

Are you Beating the Competition in Practice?

Winning.

That's usually the answer when swimmers are asked what their goals are in the pool.

To touch the wall first ahead of the swimmer in the next lane.

To win that gold medal.

Pretty simple.

And so what happens when we fixate completely on that goal?

We think less about the process.

We experience stress and anxiety because the result is an uncertainty.

We obsess over what other swimmers are doing, boosting that sense of feeling "less than" and draining our focus from our own training.

We focus more on what may or may not happen on race day than we do on what it takes to prepare for race day.

All that from just wanting to win.

But being competitive is not the problem.

Not even close.

It's how we use that competitive nature that often gets us into trouble.

How to Use the Competition to Fuel You

One of my time-tested motivational tactics is to imagine what my competition is doing.

Not on the day of the big race, or during the meet warm-up, or in the ready room in the moments prior to the race of my life.

But when my alarm clock goes off on a cold Wednesday morning.

Or when we are only halfway through the main set and my legs feel like they are fifteen feet behind me, dragging along the pool floor.

Or when I am sitting at the kitchen table and there is a plate of cranberry shortbread cookies that just wanna leap into my mouth one after another until I am full of shame.

(Can you tell that this is based off a recent and real-life experience?)

When we think about beating the competition, it's typically on the day of the big race.

We wanna get up and imagine that we have done the necessary work to beat them.

And so we focus on doing everything we can *that day* to do the job.

But if you are going to beat the competition on race day, you best be kicking their butt at practice every day too.

And not just that...

- But you should be “beating” them when it comes to showing up early to practice...
- When it comes to getting more sleep...
- When it comes to taking care of your body via nutrition...
- And when it comes to doing the little things right in your training.

If you **want to beat the competition, you gotta beat them during your preparation.**

Doing it better on race day is not enough...

You need to be doing it better in training as well.

You can use the competition as a means to get down on yourself (“I’ll never be as fast as Michael Phelps!”) or you can use the competition as a motivational springboard to crush your training today (“I bet my competition isn’t doing bonus core work and focusing on their technique 110% today at the pool”).

Being competitive isn’t the problem.

You just gotta make sure that you are wielding it for the right reasons.

After all...

If your competitive nature is leading you motivational-sapping comparison making, it’s only being counter-productive.

On the other hand, if your competitive nature helps you make the most of every aspect of your preparation today, than ride that thunder bolt all the way to some new PBs.

When you walk out on the pool deck today do it a little better than the competition.

From the warm-up, to the post-workout stretch, to your walls, to how mindful you are kicking...

If you wanna crush the competition, you gotta crush by practice.

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