



# Off The Blocks



## 5 Steps to Finish stronger at Championship Meets...by Nick Folker—Bridgathletics

Championship Meet Season is here and our version of March Madness is in full swing. All the hard work has been done. The only thing left to do is REST and RACE! Be sure you know the rest plan from your child's coach. Don't try to superimpose your own plan on the Coach's plan. The hay is in the barn, just deliver it!

Good luck to all our PVS athletes in their Championship Meets!

Bill Marlin

PVS General Chair

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With several conference championship swim meets underway and NCAA's around the corner, collegiate swimmers everywhere are basking in the glory of taper as race time is finally here. These meets run three days long, and I do mean *long*. In spite of all the excitement, three full days of racing is incredibly taxing both mentally and physically. Athletes must learn how to take advantage of the high-energy environment without letting it deplete their own energy stores. And perhaps hardest of all, athletes have to find a way to gear up for the final day of events to execute top performances. Let's take a look at the 5 things you can do to maximize your performance throughout a championship meet, down to the last relay on the final night.

**1. Manage your warm-up yardage.** Warm up should include a combination of a dynamic warm-up and foam rolling on

land, followed by your traditional pre-meet warm up in the pool. By taper time, swimmers shouldn't need too many yards to loosen up. Throughout the course of a meet, high-volume warm ups can deplete your energy stores. Stick to the warm up that has worked for you all season, and minimize unnecessary yardage.

### 2. Keep Your Emotional Energy in

**Check**  
Most athletes swim best when they are calm, cool, and collected. This means being relaxed and ready to go. With all the energy in the pool, it's important to learn how to take advantage of the excitement without letting yourself get too emotionally high or low. Stay engaged in the meet and let the momentum of your team's good racing carry you forward, but remember to relax. This also means bouncing back quickly from bad races and moving on with a

fresh start for the next one.

### 3. Tune Out the Noise

Use headphones and music to tune out the ambient noise of a crowded pool. Overstimulation of your senses initially heightens your energy levels, but over the course of a long meet the reverse can occur.

### 4. Nap between Sessions

Starting on day one, take naps between prelims and finals. Sleeping between every session will help you recharge and stay as fresh as possible for that last day. Even if you aren't as fatigued after the first session, lie down and rest as much as possible.

### 5. Foam Roll

By Day 3 your muscles will be tighter. Foam rolling is a fantastic tool for loosening up your muscle tissue without adding extra yardage to your warm up and warm down. It requires minimal energy and will improve your range of motion in the water.

## Why You Need To Go To The Top Meet You Are Qualified To Attend—By John Leonard, ASCA Executive Director

Taken from [Essays for Age Group Coaches & Parents...](#) available thru ASCA

**There are only two pains in life—the pain of self-discipline and the pain of self-regret. Discipline weighs ounces while regret weighs tons.**

This topic is one that I think 95% of coaches agree on. Also one that parents occasionally “don’t get” intuitively. So let me explain, please.

**FACT #1:** We only improve when we “stretch” or “challenge” ourselves. That’s why it is called *competitive* swimming. Competition...competitive...to “Strive WITH” a worthy adversary.

**Uncomfortable FACT #2:** The vast majority of athletes are successful at a competition *one level below* the highest level they have ever attended. That’s the level at which they feel competent enough to relax and “just swim” without involvement in all the distractions of the “highest level meet.” This fact is true for everyone up to and including OLYMPIANS, who usually are much more successful in their second Olympic Games.

**Fact #3:** If you *do not* attend the highest level meet you are qualified for, you will not benefit from the “next highest level” syndrome and no matter how many times you attend the same level of competition—High School States for example—you will experience the same overwhelming feeling you had the first time. *However*, if you qualified for Junior Nationals and actually went and competed, High School States does not seem quite so imposing, does it?

Take the same logic to the local summer league A or B meet. Once you’ve been to JO’s, that B meet isn’t such a “big deal” anymore. The less the athlete perceives the competition as a “big deal”, the more likely they are to focus on all the *right* things and perform well. When it’s a “big deal,” the athlete generally is overwhelmed by the experience and performs poorly.

Sadly, lots of athletes and parents think they are an “experiment of one” to whom this experience does not apply. In my 43 years of coaching, I cannot think of more than a handful of athletes who succeeded at the highest level they qualified for, the first time. Those were the kind of people who were largely “unconscious” of what was going on around them; too ignorant to be overwhelmed (which can work sometimes). I don’t think there are many exceptions to this rule.

**Bottom line advice:** when an athlete qualifies for a meet, attend the meet and compete! It’s in their best interest, both long and short term. **EXCEPTION:** Lots of coaches *prefer* that an athlete qualify in one season and then WAIT and compete in that meet the *next* season, when they can be once again rested and tapered—a good strategy—but NOT ATTENDING that high level meet is bad thinking.



## WHAT THE GREATEST OLYMPIC ATHLETE EVER CAN TEACH YOU ABOUT BECOMING A CHAMPION...By Dr. Alan Goldberg

This past summer in London, Michael Phelps added to his medal totals and distinguished himself as ***the most decorated Olympian of all time*** with 22 medals. He now holds the all-time record for Olympic gold (18), twice as many as the next highest competitor! In Beijing, in 2008, his 8 gold medals set the record for the most first place finishes in a single olympiad and after his performances this summer, amazingly, he has been the most successful athlete of the Games for 3 Olympics in a row!

**What has made Phelps so successful for so very long is his mental approach** to his sport. He is a fierce competitor and has mastered a winner's headset, which he began to develop at a very young age with the help of his long time coach, Bob Bowman. This is part of the legacy he leaves for swim-

mers and other athletes across all sports. When the heat of competition is turned up high, ***the mentally toughest athletes will excel***, and that's exactly what Michael Phelps has consistently done! Recently I had the pleasure to talk with Bob and former University of Michigan and Olympic team coach, Jon Urbanek about Phelps and what specific things have made him great. Whatever your sport, if you want to take your performance to the next level, to go as far as possible as an athlete, then Michael Phelps has a lot to offer you! Don't re-invent the wheel here! Learn from one of the mentally toughest athletes ever! Here are Phelps's "7" mental toughness strategies to systematically help you build the mind of a champion:

[Read More...](#)



**A diamond is a chunk of coal that makes good under pressure.**

### 6 Questions to Ask Yourself After the Big Meet

By *Olivier Poirier-Leroy*



You trained your butt off all year, through the holiday training camp, all of those two-a-days, ditched hanging out with friends on the weekend in favor of sleep and Saturday morning workouts, and then finally got the opportunity to shine on the biggest stage of your swimming career.

No matter whether you exceeded expectations, or if you came up just short of your goals, after the meet is a fantastic time to debrief

(see what I did there?). With a few minutes of reflection you get some perspective and intel on your performances, and draw lessons learned and apply them moving forward so that you can swim even faster next time around.

Here are 6 questions to ask yourself after the big meet:

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Potomac Valley Swimming

Coaches Competition Meeting

will be on Wednesday, May  
13th

at 7:00 p.m. Location TBD

## 7 Ways to Develop a Killer Pre-Race Routine to Swim Out Of Your Mind!... By *Olivier Poirier-Leroy*

The process of getting ready to swim fast is one that is sacred and unique to each athlete. We each have our own approaches to racing, our superstitions, our special meals, and so on.

For some swimmers they need to go somewhere quiet, and not talk to anyone before their race. They'll zone out to some music, a towel hanging over their head marking "do not disturb." Others are the polar opposite; they talk with teammates, joke around, and seem to not have a care in the world as time drains before race time.

In both cases, the swimmer is doing what is necessary for them to relax, to get primed, and to prepare to swim fast. Developing a powerful pre-race routine that you can use to unleash fast swims consistently will ultimately come down to what works best for you. The mental and physical preparation required for an athlete doesn't suit a one-size-fits-all approach, and even the suggestions from your coach or parents might not work best

for you.

Ultimately, you will have to figure out what works best, what gets you in the zone, and what has you feeling ready and primed to swim like a demon.

### **BENEFITS OF BUILDING A PRE-RACE ROUTINE:**

- Places you into comfortable surroundings, which is especially helpful on away meets, where the pool, competition and even the language might not be what you are used to.
- Helps reduce the distractions that comes with being at a swim meet, surrounded by heaps of friends and teammates who may be more interested in the social aspect of the meet than swimming fast.
- It will reduce stress and anxiety by giving you a familiar set of cues to focus on executing.

- Having a consistent pre-race routine has also been shown to make you 16.8 times more attractive. \*\*

*But where do I start, man?*

Bad news is that there is no template that works for every athlete. The good news is that you have your own personal history to draw from. From this you can draw up your own personalized program. No matter how long you have been doing this by now you should have a good idea of what works for you, and what doesn't. [Read More...](#)

**Encourage your athletes to think with intensity during practice and then their thoughts won't get in the way of their bodies performance on race day**