

FAMILY SWIM HOLIDAYS
BEST Centre, Mallorca

RACE PREPARATION

Racing is FUN!!

A confident swimmer is a fast swimmer. So here are our thoughts to take to the block...

Nerves are good

It's not about getting rid of the butterflies, it's about making them all fly in the same direction!

A feeling of nervousness helps the body get ready for the performance you want to give.

The body has exactly the same response to things you are anxious about, like going to the dentist, or taking an exam you have not really revised for, and things you get excited about... like Christmas Day. In both cases, you might not sleep much the night before, will feel nervous, will be thinking a lot about what is to come, etc. The only difference is how you think about it. In one you will think thoughts of being anxious, not wanting to do it and so on, and in the other, you think BRING IT ON!! So bring on the race. Who cares if you didn't get so much sleep, or feel nervous... make sure you feel excited nervous and go get 'em!

You have to ask yourself, 'Is this really where I want to be right now, here, doing this?' The answer should be yes!

No one has the right to win. No one deserves to win more than anyone else. You have every right to win. Winning is open to anyone and all we can be sure about is that someone in the final is going to win it. So think, 'If not me, then who? And if not now, then when?'

But, you if you find yourself getting too excited, you need to relax...

Relaxation

Sometimes we need to take time to relax. If we spend too much time getting excited, we will have used up all our nervous energy before we get to the race.

Relaxation helps pass the time, helps you focus on the performance and keeps the butterflies ready for when they are unleashed.

Breathing exercises are good. Breathe in for three, hold for three, out for three, hold for three. Do this for five or ten minutes. Any time is fine. In the evening before you sleep, in the afternoon when you want to rest for a while, on the day of the race....whenever you feel you need to relax for a few minutes.

Another good one is tension and relaxation. Clench your hands in a tight fist for a few seconds, feel the tension....then relax. Repeat. Then tense your arms, feel the tension...and relax. Do this for all the muscles all round the body. As you get better at it, the body will learn to relax the muscles very quickly and 'on command'.

Visualisation

When you are relaxed, this is the time to spend a few minutes visualising the performance. Go through in your mind exactly what you want to do in the race. See yourself walking out, feeling strong and confident, hear the noise, think about that swimming pool smell, getting on the block, hearing the gun, visualise the perfect streamlined dive, the strong kick into the stroke and every aspect of the race.

Run through this a few times.

When it is done well, visualisation can be a very powerful tool to help the body rehearse the performance you want to give. The more realistic you can make it, the better.

Turning around Negative thoughts or comments

Often, you will find yourself thinking negative thoughts. That's ok, but just make sure you remember to eliminate them with three positive thoughts.

"I'm not sure I'm ready for this," must be followed by something like:



“I absolutely am ready for this. I have been training consistently all year and my times in training are better than ever. I have eaten well, slept well and worked hard in training. I like racing and am ready to get stuck in.”

When you find yourself thinking a negative thought, imagine that thought written on a piece of paper, and watch it being thrown in the bin.

It also helps really to savour those positive images of you training hard and of visualising yourself with confidence and giving the perfect performance when you think of the positive thoughts. Really to feel yourself doing it is a powerful tool.

Feeding properly and Keeping warm

As well as making sure you are eating well, and have plenty of food and drink to keep you fueled and properly hydrated, also make sure you keep warm. That means a T-shirt and tracksuit and SHOES!

You need to be nice and warm when you go to the block.

Swim down and stretching

A Swim down is essential after your race, if you can. 400 – 600m should be fine, nice and steady, stretching out in the water, back, breast and free. No fly, but one arm fly is ok, long and slow.

Stretching also helps with recovery from training sessions and races, BUT ONLY IF YOU DO IT EVERY DAY!

Race day is not the time to decide you probably should be swinging your arms or taking up yoga.

Focus on performance goals not outcome goals

The one thing you have absolutely no control over is the clock. So forget about it.

The one thing you have complete control over is you.

The time on the clock gives you your OUTCOME. The PERFORMANCE is what you focus on.

The performance is every aspect of your race, from the food you have been eating to the streamlines you make off the walls, to the effort you give in the race.



There are many things that will affect your performance, and the training pool is the place to get them all as good as they can be.

You have to make sure that the subconscious mind is very well drilled because this is what will take over when you race. If you train sloppily, when you are tired or under stress, then you will race sloppily, because that is what you have been teaching yourself to do.

So teach yourself to get everything right in training. In the race, you need to fill the conscious mind with positive thoughts and images to keep it occupied while the subconscious takes over and delivers the performance you have trained it to give.

Every aspect of the race can be broken down into a checklist to be worked on in training. Have I got excellent streamlines? Do I accelerate into the walls? Are my turns fast and tight? Have I been working as hard on possible on my hardest sets?

There are dozens of areas to work on in training, so make a list and tick them off. When you come to the race and a negative thought pops up, think about all the little things you have under your control because you have been working on them day in day out. Get the list out and take a look at it.

Performance goals to work on might be streamlining, length of stroke, doing the drills as well as you can, keeping the head still on backstroke, working the underwater kick as hard as you can, holding the stroke in the final 25m, and so on.

When you work consistently in training you will go to the block thinking, 'Well, I know that if I swim a solid race, I know I can easily go 1:15. If I get everything right, I think I can do a 1:13. And I just might go a 1:12.' With three times like this, (I know I can, I think I can, and I just might) it helps take the pressure off focusing on your best times all the time.

Remember too that for many races you might be swimming tired so you may have to adjust your expectations of what you can achieve. Who knows, you may swim brilliantly!

Although we are all ranked by times and our best times go a fair way to defining who we are as swimmers, it is a mistake to chase times, to chase PBs, to chase records and qualifying times. Concentrate on the race and on your performance and the times will come to you. Sometimes you have to be a little patient.. maybe today, maybe not. Maybe this month, maybe not. But if i keep getting things right, it'll come.



If you get the **performance** right, the **outcome** (the time) will be what you want.

The 3 Rs

If you are Rested, Relaxed and Rehearsed, you are Ready to go.

Remember above all, that if you swim as well as you can, then whatever position in the race you finish, or whatever time you see on the clock, you swam your best. And that's OK.

It is not what you win from swimming, it is who you become from swimming. If you work honestly and courageously towards goals you dream of reaching but may never reach, for no money and no fame, for no more than some old cozzies, a little damaged hair and a few tears along the way, and give your best every time, then you can be proud of who you are and who you will grow up to be. And so will we.

Good luck and SWIM FAST!!

