

Commanding the Workout

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[This Overhead Projector Presentation can be downloaded at the members only section of www.swimmingcoach.org. Portions are also included at the end of this article.]

I want to explain a little bit about my talk and it may seem a little less significant when you hear the great speakers at the Clinic and the innovative things that they have to offer, but I have learned over many years that I think it is more about how you present what you present than the actual workout. I want to touch on these simple clipart presentations, which I think are very significant. You can clearly see that there are two people making a presentation. One might be the head coach and one might be the assistant coach. They look very professional which is one of our themes. What is behind the sheet, the audience, would be the swimmers and the stage would be the pool deck. We like to create this feeling every day on a pool deck and ultimately when the sheet is revealed – there is a great presentation, not dissimilar to a performer on a stage. It may seem a little bit trite, but after 30 years at age 46, I get that feeling of performing every day.

When I walk on the pool deck I almost feel like somebody walking on a stage. I have an obligation to the people that paid money to be there to do the best job possible. As with a performance, whether it is a play or a musical, there are written words but the real difference is how it is presented. Now, I don't want to trivialize anything that you learn here. I do not want to trivialize the quality of workouts; the objective of this talk is to maximize every workout from every perspective and I believe you can do that.

If you could visualize wringing the water out of a towel, if you kept going, could you get another drop? As with a workout, if you kept going, could you get a little more effort and a little more productivity? We ask our kids often, "Can this be the best workout of your life?" When we used to do that early on they would chuckle a little bit. We ask it very seriously now, "Can this be the best workout of your life?" So I am going to ask you as a coach, "Can your next workout be the best workout you have written and you have presented of your life and if so, how do you do that?" Voice, position, intensity, rapport, compassion, flexibility,

motivation, dialogue; how will you add value to the workout? And again, this is not a pump-up speech, it is not a rah-rah, it is not a get excited, get the kids up, it is an everyday thing. It is a way of life.

The next slide is a quote that I am sure most of you have seen, "The mediocre teacher leads, the good leader explains, the superior leader demonstrates and the great leader inspires." The real question behind this is, "Can you inspire every day?" The more important question is, "Can you inspire everyone, every day?" If that was your mission when you walked into the office or walked on the deck, what would you do?

The next quote is from a small book that I read by Michael Lewis, called "Coast." In the book there are teachers with a rare ability to enter a child's mind. It is as if their ability to get there at all gives them the right to stay forever. What if that was your objective? To get into every kid's mind; can you do this and if you could, what would happen?

The next slide summarizes the presentation – "Commanding the Workout." Preparation is fairly obvious. Organization – I would like to talk a little bit about. Focus - is presence and presentation which I think really defines workouts and I would say, ultimately, careers. Evaluation - I think needs to be done more. Respect - which is not really a part of this process, but is I think the glue that binds everything together.

The next page is thoughts and one analogy that I had years ago. We all go to restaurants. We all get something to eat. Sometimes you go to a restaurant because the food is great, you really like the food, but the experience is not positive. Sometimes you go because the experience is so positive you like being there. It is a good feeling and you want to go back. You do not think as much about what you order or what you eat. As with a workout, the written words are absolute, but it's everything else that is added that ultimately makes the difference and creates the desire to go back. We know with swimmers for the most part they have to go back, but how much of it is the desire to go back and to keep going back and do a better job?

I am going to ask a few questions. I would like you to respond as quickly as you can, just think briefly about these things. Would you rather coach swimmers that love the experience but do not improve or swimmers that do well but do not enjoy the experience? If you had to choose, and I realize they are extremes, which one would you choose? If a parent observed your coaching style, how would they rate your presence on the deck? If a parent observed all the clubs in your area, how would they rate your effectiveness on the deck in relation to every other club? Do you watch every swimmer every day? Does every swimmer know they are being watched? Does every swimmer in the workout feel your presence, regardless of where they are in the pool or where you are on the deck? Does your appearance foster professionalism and respect? Does your command change or deteriorate with larger groups or conditions; if the weather is bad, if the group is larger, does the effectiveness of the workout change? Do you believe that every thought, word, action will collectively define the team, the attitude, the workout and the work ethic? Do you believe that your command of the workout will ultimately determine your productivity and the team's success?

We have some big picture themes that we articulate on a regular basis: Be an athlete as opposed to a participant. You need to see and understand and kids need to understand: Are you participating or are you really an athlete? Do a sport as opposed to an activity. Be a team as opposed to a roster and create a culture as opposed to an organization. If you can do these things, if kids can understand these things – everything else gets easy.

In terms of preparation evaluate the prior workouts and your presentation. Think about not only the written workout, but every aspect of that workout. Fit the workout into the week, the month, the cycle, the season and the career. And you may look at this and say, "well how can you do that, that is ridiculous." We think about those things.

At Orinda Aquatics we have an eight year plan, but we only coach kids for 4 years. We tell them that we assume they are going to swim in college. We will prepare them to do that so the last 4 years of our plan, we won't see them. If you think you should be over-trained, you are wrong, we are not going to do that. So they understand. Any workouts should fit in to the career of a swimmer.

I am sure that you have read stories about workouts that have destroyed careers, broken egos or workouts that have motivated or challenged kids to go on to great things. One workout can change a career and you need to understand that. Commit to creating the most motivating, inspiring, challenging workout possible every day. Make them think. Make them work. Make

them better every day. Will this workout make them better and inspire them to come back tomorrow even more motivated? Make the workout an experience and not a practice. If the workout is a practice it will get old. At some time, the kids will burn out.

I hear from parents; he came home and he couldn't stop talking about workout. Is your workout dinner table conversation or is it just another workout? Make sure the plan is written and rehearsed, just like the performers that you saw on the stage. Rehearse your workout, go back through it visually as if it were happening. Go through the intervals, the equipment and make sure it works. The worst thing you want to do is be on a pool deck, give a workout and realize it is not right. The kids know that very quickly. Think about issues, announcements, events, highlights, introductions, articles, challenges. We have a weekly meeting on Friday for 30 minutes. We go over administrative issues, but the other thing we go over are big picture issues. We give out articles on life, on perseverance, on challenge, on success and when we do that we reinforce what we are trying to do on a daily basis – create great athletes and great lives. It makes it easier. Everything works together.

Arrive early. Write the workout. Prepare if needed. The last thing kids want to see is you coming in after them. Greet swimmers with the attitude of enthusiasm that you expect which is easy in the afternoon when it is 4 o'clock or 5 o'clock and it is beautiful. When it is 5:30 a.m. and it is windy and raining, can you be positive? Can they be positive? Demand it. We do. There really is no alternative. They need to understand the better they are, the better the workout is, the better the team is.

Plan to present, explain and sell the workout. Be professional. Look professional. Speak professionally. Act professionally. Treat swimmers as adults in a mutually respectful relationship. We have done this with six and unders. We have talked to them as adults. With the high school kids which we primarily work with we tell them clearly: I will treat you as an adult until you give me a reason not to. At that point we will most likely end our relationship. So they learn very quickly.

In writing the workout be very specific in every capacity; every lap, every stroke, every turn makes a difference. There should be a reason for everything. Everything is controlled: leg drive intervals, stroke counts, stroke rates, distance under water, breathing patterns, pacing, equipment, snorkels, paddles, fins, parachutes, and themes, key words, phrases, terms of the coach, emotion. Know when to be aggressive and know when to be passive. Everything should be controlled. Be creative and challenging, every lap.

Every set should have three to five themes or areas of focus. Never swim to swim. Every single lap.

We tell kids every stroke matters. One theme we talk about is the penny in the piggy bank. Now, you have heard kids say: “this is boring, it is repetitive.” Well, you can make anything a positive. Putting a penny in a piggy bank does not seem like a significant event when you do it, but over time, it adds up. An example is the 500 free. If you said: “Go 500 free.” The kids would swim, but what if you added distance under water, 2-3 black lines, be a bullet under water, it is hypoxic, you change the breathing pattern: left side, alternate right side, one breath? Give stroke counts per lap. Focus on distance per stroke. Change the kick: two beat kick, six beat kick by lap or by 100. Change the pace, three personal stroke keys that they have to know and focus on, three general stroke keys on each 500. Now they are thinking. It becomes an event, rather than monotony.

On the workout organization, and this is very important, control is critical. We have a workout group meeting before we get in the water and we review the workout; the main set, the objectives, the purpose, the organization, equipment needed, administrative issues, and we reiterate the big picture. I spoke yesterday about vision. We reiterate the vision constantly. Be clear why you are here. Be an elite athlete today. Can this be the best workout of your life? What do you have to improve? Can you improve it today? We go through that on a daily basis. Get in the water as a group. This is one thing we do. No body gets to stay late in the locker room. We get in the water as a group. We wait, if one person makes us wait, they understand that. Have each swimmer in the proper lane for the right reason. It is very important. At any point in a two hour workout could somebody point to one kid and ask you why they are in that lane and why they are going in that order and do you have a response? Rotate swimmers based on set objectives.

Get the swimmers out on the deck. I would have to say that this is probably the best thing we do. We have had coaches come and visit and stand on the deck and say, “Wow, you actually get kids out of the water! I like that.” We do it on a regular basis and we have always done it. We pull kids out of the water and they sit on the deck. We use a dry erase board. We go over the workout. They look at the dry erase board. I am in command of the workout and I watch their eyes to make sure that they are focused on the dry erase board. If they are not, I may pull them aside afterwards. We have on deck meetings several times a workout and that may be unusual to you. Something that may be very unusual is we do it year round, in the wind and the rain in the winter and we sell it as a positive. We have on-deck meetings where we go over the structure of the set and the workout, it is a matter of organization. It is

also a matter of discipline and focus, sometimes we do this and it is raining and windy and you think that, “Wow – that is not really fair,” but we tell the kids “if you can't sit here for two minutes when it is a little uncomfortable – how are you going to be an elite athlete?” You could be at the biggest meet of your life and it could be windy and rainy. You couldn't sit in a two minute meeting? But you want to have the best performance of your life? The kids realize that and so the objective is to get good at being uncomfortable. Stay focused when you are uncomfortable. So we sell that.

I highly encourage getting kids out of the water in terms of rotation. We rotate kids by heats, drills, technique, by stroke groups, we match up whether it is pacing or underwater. We have them go head to head, random, just to mix kids up and integrate, to have kids get to know one another: mixed ages, genders, groups, forced separation, intervals, endurance training, games, challenges. We have kids set lanes off and you may think, well there is a pace clock, why do you do that? It engages them in the workout and it engages the other nine lanes to focus on who is setting off. Constantly monitor the swimmers' focus, integrity, work ethic, response to coaches, response to workout and response to teammates, every minute, every workout. Stopping, talking, why? Not that they are doing it, but why. Watching the clock, focus, eye contact, body language, supportive teammates, streamlines, stroke drills, stroke rates, heart rates; look at this as if you were looking through a magnifying glass. Don't just look at the workout.

Be willing to alter or change a workout to improve the quality. Always have a backup plan. If something is not working, make a change for the positive or the negative.

The next slide is on commanding the workout and the essence of the talk: Have a constant feel of command and presence of every swimmer. No one is disengaged. In small print the slide says: “And now presenting you.” Going back to the original slide, imagine as if you were walking up onto a stage; it is your presentation. What will you get out of every swimmer in every workout? Voice and communication: It is not how loud, but how effective. You can talk calmly and convey the message. You can be aggressive. The key is not what you say, but what you hear. I read a book where one of the focuses was “it is not about you.” I definitely remember when I was young, I only focused on me, what I said. I wanted to make sure I said the right thing and if I did I thought, “Well, I said the right thing, they need to understand this and they need to do this.” But it is really not about you. It is about them. It is about what they hear and about what they interpret and about what they do.

Communicate with everyone. What we do is we move around the pool deck and we try to communicate with every kid every day. Now it is obviously easy to communicate when somebody comes into the wall but what if you were in the opposite corner of the pool and somebody came into the wall and you yelled across the pool and called their name and they turned around to find you and you made one stroke comment? It creates an impression that you are everywhere and that you are watching them from every position. Communicate during turns, breaths and between repeats. Constant communication: If kids have two seconds you can say a couple of things, a stroke key, work harder, keep it up, you are doing a great job, anything you want to say, but constant communication. You can make eye contact from the side of the pool.

Pull swimmers out of the water, individuals, lanes, groups, or the whole workout group. If the workout is not going well, pull them out of the water – believe me – you get their attention. This is not going well, this is why or you are doing a great job and I want you to know that. You need to know that. Position on the deck, as I talked about, be visible, change position, do not be predictable. Be in the middle of the pool, the corner of the pool. If they are doing a technique set, slide lane to lane. Talk to every kid as they come in. Be across the pool. Explain a set from the other side of the pool. You may think well, this is silly, but there are a lot of things and a lot of forces at work. They need to know that you could be anywhere. They need to know that you are watching them from anywhere and they need to know that they need to pay attention and stay focused on you, regardless of where you are in the pool. It is a constant process. It is not them finishing and you communicating standards – what is not acceptable and why. Kids need to understand this – what is not acceptable? Black and white.

Be on time. We tell them if a minute late is okay then so is two, three, four, five, ten, twenty, what does it matter? Don't be late. Be on time. If you have to be late, call in advance. Never talk when someone else is talking. The kids need to understand that it is a matter of respect. Demand legality. Catch phrases: let's be great today, let's make this the best workout of your life. As I mentioned, what if it had to be the best workout of your life? What if this had to be the best workout of your life? Would you do anything differently and if you would, why didn't you do that yesterday and will you do that tomorrow.

Integrity should drive the individual, the workout and the team, and as John mentioned, our motto is "Character First" and it actually works to our advantage because we put it on the bulletin board and we put it on the website. If someone does something wrong we point to it and say, "Our team motto is Character First, how could you do that?" It makes it easy to discipline,

but integrity should drive everything and it should be the glue that holds everything together. If not, you will spin your wheels and you will work a lot harder to get things to work.

Humility: no egos allowed. One of the things that we say is if you have an ego you have a problem. Get rid of the ego. Support everyone, the better the workout, the better the team and effort.

Shock the system. Something that we do occasionally and I think this is effective: if things are going well, if the kids have done a good job, we would warm-up and then climb out of the pool. They are obviously nervous but there is peace in the meeting room: "You guys have done a phenomenal job for these reasons." If things are going bad – climb out of the pool. Tell them: "we are not moving in the direction that we want to move in – as I talked about yesterday – in terms of team vision – we are not doing it. You need to understand that. You have agreed to it. We are not doing it. Because of that, I want to send a message." Then we do things like a thousand vertical, streamline dolphin kick, what Dave Salo talked about, we do a lot of. We have even done it with a parachute, but the point is we send a message. It is not going to be tolerated and it is not about you, it is about the future of this team.

Be creative. One point I wanted to make is we do play the stereo during workout. The kids love it and actually, the coaches love it. My brother programs all the songs on his I-Pod and it is a positive part of workout, but we tell them if workout is not going well, we are going to turn it off. Safety may seem obvious, but in terms of commanding the workout – you have to command safety. We have a rule that no one leaves the pool without talking to the coach. It may hark back to elementary school when you have to raise your hand to use the rest room, but that is exactly what we do and we tell the kids it is a safety issue. If you get out of the pool – we have to know where you are. Make sure that in terms of kids leaving the pool, you always know.

In general, I truly believe that command and presence in all of these things will make a better swimmer. In terms of stroke and time, a better workout, a better team, a better environment, ultimately will lengthen careers. As I said our 8 year plan is what we want to do. Make commanding the workout the X-factor in your coaching. Now in terms of evaluation, I really believe that is where the real work begins. Evaluate the integrity of your workout. One example is if you ask your kids to go twenty 150's on 44 with 12 strokes per lap, alternate breathing, streamline out through the flags and you told them you would be in the office, what would they do? This is actually a very significant thing because in our world it should not make a difference whether I am on the deck or not. If it does, then we have a big problem. Not a small problem, a big

problem, and the big problem is respect. Do you respect the kids implicitly and do they respect you implicitly? There should be no drop-off, not whether you are on the deck, not whether there are other coaches on the deck. There should be no drop-off. The workout is the workout. The intent is the intent and the benefit is the benefit. Work ethic: how would you evaluate the work ethic of your group? Do they like to work hard? Not do they work hard, but do they like to work hard? Do they embrace it and do they see the benefit? How do you sell the benefit? Work ethic is a great thing. It is a great virtue. You command it. Demand it.

Attitude: I talked yesterday about measuring the attitude and motivation. As the chemicals in the pool determine the quality of the water, the attitude determines the quality of the workout. You need to monitor it but not on a daily basis, on a minute basis. Motivation and energy and as I said, look through a magnifying glass. Watch body language, head position, eye contact, posture, everything and really, the most significant thing is evaluating yourself. As coaches or head coaches it gets easy to feel that what you do is the right thing, but who looks over your shoulder? Who evaluates you and the answer is – you. Every day before workout you should challenge yourself to write and create the best workout possible and every day leaving the workout you should honestly evaluate how you did as a coach. Grade yourself. Rate yourself. It is critical.

The next page is on concepts. Concepts can be applied to any workout and they are general, but I think they have a big impact. Your vision must be about the greater good. As I said, I remember when I was young the focus was on me. Now it is about the greater good. Is the team getting better with this workout? Putting a penny in a piggy bank, as I mentioned, if kids say, “well I am doing this over and over again.” Here is an analogy: when you put a penny in a piggy bank you do not notice each day, but over time you create wealth. Think about it in terms of technique, endurance, streamline, turns. Every stroke you take you are putting a penny in a piggy bank. Reiterate the positive and do not tolerate the negative, and power leaders engage laggards. One stitch; if you had the most beautiful article of clothing and one stitch came undone, it may not appear to be a big deal, but in time it becomes a hole and in time the seam unravels. As with a team, don’t allow one stitch to come undone. If the kids can visualize that, they understand it. One stitch can affect the entire team. The power of one; it only takes one person to do an extraordinary job. In our senior group we have 70 kids. It only takes one to do an extraordinary job – YOU – you do an extraordinary job and we will be an extraordinary team.

Support, value and respect the novice. If kids see that, they realize this is more about the person than about the time. The two cancers of the team are ego and negativity, and honestly, if I could eliminate this from society, I would and as I have said, there is never any reason for ego. If you are great you get to be great. You don’t need to talk about it and we do not allow negativity at all for any reason. Teach your swimmers to be great from the time they walk in the gate. I really believe the team and training is more about how you enter the gate than about how you enter the pool. Train like your peak meet depends on it. Be willing to do what is in the best interest of the team and not the swimmer. Younger swimmers are your future leaders so mold them early. People focus on the faster kids but the younger swimmers are your future. You need to understand that. Your older swimmers need to understand that. Find a balance between friendship and discipline. Have a sense of urgency. What if something had to happen today, a stroke had to be fixed today? A breakthrough had to happen today? It had to happen today. Would you do things differently?

Generally, all coaches need to speak the same language and have the same philosophy. You can command a workout, but what if you are not on the deck? Will the next coach command the workout? It is more about the way the kids perceive the coach and embrace the workout than about what the coach does and the kids need to understand that. We sell everything as a positive. It is positive, the betterment of the kids. Discipline is a statement of character. Technique is a statement of efficiency. Punctuality is a statement of commitment, commitment to the process. Team attire is a statement of pride. At every meet everybody wears team attire to the point that you do not swim unless you are in team attire. That is not about discipline, it is more about pride. The team concept: have the wind at your back. The greater the team, the more the wind is at your back as an individual. The worse the team, the more the wind is at your face and the glass is always half full.

We ask kids to think about the worst thing they deal with as an athlete: taking pool covers off at 5:30 and it is windy and raining, maybe that is the worst thing. How, if you had to, could you position that as a positive? If I could do this with a positive attitude, I could do anything. It is easy to break down when you are doing this so we do that so in reality nothing is negative. Everything is positive. Everything that challenges you makes you better so it gets easy when you talk about strokes or sets.

Some quotes that can be related to workouts and again this cannot be a team of common men. Who do you play for? If you have seen the movie “Miracle,” it is a phenomenal movie. It is an extraordinary story. We had our team watch it, but the two keys in that movie

were obviously in the scene when he says, “again, again, again,” but the significant thing is – when the athletes abandoned their individuality and ego and gave in to the team process, everything changed. The other thing is when they embraced the work ethic, everything changed, and then obviously they went on to win the gold medal and to become one of the greatest stories in the history of sports. But there was a pivotal point; abandoning individuality and ego, giving in to the team, embracing work ethic. Those really are the two keys, but they have always been the two keys. They are the two keys every day and if you can sell those things: work ethic is a good thing and the team is better than the individual, your team will be better. Mediocrity is the path of least resistance. If people are average then they are average. If you are mediocre you are as close to the bottom as you are to the top. Big things are accomplished through the perfection of minor details and on and on. You can pick two or three that are relevant and make a difference, but get kids to embrace it.

The next page is training concepts: some of these things I went over in terms of organization. Every set for a reason, every kid needs to understand where they are in each lane, in each order, for the right reason. Nothing is by accident. Some things that we emphasize and focus on: five dolphin kicks under water for fly and back, half way for advanced. Breaststroke pull downs to the half way point. Legality. Hypoxic kicking under water every lap. Every stroke matters. The penny in the piggy bank. Training concepts: build the stroke.

Control technique. It is easy to do a set, but can a set create a better stroke? The 500 freestyle I talked about. A few concepts on technique; technique is like ironing the wrinkles out of a beautiful shirt. We asked kids to imagine the most beautiful piece of clothing they own and it just came out of the dryer and it is really wrinkled and it is not attractive and as you iron it out it becomes beautiful with a stroke of the iron. You could be very talented, but technique will iron the wrinkles out of your potential. Do it every day, every set, every lap, every stroke. Take pride in technique as an individual and as a team. Make it the foundation of our team’s development. Kids must buy in. Another thing, a disciplined swimmer will care about technique. Going back to integrity: if kids are disciplined they will care about technique. If they are not most likely they won’t.

Turns: every turn and streamline should be one that you would put in the biggest race of your life.

Sample workout: I am going to conclude to a senior workout. This is a generic workout that integrates team meetings, team workouts, integration, and focus. It is certainly nothing complex, but one thing I want you to imagine is 50-60 kids in a workout with one coach and

we are going to be productive. We have a meeting before the workout. We talk about the objectives, the emphasis, what the main set is, what the secondary set is. We get in the water in groups and we stretch out on the warm-up. The coach stands in front, emphasis, stretch-out, technique and post-warm-up is explained. Three rounds of 350’s: free down, stroke back, build each round, change the intervals, swimmers are in the same lanes. The coach may move his position and talk to kids. Emphasis: Perfect technique as you build up. We get the kids out of the pool and they quickly climb out. Count off – they count off – we are going to go thirty 25’s, six rounds of 5. Drill progression. These are the emphasis and the kids get back in the water in different lanes. Now it may seem cumbersome to move around. What we are trying to do is create a team environment so we move kids around. Now they are with different people. They go through the drill progression then climb out of the water. We are going to do a short threshold set, five 100 freestyles on descending intervals. You have a stroke count and possibly a stroke rate. We just worked on technique. Keep those keys in mind. Two black lines off every wall in a streamline. Know your repeat times, know your intervals and do a great job. Go to your lanes. So now, they have switched again on an endurance set. When they finish that, stretch out and climb out of the water. We are going to do some speed work; twenty 25’s free burst to the half way point. We may change the intervals or the emphasis. The coach may move his position. The emphasis is bullet under water. They do that. They switch out. We ask them to get out on the deck. Now, we are going to rearrange the into stroke groups. We are going to match up. We are going underwater 25’s. Speed under water and you are racing your partner. Butterfliers, backstrokers, breaststrokers, freestylers – make sure you match it by ability and again – the coach will move. We do that set. We watch every swimmer throughout the set and then we get kids out of the water. Now this may be a social thing; kick and chat we do occasionally which is arranging kids randomly and we give a topic like global warming or your peak meet and we have kids kick and the objective of that is interaction, team building.

So, within one workout, kids have moved six times. They have almost gotten to train with everybody on the team – 50 to 60 kids. They have done six different sets with six different emphases. The workout simulates a race from controlled swimming and technique to building up to speed and hypoxic, so they understand that. They have focused on technique. Hopefully, they have done a good job and it re-emphasizes the velocity and the objective of the team. Getting kids on the deck – we feel has added value.

Thank you for your time. I wish you the best of luck in your next performance. Thank you very much.

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Don Heidary
Orinda Aquatics
September 2007

The mediocre leader tells.

The good leader explains.

The superior leader demonstrates.

The great leader inspires.

William Arthur Ward

**“There are teachers with a
rare ability to enter a
child’s mind; it’s as if their
ability to get there at all
gives them the right to stay
forever.”**

Michael Lewis, Coach

Commanding the Workout

- 1) Preparation
- 2) Organization
- 3) Presence
presentation
- 4) Evaluation
- 5) Respect!

Thoughts

- The restaurant - is it the food or the service?
- Would you rather coach swimmers that love the experience but do not improve or swimmers that swim well but do not enjoy the experience.
- If a parent observed your coaching style, how would they define your “presence” on the deck?
- If they (a parent) observed all of the clubs in your area, how would they rate you and your effectiveness on the deck?

- Do you watch every swimmer?
- Does every swimmer know that they are being watched?
- Does every swimmer in the workout “feel” your presence regardless of where they are in the pool or where you are on the deck?
- How would they describe your “command” of the workout?
- Does your appearance foster professionalism and respect?
- Does your “command” change or deteriorate with a larger group? What if it is raining?
- Do you believe that every thought, word, and action, will collectively define the team, the attitude, the work ethic, and ultimately, the workout.
- Do you believe that your command of the workout will ultimately determine your productivity and your team’s success?

Preparation

Be Prepared

- Evaluate prior days/weeks workouts to prepare the next practice.
- Fit the workout into the week, the month, the cycle, the season, and your swimmers’ careers!
- Commit to create the most motivating, inspiring, challenging workout possible – everyday! Make them think. Make them work.
- Inspire them to come back tomorrow even more motivated. Make the workout an experience and not just a practice.
- Make sure the workout is written, planned, rehearsed, and ready to be presented.
- Think about any issues, announcements, events, highlights, introductions, articles, challenges, etc.
- Arrive early. Write workout. Prepare equipment if needed.
- Greet swimmers with the attitude and enthusiasm that you expect from them.
- Plan to present, explain, and sell the workout.

Be Professional

1. **Look** professional.
2. **Speak** professionally.
3. **Act** professionally.
4. **Treat** swimmers as adults in a mutually respectful relationship

| Workout Organization

- **Have a workout/group meeting prior to every workout to review;**
 1. The workout or main set
 2. The objectives and purpose
 3. Organization and equipment needed
 4. Administrative issues
 5. Reiterate why we are here; swimming, season, sports, life
- **Team cheer**
- **Get in as a group/team** (*no individuals*)
- **Always have each swimmer in the proper lane for the right reason**
- **Rotate swimmers based on set objective (get them out on the deck)**
 1. Heats (drills/technique/speed)
 2. Stroke Groups (match up)
 3. Random (count off – team building)
 4. Mix ages, gender, group (forced separation)
 5. Interval (threshold/endurance)
 6. Game
 7. *Challenge*
 - *. **Lane set-off**

Constantly monitor the swimmers' focus, integrity, work ethic, and response to coaches, response to the workout, and response to teammates.

- ✓ Stopping/talking
- ✓ Watching clock
- ✓ Focus, eye contact, support of teammates
- ✓ SL, SD, SR, HR,

Be willing and ready to alter or change the workout to improve quality.

Commanding the Workout; Presence on the Deck

And now presenting... YOU!

Voice/Communication (it's not how loud, but how effective)

- **Explain sets from various locations (ONLY with full attention)**
- **Communicate with everyone from anywhere on the deck**
- *Communicate during turns, breaths, and between repeats*
- **Pull swimmers out of the water (individual, lane, group, or WO)**

Position on Deck (be visible, change position, don't be predictable)

- **Middle, Corner**
- **Lane by lane**
- **Across the pool**
- **In office or in conversation**

Standards

- **What is not acceptable and why/"starting over"**

Discipline

- **Be on time (if one minute late is OK...)**
- **Never talk/explain when anyone is talking**
- **Demand legality**

Catch phrase (example)

- **"Let's be great today"**
- **"Let's make this the best workout of your life!"**
- **"Be the athlete you envisioned"**
- **What if this had to be the best workout of your life – in every way?**

Integrity Should Drive the Individual, the Workout, and the Team

- **Respect (of the coach, the team, the goals, everyone!)**
- **Humility**
- **Support** *(without these, things will breakdown)*
- **Effort**

Shock the system (good or bad - no complacency – anything is possible!)

- **Pizza/Bowling**
- **"Start over"**
- **End workout (for visionary reasons)**
- **Be creative (memorable) – 1,000 yd vertical SL dolphin kick (para)**

Safety (1-safety, 2-integrity, 3-productivity)

- **No one leaves the pool without talking to the coach**
- **The coach is made aware of any problem, issue, etc, immediately**
- **Three point entry/miscellaneous activity**

Be a Salesman (not a dictator) Get buy-in. Sell everything - even the bad!
Challenge swimmers every day as athletes, as people, and as a team.

Evaluation

The reviews are out!...nervous?

1. Integrity

If you asked your swimmers to swim 21x50 Freestyle @ 44 with 12 SPL(strokes per lap), alt. breathing, 2 lines out in a SL, and you told them that you would be in the office, what would they do? Why?

Do you trust them implicitly? Do they trust you implicitly?

2. Work Ethic

How would you evaluate the work ethic of your group? Do they like to work hard? Do they embrace it and see the benefit? How do you sell it? Command it? Demand it?

3. Attitude

Monitor the attitude as you would the pool chemicals or temperature. As the chemicals will dictate the quality of the water, so too will the swimmers' attitude dictate the quality of the workout!

4. Motivation/Energy level

Monitor energy level/motivation from the time they walk in the gate/door, as they walk out of the locker room, get in, warm-up, etc. If the group lacks motivation/energy, is it you? Them? The WO? The team?

5. Yourself

Every time you leave the workout, evaluate yourself, your workout, and how the kids responded to you and your workout. Be honest with yourself. Commit to be better tomorrow. Ask kids, parents, etc.

Concepts

- “Be clear why you’re here.” For you or them, for the individual or the team?
- Your vision must be about the greater good and not about you.
- Putting a penny in a piggy bank (each day, set, lap, stroke, streamline)

- *Reinforce the positive. Do not tolerate the negative.*
- **Empower leaders - engage laggards. This applies to swimmers, coaches, and parents.**
- **One stitch! (like a shirt can unravel one stitch at a time, so can a team)**
- *The Power of One! (it only takes one – each one!)*
- **Support, value, and respect the novice as much as the star.**
- *The two cancers of a team are ego and negativity.*
- **Manage the life of an athlete not the season of a swimmer.**
- **Teach your swimmers to be great the way they walk in the gate, walk on the deck, warm up, cheer, compete, support, deal with disappointment, how to win, and how to lose.**
- **Life is less about what you do than how you do what you do.**
- **Train like your “Peak” meet depends on it.**
- **Begin with tactical discipline with the vision in mind, “it’s just not how we do things.”**
- *Always be willing to sacrifice friendship and points for a greater cause – the integrity of the team.*
- **Be willing to do what is in the best interest of the team, even if it is not popular.**
- **Seek those in need. Show you care about people and not times.**
- *When disciplining, know your objective. After you discipline step back and assess. See if there is any damage. If so, do damage control to the individual and to the team.*
- *Get to know the person behind the athlete.*
- *Younger swimmers are your future leaders. Mold them early.*
- **Create an environment where people will swim more for the team than for themselves.**
- **Sell the older kids on giving back and being leaders.**
- *Find a balance between friendship and discipline. Respect is key.*
- **Envision the novice as competitive, the good swimmer as a great swimmer, and the star.**
- **Have a sense of urgency when coaching and teaching. What if it had to happen today?**
- *Goal setting – big picture first. The big three; attitude, effort, and the team!*

- Create a WE environment.
- **All coaches need to speak the same language and have the same philosophy (continuity/transparency).**
- **Look beyond a workout. Look at effort, perseverance, and integrity.**
- **Discipline as an athlete carries over into the rest of their life and visa versa.**
- **The better you train, the better the lane trains, the workout trains, and the team trains.**
- **Working smart is as important as working hard. So is working positive.**

Sell everything (*If you don't believe it with every fiber of your being, no one else will*)

- **Discipline** – a statement of character
- **Technique** – a statement of efficiency
- **Punctuality** – a statement of commitment to the process
- **Team attire** – a statement of pride
- **Humility** – a statement of equality and selflessness
- **The team concept** – have the wind at your back
- **The worse it is the better for you**
- **The glass is ALWAYS half full!**

Quotes

"This cannot be a team of common men." "Who do you play for?" Miracle

- **Mediocrity is the path of least resistance.**
- **"Being average means you are just as close to the bottom as the top."**
- **"Big things are accomplished only through the perfection of minor details."**
- **"The best way to improve the team is to improve yourself."**
- **"He who is good at making excuses is seldom good at anything else."**
- **"Don't mistake activity for achievement."**
- **"Pain is temporary. Pride lasts forever."**
- **"If you don't find the time to do it right, you will find the time to do it over."**
- **"If your life is too hard, how easy would you like it"?**
- **"Practice makes perfect."**
- **"Perfect practice makes perfect."**
- **"Practice makes permanent."**

- **“You may forget how you behaved when the going got tough, but others won’t.”**
- **“We find comfort among those who agree with us, growth among those who don’t.”**
- **“There are no shortcuts to anyplace worth going.”**
- **“Pay now, play later. Play now, pay later.”**
- **“We first form habits. Then habits form us.”**
- **“Weakness of character is the only defect which cannot be mended.”**
- **“Don’t ask for a light load, but rather ask for a strong back.”**
- **“If the going is easy, beware, you may be headed down hill.”**
- **“He who seeks rest finds boredom. He who seeks work finds rest.”**

Training Concepts

Organize group to maximize workout

- **Interval (training/ability)**
- **Stroke (specialty)**
- **Partner/match-up (racing/UW)**
- **Heats (drills or uniform set)**
- **Random (team integration)**

Some things we emphasize:

- **Five fly kicks off every wall (free, fly, and back) two line SL**
- **Half way for advanced**
- **Breaststroke pull downs to half way (with speed)**
- **Legality (all legal back and two-hand turns)**
- **Hypoxic (separate and integrated)**
- **Kicking (separate and integrated)**
- **UW speed (separate and integrated)**
- **If you don’t count, you don’t care**
- **Every lap/stroke matters**

Training

- **Have main objective and secondary objective with general themes.**
- **Monitor workout in every capacity.**
- **Be creative and challenging every day.**
- **Always make them think.**
- **Will it make their stroke better? Or worse?**
- **Create an environment where discipline is inevitable.**
- **Get kids out of the pool to talk about sets, the workout, etc.**
- **Get kids out of the pool if you sense their focus is diminishing.**
- **Explain everything. “This is why we are doing this. These are the expectations/benefits.”**
- **Sets and workouts should be designed to reflect a race.**
- **If it is not working, be flexible, make a change.**

Build the Stoke

- **Do 25’s and critique each swimmer, each lap.**

- Use progressive teaching with random drills to solidify.
- Gradually increase stress without giving up technique.
- Drill series
- Stroke Keys – general & specific
- Controlled fatigue (previous example of 20x25)
- Teaching new = max rest
- Reviewing = moderate rest
- Training old = min rest
- Integrate technique into endurance training.

Controlled Technique; 20x25 Catch-up Freestyle

- Six Strokes per Lap (SPL)
- Odd – breathe all, even - no breath
- SL through flags with five dolphin kicks (a bullet)
- All-out leg drive through all laps
- Any time during the breath the white water drops – group goes 25 fly swim no breath or vertical SL
- Interval = 25
- Variables can include SPL, BP, interval, SD, legs, pads, fins

A 500 Freestyle or a better stroke?

- SL two lines
- Half CU
- BP = Rt/alt/Lt/1 breath
- Monitor stroke count
- Kick – Two beat odd, strong legs even
- Elbow “high and to the side” on catch on odd laps
- Elbow “high and to the sky” on recovery on even laps
- Slide to side
- All turns tight and fast (heels to suit)
- Equipment options-pads, anti-pads, snorkel, parachute, fins

Technique Thoughts/Concepts

- Technique is like ironing the wrinkles out of a beautiful shirt.
- Take pride in technique as an individual and as a team.
- Have technique become the foundation of your team’s development.
- Make it an every day commitment.
- Make the kids personally responsible for their own technical development.
- Drill the drill, build the stroke.
- Balancing training vs. technique
- A disciplined swimmer will care about technique.
- Strokes change (for better or worse) under fatigue not by merely doing drills.
- Bottom up (build the stroke and train it) or Top down (train the athlete and work on the stroke)?
- Turns – EVERY ONE should be a turn you would put into a race!

Sample Workout

- ✓ **On-deck meeting**
 - Workout, emphasis, objectives, specifics, the rest of the week, highlight someone, challenge/motivate/inspire someone, reinforce core values (what you stand for), organize swimmers
- ✓ **Swimmers should know: stroke keys, drill progressions, personal keys**
- ✓ **Group Cheer**
- ✓ **Get in together (as a team), Secret Challenge – licorice or vertical SL**

Set #1: 10x25 Freestyle Drill Progression			
Interval	30 or coach send		Drill Progression
Org. Structure	Heats (free)		Side Kick
Emphasis 1	Technique		One arm
Emphasis 2	UW/speed		Catch-up
Energy System	EN1/SP3		Lift-switch
Other	Lane 1 sets off		Burst 15 yards.

Set #2: 12x25 Main Stroke – Drill Progression					
Interval	30 or coach send	How	Fly	Back	Breast
Org. Structure	Stroke/Match	UW	Dolph.	Dolph.	PD/ kick
Emphasis 1	Technique	Kick	Side-alt	Side-alt	Back SL
Emphasis 2	UW/Speed	Str. Drill	One Arm	One Arm	Pull Dol.
Energy System	EN1/SP3	EZ-Fast	Swim	Swim	Swim
Other	Lane 2 sets off				

Set #3: Kick and chat 300 with Board		
Interval	NA	Topics: Peak Meet objectives Training Goal Personal note/trivia
Org. Structure	Random-count	
Emphasis 1	Integration	
Emphasis 2	Warm down	
Energy System	EN1	
Other	Topic-peak meet	

Sample Senior *(high school)* Workout

Set	Organization	Coach	Motivation
WU			
3x300	General Group	In front – watch	Stretch/technique
Post WU			
3x3x50 FR/Str. build round	Same	Corner	Build up/perfect turns, DPS
Climb out - count off, random org			
Technique			
30x25 Free drill series	Random – mix	Lane to Lane, opposite end	Perfect technique
Climb out – Interval org			
Threshold Fr.			
5x5x100 Free at desc. int.	Ability/Interval	Lane to Lane	Hold tech/SPL, challenge
Climb out – set up in Free heats			
Speed Free			
20x25 Free burst	Heats/Race	Side	Win UW/breakout
Climb out Stroke group – match up			
Hyp/UW- Str.			
16x25 UW Stroke	Stroke/match	Opposite corner	Bullet UW
Random count (for lane)			
Kick/Chat			
Give topics	Random	Move/check-in	Interaction
Warm Down			
	Same lane	Move/check-in	Recover/Technique

OBJECTIVE: Preparation, presentation, organization, interaction (coach-swimmer and swimmer-swimmer), knowledge, focus, etc.