

EAGLES CHAMPIONSHIP RACE PLAN

1. **STAY CALM, RELAXED AND LOOSE**—swimming fast under pressure is all about you staying loose and relaxed. This does not mean that you can't have butterflies coursing around your belly. What it does mean is that you have to be excited about the swim but loose. This ingredient is the most important one because staying loose is the secret to swimming fast when it counts the most. The key question here is **HOW** do you stay calm and loose under pressure? What are some specific things that you can do to help you stay in "Good Nervousness?" Stretch pre-race make sure that as you do, you keep your focus on the feel of the stretching; Listen to music; talk with friends about things that have nothing to do with swimming; laugh and joke around.

2. **STAY IN THE NOW**—one of the things that generates out of control is nerves. To counteract that, work on keeping your concentration in the **NOW**, before and during your races. Staying in the **NOW** will keep you loose and confident. Take the County Championships one event at a time mentally, prelims before finals. Take that big race, one stroke at a time.

3. **RECOGNIZE WHEN YOU "TIME TRAVEL" AND QUICKLY AND GENTLY RETURN YOUR FOCUS TO THE NOW**— Staying in the **NOW** is far easier said than done. Things will happen that will distract you and send your focus off into the future or back into the past. This is **NORMAL** and won't hurt you as long as you quickly become aware that your focus has left the **NOW** and then quickly, bring yourself back to it. Keep in mind it doesn't really matter how many times your focus "time travels." What **REALLY** matters is that you bring yourself back to the **NOW EACH AND EVERY TIME!**

4. **FOCUS ON FEEL**— Swimming fast is all about keeping your concentration on the feel of what you're doing, one stroke at a time. This goal is mainly for during races. Those help you go fast. You figure out these particular focal points in practice long before the big meet. It could be your pace, how much water you're pulling, the feeling and positioning of your head, your breathing pattern, a burning sensation in your forearms, ect. What you focus on varies swimmer to swimmer and oftentimes event by event.

5. **STAY IN YOUR OWN LANE**— Before and during your race you want to make sure that you keep your concentration on **YOU** and what you are doing in between your two lane lines. You will not go fast and have a chance at beating other swimmers by focusing on them! Instead, you must discipline yourself to stay focused on yourself before and during your races.

6. **RECOGNIZE WHEN YOUR FOCUS DRIFTS TO OTHERS AND QUICKLY BRING YOURSELF BACK**. Like staying in the **NOW**, keeping your concentration on **YOU** and not focusing on the other swimmers is a whole lot easier said than done. You will find your focus drifting to others before and after the event. That's normal! When it happens though, you have to quickly catch yourself and return your focus back to **YOU** and what you are doing! This means you don't want to study the heat sheet ahead of time, nor go online to check out other results. It also means that you need to **STOP** comparing yourself. **FOCUS ON YOU!!!** The only thing that really matters is what's going on between your two lane lines!

7. **KEEP TRACK OF THE "UNCONTROLLABLES"**— Focusing on things that you can't directly control before and during your race will make you nervous, tighten you up, kill your confidence and make it impossible for you to swim to your potential. When you go to these high pressure meets you must maintain awareness of the Ucs. You must know what they are and when you find yourself entertaining them, your job is to quickly return your focus on what you're doing in the moment **CAN CONTROL!** The Ucs are mental traps and they're lying in wait for you and everyone else at the big meet. Your job is to know what those traps are and use that awareness to help you avoid them.

8. **TRUST AND LET IT HAPPEN**— Once you get to the big time that you want and that great race is already inside of you. If you've done the training, then the fast swim is inside just waiting to come out. How do you get it out? You have to relax, trust yourself, trust your training and let your fast race come out. You don't need to force or muscle the swim out. You don't need to try extra hard to get the fast swim out. Swimming fast is a let-it-happen proposition. Put yourself on automatic and let the swim come to you!

9. USE LAST MINUTE NEGATIVE THINKING AND SELF DOUBTS AS A NEUTRAL SIGNAL TO RELAX AND REFOCUS-Understand that last minute self-doubts and negative thinking are a natural and normal occurrence for **ALL** swimmers. When they happen in your head, stay calm and relax. Try not to engage them. They are nothing more than brain wave activity. They do not predict the future and they aren't the voice of god talking to you. The key to hear is your reaction. When last minute doubts and negativity pop up notice them, accept them and then quickly refocus on whatever you're doing in the moment. You can still have the race of your life after being flooded with all these doubts **AS LONG AS YOU STAY CALM AND FOCUS YOURSELF!**

10. DON'T JUST THINK, JUST (FEEL) SWIM- this is related to #8. Swimming fast happens when you're focused on feel during the race and you're not thinking. Thinking slows you down because it distracts you from feel. Try to avoid the running dialog in your head when you race. Instead, replace it by redirecting your concentration to what you are **DOING** in the water at that moment.

11. FORGIVE YOURSELF FOR YOUR BAD SWIMS AND LEAVE THEM IN THE PAST- beating yourself up for a bad swim won't inspire you to become a better swimmer. It won't motivate you to work harder. Everyone fails. It's normal and part of the process of getting better in anything! When you have a disappointing race, learn what you did wrong and then let it go. Deal with your failures after the meet, not during it. Hanging on to your bad swim and then taking them into your next race is like trying to swim the next race with an additional 30 pounds strapped to your back! It will weigh you down!!!

12. HAVE FUN- you have to have fun **FIRST** before you can go fast change your headset and get into enjoying the meet, the challenge and the competition. **FUN** equals **SPEED**. You have to love what you're doing. If it's not fun, it will be impossible for you to have a good race. So do things before and during the meet that would make it fun for you. Talk to friends, laugh and joke around, smile and enjoy yourself. Don't make the meet so serious. Big race time should be party time!

"It does not have to be easy; it just has to be possible!"

(Marin Morrison)

