



Off The Blocks



4 Steps to Better Championship Preparation

Courtesy of BridgeAthletic

Good Luck Championship Swimmers

March Madness is now upon us. I would like to take this opportunity to wish all PVS Championship athletes good luck in their championship level meet. I hope all of your hard work will pay off in the pool. This month's newsletter may help you get ready to swim your best!

Bill Marlin
PVS General Chair

Championship season is the time of year when you put *even more* focus into swimming. As the physical demand of training lightens with taper and you spend less time at the pool, how you manage the remaining hours in your day becomes more critical. Making your championship meets a priority doesn't mean skirting other responsibilities—it just means planning ahead and practicing your best habits outside of the pool. Here are four ways to optimize your time as you prepare for a championship competition:

1. Be Physically Prepared. Your coach can give you all the tools you need while at practice, but he or she cannot control how you take care of your body for the other 20 hours in the day. Get adequate, consistent sleep, take a few minutes to foam roll or stretch more than usual, and pay attention to your hydration. Keep

your nutrition balanced by eating foods that make you feel your healthiest (now is not the time to be adventurous with new cuisine).

2. Mentally Prepare. Get mentally "up" for the meet. Whether that means relaxing more, listening to music, or visualizing a winning race dozens of times, do it. Part of being confident is being happy, so stay loose in the days before a meet and have fun with your teammates. Be engaged in your teammates' goals and celebrate their success—you've pushed each other to be better all year and now is the time to be most supportive.

3. Get your schoolwork done early. Part of being ready for a meet means taking care of all potentially stressful situations prior to competition. Let your professors know which tests you may need to take on the road, study early

may need to take on the road, study early for those tests, and turn in papers before you travel. Avoiding procrastination prevents the unanticipated sleepless nights or stressful moments that come along with it.

4. Take it Easy. If you have to skip out on an event with friends because it runs too late (parties, movies, etc), there will be plenty of other opportunities in the future. Avoid social outings that are too strenuous, such as walking around a city all day, standing at a sporting event or going to a concert. Give yourself a break from all things taxing—and don't take the stairs.

You've probably heard these gems of advice many times before, but that's because they all work. Take good care of your body because you owe it to yourself after all the training you've put in. Get excited with your teammates about your upcoming meet and watch that momentum carry over into great racing.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Stay loose and calm pre-race	2
Having "that" conversation with mom & Dad	2
Stretching for Race Recovery	3
Tips to Help You Relax at a Swim Meet	3
Drink up: The Best Race Day Liquids	4



Staying Loose and Calm Pre-Race

By Dr. Alan Goldberg

Why are races won and lost before the start?

As I've said many times throughout this series, the BIGGEST secret to swimming your best when it counts the most is having the ability to stay loose and calm behind the blocks, right before your race. Far too many swimmers waste precious energy the minutes leading up to their event by thinking about and focusing on all of the wrong things. Because of this, they unknowingly undermine their confidence, get themselves overly nervous and set themselves up for failure.

The Devastating Effects Of Out Of Control Pre-Race Jitters

Ever wonder how you can run out of gas at the

150 mark of your 200, the very first race of your big meet? You've worked hard all season, you've got a solid training base, yet your arms and legs feel like lead and you're totally exhausted! What gives? You go 7 – 8,000 yards easily in practice and after a mere 150 you're wasted?! This is a direct result of a swimmer being far too nervous pre-race! If you're "over-amped" behind the blocks and thinking about the time you need, who you have to beat or, "what if you don't?," then your breathing will get faster and shallower, your muscles will tighten up and the end result of these physical changes will be this feeling of premature exhaustion.

Controlling Your Eyes & Ears To Stay Calm Under Pressure

If you want to consistently swim to your potential under big meet pressure and avoid the devastating physical effects of excessive nerves, then you have to learn how to keep yourself physically and mentally composed at race time! One important way that you do this is by controlling your eyes and ears behind the blocks. This means that what you LOOK AT and LISTEN TO behind the blocks has to be only things that help keep you calm, loose and confident

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Mental Toughness: Having "That" Conversation with Mom & Dad

By Dr. Alan Goldberg COMPETITIVEDGE.COM

How you interact with your parents in relation to your swimming can mean the difference between loving to swim, staying calm pre-meet and consistently racing to your potential or hating the sport, being a nervous wreck pre-meet and consistently underachieving.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR PARENTS

Loving parents want two things for you as their child:

1. To be **HAPPY**
2. To be **SUCCESSFUL**

But, have you ever had that really upsetting conversation with your

parents during the car ride on the way to the meet? Or maybe the even more uncomfortable one right after the meet, on the ride home?

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Stretching for Race Recovery

Courtesy of BridgeAthletic

Stretching does much more than elongate tight muscles. During competitions, stretching can be a particularly useful way to accelerate post-race recovery and improve pre-race warm ups with minimal exertion. Performing dynamic stretches prior to warm up and static stretches following warm down will help your body stay sharp when you're racing on that third or fourth day of a meet. Stretching a muscle boosts blood flow to that area, increasing circulation. Better circulation improves the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to muscles and the removal of waste like lactic acid that builds up during races. If you feel tight after a thorough warm down, stretching is a great supplement to help you reset before the next performance.

Let's discuss how pre- and post-race stretching differs. Prior to your warm up, use dynamic

stretching to loosen your muscles. Also known as active or ballistic stretching, this involves the rehearsal of motor patterns that the body will make in the competition, such as swinging a leg back and forth, lunging, squatting, or even bouncing. Static stretching is the traditional passive stretching in which you lengthen a muscle group to its end range of motion and breathe steadily, holding the position for about 30 seconds. This is best done after a warm down from a race when the muscles are sufficiently warm and will lengthen with less resistance. Both forms of stretching enhance blood flow to muscles, but according to a recent study dynamic stretching leads to better power output and muscle strength than static stretching prior to an athletic event¹.

Stretching can seem like a chore on a regular basis, but if you incor-

porate it into your daily routine at competitions, it can be extremely helpful. Because it requires little physical exertion, stretching is a fantastic way to help clear lactic acid from muscle and get your body ready for the next performance!

References:

1. [J Strength Cond Res.](#) 2012 Apr;26(4):1130-41. doi: 10.1519/JSC.0b013e31822e58b6.

A dynamic warm-up model increases quadriceps strength and hamstring flexibility.

[Aguilar AJ](#), [DiStefano LJ](#), [Brown CN](#), [Herman DC](#), [Guskiewicz KM](#), [Padua DA](#).

"It's not whether you get knocked down; it's whether you get up."

— Vince Lombardi



Tips to Help You Relax at a Swim Meet By Dr. Alan Goldberg

The best way to deal with the pressure of a big meet is to stay relaxed before the start of your races.

Do you ever wonder why so many good swimmers seem to fall apart at the big meet? Why do they tend to go faster in practice than they do at the championships? Why is it that many race better in a relay or an off event than they do in their "best" events?

The answer is simple: pressure.

Pressure tightens swimmers' muscles, chokes off their breathing and robs them of their confi-

dence. Big meet pressure can make a well-conditioned swimmer feel completely and totally out of shape after just 75 yards of her first race of the day! It can turn her arms into Jello and her legs into lead.

Pressure is what Olympic legend Mark Spitz was referring to when he said, "Racing is 90 percent mental and 10 percent physical."

Once you learn how to handle the pressure of competition, then you will start swimming faster when it counts the most.

HERE'S HOW:

First, you need to learn how to relax.

The biggest secret to swimming fast when it counts the most is to keep yourself loose and calm right before that all-important event. The more relaxed you are before your race, the faster you'll go.

Unfortunately, not too many swimmers understand this. As a result, they put far too much pressure on themselves before they swim: [Read More](#)

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Potomac Valley Swimming

House of Delegates

Meeting

will be on May 20th at 7:00
p.m. at Overlee

Drink Up: The Best Race Day Liquids By Melanie McMullen // Swimnetwork.com Correspondent

What a swimmer puts into the body as fuel on race day can be critical to performance. While solid foods provide the fat, fiber, and carbs needed for endurance and speed, the right liquids are equally important.

To find out what liquids to down during a meet, Swimnetwork checked in on the favorites among the elite athletes and also got advice from two sports nutrition experts: Barbara Lewin, RD, LD, and owner of [Sports Nutritionist](#) and Kathleen Laquale, PhD, ATC, LAT, LDN and professor at Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts.

1. Jumpstart with a super food. Dara Torres prepares for a super sprint time on race day by having her favorite morning drink, a LivingFuel breakfast shake. She has one every day - including at meets - a few hours before takeoff. In fact, she downed a shake at 6:15am before her 10am 50 freestyle at the Beijing Olympics. The drink is marketed as "an optimized super-food meal replacement" composed of seven to eight different foods. The flavors contain either

seven to eight different foods. The flavors contain either vegetable (broccoli, spinach, kale, carrot, barley grass, spirulina) or berry complexes (blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, or cranberries).

2. Accelerate with a V8. If super foods seem super expensive for your training budget, try canned vegetable juices such as V8. They are filling, delicious, and also nutritious on race day, plus they are easy to pack and bring poolside. "V-8 juice is great for its potassium," says Lewin. One 5.5 oz can contains a whopping 320 mg of potassium, which is key to a body's muscle function.

3. Power on tap. Drinking plenty of water is the most simple but often overlooked race day performance tip. "Water is the number one nutrient of all six nutrients required by humans," says Laquale. For swimmers, drinking water is especially important when the pool is heated or the meet is outdoors in a hot humid environment, she adds. Laquale recommends bringing a water bottle and drinking liberally during warm-up sets. Note that

bottle and drinking liberally during warm-up sets. Note that your body can absorb cold water more quickly than warm water, so drop in an ice cube or two. If your event is a long distance race or you need a long warm-up, bring a sports drink. Laquale suggests options with a 6 percent concentration of glucose, such as Gatorade or Powerade.

4. Get a caffeine boost. Nutrition studies reveal that coffee - in moderation - the morning of a race may have positive effects. Caffeine consumption has been shown to improve athletic performance in endurance events, including swimming, cycling, and tennis. "If you are used to having morning coffee, having a cup on race day is fine," says Lewin. She recommends having the coffee approximately one hour prior to competition.

5. Save the milk for later. While milk is a top choice for recovery, it may not be the best option before a race. "Milk is not advisable before a race as it is high in protein and can create 'cotton mouth' or dry mouth," says Laquale. "The jury is still out on milk."