

City of Sheffield Swim Squad - Championship Preparation

What if....

I get ill?

- Think long-term
- Make a choice about thought content i.e. I can either focus on illness OR put it out of my mind by focusing on strengths/positives
- Remember that I have competed well when I have been ill in the past
- Maintain team spirit and support

"Even though just before I was about to compete I missed the opening ceremony because I was being sick and I was being quarantined, I still stood on that board really knowing that I was gonna perform really well. Even though it wasn't ideal being sick two days before, I still stood on the board thinking I'm diving the best I've ever dived, I'm gonna enjoy this, and that's what I did"

Olympic Diving Medallist

I have a poor first swim?

- Evaluate race with coach - identify factors responsible for underperformance and generate strategies to counter them
- Identify strengths and focus on positive aspects of performance, confident reminders for following day
- Keep it in perspective - one poor race does not have to equate to a poor championship!
- Turn it around i.e. I've got the poor swim out in the first day, now I can only improve!

"I've written down in the back of my logbook all these contingency plans, like what I'm gonna do if say the heats don't go that well....and it's stuff like ensure I get to the warm-down within a certain time, ensure that I get the best swim-down, get straight back to the hotel and stuff like that, cos then it makes you feel like you're following a plan and it makes you feel that little bit more 'well it's ok cos I've planned it"

World Championship and Commonwealth medallist (swimming)

I can't get focused?

- Relive previous successful performances and identify what works for me i.e., distraction/time alone etc
- Identify cue words that will get me task focused i.e. easy speed, relaxed and in control etc
- Execute pre-performance routine to maintain familiarity and confidence

I hit adaptation?

- Make a choice about thought content i.e. focus on physical feelings OR put it out of my mind by focusing on strengths/positives
- Knowledge of training - look back on weeks of preparation and remind myself that I can't lose speed/fitness overnight
- Maintain team spirit and support

I am placed in a fast/slow heat? The blocks are wobbly?

- Focus on controllable factors i.e. my race plan, my preparation, my strengths
- Heat draw is not controllable, neither are race outcomes, crowd, opposition, blocks, officials etc.

"Ain't no use worryin bout things beyond your control, cos if there beyond your control, ain't no use worryin. Ain't no use worryin bout things within your control, cos if you've got them under control, ain't no use worryin".

Ed Moses (Olympic gold medallist 400m Hurdles 1976, 1984 and former world record holder)

My goggles snap?

- Make sure I have a spare pair
- Make sure I'm prepared to race without
- Know the rules i.e. can stop to take goggles off

I get injured?

- I have nothing to lose - just go in there and do what I can do
- Long-term thinking
- Be realistic about what I can and can't achieve - adjust goals with coach to reduce pressure

"I was able to focus and tell myself that I'm fine, which a lot of athletes have an ability to do, they can be so strong willed that they can actually almost bypass their problems mentally. I know athletes who've had really niggling long-term injuries who actually just forced themselves to almost bypass the problem mentally. And I think that's probably what I did".

Multiple Olympic and World Championship Gold medallist and World Record Holder

I feel under pressure? I can't control my nerves?

- Ratio breathing
 - psyche up: breathe in for 8, out for 4.
 - Relax: Breathe in for 4 and out for 8.
- Identify what works for me - how have I coped under pressure previously?
What techniques have been successful for my team-mates?
 - Talk to team-mates (distraction)
 - Music
 - Imagery
 - Positive self-talk
 - Take self away from others
- Talk to the person that is most likely to make me feel good and help me to enhance my confidence i.e. coach, senior swimmer, team-mate - communicate my thoughts/feelings.

There is a lack of team spirit?

- Get behind team-mates
- Execute team warm-up
- Feed off each other
- Pick each other up
- Support each other
- Show a united front - wear the same kit!

The train/bus is late?

- Check the timetables in advance

- Be aware of the time I need to arrive at the venue - ensure parents are aware if they are taking me.
- Prevention is better than cure - ensure that I have left enough time to arrive at the venue even if there is a problem with the train/bus.

My race plan goes wrong?

- Evaluate race with coach - identify factors responsible for underperformance and make necessary revisions to plan.
- Identify strengths and focus on positive aspects of performance, confident reminders for following day
- Keep it in perspective - one poor race does not have to equate to a poor championship!

I need the toilet before competing?

- This is nothing to worry about, it is simply your body priming itself for competition and indicates that you are ready to go. As soon as the gun goes your body will respond to the physical exertion and retain this fluid which is why you are unlikely to need the toilet when you have finished your race.

I get psyched out by my competitors?

- Focus on my race plan and my preparation
- Watch my body language - presenting myself as confident with my shoulders back and head up gives the right impression to my opposition and will have a positive impact on my own feelings of confidence

"I think even if you're not confident inside, you need to present yourself as confident on the outside because that's half the battle won, firstly with yourself, because if you present yourself as confident then you immediately feel more confident, and also for your opponents, if you look confident then you're obviously a little bit more scary, maybe they don't feel as confident as you look and might be intimidated by that. So I think how you present yourself is very very important".

Olympic Medallist (Modern Pentathlon)

I have doubts about my preparation?

- This is not controllable on competition day!
- Focus on strengths/positives that are meaningful to me.
- Post-competition: Evaluate my training programme, identify strengths and weaknesses and use this information to facilitate future training and competition preparation

I have a lack of sleep?

- Develop pre-competition routines from night before
- Ensure I give myself maximum opportunities to rest i.e. don't go out the night before competition.
- Utilise relaxation techniques to assist with sleep (see Kate for help if necessary)

My coach is in a bad mood?

- Ensure that I do everything that is expected of me with regards to my behaviour, warm-up, preparation etc to avoid annoying him

- Communicate - if he is in a bad mood then talk to him and try to rectify the situation
- Surround myself with people that are in a good mood i.e. other team-mates
- Identify someone else to talk to if required i.e. senior swimmer, team-mate
- Be independent/responsible for my own performance - execute pre-performance routine and race plan in the usual way.

I have negative thoughts? I have a lack of confidence?

- Talk to team-mates (distraction)
- Music
- Imagery
- Positive self-talk - focus on strengths, previous best performances, competitive edge, performance accomplishments, experience etc
- Rationalise i.e. what is the evidence for negative thought, what is the evidence against? Negative thoughts are usually irrational!
- Give myself some space to refocus
- Talk to the person that is most likely to make me feel good and help me to enhance my confidence i.e. coach, senior swimmer, team-mate - communicate my thoughts/feelings.