years later.*

It broadens and humanizes the relationship, and reinforces values.

9-17-12
Hi Ronnie, I just wanted to say a huge 'thank you' for buying the team jacket and the team backpack for me. I am very grateful for the opportunity to be part of a team where the coaches care so much about each one of their swimmers. **Your kindness means a lot to me.** Thank you very much! Love, Olga

Hey Ronnie
Sorry I am sending this email to you so late, but I wanted to tell you how thankful I am to have you in my life. **Some of my "struggles" I have gotten thru wouldn't have been accomplished if I didn't have you to help me through them.** I hope you had a great thanksgiving, because you truly deserve the best, since you give your heart out to so many people. **I have been truly touched by our talks, and it has made me view how I live in a totally different perspective**, and it has shown me how blessed I am to have people who love me and a healthy life. **Thanks for caring** Ronnie!! Always Shelbi

My next year as a freshman, I was in Ronnie's group. Ronnie and Donnie are two of the greatest and funniest people I have ever met in my life. I was a little intimidated at first, but once I got to know them, that all changed. **Sometimes Ronnie would just pull me out of the pool to talk about Global Warming and Soap Operas.** Donnie would always make fun of me about babysitting my older brother. **Ronnie & Donnie have always been there, as coaches, but as something much more, as friends. They always push the kids on OA to become people of character, with good morals and high standards for themselves. The other thing that I have always admired is their consistent teaching of respect.** They taught us to always be thankful for everything we have and take absolutely nothing for granted because in reality, all of us are blessed. Blessed to live where we live, blessed to have the supportive families we have, and blessed to be within the loving family of Orinda Aquatics.

One at A Time

from Chicken Soup For The Soul

A man was walking down a deserted beach at sunset. As he walked along, he began to see another man in the distance. As he grew nearer, he noticed that the local native kept leaning down, picking something up and throwing it out into the water. Time and time he kept hurling things out into the ocean.

Then he noticed that the man was picking up starfish that had been washed up on the beach and, one at a time, he was throwing them back into the water.

Puzzled, he approached the man and said, "Good evening, friend. I was wondering what you are doing."

"I'm throwing these starfish back into the ocean. You see, it's low tide right now and all of these starfish have washed up onto the shore. If I don't throw them back into the sea, they'll die up here from lack of oxygen."

"I understand, but there must be thousands of starfish on this beach. You can't possibly get to all of them. There are simply too many. And don't you realize this is probably happening on hundreds of beaches all up and down this coast. Can't you see that you can't possibly make a difference?"

The local native smiled, bent down and picked up yet another starfish, and as he threw it back into the sea, he replied, "Made a difference to that one!"

Growth Expectations

(through meetings, stories, letters, and one on one dialogue)

Kids need to understand:

1. The tangible ways you want them to be and to grow.

2. That this growth is connected to their success and happiness later in life.

3. That we will do virtually anything for them if they commit to being high character-athletes.

AND THAT IT IS A TWO-WAY STREET

Expectation Examples

We talk specifically about prior athletes who have been leaders and role models, athletes who have impacted the program significantly.

And we make it clear that these qualities are what we expect from our current athletes.

We also can relate that their extraordinary qualities have put them on a path to future success and happiness.

See examples of letters we have shared with our swimmers:
Nader: an example of a caring. (pp. 106)
Peter: an example of work ethic and maturity. (pp. 268, 360)
Zach: an example of unselfishness. (pp. 104)

Talk to the kids constantly to build a positive, trusting, mutually committed relationship.

Have visionary discussions:

- I think you could swim at ? college if you …
- I believe you are an x level swimmer if you are willing to …
- I think your best event will ultimately be ? and I would like to train you for it.
    - This is why (specifically).
    - This is how we are going to do it.
    - This is the time frame for development.
    - This is the improvement you are capable of.

Have technical improvement discussions:

- I want you to work on these things … because I believe it will get you to the next level:
    - Free: lengthen stroke, more efficient distance per stroke
        - Specifically how – explain changes to be made
            - Stroke count per lap, ex.
                - 12 in moderate sets
                - 13 in threshold sets
                - 14 in speed sets
    - Underwater speed
        - Improve technique (kick width and/or speed)
        - Black lines underwater
        - Match up and race ?

Have personal growth discussions:

- I recognize how you are doing better at … and I appreciate it.
- You have grown so much in these areas … and I am proud of you.
- I need you to be a leader on this team. This is what I would like you to help me with …

Selective Screening

- New swimmers should:
  1. Love swimming
  2. Embrace training
  3. Embrace the culture
  4. Add value

- Age-group swimmers should know:
  - Senior group expectations
- National Group swimmers should be:
  - mature, leaders, goal-oriented, team-oriented, trusted implicitly, role models
- Hiring policy (for staff):
  - Integrity first
  - Passion
  - Knowledge

Other questions to ask swimmers

- Are you a great athlete? (in manner and execution)
- Are you a “role” model or a “social” model?
- Do you make a positive difference?
- Do you inspire others?
- Do you make the team better? Your friends better?
- Can you embrace every challenge?
- Can you put the team ahead of yourself?
- Do you live a life of integrity and positive social decisions?

Expectations

What Makes You Different?

Said to team: "If you want your environment to be different, "you" *have to* be different. You must walk a "different" path."

Swimmer: "This team is very, very, important to me."
Coach: "But you add no value. You reap the benefits but give nothing back. That cannot continue."

"What we do on some great occasion will probably depend on what we already are, and what we are will be the result of previous years of self-discipline." H.P. Liddon

Your Expectations?

What are your character expectations?

How are they sold?

How are they enforced?

How do kids respond?

Some Basic *(unwritten)* Rules

Everyone is treated as an adult and expected to act like one.

- Don't ever lie
  - It may very well jeopardize our relationship permanently
  - Always be honest and deal with the consequences
- Don't complain about anything
- No disrespect to anyone for any reason
- No bad language – ever
  - including slang or condescending talk
- No inappropriate attire (men and women)
- No two-piece suits – all of the women respect this policy

"Character is easier kept than recovered."

English Proverb

Thoughts on Direction

"Find comfort in those who agree with you. Find growth in those who don't." unknown

"He who is good at making excuses is seldom good at anything else." unknown

"If the going is real easy, beware, you may be headed down hill." unknown

Ask for… everything

- Can we create something powerful, different, life-changing?
- Would you commit to be a part of that?
- Can we care more than anyone?
- Can we be the best team on the deck?
- Can we be the most appreciative?
- Can we be the most spirited?

They must think on a higher plane – outside of themselves.

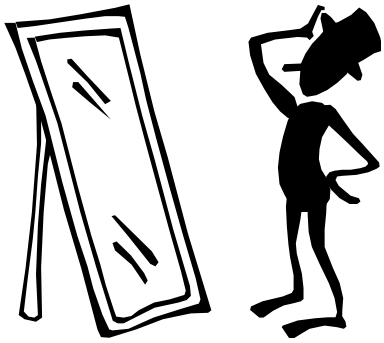
Discipline and Punishment

"If you step in a puddle, don't blame *the puddle.*"

unknown

Identify in Team

- The Leaders
- The Good
- The Neutral
- The Questionable
- The Bad/Destructive



- And identify their…
  - Commitment to swimming
  - Commitment to team
  - Character/Integrity
  - Social choices/priorities

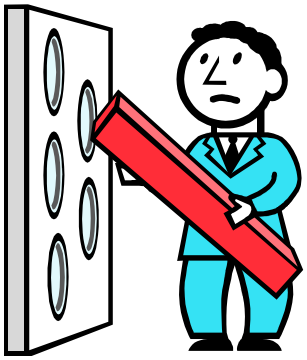
- Then –
  - Make the leaders inspirational
  - Make the good kids leaders
  - Make the neutral kids good
  - Give the bad kids a choice

The "Bad" Influence

- Will dominate the locker room
- Will dominate the lane
- Will affect others at meets
- Will challenge authority
- Will disrupt a travel trip

Options:

- Assign a mentor
- Monitor closely
- Engage aggressively



Read John Leonard's article, page 351, On Doing Less

(we give it out every year)

Core Group

You have to have a core group of kids whom you can count on unconditionally, for anything, under ANY circumstance.

We put kids into three broad categories:

- Group 1: Kids whom we can trust completely and count on unconditionally (now 60)
- Group 2: Well intentioned kids whom we can mold – like clay (now 20)
- Group 3: Kids who are not on board (now 0) – We would watch them very closely.

Punishment

(or as we call it, disincentive)

General concepts about punishment

- Fair – so kids respect it
- Swift – so the issue is immediately dealt with
- Severe – needs to be impacting (unpleasant)
- Consistent - no double standard
- Forgiving – 2nd & 3rd chances when appropriate
- Never make a rule that you have to break
- Know when to involve parents
- Assess all aspects of the issue
- Make the consequences known clearly up front
- *Always TEAM, INTEGRITY, and LIFE based*

Some Sample Punishments

- Took an Olympic Trials swimmer out of both relays at our High School Championship Meet because they did something that wasn't "team oriented".
- Forfeited our most important dual meet of the year and gave up an undefeated season because four kids behaved, on their own, maliciously. Teamwork works both ways.
- Left three kids at the hotel because they were late for departure (knew it was safe).
- Took swimmer off team for a month (with parents OK) because grades were slipping. They improved immediately.
- Sectionals (2011): three kids missed cheering for finals races. That will never happen again. Related back to "team," respect, support, commitment, etc.

Punishment Follow-up

This is critical to move the relationship and the team forward. Ideally, proper punishment and response strengthens the relationship and the team.

- Review incident/action – "I want to make sure you understand why I am upset/what you did was wrong."
- Review policy/philosophy – "Our expectation and policy is pretty clear on…
- Relate back to life (lessons) – "It will not serve you as an athlete, or a person to …"
- Reaffirm commitment to athlete if they:
  - Understand, apologize, and wish to move forward – "Are you ready to move forward in a more positive and productive way?"

A 360 Degree View When Talking to Kids

Before talking to kids, take a snapshot of all that you know:

- History
- Behavior
- Training
- Attendance
- Family
- Development
- Social
- Personal struggles
- Your relationship
- Their interpretation

Discipline

What are the most common things you discipline for?

1.

2.

3.

Why do they occur?

What can you do to change the culture or mindset toward these issues (with a goal to eliminate them)?

"By constant self-discipline and self-control you can develop greatness of character." Grenville Kleiser

The idea is to create an environment in which you don't need a lot of rules and silly punishments that are a waste of time and energy for everyone.

But rather an environment where kids rise above typical teen stereotypes and fully respect and embrace these virtues, and the team.

When expectations are clear and respected, discipline and punishment are rarely needed.

We have had minimal, if any, discipline or punishment issues in many years.

And we rarely, if ever, have to raise our voice.

We generally ask and it is done. And very often, we don't have to ask.

Discipline without Punishment
an example

A kid from the Senior 2 Group doesn't help with lane lines one day.

I pulled him out of the water during warm up and asked…

"Would you like to move up to the Senior 3 Group?

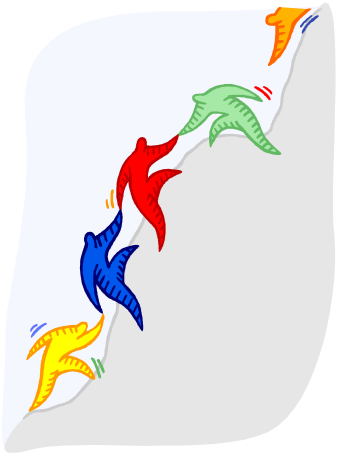
"Yes."

"I have a question. Did you help with the lane lines today?"

"Kind of. I was near the reel."

"Did you pull a lane line?"

"No."



"I know that because I watched you. No matter how hard you work, no matter how fast you swim, if you do not help every day, your chances of moving up to the Senior 3 Group are … ZERO."

Integrity in Workout

- Arrive early
- Help set up
- Have equipment
- Team cap
- In on time
- Proper warm-up/recovery
- Work on stroke (every stroke)
- Work all turns/streamlines
- Everything is legal
- Always be positive and supportive influence
- Work hard (to potential)
- Be funny (they are)
- Work with focus
  - Technique keys
  - Stroke counts, etc.
- Equipment away
- Thank coach (they do)

Character in Your Workout

How is character exhibited in your workouts?

What are any character deficiencies in your workout?

Giveth and Taketh Away

(the transition, IF value has been created)

Create value for your swimmers. Build a strong relationship. Create some kind of legitimate need.

Then make it conditional.

For me to continue to support you, I need you to…

- Be at practice every day
  - Train with more focus
  - Be a leader all the time
  - Be positive in the locker room
  - Make impeccable social choices

If they don't, you need to be willing to let them go (cut the cord).

No Dollar Lane

no dollar swimmers – these would be swimmers who are unmotivated (don't want to be there), but they are allowed to stay on the team for the revenue

Bad for the workout

Bad for the locker room

Bad for meets

Bad for culture

You must put culture ahead of revenue.

Coach Your "Favorites"
aggressively

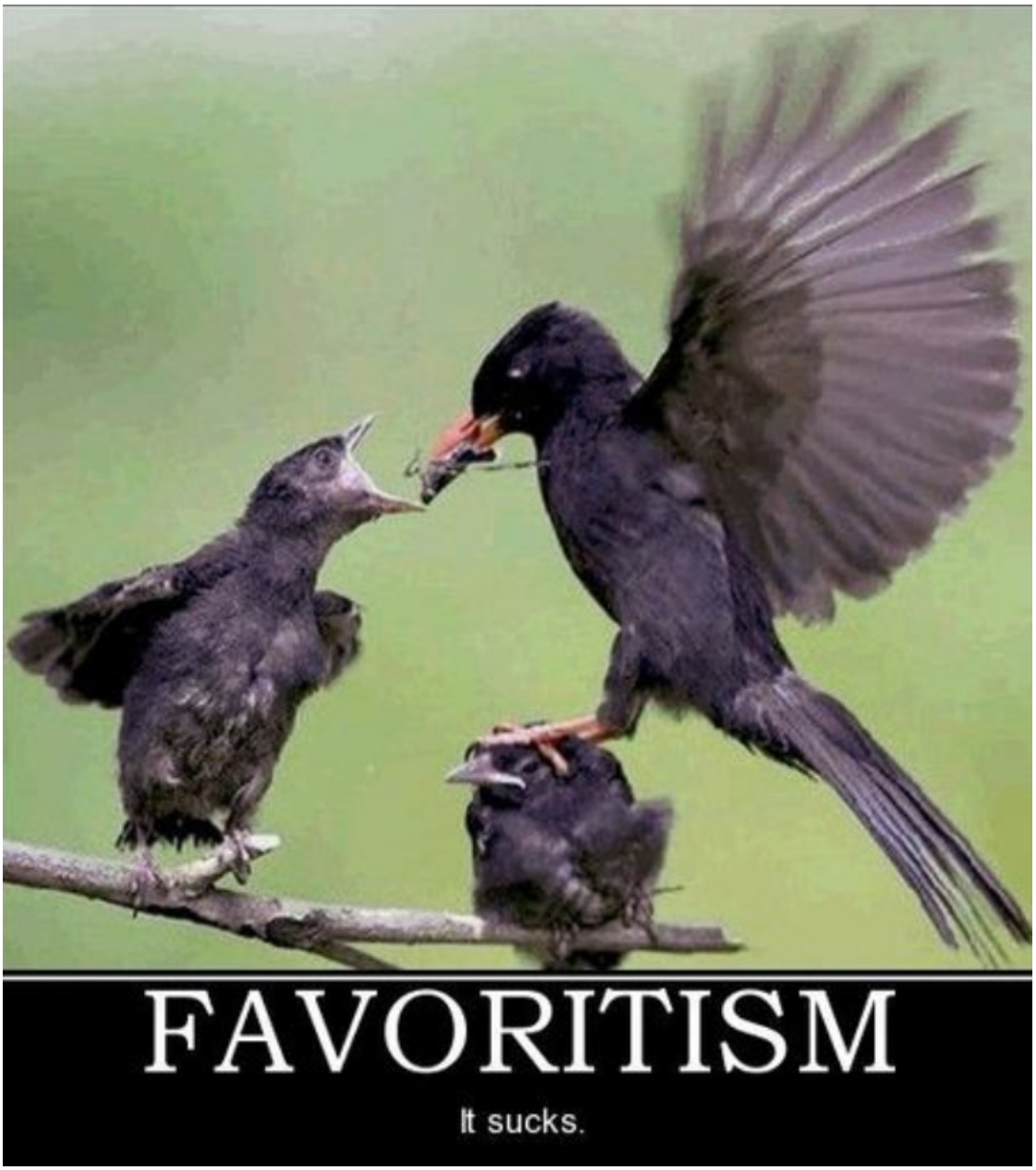
Of the "non-favorites",

- the kids who care will realize they need to be better to earn your attention.
- the kids who don't care, won't care.

The point is to make it obvious that the kids who do the right things (in swimming and life) will get the most attention.

It has nothing to do with times or your personal likes and dislikes.

Team captains at Washington State and Columbia


FAVORITISM
It sucks.

Sample Workout

Has thoughts, quotes, goal interaction, swimmer integration, education, speed kicking, distance-per stroke swimming, build up swimming, walls, & speed UW

Orinda Aquatics – Daily Workout Planner

Group: Sr	Date: Mar 23	Sat	Yards: ~7,000
Announcements	Workout Notes		Swimmer Notes
Mutual of Omaha Clinic	How do you think the team would grade *your* team commitment?		*Be very, very nice. (seriously)*
When was the last time you made a real difference in someone's life (that you didn't know very well)? Why not today?			
Warm-up: 3x300 Free, Drill, Choice	Buddy coach - (unpaid!–you're not certified!)		
Turn Master	8x50 fins kick-fly on back HU/vert SL@45 400 Stroke Pads (every 4th Fr NB)		
Cool Shades & Black-out swim VASA	8x50 str K fins UW @ 55 400 Free Pads/SN		
High School Goal sheets (weekend homework)	8x50 Stroke K fast @ 1:00 (4/8 EZ fly S NB) 400 IM fins/pads		
50x50 Stroke - wall/UW focus (10x) @55 1-build 50 to 80% 2-work mid 25 (through wall – race pace) 3-build 1st lap to 90% - fast turn/15m 4-Fins 90% 5-EZ second stroke	*Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none.* ~William Shakespeare		
Be kind to unkind people. They need it the most.			

Sample Stroke Evaluation

Sven Campbell Assessment

Backstroke

- Turn
  - Approach stroke speed – maintain speed on cross stroke, especially to the left
  - Balanced on both pulls into the wall – holding maximum water to maintain speed
  - Submerging into turn – not rolling head up
  - Learning how to be long into the turn and maintain speed and legality
  - Balanced roll to create maximum power off wall – don't throw feet ahead of hips
- Underwater speed
  - Power off wall – from balanced turn
  - Power & speed on dolphin kicks
  - Build kick speed from bigger to tighter and faster
  - Transition to flutter kicks
  - Time breakout strokes to maintain speed through the surface
  - Condition ALL of the above when tired – very important
- Stroke Balance
  - Head position higher
  - Head still – slides to right
  - Right should sits low on recovery
  - Right hand slows at side on recovery
  - Working on riding higher in the water to create less resistance
- Pull
  - Finding the proper depth of the catch
    - Too deep looses leverage and slows stroke rate
    - Too shallow doesn't create enough power
    - **Right now he is his good**. In the summer he was too shallow.
- Stroke Rate
  - **Stroke technique is balanced and very good right now.**
  - His stroke rate had to be a little slower to work on everything
  - I would like to gradually increase his stroke rate without losing technique or power

Freestyle

- How can we get faster in the 100 meter Free?
  - Dive - Improve dive reaction, entry and underwater speed
  - Turn - Improve turn technique, power off wall and underwater speed
  - Stroke – improve right arm catch when fatigued on 2nd lap
  - Train more breathing every 4th
- Stroke balance
  - Head position lower – in line with body
  - Hips ride higher – somewhat depended on head position
  - Rotate more with left shoulder – sits too low after breath
- Arm Stroke
  - Recover with more forward, relaxed hand
  - Work on high elbow catch with both arms
  - Right arm
    - Enters short and across his face when tired
      - Causes hand to slide out and up and elbow to drop
      - Elbow is below hand
      - Loses water on pull and breaks down even more
    - Enter slightly wider and farther over the water to get a better catch
    - Breathe every 4th stroke to help stay longer and more balanced

Sample Stroke Evaluation (2)

Steven Stumph: Develop specific areas to continue improvement in Breast and IM

Ratings 1-10 Notes: 1) 10 is "achievable" perfection, 2) Scale is in the context of a "World Class" swimmer

Note: IM is the development all strokes individually both technically and in training (develop the parts and the whole will improve)

	Freestyle		Backststroke		Butterfly		Breaststroke	
Body Position	Head Position-too high-relax it	5	Head/Body Position		Timing of stroke & breath	4	Keep head down on glide	4
	- Keep head in line w body	5	- chin moves to left	4	- pulse ahead of entry	4	- lean on chest	6
	- Hips need to ride higher	6	- left should sit low	4	- head uw at entry	5	- keep hips high on glide	6
	- breath too high (angled)	5	- rotate sooner ahead of pull	4	- stay extend thru hips	4	Maintain tight streamline	5
	- Rotate more to left off br	5						
Stroke	Stay extended on breath	6	Right hand catch too shallow	4	Catch under shoulders	4	Head down on out sweep	5
	- Catch w higher elbow	5	catch sooner both arms	4	Lean/pulse into catch	5	Wider out sweep	6
	- Finish stroke farther back	5	develop stronger, deeper pull	5	Breathe later at finish of stroke	3	Higher elbows on catch	4
	Relaxed hand recovery	3	Train at 40 SR w max pull	5	2nd kick meets hands at exit	2	Lead in sweep with thumbs	4
	Kick through breath	7	Train at 44 stroke rate	6	More power w 2nd kick	3	Keep pull in front	4
	Kick higher and stronger	7					No dip of hands on recovery	3
Training	Train at 12-13 SPL to lengthen	6	Must train w three objectives		Must train w three objectives		Hold streamline when tired	4
	Work on technique when tired	5	1) better stroke balance	5	1) better timing on breath	4	Focus on power pull when tired	5
	Swim moderate at 10-11 SPL	6	2) build SR w/o losing DPS	5	2) develop power 2 bt kick	3	Train at 5 spl w 40 SR	6
	Consistent breathing pattern	6	3) develop uw speed	5	3) develop uw conditioning	5		
	Improve UW & breakouts	8						
Turns	Technique	8	Leave approach arm in front	5	Technique is good	7	Technique general	7
	Approach	6	Cross arm hold more water	5	Speed of turn	5	Speed of turn	5
	Spin fast	8	Don't roll head up-roll too slow	5	Work SL off wall	7	Pull down	5
	Tighter streamline off wall	8	Bigger dolphin kicks-push hips	4	Work SL kicks UW	5	**- hold to 2 1/2 bl**	5
	Work kicks to maintain speed	8	Improve speed UW	6			- power pull & dolphin kick	4
							- hands recover ahead of kick	4
							- speed thru breakout	5
Challenges	Must improve recovery to improve catch and pull		Must slow SR to improve rotation & catch		Feel timing of and develop power 2-bt kick		Train hard but be perfectly efficient	
General	Work ethic	10						
	Maturity/Focus	10						
	Receptive to changes	10						
	Ability to make changes	10						

Team Workouts

- Every Friday PM
  - Kids integrate
  - We usually do a challenge set or some type of workout game.

    - Pick a Door, Deal or No Deal, Lane Challenge, Ultimate Frisbee, Wii dance, Kick and Chat, etc.
- It is not enough to compromise the training of the top kids but enough to really allow the kids to get know each other. It creates tremendous team bonding and camaraderie, integrating older (Senior) swimmers with younger ones.

- Theme workouts

Trick or Treating down *OA Way*…

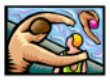
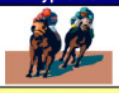
Theme Week

Verizon 3G 5:50 PM 33%

Done ThemeWeek2011 Sum.pdf

Orinda Aquatics Theme Week 2011!

Times include dry land. Subject to change.

		Monday-4th	Tuesday-5th	Wed-6th	Thursday-7th	Friday-8th	Saturday-9th
AM	Time	6:00 - 10:00	6:00 - 9:00	6:00 - 9:00	6:00 - 9:00	6:00 - 9:00	6:30-10:00
	Theme	Transformers - your strokes!	Go the "Distance"	Legs Recover	"Kick" the Habit, UP!	Need for "Speed"	Life of Swimmer!
	Main Set	Drills	Two Ladders	Recovery	Kick/Pull outs (up)	Speed	Swim each year!
							
	Meters	6000, 3000	6,500	6,000	6,000	4,500	8,000
	Topic	H/C Athlete	Appreciation	Leadership	Work Ethic	Making a Difference	Complaining
	Activity	4th of July games!	Swim Video	Swim with Jr's	Med Balls	Team Building	This is no "day at the beach"!
PM	Time	Be "EXPLOSIVE"!	3:30 - 7:00	3:30 - 6:45	3:30 - Movie	No PM	Goal - 60,000m
	Dry Land	76 crunches! X6	Katie Irwin	Abs/Core	Abs/Core		Random act of Character!
	Articles	Dry Land	Article/Quote	Article/Quote	Article/Quote		
	Theme	1776!	IM Awesome	Monsters Inc.	"Pace" Yourself - Don't Believe the "Hyp-oxic" 	Parent Appreciation Week!	
	Main Set	76x25	10x400 IM	100x50 Stroke	Str. Rate/Hypoxic	Bring equipment, water, snacks, and a positive attitude!	GO OA!
	Meters		4,500	7000 (late WO)	4,500		
	Activity	NO PM	Capture Flag	Go to a Rec Meet! (reflect)	Movie/Pizza	Be "abs"olutely committed to your TEAM!	

Character, in the long run, is the decisive factor in the life of an individual and of nations alike. *Theodore Roosevelt*

A positive spin on "hell week". Focus is on Theme workouts, team-building, theme topics, articles/movie

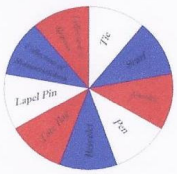
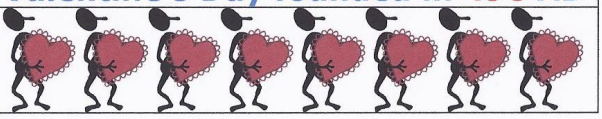
Valentine's Day Theme Workout

Orinda Aquatics – Happy Valentime's Day!

Group: Senior	Date: Feb 14	Thursday	Yards: 4,500

Announcements	Workout Notes	Swimmer Notes
	Love is the answer	Give Valentine to Jr Group

A loving heart is the truest wisdom. *Charles Dickens.*

3x300 EZ	
(1) A HEART (rate) Set - Free • *6x50@ 50: 12 = 72 BPM (EZ)* • *5x50@ 45: 15 = 90 BPM (Mod)* • *4x50@ 40: 20 = 120 BPM (Strong)* • *3x50@ 35: 25 = 150 BPM (Fast)* • *2x50@ No Brth fins- max effort – max HR* Break for 30 in between-check HR 10 sec x 6	
(2) He loves me/He loves me not See set to right – kicking with or against!	Kick and chat together (he loves me!) or kick against your partner (he loves me not!) coach will designate
(3)A Dozen (red and white) roses! Don't feel "blue" – *you need 12 roses to complete the set!*	spin wheel (with red, white, and blue tabs) – a red or white (rose) = 50 stroke max fins – exhilarating!; blue = 200 w/ parachute – difficult to deal with!
(4) "496" (500) EZ w/ partner (HOLD Hands)	Valentine's Day founded in 496 AD
Wish everyone a Happy Valentine's Day!	

Random Acts

We celebrate, and challenge kids with "random acts of kindness." It helps them to see outside of themselves.

- **At school**
  - **Thank a teacher or employee**
  - **Embrace a new/young/shy student**
- **With family**
  - **Mentor sibling (show leadership)**
  - **Show appreciation to parents**
- **With friends**
  - **Show appreciation/favor**
  - **Take a stand if needed/intervene**

Friday Meetings

The majority of the discussion is about life, integrity, and to reinforce the teams mission, vision, and expectations.

Topics include

- Character/growth
- Appreciation
- Adversity/sacrifice
- Integrity
- Random acts

Other topics include

- Finance – Setting up an IRA (with graph) and the evils of credit/debt.
- Illness – one of our swimmers put together a power point presentation to share with the team about her very serious illness.
- Forgiveness – a few years ago, we bought 16 copies of a book called Love is the Answer and let the kids read it every Monday before workout.
- The inspirational video, "The Boat Lift" of 9/11
- A College swimmer came back to talk about an alcohol incident – very serious, came with mother to talk to the group.
- A former swimmer came back to visit . She was in her late 20's. She asked if we were still doing the Friday meetings and if we were still giving the "Chicken Soup For the Soul" articles to the kids. She still had hers.

Team Meeting Article Topics

- Life Lessons
- Sacrifice
- Tragedy
- Parents
- Inspiration
- Teen Issues
- Swimming
- Appreciation
- Sacrifice

An example was an article on "middle school vandalism" vs. a "7th grader raising money for charity" (what is the difference?)

Kids think, cry, learn, laugh

It is constant reinforcement (maybe the most powerful

We (coaches) read the paper every day for social, integrity, or life learning lessons.

Some Theme Articles

(they are10-1 Life to Swimming)

Life/Athletic concepts

Some have been presented and some are in the appendix.

- The Butterfly (challenge) pp.120/344
- The Apple (selflessness) pp. 137/345
- The Uncommon Professional (detail/pride of work) pp. 130
- "Being" Olympian, John Leonard (leadership) appendix–352
- The "Bike"/Spoken Dreams (sacrifice) appendix, 350
- Good Luck, Bad Luck (stay positive) pp.112/346
- On Doing Less – John Leonard (one's affect on a group) pp. 125/351
- The RACE (perseverance) appendix, 349
- The Butterfly Effect (little things can change your life) pp. 175
- Heart Test (compassion) pp.144/348

Life Questions (for the kids)
from the book, Ever Wonder

- If your life is too hard, how easy would you like it – and what are you comparing it to?
- Are you the type of person with whom you would like to spend the rest of your life?
- Do you know that <u>you</u> are the one you've been waiting for"?

- If the world followed you, would the world be a better place?
- Can your life be more about giving than getting? How does that translate to this team?

Other Concepts Discussed

- BE ABOVE THE WEATHER (a metaphor for adversity)
- Penny in a piggy bank (get wealthy over time)
- The path of most resistance
- Wind at your back (the team)

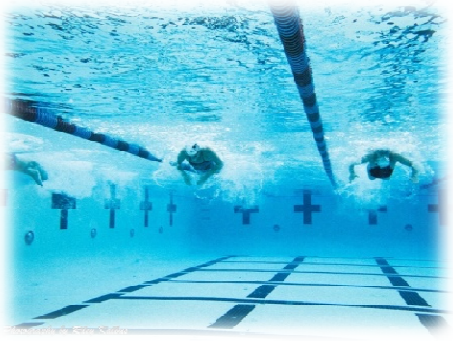
- "One stitch" can lead to a team's or athlete's "unraveling"
- The power of one – you are the one that matters
- Little things ARE a big deal (they make the big things)
- YOU are a role model/leader – whether you like it or not
- Do (and celebrate) "random acts of kindness"
- The more successful you become, the more humble you should become
- Be a difference-maker
- Always clean up after yourself (team pride/team policy)

Visualizations

CHARACTER IMAGERY

It is important that kids visualize that which they want to become. This should include character and perseverance as much as swimming. Some examples are:

- A great team (the best) – what does it look like/feel like
- Being an inspirational athlete (what does it look like/feel like)
- Climbing the mountain (of adversity) and standing on top
- The most challenging swimming issue repositioned and executed in a positive light
- The most challenging personal issue repositioned and executed in a positive light
- A crowded warm-up executed with purpose
- A shave/peak meet in the wind and rain with confidence



"Miracle", The Movie

This may very well be the greatest example of transformation based on the two most fundamental principals of sports – work ethic and teamwork. It was not that they won a gold medal, it was that the (life) transformation occurred in one workout, and under extreme duress (when life lessons are most effective). It is worth watching once every year or two with particular attention to the "again" scene.

- What you had:
  - Elite athletes

- Along with…
  - Ego
  - Selfish attitude
  - No concept of sacrifice or team
- One workout (two lessons) transformed:
  - A team
  - A season
  - A sport
  - Sports history
  - What is possible in life

- The lessons? (are the essence of sports)
  - *Work ethic*
  - *Putting the team first*
- How much talent would they have needed to win without these lessons?
- Would anyone have known or believed it was physically possible?

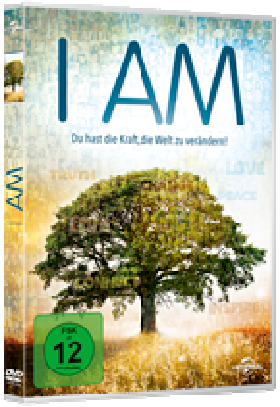
This was driven by one person and sold in one day. That is the power of the coach and of character.

"I Am" (documentary)

by Tom Shadyac

We showed this to the (75 member) senior group and ordered pizza. We gave up a workout to do it. The main messages were (which we related back to the team):

- Best of humanity – connectedness
- Worst of humanity – disconnectedness
- The destructive nature of greed and self-service



Some Activities

(must be "team" oriented)

- Rafting (team)
- Holiday gift exchange (senior)
- Team building

- Bowling (divide group)
- Beach trip (seniors)
- Kids bring treats on their BD (everyone sings)
- Theme Week (activities/movie/training)
- Theme workouts

Top-Down Goal Setting

- Life
  - Be a person of integrity
  - Make a difference
  - Be healthy and happy

- Athlete/Team
  - Be a role model and a leader
  - Be a great teammate
  - Train with purpose

- Swimming
  - Training goals
  - Technique goals
  - Walls/Under Waters
- Times

This process alone mitigates anxiety and "burn-out" and is counter to virtually every goal-setting exercise done by coaches, swimmers, and parents.

“A goal without a plan is just a wish.”

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Travel Process

Travel has been covered but it cannot be emphasized enough that travel is a critical component of team character, team leadership, and team culture. Every detail must be examined along with any suspect person or possibility.

- Look at travel in the context of the bigger picture
  - To integrity, life, the team, the staff, their parents
  - To mutual trust and respect
  - To owners/partners, accountability
  - To proving that they do not need to be supervised
  - A business trip and not a "road trip"
  - And not about rules

- Little down time – if so, it is in room
- Room captains (ownership)
- Senior leadership (ownership)
- Mentorship (ownership)
- Mix ages (mentoring)
- Address concerns in advance
- Safety is paramount - cannot leave hotel room or the team without talking to coach
- Team attire mandatory virtually the entire trip
- We explain this philosophy and process to parents
- We have several meetings about purpose and organization
  - We are not babysitters. If they cannot follow and contribute, they cannot travel
- We have several meetings during the trip (at least four a day) to organize, and sell trip purpose and team message.
- No one is ever late

Team Banquet

and Inspirational Awards

- Final awards of the evening are the Inspirational Awards
  - Male recipient
  - Female recipient
- Focus is on leadership in all aspects
  - *Commitment*
  - *Discipline*
  - *Academics*
  - *Integrity*

- Tone of banquet is as much on character as performance
- Every swimmer is acknowledged for performance as well as personal contribution
- Coaches do extensive preparation for comments and speeches
- Gave a nice quote book one year
- *There is no alcohol at an OA banquet.*

"Integrity In Aquatics" Award

we initiated a high school scholarship

- Based on:
  - Character
  - Academics
  - Anti-Drug and Alcohol stance
- A one-time scholarship ($1,500)
  - From salary
- Plaque and Letter

  (Recipient-Brooke Woodward, Emory)

Excerpt from letter to Brooke:

"I have seen all too clearly that it is not navigating the academic or athletic landscape that is the most challenging for youth. It is navigating the character landscape; to live a life of integrity in the midst of extreme social and peer pressures. You have not only done this, but become the standard." Don

Parent Communication

It is critical to sell the team vision (competitive and character) at every opportunity.

From High School Parent Handbook
(reiterated at every meeting)

- In our program, **leadership is invaluable to the team's success** and to the process of maintaining our **tradition of excellence**. Furthermore, the entire group, from freshmen to senior, is extremely mature. In terms of ability, the men's team is certainly a possible North Coast Championship team and the women's team is going to be one of the best we've had in many years.

- While we have had much success on a competitive level over the last ten years, **our primary objectives have included much more than achieving competitive goals. Our intention throughout has been to instill values that will have a lasting effect on our athletes long after they leave the program. We believe that our student/athletes have much to learn about themselves and about life through the sport of swimming.**

- **It is our commitment to these values that has set the foundation for our success. And it is our intent to remain steadfast in our commitment to these values.**

Parent Info-Priorities
(also in handbook)

- As a student/athlete, ***we know you will have a demanding schedule.*** Although it may be difficult, it is certainly possible to do the things that you want to do and to do them well. You will need to be disciplined and keep your priorities in order. They should be as follows:
- ***Swimming:*** You have one opportunity to be a high school athlete. We want you to value it and get the most out of it. Regardless of your ability, **make the commitment and make the sacrifices** to reach your goals. High school athletics can provide many of the fondest memories of your life and, often, some friendships that will last a lifetime.

Why is swimming the MOST important?

It encompasses …

- Discipline – the discipline/work ethic from swimming is invaluable for personal growth.
- Structure – less free time and more structure is good.
- Priorities – adhering to the workout schedule **forces** kids to prioritize their activities.
- Sacrifices – kids need to learn to make sacrifices, especially social sacrifices. Often, the choice can be workout or socializing. Workout is better.
- Health – hard training is physically beneficial.
- Family – often, a sport such as swimming may be the (only) vehicle that allows parents to participate in their kids' lives and communicate (not coach), interact with, and support them.
- Academics – time management must be employed, and more often than not, grades are better during the athletic season because a demanding schedule often forces better time management and consequently better study habits.

Parent Response

Dear Coaches,

My child recently just joined the team but the impressions that you have made in the last two months on her are nothing short of incredible. Although she is a really good kid already, whatever you have all been telling her in the team meetings, on the pool deck and in the water has had a great impact. Last week, she apologized to me, quite sincerely, for having a sullen attitude. She also thanked me for all the driving that I do for her. And tonight after I picked her up, she told me about a kid in her school who was having trouble recently and it had been bothering her and it was time to tell me about it. This kicked off a lengthy discussion about drugs and alcohol that was candid and honest and you all gave me the springboard to have a very positive, helpful conversation with my daughter. I wanted to let you know that I very much appreciate all the hard work that you put into these kids, helping them to become better people and grow up well in so many different ways. Thank you. New Parent

College Swimming/Support

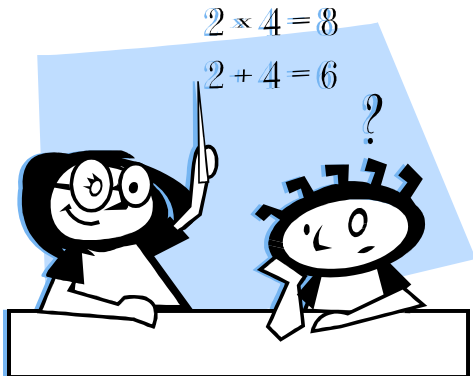
- It is assumed from the beginning that 1) they will swim, and 2) we will help them in any way we can
- It is an extension of our commitment and partnership
- And a result of their commitment to the team/culture
- It is (should be) an extension of the swimming process
- We hold meetings for swimmers and parents
- We write letters to coaches
- We call coaches
- We bring in college advisors
- Margot Woodward (OA parent alum) has built an extensive component on our website, and assembled a fifty page manual
- College swimming is built into program philosophy and mindset
- We see senior swimming as an eight year (4 high school/4 college) process rather that a four year process
- We sell the value and experience of being an collegiate athlete
- And ask them to pursue leadership there
- The result is virtually every swimmer pursues college swimming

Other Things We Do

- Virtually anything to help them in swimming and life
- Challenge them on personal issues
- Support them through the dire circumstances
- Always let them know where they stand – be honest

- Go to Doctor's appointments (and PT)
- Have family meetings
- Take to lunch, dinner
- Write personal notes/letters
- Assign mentors
- Occasionally help with homework

Summary



(We hope this all adds up!)

The next three pages summarize the process of developing high-character athletes (leaders) and high-character teams (cultures). It is critical that coaches pursue this progression and can evaluate each level of the coach-swimmer relationship as it evolves.

Levels of Development/Connection

- Coach runs workout/swimmer shows up
- Talk to about stroke (may or may not connect)
- Talk to *aggressively* about stroke
  - Pull out of water
  - Watch constantly
- Connect personally (care)
- Talk about attendance and commitment (link)

- Watch demeanor in all aspects
  - Encourage areas of improvement
    - Arrive earlier, focus, help more, talk to others
- Talk about leadership attributes
- Demand leadership skills
  - Begin giving leadership responsibilities (set up, tasks, lead stretching, etc.)
- Explore life/social choices (easy transition) – the "concepts"
  - From an athletic perspective
  - From a personal perspective
  - Give articles, shares a story, talk about past successes
- Talk about life skills that are critical to be a "good person"
  - Relationship with parents
  - Academics
  - Mentoring/inspiring others
- Demand them (fully connected)

Stages - Macro

- Take from name on roster to someone who connects
- Take from someone who connects to someone who is committed
- Take from someone who is committed to a high-character athlete
- Take from a high-character athlete to a high-character person
- Take from a high-character person to a leader (and someone *you* trust implicitly and will do anything for)

Stages of Acceptance for Kids

- Defiance
- Ignorance
- Awareness
- Intellectual
- Emotional

- Affect social/personal decisions
- Defines path (rise above)
- Defines life
- Impact others
- Lead

Connected/Disconnected?

List ten swimmers that you are the most connected to.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

Can they take a leadership role and mentor others?

List ten (committed) swimmers that you are the least connected to.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

Orinda Aquatics – Policy on Behavior

The policy and philosophy of Orinda Aquatics will be viewed in three areas:

- *The mission and guiding principles of Orinda Aquatics*
- *Strict protection of the Orinda Aquatics environment*
- *Inappropriate behavior outside of Orinda Aquatics, including the use of drugs or alcohol*

"Integrity has no need of rules." Albert Camus

1 – The Philosophical Backdrop and Mission of Orinda Aquatics

First, and foremost, it is imperative that all members of Orinda Aquatics, swimmers and parents, fully understand and embrace the team's mission and values. The culture and athletic foundation of Orinda Aquatics is based on a high-character athletic process coupled with an integrity-driven lifestyle. Our core values will be centered on integrity, work ethic, humility, compassion, mutual respect, and team support. This "character-based" philosophy encompasses all aspects of behavior, attitude, and interaction. There is no divorcing the swimmer or athlete from the person or teammate. Beyond creating a positive character-based environment, it is the objective of Orinda Aquatics to be a safe-haven for young adults who choose to walk a socially responsible path. We want to lead the way in this regard and show that it is possible to maintain a positive, healthy, drug and alcohol free environment for young adults. While certain activity may be commonplace in society or acceptable locally, we will not tolerate any activity that compromises the integrity of an individual, our team, or the organization as a whole.

2 – The "Protection" of Orinda Aquatics

Our philosophy should translate into a positive, healthy, and productive environment that supports all members and protects the environment and culture. Behavioral expectations will encompass every aspect of this program from training, competition and travel, to activities and general personal interaction. Members will be expected to act with the utmost integrity at all times. This is the reason that Orinda Aquatics does not travel with chaperones. As stated above, any action or activity that compromises the integrity of Orinda Aquatics will not be tolerated. Examples would be inappropriate language, improper attire, lack of team support, negativity/apathy, tardiness, being disrespectful to anyone, or clearly engaging in activity that is inappropriate or illegal. Even the smallest infractions will be addressed, and the coaches will be the ones who evaluate and address behavioral issues.

3 – Behavior "outside" of Orinda Aquatics

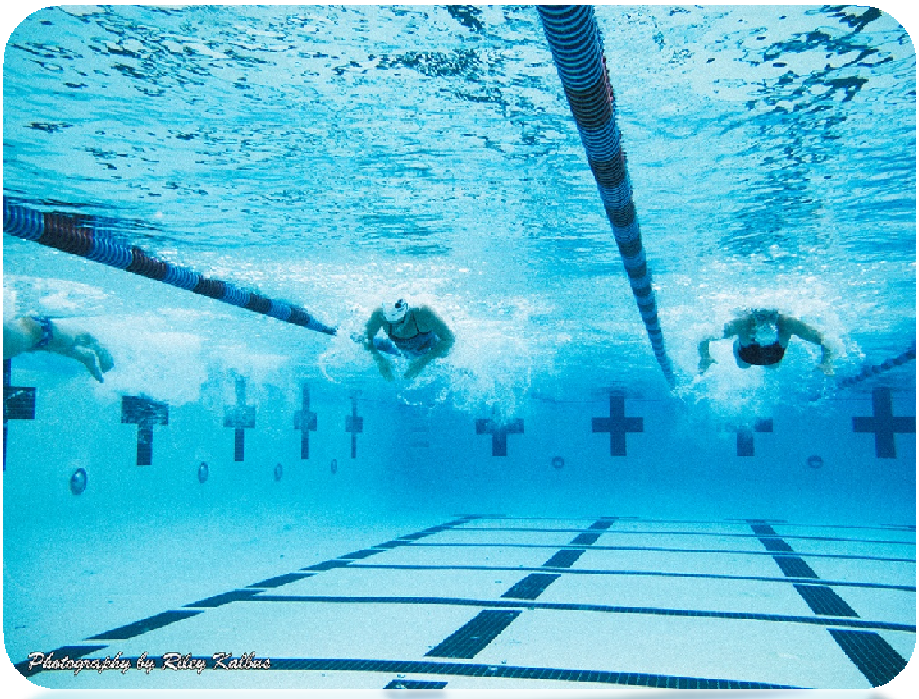
While we do not have the desire or intention to monitor or evaluate behavior outside of Orinda Aquatics, we will be steadfast in our effort to protect this team and its culture. Any action or activity that would be unbecoming of a high-character athlete or representative of the ideals of this program will be addressed, regardless of the circumstance or location. Anything that translates into dialogue, focus, or rumor within the team or the community will become a team issue, and therefore will be addressed. With regard to the use of drugs or alcohol outside of Orinda Aquatics, those who engage in such activities, do so in direct contradiction to everything this team stands for. These actions betray the trust and commitment of the coaches and swimmers, and they jeopardize the organizational foundation and reputation. Additionally, any collegiate swimmer who engages in the use of drugs or alcohol with members of the Orinda Aquatics Senior Group (high school swimmers), will be excused from the team, as this is not the leadership or mentorship we are looking for from older swimmers. And, Orinda Aquatics will not need "proof" of such activity to investigate and take action against.

Response

Response to inappropriate actions, or the suspicion of such actions, either within the context of an OA activity or outside, will be addressed by the staff with the team member involved. If necessary, a meeting will be held with the member's parents and or the Board of Directors. And if it is clear that the ideals and philosophies of Orinda Aquatics are not aligned with those of the athlete, we will ask the member/family to leave the team. **Finally, the coaching staff of Orinda Aquatics reserves the right to dismiss any member for actions or attitude that is counter to the team's mission and ideals.**

Character is that which reveals moral purpose, exposing the class of things a man chooses or voids. Aristotle

Program Types



Summer League

- **Safety first** (a platform for discipline/development)
  - Organization
  - Discipline
  - Responsibility/Accountability
- **Structure**
  - Attendance
  - Punctuality
- **Staff**
  - Like-minded (language/message)
  - Passionate
  - Principled
  - Transition/perpetuation plan – staff and swimmers
- **Parents**
  - Objective
  - Understands role
  - Supports mission
- **Commitment/discipline**
  - Effort/focus
  - Coach-swimmer relationship is key
- **Technique foundation** (committed kids will care)
- **Sell leadership**
  - Build into program
  - Hire from within (the leaders)
- ***Demand integrity***
- ***Keys to character (risk is "social" emphasis and summer-time for high school kids)***
  - ***Start early (6&U)***
  - ***Build relationships***
  - ***Embed into life skills***
  - ***Can carry over into high school***

High School

- **Most challenging program type**

- **Challenges**
  - ***USS vs. summer-league (culture difference)***
  - ***Coach conflict (opposing philosophies)***
  - ***Serious vs. casual***
  - ***Kids already down "social" path***
  - ***"Social" kids can dominate***
  - ***Administration is final ruling on discipline***

- **Must first control team (workout/meet) environment**
  - ***Captains are critical (have pre-season meeting)***
  - ***Have a preseason parent meeting***
  - ***Talk to upperclassmen individually***
  - ***Make prudent travel plans (know risk)***
  - ***Talk to principal and A.D. about authority and discretion with discipline***

- **Sell culture and vision as often as possible**

Club-Multiple Sites

- **Staff on board/positive relationships**

- **Monitor site cultures**
  - **Same message, language**
  - **Mission, visions, policies flow from top - down**
  - **Weekly conference calls/meetings**
  - **Adhere to same standards, values, rewards, punishment, and discipline**
  - **Stay together at meets (attempt integration – buddies)**
  - **Blend when possible – activities, "camps", Saturday workout**
  - **"Elite camps" at main site (for dedicated kids)**
  - **Head Coach spends some time at each site**
  - **Run parallel meetings, activities, or challenge sets**
  - **Use team meets, activities, and events to "sell" and convey overall team vision and identity**
  - **The organization/culture is bigger than the site**

"When we dream alone it is only a dream, but when many dream together it is the beginning of a new reality."

F. Hundertwasser

Orinda Aquatics
Olympians

Kim Vandenberg & Peter Varellas

800 Free Relays - Bronze Medal *Men's Water Polo – Silver Medal*

Orinda Aquatics, UCLA Swimming

20 Questions from United States Swimming

#20 *What gets you through the tough times – or what has until now?*

Kim: When I was younger, before I came to college, ***my coach always got me through the tough times by making me see the "bigger picture"*** as he would say. We would have numerous talks about where I was going with swimming and what I wanted out of the sport. Even though I didn't agree with much of what he said then, I look back on it and realize he was right. He was always there for me, and I know I wouldn't have made it this far without him.

Orinda Aquatics, Stanford Water Polo

"Talking with you both seriously and jokingly is so enjoyable that I often find it difficult to leave the pool deck after practice. You have done so much for me in such a short amount of time and I just wanted you to know how much I appreciate all your efforts. It seems like every day you say something that amazes, inspires or intrigues me. I truly consider you to be the perfect role model for each of the kids on the team. ***You are the strongest, most stable foundation that I could ever hope for."***

Age-Group Focus

Why Now?

"Some day, in years to come, you will be wrestling with great temptation, or dealing with intense tribulation. But the real struggle is here and now, in these quiet weeks. Now it is being decided whether, in the day of your supreme temptation, you shall fail or gloriously conquer. Character cannot be made except by a steady, long continued process." Phillips Brooks

Why is it important?

- Need to start young
- It is *never* too early
- How will they learn how to lead?
- Who will they follow?
- Need to derail:
  - Drugs/alcohol
  - Ego
  - Attitude
  - Apathy

Life skills and character are NOT bound by age

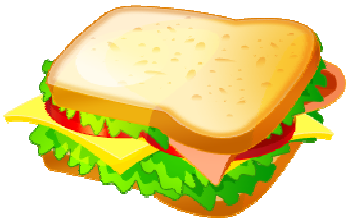
Again, how many parents are hoping their children learned (today); work ethic, humility, sacrifice, adversity, or helped a teammate, etc.

Early Character Development

- Where the foundation begins
- The beginning of connection and relationships
- The most effective period to teach and impact kids
- Prior to social focus/pressure
- Prior to media immersion
- They still want to please/offer less resistance
- They can see and understand the path and expectations

Layers of Leadership

Senior Role Models (iron clad)



(The team)

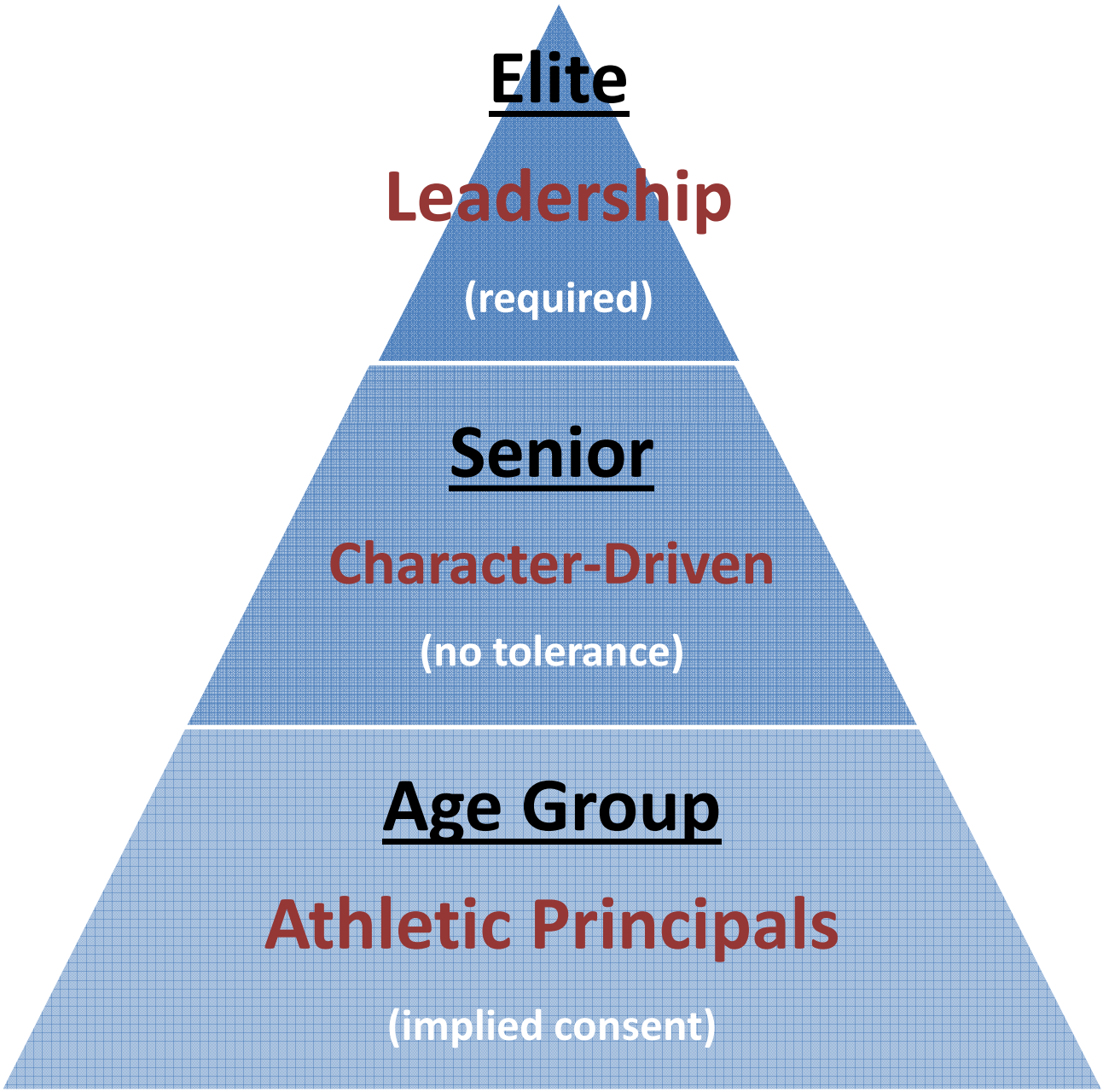
Education at an early age

Focusing on both ends of the age spectrum keeps continuity and fluidity in cultivating and maintaining a character culture. Problematic kids become outliers. (see next page)

From an OA Grad: "Thank you so much for the recommendation. I actually cried when I read it. I just wanted to say that all the kind things you wrote about me being a responsible, high character young adult would not be half as true were it not for your influence in my life. Your philosophy and the atmosphere you created at OA had a huge role in my maturation and formation as a person. So thank you for that." Megan

An Athlete Leadership Model

Continuity can be created by starting early and accelerating leadership demands throughout the process.



Build into Model

(see "Develop" progression)

Orinda Aquatics - Group Quadrennial Plan

"Prepare the child for the path, not the path for the child."

2012	Junior Cub	Junior Plus	Senior 1/2	Senior 3	National
Skill	Streamline, feel, balance, body line, distance per stroke - technique in all strokes	Advanced drills, "build" stroke, better awareness and discipline, refine turn technique, introduce stroke rates	Know drill sheet, drill discipline, know stroke keys, train stroke rates, develop under water speed, improve pacing	Detailed stroke breakdown, pace, back half swimming, aggressive stroke rates, recovery, disciplined walls, turns as an asset	Stroke accountability, precise pacing, back half swimming, aggressive stroke rate training, disciplined recovery
Training	Light aerobic swimming, 50% skill/drill (all strokes), turn technique, dry land stretching, injury prevention, introduce test sets, develop 200 IM	Introduce/develop all energy systems, increase test sets, increase aerobic base/threshold in free and main stroke, maintain stroke and turn technique while training, increase pulling, train for 400 IM, introduce dry land, core, strength training	Know energy systems/test sets, train with purpose/ focus, more pulling/resistance, increase kicking, increase IM training, add aggressive strength/core work, film (Dr. G), attendance - optional	Increase threshold/Vo2Max for free and stroke, increase stroke training, pulling/resistance training, aggressive IM training, increase core/strength training, film (Dr. G). Attendance at 90%	Increase threshold/Vo2Max and anaerobic training, aggressive IM training, increase pulling and strength training - VASA, med ball. Film (Dr. G). Attendance at 100%
Develop	Training principles (general - why, how), introduce team culture, character, HAVE FUN!	Training efficiency/maturity, introduce leadership, humility, team commitment, begin long-term planning	Zero tolerance for adverse behavior, look for leadership, humility, team commitment. Elevate focus on training and competing. Strong academics.	***Leadership,*** humility, perseverance, appreciation, vision, reach out to team, strong academics. Attendance is 90%. Begin college focus.	Leadership, humility, perseverance, vision, strong academics. ***Take responsibility for all aspects of team.*** College plan. Attendance is 100%.
Competition	**CBA+, JO, FW**	**CBA+, JO, FW, All-Star Meets, Sectionals**	**CBA+, Senior Meets, Sr T/F, Clovis shaven, HS, LC - FW, Sectionals**	**Senior Meets, Sr T/F, Clovis shaven, HS, LC - Santa Clara, Sectionals, Junior Nationals**	**SC - Clovis (unshaven), HS, LC - Santa Clara, Sectionals, Nationals, Jr Nationals, FALL -LC Grand Prix - MN, SC Jr Nationals, Dec LC**
Goal	Far Westerns	Sectionals	Sectionals/High School	Santa Clara, Junior Nationals	Nationals, Olympic Trial Cuts
	Become a high-character person and athlete				

Character Camp

We started this camp to teach leadership, character, and life skills to younger children/athletes.

Testimonial

Hi, I was hoping to have the opportunity to see one of you this morning to *Thank You*, and congratulate you on a wonderful camp for these young swimmers. My daughter has come home every night to enthusiastically share the objectives she learned and reviewed in the water that day. There is still one day remaining, but from our standpoint, this camp is already a huge success and should be a requirement of all middle school aquatic athletes in the area. *If you could have been a fly on the wall last night, listening to her talk bluntly about the challenges of alcohol and drugs in our community with her brother, and how it is a reflection of self-esteem, you would realize the impact you have made.* Taking time from your already busy schedules, and donating your time to reinforce lessons about Character as it relates to life and sports is a true gift. I can't thank you enough for developing this camp. Character Camp Parent

I AM

a

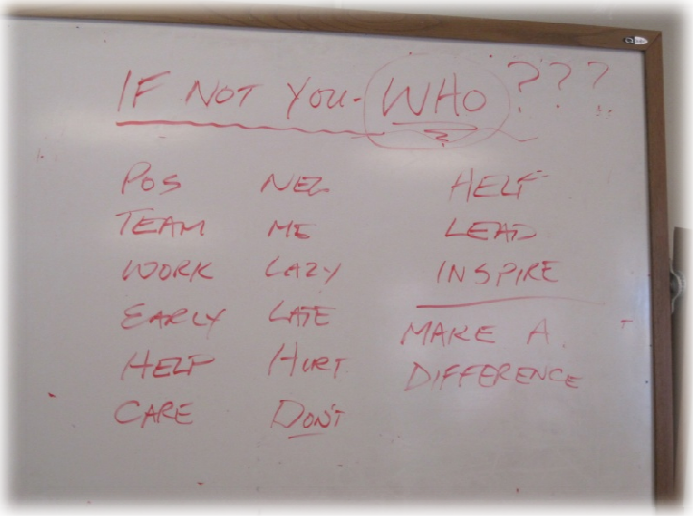
"High-Character Athlete"

Repeat 100 times a day!

We ask the kids to repeat this often to come to identify with the principals and to develop a sense of pride in the concept.

What is the Camp?

- One week
- 10-14 year-olds
- Open to the community
- Integrate life lessons and leadership into athletics
- Become a high-character athlete!
- One hour classroom and one hour pool each day
- T-shirt, Cap, and bracelet (Character First)
- Proceeds donated to Swaziland, Africa



Character Camp Parent Meeting

- What
- Why
- The missing part of youth sports
- OA history
- Coaches' experience
- The role of the parent
- What we see in high school
  - Emphasis on performance
  - De-emphasis on character, values
  - Drug and alcohol use
- Life lessons/skills in sports
- The leadership aspect of sports
- The high-character athlete vs. the "successful" athlete
- Longevity
- Q&A

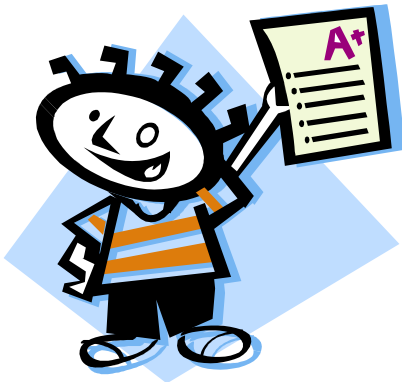
Classroom Topics

- Leadership (good vs. bad) – ALL ages
- Attitude
- Complaining
- Work ethic
- Academics
- Parents
- Appreciation
- Drugs/Alcohol
- Compassion
- Selflessness
- Healthy goal setting
- Healthy disappointments/challenges
- Training with focus, purpose, and a team commitment.

Index Card - Who Are You?

- Name
- Age/Grade
- School
- When/where did you start swimming?
- Most positive (non-performance) swimming experience?
- Best display of leadership?
- Who do you admire and why?
- Who should you know better?
- Who supports you and how?
- How can you help the team (out of the pool)?
- How do you show your appreciation?
- How can you make the team better?
  - The lane better?
  - The locker room better?

Grade your…



- Attitude
- Effort
- Focus
- Team commitment
- Reaching out
- Parent appreciation
- Social Choices
- Attempt to “make a difference”

Good leader/Bad Leader

YOU

are leading someone!

List ten qualities of each type of "leader" (good and bad).

We explain to kids that everyone is a leader to some degree, the question is, are you a good leader or a bad leader?

Questions on Leadership

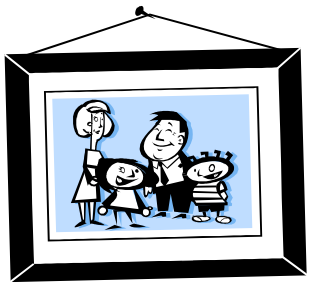
- What is the best age to be a leader? – ANY AGE!
- Will you accept that you ARE a leader?
- Who will lead your team in the future? If not you, who?
- Can you make the team better? Now?
- Can you be a difference-maker? Now?
- How do you want to be remembered as an athlete? Is that the way you live your life?
- If you walked in the pool gate and saw ten kids playing 4-square to your right and one kid sitting alone to your left, where would you go and why?
- If the coach asked someone to help with covers, in the wind and rain, what would you do and why?
- Would you rather be the fastest swimmer or the most respected?
- How have you contributed to this team (other than showing up)?
- If you were the most inspirational athlete in the world AND responsible for this team, what would you do differently today?
- Can you name five people you should/can get to know better this week?

Questions on Life

- Is your life more about giving or getting? Why? How?
- Is your life more about how you appear or how you are? Why? How?
- Is your participation on this team more about you or the team? Why? How?
- Is your relationship with your parents more about what they give you or how they support you?
- Your best friends should be your? …(parents)
- Do you lean toward the path of most resistance (like the work) or least resistance (avoid it)?
- What good can come from drugs or alcohol (name one)?
- Why do people (kids) move in this direction?
- How much of what you do is influenced by others?

Define your Support Network

Family – A "Team", YOUR team



- Are you a good teammate?
- Do you appreciate their support?
- Are they your "best" friends?

Friends – do they support;

- Good habits
- Good decisions
- Strong academics
- Sports (attendance, effort, and leadership)
- Do you watch out for their well-being?

School/Sports - do you appreciate;

- Teachers
- Administrators, assistants
- Librarians
- Custodians
- Homework
- Coaches/teammates, hard work

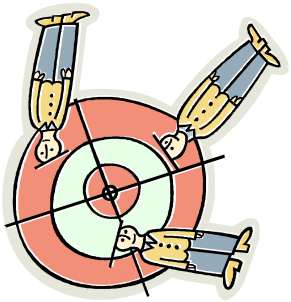
Do you know what the "bad" influences are?

- And why they are bad?
- Drinking/Drugs (need for acceptance)
- Stealing (need for control)
- Bad language
- Bullying
- Attire
- Cheating

Goals

Big Picture/Healthy - Fill in goal sheet

- Personal
- Family
- Friends
- Student
- Teammate
- Athlete
- Swimmer
- Appreciation
- Work ethic
- Attendance
- Attitude



Quiz

List three traits of a good leader?

List three traits of a bad leader?

The Butterfly teaches us what?

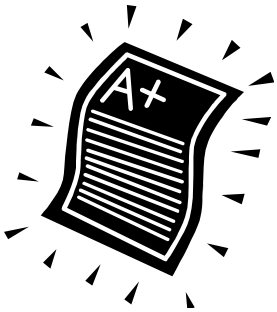
How would that relate to swimming?

Giving the better "apple" teaches us what? (from article)

How does that relate to swimming?

What good can come from drugs or alcohol (name1)?

What bad can come (name 5 things)?



Why do people (kids) move in this direction?

Your best friends should be your…

You should be appreciative when…?

- You get something (good)
- Every day for every thing

What is the best way to handle a "bad" swim?

Why "climb the mountain" and not just hang out at "base camp"?

What is more important?

- Being respected or being popular?
- Swimming fast or working hard?
- Helping with pool covers or getting to the shower first?
- Homework or video games, etc?
- Joining someone sitting alone or a "fun" group at the pool?
- Getting in a lane with your best friend or someone you should know better?
- Your swimming or the team's character?
- What you say in the locker room or on the deck?
- Doing the right thing or the popular thing?
- Getting kickboards for your lane or having someone else do it?
- Your parents saying "no" for the right reason, or "yes" for the wrong reason?

If you complain about anything, you will complain about…(everything!)

Who wants to hear you complain? (NO ONE!)

Complaining achieves what? (NOTHING!)

Young Character!

Can you name five things you can start doing to develop a character culture in your 10 & under swimmers?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Other?

The High-Character Athlete at Workout!
Checklist

- ✓ Arrives on-time/early
- ✓ Arrives with a positive attitude
- ✓ Helps set up pool
- ✓ Welcomes teammates
- ✓ Positive in the locker room – ALWAYS
- ✓ Reaches out to a teammate every day
- ✓ First one out of the locker room and in the pool
- ✓ Has proper equipment at the beginning of workout
- ✓ Swims warm-up with focus, concentration, non-stop, with perfect streamlines
- ✓ Leaves wall on time (on intervals)
- ✓ Knows repeat times
- ✓ Counts all laps and repeats
- ✓ Wears team cap
- ✓ Doesn't stop until finished or coach stops you
- ✓ Knows each set swim objectives
- ✓ Swims with focus and purpose
- ✓ Pushes through challenging sets
- ✓ Remains positive through challenges
- ✓ Communicates with coach

The High-Character Athlete at Meets!
Checklist

- ✓ Takes ownership and responsibility
- ✓ Prepares the night before
- ✓ Talks to parents about meet details, plan, the day, etc.
- ✓ Prepares items – suits, goggles, towels, team attire, snacks
- ✓ KNOWS WHAT TIME TO LEAVE THE HOUSE
- ✓ Arrives early
- ✓ Checks in with coach upon arrival
- ✓ Finds team area
- ✓ Team stretch
- ✓ Team warm-up (first one in) – focused
- ✓ Loudest/most spirited at team cheer
- ✓ Stays in team area
- ✓ Stays positive and focused
- ✓ Gets to know swimmers that you may not know well
- ✓ Checks in with coach before and after races
- ✓ Finds the value in every swim (never negative or upset)
- ✓ Focuses more on the "race" than the time; pace, walls, streamlines, etc.
- ✓ Cheers for teammates
- ✓ Warms down
- ✓ Helps clean up team area
- ✓ Checks in with coach prior to leaving
- ✓ Thanks coaches and parents for their support

The High-Character Athlete at Home!
Checklist

- ✓ Appreciates parents – ALWAYS
- ✓ Is respectful at all times
- ✓ Supports family (recognizes "team" effort and role)
- ✓ Mentors siblings
- ✓ Embraces academics and takes responsibility
- ✓ Takes responsibility for practice schedule
- ✓ Takes responsibility for meet schedule
- ✓ Remains humble (especially with success)
- ✓ Always sees the glass as "half full" – finds the value/growth/positive in everything
- ✓ Communicates openly with parents about swimming (positive and negative) and always respects parents input/decisions
- ✓ Plans day and week with academics and athletics as a priority
- ✓ Uses technology wisely and purposefully
- ✓ Seeks out and follows *positive* role models
- ✓ Chooses positive friends
- ✓ Makes healthy life choices
- ✓ Seeks out life lessons and values from athletics and transfers them to life in general
- ✓ Thinks about leadership and "making a difference"

Pool Sessions (Demeanor)

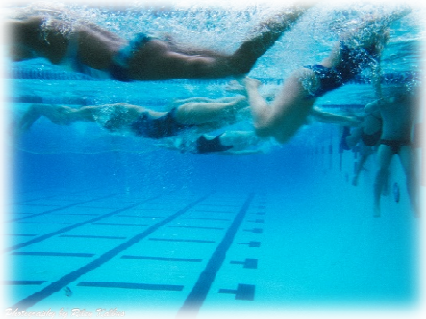
Character Camp

Have integrity about *everything* you do.

- First one out of the locker room
- The way you walk out of the locker room
- Having equipment
- Wearing team cap (pride)
- Getting in (first)
- Warm-up – focus, purpose
- Lane leadership - positive
- Getting equipment for lane
- Team motivation
- Connect with new swimmers
- Only positive dialogue
- Never talk when a coach is talking
- Know all sets and objectives
- Never complain – cold, tired, crowded
- Put equipment away
- Thank coach

Pool Sessions - Focus

- Streamline off ALL walls (streamline game – each one better than the last)
- Work on technique in all sets/laps
  - Every stroke matters
- Work on turn technique on all turns
  - If a judge is watching
- For Fly and Back: 4-6 Fly kicks off each wall (fast)
- For Free: 2-3 fly kicks off each wall (fast)
- Monitor stroke counts
  - All strokes
  - At different paces



- Know three personal stroke keys
- Know three general stroke keys
- Motivate others to train better
- Legality in everything
- Know set objective
- Count all laps, repeats (don't count/don't care)

Where to Start

Begin with (demand):

- Safety
- Organization
- Structure

Do:

- Sell vision/framework
- Set an example

Progression:

Common decency/general respect

- Language, interaction, respect

Athletic principles

- Work ethic, commitment, development, sacrifice

Team principles

- Team goals, mission, support, humility, unity, attire

Leadership principles (that work)

- Compassion
- Ethics
- Social Decisions
- Mentoring

Common Issues

"What's the big deal? Everyone else does it."

"Wise men, though all the laws were abolished, would live the same lives."

Aristophanes

"The only thing missing from any situation is that which are not giving."

Course in Miracles

Framework

Again, there must be a framework and philosophy that is clearly understood and is *undeniable*.

Tie everything back to:

- Team culture/vision
- Team policy
- Athletic right and wrong
- Life right and wrong

This stabilizes your position and argument.

"Just because everyone agrees with you doesn't mean it's right, and just because no one agrees with you/me doesn't mean it's wrong." Unknown

Public opinion does not determine policy OR character.

Many years ago, our high school team wanted a cheer and a team shirt that was "inappropriate." They said, "we all like it and we all agree." *It was still wrong.*

In hindsight

In over 30 years, no swimmer has ever looked back and been proud of poor behavior – ever.

The profound appreciation has been for caring, guiding, and *holding them accountable*.

Most apologize or ask for forgiveness (once they understand).

The Derivation of Behavior

Virtually all behavioral issues come from a disconnection of a few key (life) concepts.

Late, loud, ego, cruises a relay, lies about an absence, cuts set back, rolls eyes at hard workout, bad language, late to a meet, false starts to avoid finals, etc.

Dealing with Teenagers' Issues

Kids' behavior problems are usually from being insecure, self-esteem, afraid, needing attention, family dysfunction, reaching out for help in a negative way etc. If we can understand the kids better, often we can help in a direct and impactful way.

Things we can do:

- Show them we care deeply for their well-being
- Show them the best of who they can be
- Have a sincere conversation with them off the deck. Go to dinner /lunch.
- Talk to other kids on the team (gain insight)
- Talk to parents
- Open up and share your/our similar life struggles with them.
- Share books you think may be helpful – ex. Conversations With God For Teens

  Have a conversation with them speaking "generally" so as not to come across as attacking.

- For the arrogant kid … our experience has been that kids who act out in this way are generally insecure and they cover it up with bravado.

- For the social/party kid … our experience has been that the most mature, secure, self-confident kids I have coached have never drank. They just don't need it. They do not need to impress anyone. And they will not compromise their values to be liked.

Most issues can be dealt with in the context of a few general concepts

- If you want to be a high-level athlete
- If you someday want to be a leader or captain
- If you want to "move up" or want attention
- If you want to be respected by peers
- If you want to be respected by coaches
- If you want to grow as a person
- If you are open to accepting what is right
- If you can distinguish the path of least resistance vs. most resistance
- If you realize that behavior that does not support the vision, goals, and policies of the team will not be tolerated

- Again, rhetorical questions will set up the platform for positive change.
  - *"You did tell me that you wanted to do well…"*
  - *"You did tell me that someday you wanted to be a leader…"*
  - *"You did tell me you wanted my input. Here it is."*

Athletic and Life Growth

Again, from a reaction perspective, kids/athletes must reframe challenges. Responses to these basic conditions can affect your teams' culture and a swimmers performance over the long run.

An athletes poor response to:

- Not feeling well
- Poor race/"bad" swim
- Tired
- Crowded warm-up
- Long/difficult set
- Cold water (pool)
- Bad weather
- Losing a relay spot, etc.

Find the growth and the value

In mild situations…

a conversation can usually addresses:

Not working hard

Not finishing sets

Not focused

Talks in workout/dry land

Not in team attire

Poor attendance (lower group)

A few minutes late

In destructive situations…

an ultimatum must be given – these will break a positive culture (or an attempt at one)

Arrogant/ego (aggressive)

Selfish

Bully

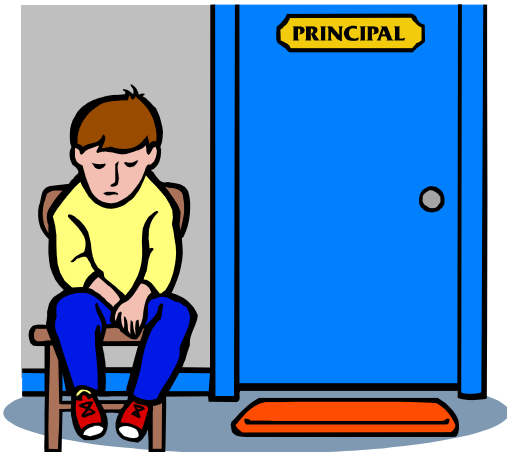
Negative

Dishonest

Disrespectful

Bad language

Come late



Drug/alcohol connection/association

Negative at meets

Poor attendance (higher group)

Deck change

Doesn't help set up

Doesn't cheer/support teammates

The following pages address some specific and more common issues.

Attitude at Home

(OA swimmer)

Swimmer was rebellious and disrespectful to family, home life became difficult. Athlete is *great* at workout in all aspects.

Parent sent email asking if we could help

Coach's response to swimmer: "No leader on this team has ever been at odds with, or unappreciative of, their parents/siblings. It shows poor judgment, ego, and misaligned values, and WILL affect our relationship. It is at odds with everything we stand for. More importantly, this is not you."

Result: Changed that day.

"No matter what you have done for yourself or humanity, if you can't look back on having given love and attention to your own family, what have you really accomplished?" E Hubbard

Travel Attitude

Swimmer was mildly critical at a travel meet – "not swimming well, cost too much money, shouldn't have come…"

Coach's response:

"You had the opportunity to travel with an extraordinary group and to learn about leadership.

You have lost sight of the bigger picture and your opportunity to learn and grow as an athlete.

You have reduced this trip/meet to a few selfish issues.

You will never travel again if you cannot seek leadership and deal with adversity in a more productive way."

Result – felt pressure from home to swim well.

Is now a completely different person – made Junior National cuts (from first Sectional time a year ago). First one to morning workout. Helps with everything. Has become a "go-to" person and is emerging as a strong leader.

Comes late/Doesn't help

Generic

- "Do you realize that you are…
- Is it OK with you that the team does your work?
- Are you aware of the affect on your team?
- Are you aware of how we perceive you?
- Do you realize that this displays an arrogant, selfish, individual attitude and completely is opposed to the "team" concept?"

" If you cannot respect and appreciate this process, it would be better for you to not come to practice." DR

Poor Effort in Workout

Generic

- Are you OK? (check first)
- How would you rate your work ethic? I will.
- Do you know that this does not support your success or foster respect from the team?
- Do you really want to be an athlete?
- Do you understand the nature of athletics?
- Do you understand the virtues of work ethic?
- Do you understand that this does not fit into the team culture?
- You will need to decide to be an athlete the right way or find a more comfortable activity.

Lies on Repeats/Yardage

This will only happen once!

It only suggests/reveals that:

- "You have no respect for your coach, the workout, or the process
- You have no intention of training at a productive level
- You are a poor leader and role model
- I can't trust you going forward – with anything!
- I have no desire to watch you or help you
- What is the justification for you to remain on this team?
- What is your justification to even be an athlete?
- You missed the entire concept (of being an athlete!"

Complaining

(not allowed – for the following reasons)

- If you want to be a high-level athlete…
- Must deal with the bigger issues: weak, soft, pampered, selfish
- Doesn't understand
- Must create an attitude of embracing adversity – this is good for you
- Must show the destructive nature of complaining
- Deal with it with the group
- Repeat quote: "Any fool can complain…"

Negative at Meets

- Arrives late (be accountable/partner)
- No team attire (will not compete/no pride)
- Handles disappointment poorly/immaturely (learn from every race)
- Not in team area or with teammates (not connected)
- Too social (learn competitive focus)
- Doesn't warm up properly (a policy and a critical aspect of preparation)
- Doesn't warm down (a policy and a critical aspect of recovery)
- Scratches events/finals without talking to coach (unacceptable – you act alone, you will be alone).

- Reinforce concepts of team, process, growth, support
- Relate all to life concepts (you are learning nothing)
- Would that work in…, Is that the way you would perform on a college team or at a job?
- Would you run a team like this?
- Reinforce lack of tolerance for behavior
- Would it help if I talked to your parents ?

Lying

- Simple concept that we repeat often
- *If you lie to me (once), why should I ever trust you again? Or…*
  - Care
  - Help
  - Allow you to travel
  - Respect you
  - Etc.

- You will get more respect and support if you are honest. PS: If you are lying to me, you are lying to everyone.

"Character is what you are in the dark." unknown

"A half-truth is a whole lie."

Yiddish Proverb

Cheating
(a lesson learned)

Kids often cheat and try to justify it. Their implication is:
Don't expect me to be ethical when my personal interests are at stake.

A girl on our team talked to me about what to do in her class. So many other kids were cheating that her grade was lower because of it. So we had a meeting about cheating.

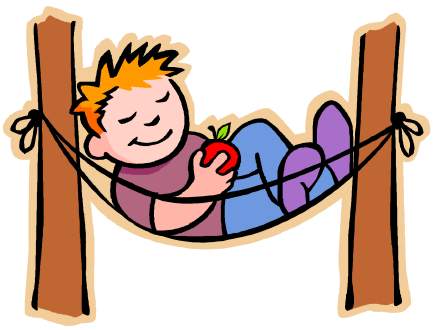
We got this email three years later:

"Ronnie and Donnie, Hello! I couldn't help but notice in the news a story about a mass cheating attempt on a test at a major college involving more than 200 students. A student interviewed said that "everyone cheats in life" and something along the lines of, "there is nothing wrong with cheating to get ahead." The reason I'm bringing this to your attention is because I wanted to thank you for everything you have taught me. I specifically remember having a team meeting about cheating in life and in the classroom and how to protect your personal integrity during my sophomore year of high school. I know that the confidence, pride, and love that both of you have for your swimmers did have a direct influence on my development as a student-athlete and as a person."

Burnout

- Understand what causes it
- Help kids understand
- A lot of a bad thing is bad
- A lot of a good thing is good
- You must create a “good thing”
- Make work, team, dedication, etc., positive and life-enhancing.
- The goal is to eliminate it completely with a culture that provides athletic development and personal support.
- At times, we suggest a short break or an abbreviated schedule if it helps the athlete over the long-term.

Senioritis



- Not acceptable.
- "You benefitted from great leaders and role models. You will finish your career at your best or not at all."
- Our seniors are leaders in all aspects:
  - Attendance
  - Effort
  - Support
  - Mentorship

Swimmer Resistance – General

Our response

- "Integrity is the only way to live your life *and* to be an athlete.
- How does that not fit into your thinking or vision for yourself?
- We are trying to prepare you for higher levels of athletics, college, challenges, life, work, etc.
- If this is not important to you, this may not be the right environment for you."

Swimmer Resistance - Elite

- Ego (insecurity) is the issue
- Remind kids to keep identity tied to the person/athlete and not performance
- Sell humility to the group
- Sell the concept of linking appreciation to success and not ego
- Ask them to mentor others
- Would you do this on a college team?
- You will be respected more for what you do as a person than as a swimmer.
- We as a staff downplay "success" (do not feed the ego). *Emphasis goes to attitude, effort, impact on the team, and the long-term.*

"Success is always temporary. When all is said and done, the only thing you'll have left is your character." Vince Gill

Parent Resistance/Issues

- Know issues
- Know personalities
- Know politics
- Watch for "group think"
- Use every opportunity to "sell" parents
- Work from top down (board)
- Work from bottom up (new members)
- Emphasize personal growth, long-term development, college swimming
  - What will matter a year from now? two, ten?
- Remind them that you care more about their child as a person than a swimmer.
- Make sure the athlete understands the process and plan

Drugs and Alcohol

"Our lives begin to end when we stop talking about things that matter."

Martin Luther King

We do.

We repeatedly tell the kids,

NOTHING good will EVER come from drugs or alcohol. It can't.

- Understand the desire/pull
  - Due to social climate, many don't have confidence in social settings
  - Need for acceptance
  - Peer pressure
  - Self-esteem
  - "what else would we do?" said one swimmer

- Types of use
  - Becomes one's identity (the "social model")
    - Is addictive/destructive (binging)
  - Casual/occasional
  - Those who "use" but respect rule ("dry season", etc.).

Kids must be willing to rise above these pressures and make mature, productive social decisions. (our goal with everyone)

"Character is that which reveals moral purpose, exposing the class of things a man chooses or voids." Aristotle

Cost/Benefit

Cost

- Illegal
- Dangerous
- Addictive
- Risk of suspension (academic/college impact)
- Risk of athletics
- Eligibility
- Performance/potential
- Commitment
- Risk of personal embarrassment
- Risk of family embarrassment
- Loss of integrity
- Discipline/work ethic decline
- Reputation risk/trust (hard/impossible to repair)
- Lie to parents
- Lie to friends
- Lie to coaches
- Lie to those who support you
- Poor role model/leader
- Perpetuate the problem

Benefit

? – There is no benefit

From, *A Nation of Wimps*, by Hara Estroff Marano, published on November 01, 2004

Drinking, too, has changed. Once a means of social lubrication, it has acquired a darker, more desperate nature. Campuses nationwide are reporting record increases in binge drinking over the past decade, with students often stuporous in class, if they get there at all. Psychologist Paul E. Joffe, chair of the suicide prevention team at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, contends that at bottom binge-drinking is a quest for authenticity and intensity of experience. It gives young people something all their own to talk about, and sharing stories about the path to passing out is a primary purpose. *It's an inverted world in which drinking to oblivion is the way to feel connected and alive.*

"There is a ritual every university administrator has come to fear," reports John Portmann, professor of religious studies at the University of Virginia. "Every fall, parents drop off their well-groomed freshmen and within two or three days many have consumed a dangerous amount of alcohol and placed themselves in harm's way. These kids have been controlled for so long, they just go crazy."

Heavy drinking has also become the quickest and easiest way to gain acceptance, says psychologist Bernardo J. Carducci, professor at Indiana University Southeast and founder of its Shyness Research Institute. "Much of collegiate social activity is centered on alcohol consumption because it's an anxiety reducer and demands no social skills," he says. "Plus it provides an instant identity; it lets people know that you are willing to belong."

Compilation of notes from kids regarding high school drinking

Parents:

- A contributing problem is parent's attitude towards drinking in our community.
- Some parents supply kids with alcohol
- Many parents don't know what their kids are doing and where they are
- Some parents allow kids to drink in the house
- Some parents don't care if kids drink as long as they don't drive (parents actually drive kids to parties and pick them up because they know they will be drinking)
- Often parents don't punish kids for drinking – in effect condoning it.
- Many parents have the attitude that by the time they are seniors in high school it is almost expected since they will be in college the next year
- Some parents leave kids home alone for a weekend and a number of kids have parties
- Too many parents feel a need to drink at (all) social events, i.e., ties friends (being social) to drinking.

Reasons That Kids Drink:

- Their friends drink
- They drink to fit in
- They drink because it (appears) fun
- They drink because everybody does it in college so they feel a need to drink before they go to college!!
- To celebrate
- Stress
- Seniors are already into college
- Aren't serious about sports/or in off season (most athletes that are semi-serious don't drink during the season but they do drink a lot during the off season)

Why - the biggest issue, is why an athlete is motivated to drink. If you don't first "fix" that issue, then the "problem" may not be solved, certainly not in a short period of time. ***I think any system should be a positive one that makes kids want to not drink.***

Drinking – Some Comments

From a prior team captain, an excerpt from an email to me on drinking:

"I think I was fortunate to have a group of friends that did not necessarily equate having fun in high school with drinking. The kids who got the most out of the program are people who took to heart the so-called "big picture" philosophy that is the *backbone of the program."*

"… we reform others unconsciously when we walk uprightly."

Quote from the Simpsons: "Son, when you participate in sporting events, it's not whether you win or lose... it's how drunk you get." Homer Simpson

From an SF Chronicle article by Joan Ryan

A mother was disconcerted when a friend told her about the latest t-Shirts at Abercrombie & Fitch. "The t-shirts seemed too ignorant and irresponsible to be believed. Yet there they were, on the table in the store, high quality t-shirts for the pre-teen and teen market with sayings:

"Don't bother me, I'm drunk."

"Bad girls chug, Good girls drink quickly."

"If you can read this you need another cocktail."

She says, "Today's teens have also been cheated of large chunks of childhood, pulled by movies and television, music and marketing, into an adult world for which their brains are not developmentally ready."

Note: I had a conversation with a girl who was wearing Abercrombie & Fitch jeans. I shared this page with her and asked her to never shop there again.

"You become that to which you are most exposed."
Denis Waitley

Team (senior) Meeting Topics

LESSON LEARNED

Police seize pot from buses

Teens on trip given choice of giving up drugs or detention

By Ken Ritter
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — A police chief in northern Nevada said Thursday he decided to use the discovery of marijuana on five Utah-bound buses carrying 250 underage skiers from Northern California as a teaching moment instead of an enforcement headache.

Elko Police Chief Don Zumwalt said he offered a choice to the mostly teenage passengers from the Bay Area: They could spend their three-day ski and snowboard trip in juvenile detention in northeast Nevada, or they could turn over the illegal drugs voluntarily.

The kids gave up the pot.

"A lot of them thanked us. Some scowled," Zumwalt said during a telephone interview from his town of about 19,000 residents off Interstate 80. "You wonder, 'Did I make a difference here?'"

Video showed the haul late Tuesday included pipes, bongs and rolling papers stored in jars, Tupperware, cigarette packs and plastic bags. Zumwalt said it hadn't been weighed, but he guessed the marijuana totaled several pounds.

KRNV-TV in Reno first reported the contraband confiscation, which Zumwalt said stemmed from a store clerk's report that passengers were smoking in the parking lot of an Elko travel plaza near the interstate.

The police chief estimated the group had been traveling for eight hours, and was about four or five hours from Salt Lake City.

After police dogs sniffed marijuana in each baggage compartment of each bus, Zumwalt said he realized he had a problem.

"We had 250 kids. I don't know if anyone was over 21," he said. "I could have written a citation and arrested them all and confiscated the buses. But logistically it would have been a nightmare. Who belonged to what? Where would we put them?"

The juvenile detention facility in Elko has 20 beds.

"Las Vegas or Reno police might have done things differently," Zumwalt said. "But this is how we solved the dilemma. Rather than seize the buses and obtain search warrants, we said 'Get all the stuff off the buses.'"

"No one was under the influence. No one was injured. I gave each bus a fatherly talk about skiing sober. I told them to be safe. I didn't want them skiing stoned out of their minds or dying of a drug overdose."

Zumwalt said he was trying to contact officials with the tour operator, Summer Winter Action Tours, based in Costa Mesa.

A website touts the trip, dubbed El Nino 2011, as a gathering of high school students from 67 schools in Los Angeles, Orange County, Temecula and Arizona, 27 schools in the San Diego area, and 40 schools in Northern California.

"I'm trying to hunt down who has ultimate responsibility," Zumwalt said.

Company officials didn't immediately respond to messages Thursday from The AP.

KRNV said a company official called it almost impossible to control what people bring onto the bus.

Middle school prohibits water bottles due to alcohol consumption.

Parents held liable for teens' drinking

Guardians can face fines, jail time for kids' consumption

By Leanne Italie
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Parents of teens: If you think a drinking disaster at your kid's party can't happen at your house, not with your kid, because he's a good kid, it's time to wake up and smell the whiskey bottle tossed on your lawn.

Because of the high risk of underage drinking and driving this time of year, many parents open their homes to partying teens as a way to keep them off the roads. What some may not know is that liability laws can leave Mom and Dad vulnerable to lawsuits, fines and even jail time if underage drinking is found to be going on under their roof.

Parents can get in trouble even if they didn't know about the drinking.

That's what a Menlo Park father says he is up against.

Bill Burnett, a Stanford University professor, was arrested the night after Thanksgiving over a basement party thrown by his 17-year-old son to celebrate a big high school football win.

Burnett said he and his wife had forbidden alcohol at the party and were upstairs at the time police received a call about possible drinking by minors. In fact, he said, he had twice made his way to the basement to check on the merry-making.

He spent a night in jail and was booked on 44 counts of suspicion of contributing to the delinquency of a minor, carries up to a $2,500 fine and nearly a year in jail.

Eight states have specific "social host" laws that say parents can get in trouble if underage guests are drinking, even if no one gets hurt, according to the National Institutes of Health. (Some of those states allow parents to serve alcohol to their own children in some situations.)

Sixteen other states have laws that hold Mom and Dad legally responsible for underage drinking under certain circumstances — for example, if a teen who drank at their home got into a car accident, NIH said. In other states, parents can get in trouble under more general liability laws.

"Some parents feel helpless," said David Singer of Demarest, N.J., who has 17-year-old twin daughters and a 20-year-old son in college. "Some parents feel they need to look the other way in order to help their kids fit in with the cool crowd. And some parents believe, 'It's better under my roof than who-knows-where.'"

Like Burnett, Singer said he doesn't condone drinking by his underage kids under any circumstances. And yet he found a whiskey bottle in the yard after a party thrown by his son.

Burnett acknowledged he made a mistake but said he doesn't believe police crackdowns like the one at his house do much good.

"All of this is probably going to go underground and result in a more dangerous situation for kids," he told the online news network Patch. "I really don't think it's up to

The team culture sways a social lifestyle

(repeat from earlier) Dear Orinda Aquatics,

I can only imagine where I would be today, right now, if I had never joined Orinda Aquatics back in seventh grade. I see myself spending this Saturday night in my parentless house with a dozen members of my high school's top partiers, already a few drinks deep in my parent's liquor, behaving like a sloppy mess. I see myself dancing with boys I don't even like, breaking my mom's glass top coffee table, and getting into a car with a girl who swears she's safe to drive but clearly isn't. And I wouldn't even care. It would just be another typical Saturday night. Instead, I'm here sitting on my couch writing a letter to the team that changed the entire course of my life, the team that I owe everything to.

In middle school, I found myself, like so many others do, at a crossroads of sorts. The girls I considered my best friends were making choices that made me uncomfortable on all kinds of levels, but I could still feel myself slipping down with them. Looking back, I can see just how far I was about to fall. After joining Orinda in seventh grade, I made the choice to stop hanging out with those girls. Over time, I began to categorize my friends, as so many other swimmers do, as "school friends" and "swim friends." It wasn't long before "swim friends" was shortened simply to "friends". My life went from slipping downwards, and slipping fast, to something entirely different and positive.

I have so much gratitude towards Orinda Aquatics for everything that the team has done for me over the past seven years. To the coaches, I owe not only my career in the pool, but also the relationships that I consider some of the most important in my life. I know that there are very few people in the world who would do for me what Donnie and Ronnie would in a heartbeat, and I cannot express how thankful I am to have these two people in my life. And to my teammates, well, I love you. We've been through a lot together and I know that in the end we're here for each other. To the girls in my class, you have been amazing friends over the years, and I could not be more grateful. OA has given me so many lifelong relationships, and for that, there is nothing I can say but thank you.

Is it Possible?

A challenge we posed to high school kids

Is it possible to reprioritize your lives so that alcohol and drugs have no place or value in your pursuit of (academics, athletics, self-esteem, character, respect, and relationships) living?

- Can you be the catalyst to change a multi-decade trend that has been described in "crisis" terms?
- Is it possible to celebrate time and experience with our friends for the simplicity and purity of who we really are?
- Is it possible to ensure that those coming after us will only know a healthy environment where the norm would be that indiscretions are not only unhealthy but intolerable?
- It comes down to a simple question of why. Is it simply tradition, like so many other traditions, that has led us astray?
- Can you say that you really, rationally, and intellectually, feel this adds value to your life?
- If so, what is the benefit?

Thoughts for Kids

- If there were no use of drugs or alcohol on this campus – on teams, none whatsoever, would you do it?

- Ask anyone who has engaged in this if it was worth it – if it added value or enhanced their lives. Not one will tell you yes, yet we follow.

- Please, make an honest, objective, intelligent, and unpressured decision.

- Celebrate things that matter – that add value to your life and growth: family, friends, academics, athletics, discipline, challenge, trips, dances, etc., with your full presence.

- Be the leader and not the follower; a leader, an example of what is possible for your friends/peers, your teams, the school, the district, the future.

Quote (for "role models"):

"Little eyes upon you, watching everything you do, little eyes upon you, wanting to grow up just like you."

unknown

Our (OA)Drinking Issue

Our written response to the team in a letter and an aggressive meeting about a non-team related alcohol incident.

"Let's simplify the key issues for all of you to understand. We do not own your social life, nor do we want to. We do however own the team and have a responsibility to every member. That being said, ANYTHING that affects the team IS a team issue. Period. It does not need a memo attached or Board approval. One person or one action can become a "team" issue. Chatter in the locker room Saturday morning made it a team issue. If in your world, this is not a team issue, what is? Will you know when it is a team issue and when behavior threatens reputations, athletic careers, and even lives? We truly believe that we as coaches are infinitely better qualified than you to assess the effect on the "team". You do not have to answer to parents, or rumors. You do not sit in living rooms defining our team and its environment to perspective members, or sit in Board meetings answering questions.

What you did was not legal, not right, not positive, not conducive to being a serious athlete, not responsible, showed no leadership, hurt parents, and deeply affected coaches that have unconditionally supported you for most of your swimming lives. It is not obvious to us why someone could think this is "OK". And the fact that your peers or friends may have done this does not legitimize it but rather suggests that you need to find other friends and better role models. We have seen, up close, every aspect of substance abuse from alcoholism to hard drug abuse to endless rehabs, an abyss of a mother's pain, and even prison. Please don't insult us by telling us it is "no big deal". Wait until your daughter tells you not to worry, that, "it's no big deal."

About five years ago, a swimmer walked on the deck of this pool and told us he wanted to join our team. We knew he was a known drug user. We pulled him aside and told him that we were aware of his reputation and his social life and while we would allow him a trial period, if we heard one word related to drugs spoken in front of any member of this team, at any time, he would be gone and regret this meeting. He chose not to join the team. You were about twelve years old at the time and neither you nor your parents were ever aware of a two-minute conversation that put your safety and the protection of this team ahead of a new member, added revenue, and his "social life". So you tell us where a "social life" ends and "team" character begins. We may not know the exact answer but we will always err on the side of caution, for you. And by the way, while some of you want to draw a line that separates this team from the rest of your life, we never have. We have never stopped caring about you or stopped supporting you when we leave the pool or take off our team jacket.

Some day you may have a thirteen, fourteen, or fifteen year old child and you will pray every time they walk out the door that they are safe and with good people doing the right things. You will pray that they can avoid drugs and alcohol, that they don't lie to you, and that someone is looking out for them. You will also hope that they might find an athletic program that places a premium on character and doing what is right. While you would not assume it, you would take comfort in finding overprotective people that run the program, people who actually care about your child as a person, even when they are not at practice. You will be grateful for a second pair of eyes to watch over them. You will care less about their success as an athlete than you will about their safety and personal well-being. Ask any parent.

Too often in this day, the coach is simply a spoke in the wheel of a teenager's life, and not a partner. Today, focus is more about being happy and being "right" rather than being respected and doing what is right. We cannot, and will not, fit into that world. We want to be your partner and not someone who is dismissed when he is not in agreement with you. We are not administrators enforcing rules, we are simply people who care passionately about you bringing out the best that lies within you and those around you.

As for insight into our reaction, it is not when we care this much or get upset that you should be concerned. For this you should feel fortunate. It is when we stop caring that the greater loss and the greater problem begins. And if you are not into the whole "character first, do the right thing" thing, you should know that every college coach we talk to asks about it and praises us for emphasizing it.

Should you disagree with this, that is fine, it simply means that our priorities and our philosophies are opposed to one another and that this clearly is not the proper environment for you."

Donnie & Ronnie

A letter from a swimmer to the BOD regarding a personal alcohol issue (swimmer drinking outside of OA)

Dear Board of Directors of OA, I send this to you, ashamed, stripped of any dignity I once had and humbled. Over the past few days it has come to light that I, along with other individuals, have taken part in consuming alcohol multiple times. I tell you now, personally, that I am guilty of such accusations; however, this is not what I am most ashamed or regretful about.

My actions have undermined the very philosophy of this team and it's members, destroying the reputation, determination, and spirit of the team that has been shaped over the years by the hard work of the coaches and my teammates. Not only have I made a poor social decision but I betrayed the team and all that it stands for. I was blinded by my own stupidity, carelessness, friendships and ego, resulting in a catastrophic meltdown of the leadership of the team. The extent of my actions have gone far beyond just the people involved and knowing that makes me feel disgusted with myself. I feel almost nothing but shame and regret for what I have done and what it means for this team. I see now that such behavior that jeopardizes the team not only hurts the team but also hurts me from the inside out.

What is truly sad is that I have grown to love the team but now I have betrayed it. It is where my friends are and where I have grown up. The bonds I have made through the team will influence me for the rest of my life. The life lessons I have learned from my teammates and coaches have truly changed me forever. Not only have they affected me but they do so in the most positive way imaginable. I am so thankful for what the team has done for me whether its growth in the pool or out of it. My growth in character and maturity allowed me to hold a position of influence and through this spotlight I wanted to help others grow and give them a loving, positive environment such as the one I was given by the leaders before me. It hurts knowing that I turned my back on all of this and on the very people I have come to love and cherish with all my heart.

I deeply regret my actions and I am truly sorry for what I have done and I humbly apologize for my behavior and the effect my actions have on the team.

The end.

Questions?

Thank you, most sincerely, for giving us the opportunity to share our coaching and life philosophy with you. We truly hope there has been something of value for you, your swimmers, and your organization. We wish you the very best in your pursuit of culture *and* success.

Don/Ron Heidary
OAswimcoach@aol.com
www.orindaaquatics.org

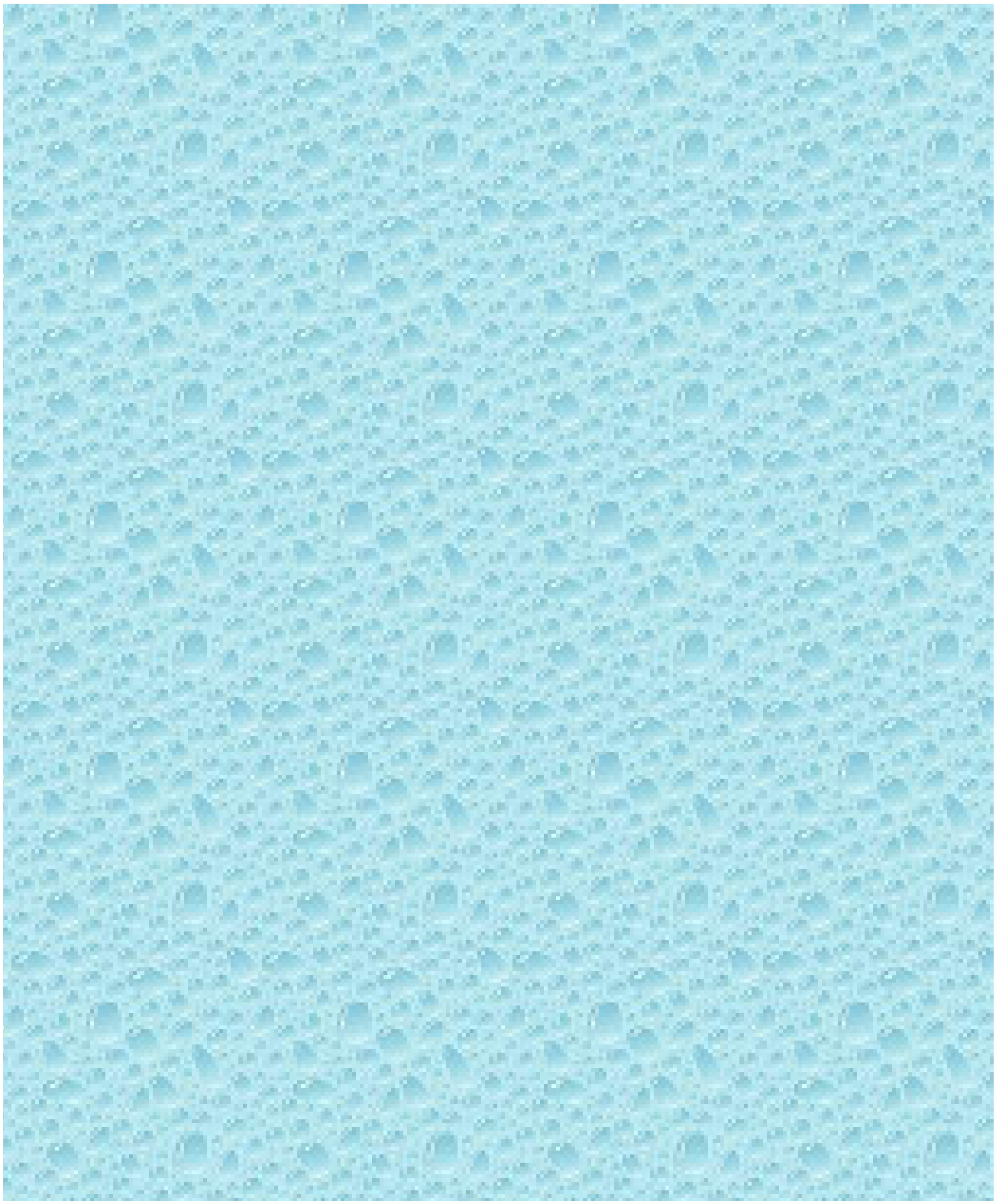
Thank you to the Orinda Aquatics swimmers past and present for your dedication, humility, caring, friendship, and, for putting *Character First.*

With love always, Don &Ron

We would also like to thank our swim team parents over the years for their unconditional support of the team and the message, Margot Woodward for her selfless support of Orinda Aquatics, and our mother Jean for supporting us as a great (swim team) mom, and for never knowing our times, just our needs. And a very sincere thank you to Jan and Alma for understanding and supporting our passion.

We would not be where we are, nor would our teams have achieved the success and culture they have, without the tireless and selfless support of our dear friends and coaches: Matt Ehrenberger (our Head Age-Group coach and someone who has been by our side throughout our entire journey), as well as Dave Schurhoff, Marc Cavallero, Kevin Honey, and Christina Risso. They are the best of coaches and people. We are also deeply indebted to our own coaches, mentors, and dear friends, Fred Brown and Lenny Chaplin.

Notes



Kids to Talk To

Leaders (to mentor)

Laggards (to motivate)

Things to Do

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

“Character, not circumstances, make the man.”

Booker T. Washington

“Character is the only secure foundation of the state.”

Lyndon Johnson

And the team, and your life

Key Articles

(& letters)

Butterfly

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly
One day a small opening appeared
He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to squeeze its body through the tiny hole
Then it stopped as if it could go no further

So the man decided to help the butterfly
He took a pair of scissors and snipped the remaining bits of cocoon
The butterfly emerged easily but it had a swollen body and shriveled wings

The man continued to watch it expecting that at any minute the wings would enlarge and expand enough to support the body.
Neither happened
In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around
It was never able to fly

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand:
The restricting cocoon and the struggle required the butterfly to get through the opening was a way of forcing fluid from the body into the wings so that it would be ready for flight once that was achieved

Sometimes, struggles are exactly what we need in our lives
Going through life without obstacles would cripple us
We will not be as strong as we could have been and we would never learn to fly

What Stella offered went beyond fair trade

More Than I Bargained For

by Jean Bell Mosley
Cape Girardeau, Missouri

It was an ordinary school day. I was in the fifth grade. Children like me who didn't live close enough to go home for lunch brought their paper-wrapped meals and gathered under the shade of a tree.

Such lunches usually consisted of a sandwich, hard-boiled egg, pickle, cookie and a piece of fruit. Bartering prevailed. If a schoolmate's sandwich or cookie appeared to be more appetizing than your own, you tried to negotiate a trade. I always tried to trade something I didn't want anyway—a mashed-bean sandwich or an overripe banana. It never occurred to me to trade a slice of Mama's Old Kentucky walnut cake for my schoolmate's offering of a boring-looking molasses cookie, even though I could see longing in the barterer's eyes.

Sometimes Mama put two pieces of fruit in my lunch package, one to be eaten at morning recess if I was hungry. Quite often, though, I saved that piece of fruit as my bargaining chip to trade for a sugary doughnut or fried apple pie.

Unabashedly, I always examined the looks and quality of my fruit to see which piece was best and then offered my classmate the poorer, less-attractive piece. I felt no pangs of selfishness. It was just good trading sense.

That autumn day after the lunch-bringers had eaten their food, disposed of the wrappings and dispersed to various parts of the playground, I lingered under the shade of a maple, watching monarch butterflies drifting lazily southward. I was still hungry and Mama had put no fruit in my lunch that day.

I saw my classmate Stella Downing coming up a path. She was returning from her home, one of the lucky ones who lived near the school. The sunshine glinted on Stella's black curly hair. Her blue dress matched the color of her eyes. She had something in each hand. When she drew closer I saw she was holding apples.

Stella noticed my interest and asked, "Want one?"

"Yes," I replied, simply and truly. "But I've already eaten," I added, to indicate I had nothing to trade.

Stella held up the two apples, much as I would have done to appraise my trading fruit. One was perfectly shaped, red and shiny, stem intact. No flaws. The other one was smaller, slightly shriveled and dented on one side.

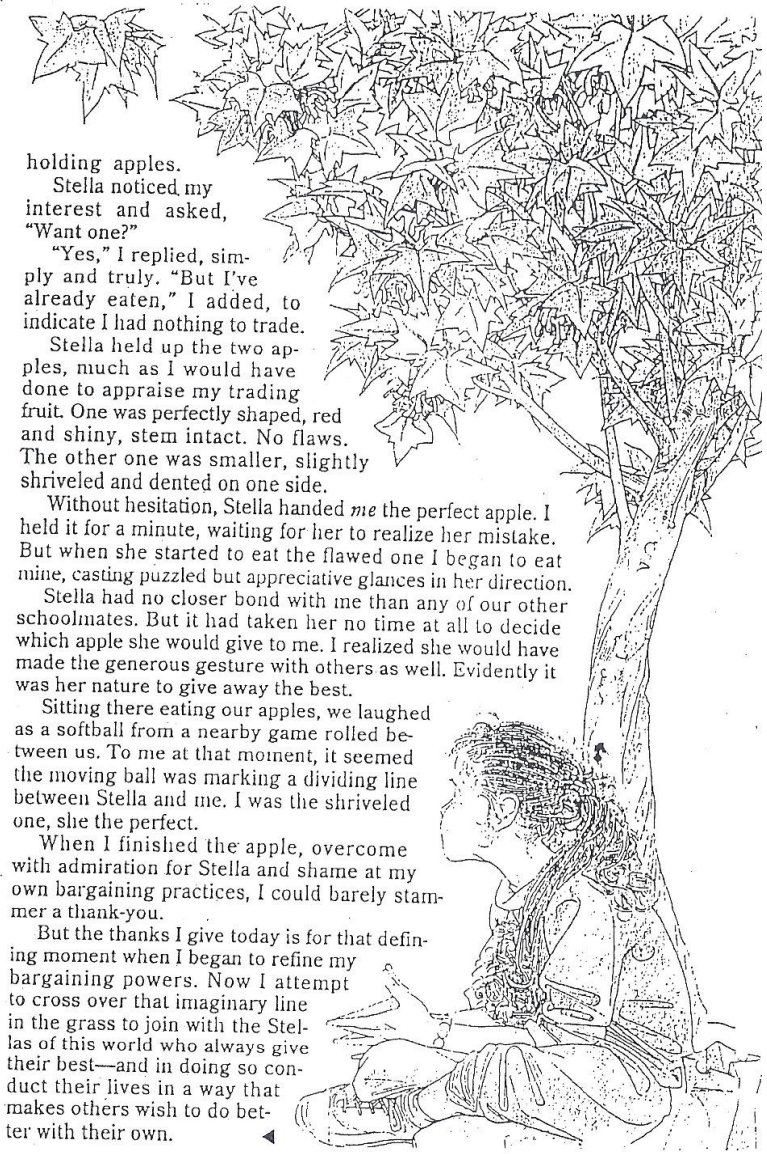
Without hesitation, Stella handed *me* the perfect apple. I held it for a minute, waiting for her to realize her mistake. But when she started to eat the flawed one I began to eat mine, casting puzzled but appreciative glances in her direction.

Stella had no closer bond with me than any of our other schoolmates. But it had taken her no time at all to decide which apple she would give to me. I realized she would have made the generous gesture with others as well. Evidently it was her nature to give away the best.

Sitting there eating our apples, we laughed as a softball from a nearby game rolled between us. To me at that moment, it seemed the moving ball was marking a dividing line between Stella and me. I was the shriveled one, she the perfect.

When I finished the apple, overcome with admiration for Stella and shame at my own bargaining practices, I could barely stammer a thank-you.

But the thanks I give today is for that defining moment when I began to refine my bargaining powers. Now I attempt to cross over that imaginary line in the grass to join with the Stellas of this world who always give their best—and in doing so conduct their lives in a way that makes others wish to do better with their own. ◀



Bad Luck, Good Luck. Who Knows?

From "Healing Words for the Body, Mind and Spirit" by Caren Golman:

An old Zen story goes like this: An old Chinese farmer had a mare that broke through the fence and ran away. When his neighbors learned of it, they came to the farmer and said, "What bad luck this is. You don't have a horse during planting season." The farmer listened and then replied, "Bad luck, good luck. Who knows?"

A few days later, the mare returned with two stallions. When the neighbors learned of it, they visited the farmer. "You are now a rich man. What good fortune this is," they said. The farmer listened and again replied, "Good fortune, bad fortune. Who knows?"

Later that day, the farmer's only son was thrown from one of the stallions and broke his leg. When the neighbors heard about it, they came to the farmer. "It is planting season and now there is no one to help you," they said. "This is truly bad luck." The farmer listened, and once more he said, "Bad luck, good luck. Who knows?"

The very next day, the emperor's army rode into the town and conscripted the eldest son in every family. Only the farmer's son with his broken leg remained behind. Soon the neighbors arrived. Tearfully, they said, "Yours is the only son who was not taken from his family and sent to war. What good fortune this is..."

Whom Do You Love?

John Blanchard stood up from the bench, straightened his Army uniform, and studied the crowd of people making their way through Grand Central Station. He looked for the girl whose heart he knew, but whose face he didn't, the girl with the rose. His interest in her had begun thirteen months before in a Florida library. Taking a book off the shelf he found himself intrigued, not with the words of the book, but with the notes penciled in the margin. The soft handwriting reflected a thoughtful soul and insightful mind.

In the front of the book, he discovered the previous owner's name, Miss Hollis Maynell. With time and effort he located her address. She lived in New York City. He wrote her a letter introducing himself and inviting her to correspond. The next day he was shipped overseas for service in World War II. During the next year and one-month the two grew to know each other through the mail. Each letter was a seed falling on a fertile heart. A Romance was budding. Blanchard requested a photograph, but she refused. She felt that if he really cared, it wouldn't matter what she looked like.

When the day finally came for him to return from Europe, they scheduled their first meeting - 7:00 PM at the Grand Central Station in New York. "You'll recognize me," she wrote, "by the red rose I'll be wearing on my lapel." So at 7:00 he was in the station looking for a girl whose heart he loved, but whose face he'd never seen.

I'll let Mr. Blanchard tell you what happened:

A young woman was coming toward me, her figure long and slim. Her blonde hair lay back in curls from her delicate ears; her eyes were blue as flowers. Her lips and chin had a gentle firmness, and in her pale green suit she was like springtime come alive. I started toward her, entirely forgetting to notice that she was not wearing a rose. As I moved, a small, provocative smile curved her lips. "Going my way, sailor?" she murmured. Almost uncontrollably I made one step closer to her, and then I saw Hollis Maynell. She was standing almost directly behind the girl.

A woman well past 40, she had graying hair tucked under a worn hat. She was more than plump, her thick-ankled feet thrust into low-heeled shoes. The girl in the green suit was walking quickly away. I felt as though I was split in two, so keen was my desire to follow her, and yet so deep was my longing for the woman whose spirit had truly companioned me and upheld my own. And there she stood. Her pale, plump face was gentle and sensible; her gray eyes had a warm and kindly twinkle. I did not hesitate. My fingers gripped the small worn blue leather copy of the book that was to identify me to her.

This would not be love, but it would be something precious, something perhaps even better than love, a friendship for which I had been and must ever be grateful. I squared my shoulders and saluted and held out the book to the woman, even though while I spoke I felt choked by the bitterness of my disappointment. "I'm Lieutenant John Blanchard, and you must be Miss Maynell. I am so glad you could meet me; may I take you to dinner?"

The woman's face broadened into a tolerant smile. "I don't know what this is about, son," she answered, "but the young lady in the green suit who just went by, she begged me to wear this rose on my coat. And she said if you were to ask me out to dinner, I should go and tell you that she is waiting for you in the big restaurant across the street. She said it was some kind of test!"

It's not difficult to understand and admire Miss Maynell's wisdom.
The true nature of a heart is seen in its response to the unattractive.
Houssaye wrote: "Tell me whom you love and I will tell you who you are."

Heart Test

As she stood in front of her 5th grade class on the very first day of school, she told the children an untruth. Like most teachers, she looked at her students and said that she loved them all the same. However, that was impossible, because there in the front row, slumped in his seat, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard. Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he did not play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy and that he constantly needed a bath. In addition, Teddy could be unpleasant. It got to the point where Mrs. Thompson would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold X's and then putting a big "F" at the top of his papers. At the school where Mrs. Thompson taught, she was required to review each child's past records and she put Teddy's off until last. However, when she reviewed his file, she was in for a surprise. Teddy's first grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is a bright child with a ready laugh. He does his work neatly and has good manners.... he is a joy to be around".

His second grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is an excellent student, well liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle." His third grade teacher wrote, "His mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best, but his father doesn't show much interest and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren't taken."

Teddy's fourth grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is withdrawn and doesn't show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and he sometimes sleeps in class." By now, Mrs. Thompson realized the problem and she was ashamed of herself. She felt even worse when her students brought her Christmas presents, wrapped in beautiful ribbons and bright paper, except for Teddy's. His present was clumsily wrapped in the heavy, brown paper that he got from a grocery bag. Mrs. Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the other presents. Some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing, and a bottle that was one-quarter full of perfume. But she stifled the children's laughter when she exclaimed how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on, and dabbing some of the perfume on her wrist. Teddy Stoddard stayed after school that day just long enough to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my Mom used to." After the children left, she cried for at least an hour.

On that very day, she quit teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. Instead, she began to teach children. Mrs. Thompson paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded. By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class and, despite her lie that she would love all the children the same, Teddy became one of her "teacher's pets."

A year later, she found a note under her door, from Teddy, telling her that she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life. Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy. He then wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class, and she was still the best teacher he ever had in life. Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while things had been tough at times, he'd stayed in school, had stuck with it, and would soon graduate from college with the highest of honors. He assured Mrs. Thompson that she was still the best and favorite teacher he had ever had in his whole life. Then four more years passed and yet another letter came. This time he explained that after he got his bachelor's degree, he decided to go a little further. The letter explained that she was still the best and favorite teacher he ever had. But now his name was a little longer.... the letter was signed, Theodore F. Stoddard, MD.

The story does not end there. You see, there was yet another letter that spring. Teddy said he had met this girl and was going to be married. He explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was wondering if Mrs. Thompson might agree to sit at the wedding in the place that was usually reserved for the mother of the groom. Of course, Mrs. Thompson did. And guess what? She wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestones missing. Moreover, she made sure she was wearing the perfume that Teddy remembered his mother wearing on their last Christmas together. They hugged each other, and Dr. Stoddard whispered in Mrs. Thompson's ear, "Thank you Mrs. Thompson for believing in me. Thank you so much for making me feel important and showing me that I could make a difference." Mrs. Thompson, with tears in her eyes, whispered back. She said, "Teddy, you have it all wrong. You were the one who taught me that I could make a difference. I didn't know how to teach until I met you! "

(Teddy Stoddard is the Dr. at Iowa Methodist in Des Moines that has the Stoddard Cancer Wing.)

The Race

Whenever I start to hang my head in front of failure's face, my downward fall is broken by the memory of a race. A children's race, young boys, young men; how I remember well, excitement sure, but also fear, it wasn't hard to tell. They all lined up so full of hope, each thought to win that race or tie for first, or if not that, at least take second place. Their parents watched from off the side, each cheering for their son, and each boy hoped to show his folks that he would be the one.

The whistle blew and off they flew, like chariots of fire, to win, to be the hero there, was each young boy's desire. One boy in particular, whose dad was in the crowd, was running in the lead and thought "My dad will be so proud." But as he speeded down the field and crossed a shallow dip, the little boy who thought he'd win, lost his step and slipped. Trying hard to catch himself, his arms flew everyplace, and midst the laughter of the crowd he fell flat on his face. As he fell, his hope fell too; he couldn't win it now. Humiliated, he just wished to disappear somehow. But as he fell his dad stood up and showed his anxious face, which to the boy so clearly said, "Get up and win that race!" He quickly rose, no damage done, behind a bit that's all, and ran with all his mind and might to make up for his fall. So anxious to restore himself, to catch up and to win, his mind went faster than his legs. He slipped and fell again. He wished that he had quit before with only one disgrace. "I'm hopeless as a runner now, I shouldn't try to race."

But through the laughing crowd he searched and found his father's face with a steady look that said again, "Get up and win that race!" So he jumped up to try again, ten yards behind the last. "If I'm to gain those yards," he thought, "I've got to run real fast!" Exceeding everything he had, he regained eight, then ten... but trying hard to catch the lead, he slipped and fell again. Defeat! He lay there silently. A tear dropped from his eye. "There's no sense running anymore! Three strikes I'm out! Why try? I've lost, so what's the use?" he thought. "I'll live with my disgrace." But then he thought about his dad, who soon he'd have to face.

"Get up," an echo sounded low, "you haven't lost at all, for all you have to do to win is rise each time you fall. Get up!" the echo urged him on, "Get up and take your place! You were not meant for failure here! Get up and win that race!" So, up he rose to run once more, refusing to forfeit, and he resolved that win or lose, at least he wouldn't quit. So far behind the others now, the most he'd ever been, still he gave it all he had and ran like he could win. Three times he'd fallen stumbling, three times he rose again. Too far behind to hope to win, he still ran to the end.

They cheered another boy who crossed the line and won first place, head high and proud and happy -- no falling, no disgrace. But, when the fallen youngster crossed the line, in last place, the crowd gave him a greater cheer for finishing the race. And even though he came in last with head bowed low, unproud, you would have thought he'd won the race, to listen to the crowd. And to his dad he sadly said, "I didn't do so well." "To me, you won," his father said. "You rose each time you fell." And now when things seem dark and bleak and difficult to face, the memory of that little boy helps me in my own race. For all of life is like that race, with ups and downs and all. And all you have to do to win is rise each time you fall. And when depression and despair shout loudly in my face, another voice within me says, "Get up and win that race!"

Spoken Dreams

I'd saved up for a new bike. Then I heard a sick boy needed one. I never dreamed my donation would mean so much

BY GINGER LINGO

More than anything I wanted a new bike. I dreamed about it every day while walking to school. My father was a pastor so we didn't have much money. The only way I was going to get that bike was to earn my own money for it. So I worked hard, doing odd jobs like babysitting, weeding and raking leaves. I stashed every penny I earned from those jobs and my allowance in my piggy bank.

Then one day at Sunday school our teacher told us of a letter she had received from Chile about a boy who had hepatitis. His missionary parents said he was recovering, but his spirits were still low. "Can you think of anything that might cheer him up?" our teacher asked us.

"A new bike!" the whole class exclaimed eagerly, and we agreed we would raise the money.

All week long I agonized over what to do. My conscience could only come up with one answer—give up my savings for the boy in Chile. So I emptied out my piggy bank and brought every cent to Sunday school. It was the hardest thing I had ever done, and maybe that's why it felt so right.

In college years later I found myself praying for something even harder than I had prayed for the bike—a man meant just for me. All my friends were dating. Why wasn't I? Was God asking me to wait again?

At last I met someone named Steve. We had a lot in common. He went to the college where my father taught, and my roommate was engaged to his best friend. He was earnest, smart and hard-working. But I couldn't help wondering, *Is he really the one?*

One evening our families got together for dinner, a chance for everybody to get to know each other better. Over dessert and coffee Steve's mother talked about some of the places they had lived when they were missionaries. "Once when we were in Chile," she said, "Steve got hepatitis. You know what cheered him up?"

Of course, I knew. He got a bike—my bike. And I got the husband I have been married to for 29 years.

On "Doing Less" ...a Story

BY JOHN LEONARD

Once upon a time, in a swimming pool in the far north, near the arctic circle in upstate New York, I learned a lesson.

There was a lane we called "the national team". Some of these 8 or 9 bodies had national cuts and others just aspired to have the national cuts, and were close. They all thought they were special. They came early, they stayed later, they were "the National Team".

They weren't the only ones I had in the pool during this time, and I moved from group to group, so periodically, I'd pass them by and say something like "Nice Job. You guys are working hard, keep it up, Good Work". They improved when they went to swim meets and swam faster and faster.

One day as I walked past, I heard Lynn Scully say to Amy Richards, "hey, cut me some slack here, slow down, I can't go that hard right now." (for purposes of full disclosure, Lynn is a male, Amy a female) Amy looked at him in a quizzical way, and went hard again. I ignored it and walked away.

The next day, I walked past, said "good job, Good work, makin'progress". Lynn and two other male swimmers didn't look me in the eye. Later in that practice, I heard Pete say, "Amy, I'm dyin' here, give me a break hey?" and heard Lynn chime in, "Yeah, no need to go this hard". And a third male say "Crap Amy, you're makin' us all work too hard to keep up with you!".

I learned from this that we can be two kinds of people.. the kind that encourages everyone around us to work hard and achieve more, or we can be the kind that says "we don't have to work that hard to achieve more."

Amy slapped her hands on the water with frustration, gave up, stepped aside and moved to the middle of the lane to let Petelead.

Our nationals Sucked.

I learned from this that we can be two kinds of people....the kind that encourages everyone around us to work hard and achieve more, or we can be the kind that says "we don't have to work that hard to achieve more". We each of us have both people within us. And everyone who has ever coached or ever swum or ever competed knows this is the truth.

If just one person backs off, it lets the next weakest person do likewise. Its a disease, and it spreads fast.

After that lesson, I always paid attention to the "lane talk" in workouts. And I'd talk to my teams about how to encourage each other to be achievers and how no one person in the group can achieve more than the group aspires to achieve. The group has got to get it right, and none can have the attitude that says "we don't have to work that hard".

And if they didn't want to be their personal best selves, they didn't want to train with me. They could train somewhere else and float through with some other coach. Life, and this sport, does not reward those who "float through"...it rewards those that enjoy the work for its own sake.

I would say for awhile that I was "amazed" at how much satisfaction the swimmers took from encouraging each other to do more than they thought was possible.

Now, I look back and know it was not amazing at all. It was normal. Because, you see, we can all chose to be the person who says "lets do less" or the person who says "lets swim faster". And once the team decides to only accept the positive input, there is nothing amazing about it. Its normal.

Since 1974, that experience left an indelible mark on me. It marked me with the knowledge that just one person who thinks they can "do less" can ruin a team, or a group, or an office, because we all have the capacity to sink, or to rise to leadership.

Think about that when your team is swimming up and down that lane.

American Swimming Coaches Association • 5101 NW 21st Avenue, Suite 200 • Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309

"That's Not It"

Last week, we had a Mom come to us and "inform us" that her 13-year-old daughter would be gone for two weeks vacation in late June, maybe another week after that.

Her daughter was not much of an age group swimmer, but she has some endurance capacity and comes regularly to workout at 5:30 am and again at 5:30 pm daily. She works hard, demonstrates little talent, but lots of determination.

Her mother is not athletic and clearly does not value athletics. We expressed our dismay that she'd be missing for 2-3 weeks in the middle of the most important training of the summer. Her mothers response?

"Who cares, she'll never be an Olympic swimmer, so what does it matter really?"

This is a dagger in the heart to any swimming coach, and it is to me.

If we only cared about and worked hard with, those 52 people who will eventually, once every four years, go off to the Olympic Games, it would be a small, empty and meaningless sport.

My response was "That's really not it."

What is **it**?

It is the fact that young people need to learn to dedicate themselves to something that is difficult, something that requires perseverance, guts and the daily determination to get your butt out of bed and go out and push your body till it can't go anymore.

Why do they need to learn this?

Because their lives are too easy, too soft, too catered-for. Too many people carry them, make excuses for them, never **allowing them** to try to be "heroic." Is it "heroic" to get your butt out of bed and go swim at 5 am? It is if you haven't done it before. Is it heroic to "make" 10x200 fly on 4:00? It is if you haven't ever done it before. Is it heroic to finish your swim and turn around and cheer for the teammate who is even further behind than you are, and is struggling to make the set? Need I say it? It is if you've never done it before.

And that is what **"it"** is about. About doing what you haven't done before. And learning that sometimes you succeed. Sometimes you fail. If you fail, you go again until you learn to succeed.

It's not about being **an** Olympian.
It's about **being Olympian**. Learning to be a hero.

And what it takes to learn that.

Or, you can Be Comfortable and teach your child that its more important to be Comfortable.

So, if that's your choice, I only have one question?

What will happen to your child on the day when they are made "uncomfortable" by life?

-John Leonard

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From the Book, Secrets of the World Class

Key questions:

What am I willing to fight for?
What values do I commit to?
Am I growing or drifting?
The great ones choose discipline over pleasure.
The great ones don't give back. They just give.
Am I more interested in comfort or in being uncomfortable?
Are my habits, actions, and behaviors congruent with the vision I have for my life?
List the three most difficult adversities you have faced and the positive that has come out of them.
"You will never be the person you can be if pressure, tension, and discipline are taken out of your life". James Bilkey

What makes the difference:

The middle class competes. The world class creates.
The middle class love comfort. The world class is comfortable being uncomfortable.
The middle class cares about themselves. The world class cares.
The middle class lives in delusion. The world class lives in reality.
The middle class if frustrated. The world class is grateful.
The middle class wants. The world class sacrifices.
The middle class has dreams. The world class has vision.

Letter to the team from a graduating senior – Brooke Woodward, Emory University

To the past, present, and future Orinda Aquatics swimmers and families,

No quote, story, or video could ever fully explain the feeling and deep connection that this team provides its swimmers. Through commitment to this team we learn pride and purpose, sacrifice and discipline, and love and passion.

It is extremely hard to write this letter because I am not ready to leave the team that has been my backbone through the past six years. Reflecting on my Orinda Aquatics swimming career, I will never remember my times, the grueling sets, or any important meets. Instead, I will always cherish the lifelong relationships that I built over my years on the team and how they have changed me.

In life, we gradually shape our identities through our reactions to the people and environments that surround us, so we truly become that to which we are most exposed. For this reason, every Orinda Aquatics swimmer is incredibly lucky to be influenced by the team's philosophy, have access to the coaches' wisdom, and have the constant support of extraordinary teammates.

Orinda Aquatics is not a regular team. The pool environment is a haven where passion, dedication, unity, and character thrive. Our team truly lives its mission statement. Some outsiders may call it cultish, but it is hard not to be extremely close with those with whom you share morals, goals, and a lifestyle. In a community where drug and alcohol use increasingly threatens teenagers, Orinda Aquatics is a sanctuary that encourages us to pursue athletics, academics, and personal growth at the highest level. When the academic, athletic, and social pressures of high school hit, I found myself splitting my time between studying and training at the pool. Where schoolwork often seemed tedious, swimming became the exact opposite. This team has taught me how to live a life of value and leadership, but as much as I have grown from my years on Orinda Aquatics, it may be an even greater privilege to watch how the team has changed the life of many individual team members.

Ronnie and Donnie: you are blessings to our team, our families, and our community. No amount of description could truly do you justice. You are the cornerstone of the true purpose of athletics. Thank you for passionately showing us life's most important lessons and changing our lives selflessly and humbly. Thank you for teaching us humility, integrity, compassion, respect, honesty, work ethic, and commitment. Although you convey your wisdom through talks, quotes, stories and videos, we learn the most from watching how you live your daily lives. I could not have asked for better mentors, role models, and coaches, and I know my friendships with you will last forever.

To the team's past swimmers: thank you for being the framework for an incredible program and setting the standard for the years to come. To the team's present swimmers: enjoy the time you have left on Orinda Aquatics, soak up the lessons there are to learn, love everything for what it is and how it can help you as a person, and remember that your swimming career is not defined by your time on the scoreboard. To the team's future swimmers: I envy that you are just beginning your Orinda Aquatics journey and I wish you the best, continue to set the standard for the years to come.

Thank you Orinda Aquatics. From the bottom of my heart, my daily life will not be the same without you, but your message will always guide me. I will miss you. Love, Brooke

Senior Letter to the team - Jill Jones, Cal Poly, Captain

As I prepare to leave for college, I have an opportunity to reflect on the "Orinda Aquatics Journey" that has shaped me and laid the foundation for the rest of my life. At 9 years old I stepped onto the pool deck of (what I thought to be) just another swim team. However, I soon began to realize a uniqueness that could only be found on deck at the Soda Center with Orinda Aquatics. Not a single person was treated better or worse than another; everyone was considered an equal asset to the team. Even my little sister, who was the youngest on the team at that time, became the only member of the "Cub" group. Everyone was given an opportunity to do the sport they loved and a chance to improve despite their ability.

Over the years I have learned to place my trust in the coaches. It wasn't easy to trust Matt when he told me at 11 years old that I was swimming the 1650 at the next meet. Little did I know that while I swam the mile ten times over the next 2 years, Matt had been looking at the bigger picture. He knew that if I was able to handle the mile, I would be mentally tough enough to handle any obstacle or race that would come my way.

Similarly, two years ago it wasn't easy to trust Ronnie when he told me to sign up for the 400IM. I believed myself to be a sprinter and presumed he was joking. As fate would have it, the 400IM is now one of my best events. You were right Ronnie!

OA coaches have dedicated their lives to every single swimmer. I encourage you all to trust the coaches wholeheartedly; they know your potential and how to get you there. Orinda Aquatics has successfully prepared me for my future and every challenge I may face. Through both success and failure I have learned how to be humble and confident, how to be a leader and a follower, and most importantly, how to apply the team motto "Character First" to every aspect of my life. Being a swimmer isn't everything; in fact, our weekly group meetings usually consisted of an inspirational article rarely pertaining to swimming. Because of their interest in us as swimmers ***and*** people, Ronnie and Donnie harnessed every opportunity to make a difference in our lives.

Not only have the coaches taught me valuable lessons, but my teammates also have significantly influenced my life. I was fortunate enough to have excellent role models like Shelbi, Molly, and Caroline, all of whom inspired me to represent nothing but excellence as I took on a "Senior Leadership" role. I am inspired daily by my teammate's dedication and hard work. This one-of-a-kind team would not have been possible without the incredible people that define Orinda Aquatics.

My journey is far from over because Orinda will forever be a part of my life. The valuable lessons I have learned and the friendships I have made will never be forgotten. I have spent half my life with this team and will forever consider myself to be an ambassador of Orinda Aquatics.

Marc- Thank you for your unfailing support and positive post-race feedback.
Matt- Thank you for believing in me and for always helping me through the hard times. You not only helped me grow as a swimmer but also as a person, and I cannot thank you enough for that.
Donnie- Thank you for never losing sight of the bigger picture and finding the positives in everything. Your dedication and passion for this team is contagious.
Ronnie- Thank you for reminding me to look at the glass as half full, for pouring your life into this team, for caring about me as person and a swimmer, and for always supporting me. And don't you worry, my sassiness will live on in Shannon and Courtney. They're all over it.
Mom & Dad- Thank you for waking up early to drive me to practices, driving me across the Bay Area for swim meets, all of your support throughout my swimming career, and the countless hours you have worked so that I could be a part of such an amazing program.

My teammates- Thank you for inspiring me daily. You have no idea how big of an impact you have made in my life. Thank you for supporting me; nothing makes me want to swim faster than swimming into the screaming "***Red Wall***." If you ever need anything, I'm always here for you. **Much Love, Jill Jones**

Senior letter from Shelbi Luchini, Washington State (Team Captain)

Now as I start to move into the future and head off to college, I would like to share how Orinda Aquatics has made me a better person and swimmer in every way. The first and most important virtue that OA has taught me is to live with the most impeccable character as possible. Character first is the motto of the team and whenever I am at a swim meet, I always see that character shine through in every OA team member. They are always cheering, encouraging and supporting their fellow team mates. My teammates are much more – they are my best friends. Every day I look forward to seeing them and I will miss them so much when I go to college. I will always cherish the times we spent together and I know we will continue to have amazing experiences in the future.

I have learned to be respectful, humble and to always look at the brighter side of a situation. I am so grateful that Orinda Aquatics has given me something that I never thought I could achieve in my high school career; confidence. This new found confidence that I now have has changed my life completely and I owe that all to this swim program because I can now walk with my head held high and look a person in the eyes without feeling uncomfortable.

The Orinda coaches are truly one of a kind. They are unlike any individuals I have ever met in my life. Donnie is one of the most sincere people I know; he can always help us to see the glass as half full. For example, he is always looking for ways to encourage us, either with articles or his own words of wisdom. Ronnie's friendship is something that I will cherish forever. There have been discussions beyond swimming that have included philosophy, religions, politics and diversity…I could go on forever. These discussions have helped me realize the bigger picture; life beyond swimming. Ronnie and Donnie have held us all to a very high standard throughout our years with Orinda Aquatics, and I believe that it has molded us into better swimmers, better teammates, better students, and most importantly better people, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I don't know if I truly understood the journey that I was about to embark on as I entered the OA family, but now as I move forward as a young woman, I realize the impact that this program has had on my life and will continue to have from this point forward. God bless all of you as you continue on your journey with Orinda Aquatics, and know that the OA family is always going to be right behind you every stroke of the way. Best Regards, Shelbi Luchini

More Than a Team

An essay written on OA by Kelly Noah, 15, for high school

The time is 5:30 a.m. as the stars gleam overhead on a blustery Tuesday morning. Laughter and quiet chatter from my teammates entwines with the patter of rain splattering on the pool deck. I help to uncover the pool and then hustle into the locker room with my teammates where we change into our swimsuits and then quickly head back out. Although it's never easy to get up to go swim when the stars are out and the sun is still sleeping, we honor perseverance. Commitment and dedication are imperative qualities that we strive to live by in order to strengthen our team's unparallel bond with one another. Icy rain pours from the gloomy clouds above. We gather in a circle where everyone listens intently and respectfully to our coach, Donnie, as he describes the workout over the roar of the rain, and reminds us to be "above the weather." The team dives in the pool for warm up and when we finish we quickly hop out again to hear Donnie explain the next set.

This is going to be my third year swimming for Orinda Aquatics, a year-round swim team that's sole purpose is to continue a tradition of team unity and impeccable character. We constantly push our physical and mental limits during workouts and races and we approach swimming with a positive thirst for challenges. Like many sports teams, we persistently encourage each other to never give up. Because our team spends the majority of our time working out at the pool together, we share an incredible sense of family. When I first started Orinda Aquatics, my coach told me that I would develop long-lasting relationships with my teammates. I didn't realize just how right he was until I came back from a long break. The first day back absolutely vibrated with energy as we excitedly greeted everyone with hugs and smiles. Three weeks of vacation had felt more like three months apart from each other. I am filled with a sense of ease knowing that I have a security net of friends to rely on.

I don't believe that Orinda Aquatics would be the same team that it is today if it weren't for our staunch coaches. In today's world, people who are completely driven by helping other people are hard to come by. Our coaches come to workout with the goal of improving everyone's stroke by the end of practice. They remind us to keep the "big picture" in mind so that we see beyond minor setbacks and learn from mistakes. I have immense respect for all of them, but at the same time I am very comfortable to talk to them about school, piano, or personal problems. They have taught me to keep swimming in balance with the rest of my life. I am grateful to them beyond words for being dedicated coaches, role models, and friends.

People always ask me why I swim year-round. They ask me how I make myself get up for morning practices and how I endure the intense workouts. My answer is pretty simple. I love swimming. I love the life lessons that the sport teaches me. Practices relieve my stress by keeping my mind focused on the here and now. I feel proud of my physical and mental strength when I work through difficult sets. But more importantly, I swim year-round because of my team. My teammates are some of my closest friends. We have coaches that are like father figures because of how much they care for us inside and outside of the pool. The environment is always positive and geared towards "putting character first," as our team motto says. I'm sure that Orinda Aquatics will be the best group of people that I will ever have the chance to be a part of.

A 2009 letter to the team from Ron/Don

Our Mission as Coaches

We would first though, like to reiterate our mission, philosophy, and intent, with regard to Orinda Aquatics, our coaching careers, and what we want to be doing with our lives. It is our intention and desire to be more than coaches, but rather partners with our swimmers on their athletic journey, and to a greater extent, partners on their life journey. Our ultimate goal is that four or eight years from now they are swimming at their very best, loving the sport, are leaders on their team, and are better people. And there is no one meet on that path that will define it more than the process reflected in the quote below, "*it is produced in the great manufacture of daily duty*." We have always wanted this team and the environment to be different and to stand apart from the norm. The best and first way to achieve this is to care "intensely" about people and their well-being first and swimming second. We do not and have never viewed our relationship or support ending when practice ends or when we leave a meet. It is the least we can do for their commitment to swimming, to Orinda Aquatics, and to us. In short, your children have our unconditional support in the pool and out.

Our Team

We would like to attempt to describe the team environment and try to do justice to this group. This has been unequivocally the greatest "character group" we have seen in thirty years. It may sound redundant as we praise them often, but we really do believe that this group sets a standard that is unmatched by any high school athletic group in the country. As we see teen trends drift in troubling directions, this group is doing the opposite. Our swimmers, your children, demonstrate not *some* of the qualities, but *all* of the qualities you would hope to find in the finest person, let alone athlete.

They possess humility rarely seen in young adults, or actually anyone. It is humility almost to a fault, and to a person. Whether new to the group, a four-year veteran, a beginning swimmer or a national qualifier, there is no self-promotion, no spotlight, *no* ego. Attention and praise is always deflected. On too many teams one can tell the success of a swimmer by the way in which they carry themselves. On Orinda Aquatics, it almost seems to be a race to be the most humble as opposed to being the most celebrated.

As kids today are challenged with academic pressure, social pressure, and athletic demands, your children find balance, find a way to make it work, and succeed. They respect academics and embrace it as a foundation of their life. They are the community example, if not the national example of the quintessential student/athlete. While many can excel in one area, few can have the self-discipline to set an alarm at 4:45 in the morning, take pool covers off in the wind and rain, push themselves physically and emotionally every day (of the year), sacrifice countless opportunities, and simultaneously commit to the highest academic standards. It takes a special person to be a great student, a great athlete, and a great person in this day and yes, in this community.

Continued next page

Additionally, they could not be more respectful, helpful, supportive, and sincere. How many coaches, teachers, administrators, could walk away from fifty teenagers with *complete* confidence that there would be no drop-off in activity, effort, or focus, and that the thought of doing less would not enter anyone's mind? How many coaches can have a fifty meter pool set up for every workout without ever asking anyone to do anything? There is never a "why me" or a "do I have to" attitude. It is incredibly refreshing and a great source of pride to see even the least glamorous parts of swimming treated with such respect, and with a positive attitude. How many coaches can take forty athletes (of any sport) on a four day travel trip and have absolute assurance that their behavior would be impeccable - from everyone? Our team continues to rebuff the notion that kids need to be chaperoned. To the contrary, mature, caring, respectful, young adults do not. Oversight is always a character issue and not an age issue. They clearly prove that. Whether it is an activity at the pool or a cross-country trip, their character does not change and neither does the respect or behavior. We honestly feel sorry for teams, coaches, and parents that do not get to experience this. Most teams look for "leaders" or high character kids with a team captain-like mentality, that special one or two that might improve the environment and make the team better. College coaches want "good, positive, kids". That is our team. Not one, two, or five, but fifty.

A freshman boy climbs out of the pool asking to talk after he struggles through a hard set. Rather than making an excuse or complain because the interval or set was too hard, he apologizes for not doing better and vows to do better next time. A swimmer gives up a relay spot at a championship meet because he is "not at his best" and the relay goes on to win (and he had the fastest time of any swimmer in consideration). A swimmer, who when asked if she wanted to swim in college, replies, "I could not imagine my life without swimming," swimmers stand in the wind and rain for a "meeting" during workout without complaining, swimmers persevere through injury – with a positive attitude, seniors fix broken lanes lines, and swimmers thank *us* every day for the practice. And the random acts of kindness and respect are too numerous to mention. They are daily occurrences. As an example of self-discipline, earlier this season Ronnie could not be at a few workouts due to a conflict. I asked if he needed me to oversee his group. He said they would be fine and he would email them the workout. I watched in awe everyday at their focus, maturity, and punishing work ethic as they painstakingly went through every detail of the workout, with no "supervision".

And this group rebuffs more myths than teen supervision. In a rec dominated community which that is sure that year-round swimming will only lead to "burn-out" and deficient academics, they again prove the opposite - that by doing something positive that you enjoy can actually be a good thing, and that strength in academics is really more about self-discipline than free time.

Another very unique characteristic on this team is the extraordinary maturity of our freshman (and eighth grade) group. They clearly swam incredibly well in league meets and North Coast , but more significantly they have demonstrated poise, respect, and sincerity that usually takes years to develop. Our freshmen could be team captains on any high school team. It is a testament to their character but also to the steady and uncompromising leadership of our upperclassmen. While it is common to haze, "initiate", delegate to, or keep freshman on a lower level, our team and our seniors see everyone as an equal, and see the value in creating our future (leaders) today.

The drug and alcohol epidemic or crisis is not going to change or mitigate without inspirational young adults making an intelligent and conscious choice for a better, healthier, and more productive way of life. They are our hope. Your children represent much more than swimming. Regarding "life lessons", they are life lessons and will be life's leaders. They are inspirational stories, individually and collectively. While they will be successful, it will be their humility, character, and work ethic that drive their lives and impact others. We thank them for putting "character (and the team) first" and thank you for sharing them with us and allowing them to represent this team as the pinnacle of youth sports and young adults. And we want to thank you again for your support and hope that you share in the pride of this great organization.

Donnie & Ronnie

Miramonte High School - Integrity in Aquatics Scholarship

Letter to recipient, Brooke Woodward

Dear Brooke,

You are the unequivocal representation of "Integrity in Aquatics" at Miramonte, and anywhere for that matter. I had decided a while ago that there was no reason to open this up in any capacity this year, and that you had earned and deserved this recognition. I may offer a runner-up award but have not yet decided. So, congratulations on being the inaugural winner of the Miramonte High School Integrity in Aquatics Scholarship. I could not imagine a more deserving individual, or one more representative of the cornerstones of what this recognition is designed to acknowledge.

I have seen all too clearly that it is not navigating the academic or athletic landscape that is the most challenging for youth. It is navigating the character landscape; to live a life of integrity in the midst of extreme social and peer pressures. You have not only done this, but become the standard. You have been the quintessential student-athlete and a role model for those who value and pursue athletics, academics, and character on a high level. Your gifts transcend sports and should be emulated by every young athlete. I have watched you grow into an extraordinary young woman and not only live a life of character but a life of conviction. You have demonstrated stoic purpose, deliberate thought, and sincere compassion. While many do make good decisions, most do so silently. They know what is right but do not take a stand against what is wrong. Through your incredible maturity, you have done this, and set yourself apart. And from a swimming perspective, your integrity in the water is simply impeccable – every day, every set, every lap is executed with purpose and focus. You have been a coach in the water and the one whose opinion I respect and value most.

You have not only made a year-round commitment to swimming, you have made a year-round, and a life-long commitment to character, to discipline, to sacrifice, and to a greater good – your team. While your path has not been easy, it has only revealed the tremendous resilience, perseverance, and mental and physical fortitude that defines your life. You have shown that success in life does not and should not come without commitment and without a price. Few can live by the saying, "Don't ask for anything, if you are not willing to give everything." And thus, you lived your own quote, "what you are becoming day by day is infinitely more important than what you are today." Look at what you have become, day by day - a leader, a role model, an inspiration, the pinnacle of respect, and "world class."

The quotes mentioned previously not only apply to you, they are you. "Followers see the hard work they must endure to climb the mountain of success, while leaders see the success of climbing the mountain of hard work." And, "when he took the time to help the man up the mountain, lo, he scaled it himself." Thank you for helping our team up the mountain. And my favorite, "The world waits for you, in the place where you are. Heal it now. There is much you can do." Brooke, there is *much* you have done. You have been an anchor and a beacon of light for a team that needed you.

It is has been a true privilege to know you and to coach you. With love and immense respect, Donnie

A letter of recommendation (for a future Olympian)

Peter Varellas: An example of work ethic, leadership in workout, and maturity.

From a letter of recommendation written for Peter:

As an example of his dedication to both sports (swimming and water polo), on Thursdays he has morning swim practice from 5:30 to 7:30 AM and afternoon swim practice from 3:30-5:45 PM. After the PM practice he drives to Palo Alto (1 hour away) for a 7:00 PM water polo Junior National Team workout. His mother had to ask me if he could get out a little early to get something to eat before the long drive to Palo Alto. Peter never asked and declined the offer when I suggested it.

As good as his value is in the water, his other qualities are even more valuable. For good reason, Peter is the team captain for the Campolindo Swim Team and for Orinda Aquatics. His leadership is impeccable. There is not a single important leadership quality that he does not possess. **His work ethic is outstanding. He is the hardest worker on the team. He sets an example everyday in practice for others to perform at his level.** And he is never negative or condescending about motivating others. He is always positive, supportive and encouraging.

He takes the leadership role very seriously and cares about making a difference. He is the first one on the deck for workout and he is usually the last one out of the pool. He is the first one to take pool covers off on a cold, rainy morning, usually doing all the covers. The one time I almost got upset with him was at a recent meet in Las Vegas. We ask the kids to be prompt at all times on travel trips. On the second day of the meet Peter was late coming out of the pool area to the team van. I asked him why he was late. He matter of factly, with no disgust in his voice, let me know that our kids had left the team area a mess and he stayed around (alone) to pick up all the garbage and throw it away.

Did these qualities have an impact on his future success. Yes, indeed. In water polo, he went on to win an NCAA Championship at Stanford, was voted Stanford's Male Athlete of the Year (all sports), and earned a Silver Medal at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

Ron Heidary

A letter from a graduating seniors parent

Don and Ron

Thank you, thank you, thank you, a thousand times.

We are so blessed to have you gentlemen in our son's life and allowed us to be a part of an amazing family, The Orinda Aquatics Swim Team.

Sometimes we know the definition of a word, but don't truly understand the meaning. For me that word would be GRATITUDE. My wife and I owe the two of you a great deal of gratitude for all you have done for our son and us. We pray that we will be able to repay you in some way in the future.

I truly believe you guys live out the value of "Character First" and it's not just some phrase you put on the swim caps. In a society that challenges kids' integrity every day, you help young men and women develop true character. What a great reinforcement to the family values we hold important. You have made our son a better swimmer and have taken him to the next level. But more important than that, you have helped him be the man he is becoming. We know he would not be at the level he is without the two of you.

We see that you encourage young men and women to strive for what they want most, not just what they want at the moment, and for them to stand up for what is right even when they are the only one standing. I truly believe people are put into our life for a reason, and we could not be more grateful to have you in ours.

God has truly blessed our son and us. Thank you, Don and Ron.