



“TRAINING YOURSELF TO ENJOY THE DANCE”

by Dr. Alan Goldberg

A number of years ago, at the beginning of her senior year in college, a swimmer contacted me with the following problem: She hadn't gone a lifetime best time since she was a senior in high school. Do the math, folks — she hadn't gone fast in almost four years! To make matters even more frustrating for her, she was physically stronger than she had ever been in high school and it showed in her college practice times where she'd consistently go faster than when she raced.

Here's a guiding principle to help you understand what she'd been doing wrong mentally all these years: **Your races are won and lost before the start!** What does this really mean?

What you think about and focus on behind the blocks before your races will determine how nervous or calm you are, your level of confidence, how well you handle last-minute negative thoughts and doubts, and therefore, how well you'll eventually swim.

Here's what she told me about her pre-race routine.

She's get behind the blocks 10 minutes before her races, cover her head with a towel so no one would bother her and then think about her race. First, she'd go over her race strategy and remind herself of all of the things that she needed to make sure she did in order to swim fast and all of the things that she shouldn't do. Next, she'd tell herself that she *needed* to have a fast swim because she hadn't gone fast since she was a senior in high school, and as a result, was letting her coaches and teammates down. She had been recruited as a butterfly swimmer with fast times and she wasn't living up to her potential. By the time she was finished with all of this thinking, she was a nervous wreck!

I then asked her what she used to do behind the blocks back in high school when she was swimming fast, like her “old self.” Her answer at first caused me to chuckle — she said, “Oh, I used to dance!”

When I reminded her that she was not at a dance and was instead behind the blocks pre-race, ready to compete, she said, “I had my ear buds in, I was listening to my favorite playlist and I was moving and grooving to the music! My teammates would be laughing at me. Their parents would be laughing and we were all having a

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grand old time! Then I'd get up on the blocks with no thoughts in my head and just swim fast!"

So I said to her, "Let me get this straight: in high school you used to dance before all of your races and, as a result, you used to swim fast. But then you went to college and stopped dancing behind the blocks and instead started overthinking everything about your race and suddenly you started struggling performance wise, right?" To which she replied, "yes."

So then I said to her, "Let me ask you another question. Why on earth did you stop dancing when you got to college?" And her answer was stunning and highlighted the very common mistake that she and a lot of swimmers make before their big races! ***"I stopped dancing because I was now performing at a much higher level and this was way more serious than high school and club swimming!"***

Here's the thing that you need to keep in mind if you really want to be able to compete at a higher level: if you make a meet or race too serious or too important, then you will make yourself nervous, tighten up physically and consistently underperform! In order to swim fast when it counts the most you have to have fun ***first! You have to enjoy the dance***, so to speak. When you're having fun you'll stay loose and relaxed and the secret to swimming fast is you have to be loose!

Keep in mind that people don't dance to get from the beginning of a song to the end, they don't dance to get from the left side of the dance floor to the right, they dance because it's a blast! They love the rhythm, the movement and the fun of it. As a swimmer, you need to learn to "enjoy the dance!" You need to embrace everything about the meet and your races: The challenge from faster swimmers; The uncertainty as to the outcome; The physical challenge of your specific event, etc.

If you make this meet or race too serious, you will tighten up, get flooded with negative thoughts and doubts and then swim poorly. Seriousness is only for your commitment to your training and how hard you work in practice — seriousness does not have to belong on the deck with you and at the front of your mind when you're about to race. Go out there and have fun.



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**For a list of equipment required for your specific practice group [CLICK HERE](#).**



**Swim Meet participants are required to wear a red LAC cap and a black Arena suit with LAC Logo.**



***Members receive discounted pricing on Arena products when purchased through our exclusive retailer, Xtreme Swim.***

## NOVICE PRACTICE GROUP QUESTIONS

BY BILL CHRISTENSEN, SHELLEY ROSS AND DONOVAN POPE

It is the middle of the short course season. The coaches are starting to think about the move-ups after Spring Break. Each site and group is different but there are a few key areas of importance all coaches look at.

- 1) Attendance—How often do they come to practice? The higher the practice group, the higher the practice percentage requirement. If a swimmer cannot make the requirement in the lower group, they cannot make it in a higher group.
- 2) Practice Performance—Do they complete the sets? Do they know the drills and do them correctly? Are they leader in the group or a follower?
- 3) Training Performance—Do they go on the faster intervals and still do the set correctly? Do they complete sets without stopping?
- 4) Meet Participation—Do they go to swim meets? Do they compete in a full set of events? Do they arrive on time and prepare correctly?
- 5) Meet Performance—Did they achieve the time standards needed to be competitive in the next group.
- 6) Coachability—To be coachable: A swimmer listens, comprehends and makes an attempt to apply daily practice focus and race strategies at meets. Swimmer accepts corrective feedback with a positive attitude and applies feedback to skill work.

The list is extensive but it helps ensure your swimmer is placed in the correct group at the start of the next season. Swimmers stay or move groups based on what is best for each individual swimmer. There are many variables in play even group sizes and lane space. If you have questions about your swimmer's placement later, feel free to reach out to your coach. They will be able to explain their reasoning for your swimmer's placement. But in the long run, it is what is best for that swimmer.



## PRACTICE GROUP MOVE-UPS– AGE GROUP

At LAC, the coaches conduct group changes at the end of the seasons, spring break in March and the extended break in August. Group changes are made 1) to continue to challenge the athlete as they improve 2) create groups similar in size and ability. Practice group criteria change from season to season and site to site. Qualifying times and practice set requirements vary but what coaches use and not to use determine move stays relatively the same.



Positive Reasons to Move-up	Reason to stay in group
Attends almost all the practices	Attends the minimum number of practices or lower
Attends Swim Meets on a consistent basis and the champion-	Does not attend meets or just does a few events
Trains at the front of practice group	Trains in the middle or back of the group
Does the sets, drills, and intensity levels correctly	Rarely follows instructions or puts in a good effort
Prepares and performs well at swim meets	Poor preparation (late to warm-up, poor post-event warm-down) and performance
Has shown the maturity and mental ability to handle the next level	Needs to mature physically and mentally to handle the current group

Coaches take a lot of time considering all factors when looking move-ups but there are few things we do not consider 1) all their friends moved-up. 2) they have been in the group a long time 3) they will do better chasing others. Group move-ups are an increase in training and commitment. They are not a social status opportunity. We DO NOT move up, just because. Moving up **before** an athlete is **ready**, is rarely a good thing. We have seen too many athletes move up too early and end up hating swimming, injured, or unable to handle the increased workloads put on them. Please trust your coaches' decision in this process and trust we are doing what is best for the athlete AND LAC.

# VOLUNTEER NEWS

## UPCOMING MEETS TO VOLUNTEER AT

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meet</u>	<u>Jobs Open</u>
1) January 7 to 9	LAC Ice Breaker at NWISD	Sunday, January 2 <sup>nd</sup>
2) Feb 18 to 20	BB/B/C Champs	Sunday, February 13th
3) March 3 to 6	TAGS	Sunday, February 27th

**Signups for meets typically open one week before the meet starts.**

**An email is sent to the Members letting them know when the signups are open**

**Signups for volunteering are done online through the LAC website**

**For Fiscal 2021 (Sept 2021 - Aug 2022) the volunteer requirement is 4 points per family.**

- One Timing session (1 point)
- One Safety Monitor session (1 point)
- One Runner session (1 point)
- One Hospitality \$150 Donation (1 point)

Volunteers are most needed as timers, marshals, and hospitality workers. If you are new to competitive swimming, these are the easiest to learn about competitive swimming.

In addition to swim meets, the volunteer obligation may also be met through committed Leadership Positions on LAC Committees, Board of Directors or serving as a trained official. Availability may vary but many opportunities exist on committees such as:

- Events
- Fundraising (Swim-a-thon)
- Board of Directors
- Group Parents & LifeSavers

'Active' service in these work areas will meet the family's obligation for volunteer service for that year.

The coaching staff appreciates all the time and effort put in by the parents to make LAC meets a success. Thank you for your time and dedication. ***If you have any questions, please email [candices.saffle@swimlac.org](mailto:candices.saffle@swimlac.org).***