

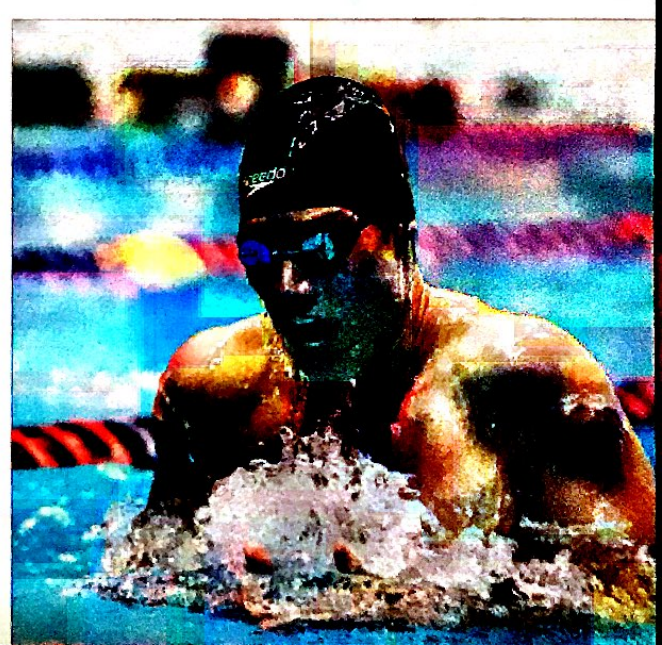



National Interscholastic Swim Coaches Association of America, Inc.

"To educate coaches, to promote aquatic sports, and to honor coaches and athletes"

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- Membership Pg.5
- Unpredictability of Coaching Pg. 7
- All-America Awards Pg. 8
- Building Resiliency in Swimmers Pg.10
- Teaching Tech Pg. 11
- Swimmer Strength Pg. 13



WELCOME NEW AND RETURNING SWIMMING COACHES

Welcome to another school year and another swimming and diving season. As you prepare for a new round of training and competition, take time to consider your membership in NISCA. We are the representative body of high school swimming and diving coaches. As a new coach or returning coach to the sport, you might ask what NISCA has to offer you? Why should you join?

Each membership offers \$1,000,000 dollars in liability insurance for you while you are coaching, whether it be on the deck at the high school, or while coaching a club team.

A professional journal will arrive at your house every other month. Journals are generally filled with articles on swimming technique, goal-setting, and training sets. Each issue also includes a "tear-out" center section from Go Swim.

The NISCA website offers a Members Only page with access to previous journal articles, the NISCA coaching handbook, and examples of team handbooks. Other valuable information for coaches is found there as well. The website is also the home of the NISCA All -America information.

The All-America, Scholar Team, and Power Points programs are NISCA Programs. As a NISCA member, you may submit applications for these programs free of charge. Non-NISCA members must pay fees for applications.

NISCA also provides recognition for coaches through the Professional Awards Program. Our mission is to recognize coaches for their achievements. Each year, coaches from across the United States are honored at our Awards Banquet held during our annual conference.

NISCA offers clinics at our coaching conference each spring. This conference is held in conjunction with the Men's Division I NCAA Swimming and Diving Championships. This year we will be in Atlanta, Georgia. Come join us.

Let me know if there are questions I can answer or issues I can help with during the year. Here's to another successful swimming and diving season.
Have a great school year.



Arvel McElroy
NISCA President

THE UNPREDICTABILITY OF COACHING

It's the call, text, or email no coach or teacher wants to receive:

"We have sad news to share..."

Whether it's a teammate, classmate, teacher, or family member, the news of a death in your coaching community brings a barrage of emotions, questions, and concerns. It doesn't matter if it's the first or 20th time you've encountered grief in your career, a death can leave anyone unsure of what to say, do, or feel. Your attention may go in many directions: the affected student, the rest of the team, and yourself. Grief, much to everyone's frustration, doesn't follow a linear path. There is no universal timeline or step-by-step guide. That said, there are some basic guidelines for providing support and understanding to those in grief.

As a coach, you are in a position to be uniquely helpful. Numerous teens report that a coach was the adult they turned to the most in their grief. In a coaching role, you interact with them regularly, but have more opportunity for one-on-one connecting than a teacher does. You may also be more removed from the death, which for many teens makes it easier for them to open up with you. When they don't have to worry that their grief is affecting you, it frees them up to honestly share about their experience.

Here are some basic needs of grieving teens and suggestions for supporting them:

1) Information: Teens often have a lot of curiosity about the details of what happened. Let them know it's okay to ask and there are no wrong questions. If a teen asks something you don't know the answer to, let them know what you

can do to find out, acknowledging that some questions may not have answers.

2) Choices: Teens appreciate being able to make choices as much as adults do. The death of a family member or friend can be disorienting, bringing to light their lack of control in life. Allowing them to make choices can help re-establish a sense of power, control, and trust. Of course there will be certain decisions teammates can't have a choice about, but wherever possible, build in opportunities for them to be part of decisions. This could be as simple as picking a place to stop for food on the way back from an away meet or something more complex like deciding what to do with the number or locker of a team member who died.

3) Listeners: When a teen is grieving, people are quick to offer advice and give opinions. What's more helpful is to listen without judging, interpreting, advising, or evaluating. It can be tempting to minimize their feelings, or convince them to think or feel differently than they do. If it's a case of misinformation, provide the correct details, but still allow teens to express their take on things. Sometimes the best response is to repeat what you hear them say -- called "reflecting" -- so that they know they have been heard. For example, "You are worried about regionals this year. It will be the first time your dad isn't in the stands to cheer you on." Doing this helps teens trust that you will listen, leaving them more likely to come to you when they're hurting or needing advice.

4) Food, water, and sleep: Grieving takes a lot of energy, so it is important for teens to have nutritious food, hydrating drinks, and enough sleep. As a coach, encourage them to take

good care of their physical health and be aware that, at the outset, some teens may not have the energy to perform as well as they normally do in practice or meets. Others will welcome the physical challenges as a way to process their grief.

5) Routines: Athletics are a great environment for routine. Predictability helps minimize fears and worries about what will happen next. They provide structure and a sense of normalcy that many grieving teens find reassuring. While the consistency of practice and coaching expectations can bring solace, there will be times when flexibility and accommodation are needed.

6) Role models: Teens look to the adults in their lives as examples for how to grieve and express their emotions. If you knew the person who died, it's okay to talk about and remember them. If you didn't know the person, you can still ask a grieving teen if they'd like to share memories with you. You can also model being aware of significant dates that might be particularly difficult. These include: the anniversary of the death, birthdays, holidays, and important events in a teen's school and team career (meets, graduation). Some adults feel they need to hide their own grief from teens. While it's important not to turn to teens for support, sharing a little about your grief helps to normalize what they are experiencing. ♦

For more information about supporting teens in grief, please contact The Dougy Center.

www.dougy.org
help@dougy.org
503.775.5683

BUILDING RESILIENCY IN YOUR SWIMMERS

BY BO HANSON

No one will ever forget seeing Greg Louganis recover from his poorly executed preliminary dive at the 1988 Seoul Olympics where he struck his head and bled into the water. During that reverse 2½ pike dive he suffered a concussion. However, in his very next dive, despite his obvious injury, he earned the highest single score of the qualifying. He then went on to repeat the dive during the finals, earning the gold medal by a margin of 25 points. This performance was once explained to me by a mentor as an example of a person having phenomenal recovery strategy skills.

What the best athletes, and the most successful people, have in common is not that they do not make mistakes. They all do. However, they do have an incredible ability to recover from these mistakes. These athletes have a well-developed recovery strategy, whether it is conscious (known to themselves) or unconscious (they perform this strategy unknowingly). Either way, we view athletes with a well-developed recovery strategy as being resilient.

DEFINING RESILIENCE

Resiliency is the ability to bounce back positively after a mistake, mishap, loss or any negative situation.

Defining the skills and behaviors of resilient people is not as simple, as there are a range of skills involved. It is critical to realize that resiliency is not a personality trait or behavioral style. Resiliency is a skill anyone can learn.

#1 REFRAMING

You cannot change the result, but you can change what the result means and what something means is what we CHOOSE to associate with it. This is what reframing is all about. It is not about being purely positive, but more importantly being productive with your thinking. A loss is still an unwanted result it is just that now, I am choosing to say to myself, "What do I need to learn from this?" "What did this result teach me?"

#2 CONTROL AND INFLUENCE MODEL

At some point in time, most athletes have been (or should be) exposed to the 'Control and Influence Model'. This is a model for understanding those situations, events and challenges which you have 100% control over, those situations you have influence over, and the situations you no influence or control over. We need to spend our energy dealing with those situations where we have control and influence, and not consume any energy over

events over which we have no control.

Coaches need to understand this model and then question their swimmers over what is within and outside of their control. You can have them make a list and ask them to note where they most spend their time and energy. This exercise helps the swimmer notice where energy is best used and also wasted.

#3 MODELING RESILIENT BEHAVIOR

Modeling is a process where you observe someone who displays behavior which creates results you desire. For example, a successful swimmer being used as a model for other swimmers to learn from. Modeling is about replicating the thought patterns, actions and emotions that successful results are based on. It is these three essential processes which create our outcomes. Swimmers can create a shortcut to success by noticing what already successful swimmers do. This becomes the starting point for performance. Each swimmer then makes distinctions to the modelled process so that it suits their unique self.

Ask the swimmers to find a role model either within their squad or even from another sport. This role model should be one who has demonstrated resilient skills. Ask the swimmer to tell you about their story and what they believe makes them resilient. This helps the swimmer begin to identify behaviors of resiliency and is a critical step in learning how to do this themselves. Swimmers within the squad can share stories and examples. Next, ask the swimmers what behaviors they have which are similar to their role model or what key behaviors they feel like they need to improve to be more like their role model.

#4 ATTRIBUTION OF SUCCESS OR FAILURE

Research clearly states how resilient people attribute their success to those elements they can control or influence. This means their success is not someone else's responsibility or related to external circumstances. The same is true for any poor performance. Resilient people attribute poor performance to something they "did" or the great performance of their opponent. They do not attribute it to who they are. For example, if a swimmer loses the final, they are more likely to say "today my opponent swam an exceptional race" or "today I felt I could have executed my technique better and made better choices at those critical moments". They are accountable to what they can control.

#5 ATTACHMENT TO A SUPPORT TEAM

Resilient people always have a strong support team of people they trust, have acceptance from, feel secure and safe with and like they belong. This is the essence of what we call attachment. In order to boost resiliency, one must feel as though they are exceptionally well supported. How much support one needs differs in proportion to the challenges they feel they are facing. When an athlete is confronted with a significant obstacle or if they have been knocked down by a certain event, those with a great support team are likely to manage that situation more

effectively than those who don't. This means a faster recovery.

#6 HIGHLY DEVELOPED TECHNICAL SKILLS

Athletes who are exceptionally technically competent are usually more resilient to setbacks in their performance. Athletes who have experienced poor performance and have a high skill level realize that recreating a successful result is not about reinventing their whole process. Instead, they know all they have to do is recall times when they had previous success, and go back to the technique which delivered this success. This helps them rebound faster than less skilled athletes who need to also be thinking about the establishment and improvement of their basic skills. We can also refer to this as an athlete's technical reference point (the technical focus point which acts as a reference point to look for, hear and feel). This reference point then acts as a spring board to recreate an effective future performance.

Coaches can develop this in swimmers by showing them video footage of when they are at their best and asking them questions as to what they see themselves doing well and how this is giving them better results. What coaches need to do is to embed these technical processes and images in their athlete's

minds so they can refer back to them at will.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

It is important to remember— as coaches we are responsible for an athlete's whole development. Gone are the times when all a coach had to do was teach technique. The defining factor in a swimmer's performance is not going to be their technical skills but rather their non-technical skills. Of those non-technical skills, being resilient is a foundation skill. Writing this article reminds me to improve my skills in this area. I firmly believe all of us can continue to develop and provide a learning experience for those around us. As a consequence we will provide a role model example of how to behave.

You can watch a video of Bo discussing how to coach resiliency in sport at: www.bit.ly/CoachResiliency ♦

Bo Hanson is a 3x Olympic Medalist, 4x Olympian and Director of Athlete Assessments. As a coaching consultant, Bo has worked with more than 22,000 coaches, athletes and sports organizations in 40 different sports.

TEACHING TECH:

KURT JOHNS OF LYONS TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL ON HOW THE LADY LIONS ARE ACCELERATING INTO THEIR BACKSTROKE TURNS

BY MAC GUY

Kurt Johns has made a habit of developing strong Illinois swim programs. In his twelve years as a high school coach, his teams have earned seven top ten finishes, and he has been recognized as an Illinois High School Association State Coach of the Year twice. Johns is headed into his sixth season as head coach of the Lyons Township High School Girls Swimming and Diving team in Lagrange, Illinois. I recently caught up with him to hear about what he is emphasizing with his swimmers.

MG: *What has your team been working on lately?*

KJ: Turns are a big one, specifically how quickly our girls can get in and out of the walls. Backstroke has kind of been an Achilles heel, so we've been working for the past couple years, trying to make that as good as we can. I think a lot of our kids, roll over to their stomach and go through the motions...That's one thing our kids struggle with: they will roll over—their head is still up as they try to spot the wall—and they lose that momentum with a glide into the wall...

We want to make sure they're coming in fast, immediately tucking the head, and leaving their hand out as they are rolling over, to use it almost as a freestyle pull to generate a little more power and a little more snapover, so they can get off the wall a little better. We've been working with kids

to follow their hand as it enters the water and tucking the head to go right into their turn. That way, they are able to carry their momentum the best that they possibly can, and hopefully get in and out of the wall quickly.

MG: *You've mentioned your team is made up with a wide variety of skill and experience levels. Are there specific teaching points that you use to reach all your athletes?*

KJ: When we teach it at the beginning of the season, we go back to basic backstroke and get the kids to get a good feel for the water...If they don't have a solid freestyle flip turn, this is going to be tough, so we start there to help them understand that as they approach the wall on their stomach, when they decide that "hey, this is the last stroke I'm taking," almost before their second hand hits the water, start to tuck the head and start the turn. We'll talk a little about almost submerging their upper body so that as they feel that last stroke coming they will engage their head, engage their core, and snap their legs over quickly.

Once they get that down we'll move into the backstroke, adding the counting of their strokes and figuring out when they should actually roll over. When they roll over, it's actually the same motion as in their freestyle. It's just making that transition from your back to your front. Then we start

Continued on 12

working with them on the placement of their other hand. When they are coming in toward the wall, and they are going to come over with their right hand and roll to their left, they tend to pull down as they are rolling and don't generate much power. We encourage them to wait until they're on their side and then start pulling with that arm. They'll be able to generate a lot more power versus pulling on their back and as they are rolling.

MG: *How has your approach to your backstroke turn work affected your underwater fly kicking work?*

KJ: We do a lot of underwater stuff, a lot of vertical kicking to help understand how to emphasize their up kick. They don't just want the down kick, they want the back and forth or the kick on both sides. I think the vertical kicking really helps to develop that.

Obviously fins can help when you are doing that as well.

I tell our kids that the best backstrokers don't swim backstroke. They kick as far as they possibly can, and then take three or four strokes and then go into their underwaters again. I think the more we can push that with our kids, the better. It's tough. It's a tough thing to develop with the average high school kid.

MG: *What has surprised you or changed your thinking as you've taught it to a wide range of kids over several years?*

KJ: One thing that we've done differently in recent years is that we used to do our start and turn work at the end of our practice. We would pound in whatever work we needed to get done, and then we'd get whatever start and turn work we could at the end of practice. You know, if there was time left. But I've realized, especially with girls, that at the end of practice they are ready to go home. They've tuned out. And for that kind of work, it's probably the time when you need to be the most focused. So now, we warm up, and then we go right into 15 to 20 minutes of this kind of turn work when everybody's fresh. That way, our turn work doesn't get shortchanged, and the kids usually do a pretty good job with it. I think it emphasizes the importance of it. We are spending prime time in the middle of practice to work on this because it is important and because it is going to make our athletes faster.

MG: *Can you give me a sense of how you work this in as an emphasis throughout the rest of a practice?*

KJ: We try to emphasize the skill work we do early in a practice throughout our main sets every day to express that there is a point to us working on a specific skill. We don't want to just emphasize that skill for a limited time; we practice it for 15-20 minutes, and then we want them to apply it. So we try to tailor our main sets to whatever our focus was to start the practice. If our focus is underwaters, we describe what we want on the upcoming set, for instance we want to see six

kicks off of every wall, or we want to see you up at this point off of every wall, or we want your focus on this aspect of your turns. Even if we are doing a set like 10x100, we emphasize that there are 30 turns throughout that set and those are 30 opportunities to practice. We want them to understand that it is not just the 15 or 20 minutes we are working on it in the warm up, but it carries over into everything we do. I think this is something we try to emphasize and try to always get better at it.♦

Swimming Practice Log

Date: 8/17/15 PM

Comments: Quick class meeting = roles and challenges on the team.

EN2 training

Stretch

4 x 300 @ 5:10 – 50 Drill/25 Swim DPS – IM

- Fly Drill = 4 kicks 1 pull with UW recovery

- Back Drill = 6 kick and switch with shoulder out

- Breast Drill = double pull outs and kick/pull/kick

- Free Drill = one arm drill with off arm at side [1200]

Skill focus: Turn 25's – 10 to 15 minutes – backstroke turn progression (I'll explain and we will work together in small groups) Watch Ryan Lochte Backstroke Turn Technique (youtube) good video to show, except for head drop

- 1) Free turn set up: tuck head when last stroke begins, tight body, quick feet – no push
- 2) Same thing – but add the press off the wall, stay on back, and work your UW
- 3) Backstroke approach now – after you roll, implement everything we have worked on.
- 4) Backstroke turn with the delayed arm pull on the last stroke

Main Set: (apply turn focus)

4 x 100 @ 1:30 – Descend 1-4 – Free (part 1 of progression)

R @ 1:00

6 x 50 @ 55 – Free – hold 200 pace – 6 or more fly kicks off each wall – fast

Easy 100 @ 4:30

2 rounds

4 x 100 @ 1:45 – Descend 1-4 – Back (full turn focus)

R @ 1:00

6 x 50 @ 1:00 – Back – hold 100 pace +3 sec (turn focus)

Easy 100 @ 5:00

2 Rounds [4400]

10 x 100 @ 2:00 – Kick on your back

Get 10 to 15 yards off every wall – fast kick [5400]

Stroke focus set: Underwaters and Breakouts

20 x 25 @ 30 – choice of stroke at least 10 the same in a row

*great UW and 4-6 fast breakout strokes then easy the rest of the way Max Distance Per Stroke (MDPS)

SWIMMER STRENGTH: AN OVERVIEW

BY JIM DAVIS ED.M., MA, USAW

After many conversations with swimmers, swim coaches, and strength coaches working with swimmers, a common question persists: where do we start? As an entry point, and in an effort to scaffold decision making and program design, we always begin by addressing the following five progressive steps listed below.

There is plenty of room for autonomy within these steps, and each coach should identify his or her own approach based on the specifics of the athletes in his charge. I propose only this: if a strength program has no scaffold, no core ideals, then it cannot be trusted and just might do more harm than good. When it is done well, strength and conditioning can be one of the most rewarding coaching experiences in all of athletics.

STEP ONE: SAFETY

The strength coach has a very clear and primary role: do not harm. That means the strength coach must ensure three things: emotional and psychological safety while under coach supervision, immediate physical safety (perfect technique and the use of an appropriate load), and long-term safety by preparing an athlete's body to meet the demands of his sport. This must be at the forefront of the coach's mind at all times. A healthy athlete is a happy, productive athlete.

Our coaching staff meets regularly to assess ourselves in the context of safety. We are diligent in our self-reflection, continually asking if we have held students to a standard that will ensure their safety while in our company, and that the strength work we engage in will ensure their safety in the pool and beyond. The following steps all fold back into this core ideal.

STEP TWO: UNIFORMITY

A body is a body. The strength coach should stay on top of the literature, be well-versed in emerging science, and continually push his own competency in the field, but not at the expense of the basics. Too often a coach will look for

novelty and neglect a strong foundation. A human body should have a strong core, consistent posture, healthy levels of mobility, and sufficient muscular structure to support its most used joints. I have been in weight rooms all over the country, spoken to professional, elite high school, BIG10, SEC, ACC, and Ivy League coaches, and I have yet to see a program that does not Squat, Clean, and work on upper body stabilization. Nathan Adrian squats. Katie Ledecky squats. Ryan Lochte squats. Rebecca Soni squats. The difference (and the job of the strength coach) is to determine how (variation and difficulty relative to an athlete's proficiency) and when (timing relative to peak) that movement will be performed, while paying attention to their volume and intensity.

Undertraining the posterior chain through the glutes and hamstrings is one of the most common mistakes I have seen. It is true that added weight and bulk in the lower half will require more work to stay parallel to the surface (I'm certainly not suggesting swimmers pack on mass below the hips), but without a posterior chain which can activate and snap to streamline position quickly, then maintain the integrity of that posture through exhaustion, the swimmer will do more work overall and times will suffer. Train the glutes and legs, but be deliberate. As with everything, find the right balance for your individual team.

The second component to Uniformity is a clear performance expectation. Coaches, you must be relentless with your expectations for each lift (posture, depth, etc.) and be sure those expectations are shared are always met.

Train the body first, then train the athlete (specify).

STEP THREE: SWIMMER SPECIFICITY

Tailoring a program to one's clientele is the secret of the job. At New Trier, we take two components into consideration when designing programs: group

experience/ability, and the specific demands of that group's sport. For example, the varsity swim sessions will look different than the first-year swim sessions, which both look different than lacrosse or field hockey workouts.

STEP FOUR: APPROPRIATE LOAD

High School strength coaches have different challenges than their college counterparts. One of those considerations is developing strategies to incorporate intensity progressions which have been scientifically proven; specifically, we cannot make use of a rep/set scheme that uses, say, 85% of a max load, without an accurate max. Without an accurate max, the 85% is meaningless. We will never ask an unprepared athlete to push to full exertion (we have and never will have a freshman put on a max load); in fact, there is a very small percentage of our high school population from whom we can obtain accurate maxes. With that in mind, we use the Appropriate Load Model (more on this in a different article). In short, we take well-tested scientific data and attempt to replicate its essential training purpose.

MOVING FORWARD

The overarching message is this: be prepared, but be flexible. The strength coach should have a set of ideals upon which his program is built (we start with these five steps), and plan according to a specific timeline, but never be afraid to change. We have brief discussions with our strength and swim coaches before and after every session. Sometimes we train through meets, sometimes we pull back on intensity to avoid burnout; whatever we do, we take great care to be deliberate – we are not always right, but we are always intentional. We have goals, we have structure, we adjust as necessary and we enter each session with a purpose.

For more on Appropriate Load theory or to learn more about specific lifts and how they are performed, feel free to contact me on Twitter @NTStrength. •