

Bulldog Aquatic Club Goal Setting Strategy



I'm really excited about the possibilities that each and every one of you must take advantage of in the meets during the season. To help you set goals for these meets remember that successful athletes have always found that good goal setting skills contribute to performance and self-confidence. In fact, in 90% of studies conducted in human performance, goal setting played a significant role in achieving success. Obviously, the first and easiest step toward successful performances is to understand and use techniques of effective goal setting.

GOAL SETTING STRATEGY

1. Specific goals direct activity more effectively and reliably than vague or general goals.

Telling a swimmer to "do your best" is an ambiguous statement. The swimmer does not know what exactly is expected of him/her and cannot tell when the "goal" has been achieved. In contrast, telling a swimmer that he/she should average 56 seconds per 100 hundred yards for a 500 hundred yard race, gives him/her an exact idea of what he/she needs to accomplish. A quantitative, or numerical, goal is a specific goal.

2. The more challenging or difficult, the goal, the better the performance.

Goals should not be so difficult that the swimmer will fail to take them seriously. However, goals that are too easy to attain will not improve performance. If a swimmer has the ability, a challenging goal will greatly enhance motivation.

3. Using short-term goals and long-term goals will aid performance more than using long-term goals only.

The swimmer should use the short-term goals as steps to help them reach their long-term goal. Don't expect major jumps in performance levels right away. Use short-term goals to show progress toward the long-term goal.

4. Goal-setting only works if there is prompt feedback showing progress in relation to the goal.

The swimmer must be able to check how well she/he is doing in relation to the goals that have been set. So performance must be measured. The swimmer is often best able to track progress himself/herself.

5. Goals must be accepted in order to be effective. The more committed the swimmer is to the goal, the more effort she/he will put in to reach that goal.

The coach can increase commitment by asking the swimmer to accept the goal, showing support for the swimmer, having the swimmer participate in setting the goals and offering incentives for reaching goals.

6. Achieving goals will be helped by working with your coach and developing a plan or strategy for reaching the goal.

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The best plan is a training schedule with specific objectives for each practice session. Complex tasks can be broken down into more specific sub-skills, for example, starts, strokes, turns and so forth. In addition, at least some practice sessions prior to competition will mimic the conditions of that competition.

PROBLEM SOLVING

It is very difficult to solve a problem unless you imagine that you can solve it. Imagery can be used to rehearse crucial problem situations and to find solutions. Swimmers are also often confronted with new and different situations that require adjustments. Imagining these situations in advance and making the required mental adjustments increases the chance that the appropriate response will be made when it counts.

CONTROLLING PEAK STATES

Each swimmer has an image of himself or herself performing at a peak level. The thoughts, emotions and body feelings associated with this image are part of the swimmers "peak state". By knowing which physical or mental factors are associated with "peak" and then creating images that describe these factors, a swimmer can gain some degree of control over the performance states.

IMAGERY FOR GOALS

Athletes can "program" their goals by using imagery to "see", "hear", or "feel" themselves achieving the goal.

Guide for including imagery in training programs:

1. Imagery is like any other skill: it must be practiced regularly to be effective.
2. Imagery training should be included as part of the swimmer's regular practice routine. If it is added as an extra to be done outside practice, this sends a clear message about its priority relative to physical practice.
3. Imagery can be used effectively before, during and after physical practice:
 - a. "Before" sessions can be used to prepare athletes for what will happen in practice or to create a particular mental state.
 - b. "During" sessions can reinforce how imagery might be used during actual competition or help athletes learn new skills or strategies and
 - c. "After" sessions can help emphasize points made during the day or give athletes the chance to recover after a strenuous practice.
4. Regard imagery as simply another useful skill in a swimmer's repertoire of physical and mental skills. For some people it will be of enormous benefit, while for others it will have little effect. Used properly, imagery training is a powerful tool for integrating the body and mind in sports.

I hope you will use these guidelines to set some worthy goals for yourself in these upcoming Championship meets.