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# Between **the Lane** Lines

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The big meets are coming up! We have worked long and hard over the past season to make ourselves better, and now is the time to swim fast.

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## Breakfast and Recovery Strategies for Swimmers

Excerpt; by **Jacqueline R. Berning, Ph.D., R.D.**

Like many athletes, swimmers often face early morning workouts and races. It is not uncommon to see swimmers in the water by 5 a.m. One of the concerns with scheduling practices early in the morning is what to do with breakfast.

Athletes are often advised to eat two to three hours before exercise to allow for stomach emptying. Most athletes do not want to eat just before practice or a competition, as the food left in their stomach may cause nausea and gastrointestinal upset.

So rather than getting up at the crack of dawn to eat, many swimmers simply forgo food before practice. This habit of skipping food or a meal before exercise, especially after an overnight fast, can lower the body's store of energy and impair their ability to train and compete. Try these suggestions:

- Two pieces of toast with juice
- Small bowl of cereal with low-fat milk
- Banana and one tablespoon peanut butter
- Bagel with small amount of cream cheese
- Applesauce and two graham crackers
- Gatorade Energy bar and Gatorade Thirst Quencher
- Raisins and pretzels
- Fig bars and low-fat milk

How can swimmers eat breakfast without having to wake up at 3 a.m.? Simply stated swimmers need to snack before an early-morning swim and then eat breakfast once the workout is over. While it's not easy, once the swimmer gets into the swing of it, the habit becomes routine.

While the athlete doesn't want to have a full stomach, having a light snack can refuel and hydrate him or her before the

workout. Swimmers should pack the foods the night before and then they can grab it and eat it in the car if they are pressed for time in the morning.

Once the workout is over, it is very important that swimmers eat a regular breakfast. Most competitive swimmers work out six days a week. To recover from the workout, both fluid and fuel must be available to the body. If the meal can be eaten within 30 minutes after the workout, then the body can start the recovery process faster and be ready by the next practice to provide a quality workout.

Carbohydrates are the most efficient source of energy for muscles. An athlete's diet should consist of approximately 60 percent of total calories from carbohydrates like breads, rice, cereal, pasta, bagels, muffins, fruits and vegetables. Athletes with low-carbohydrate diets cannot easily recover their pre-exercise muscle glycogen levels before their next workout.

Some swimmers are unable to eat after practice due to time constraints, lack of appetite or stomach discomfort. During these times a liquid meal replacement, such as a nutrition shake or a high-carbohydrate drink, can be used. Then, when the appetite returns, try to eat the suggestions listed below:

- One bagel with peanut butter and banana
- Bowl of oatmeal with raisins and nuts
- One cup of low-fat yogurt, banana and orange juice
- Waffle with syrup and low-fat milk
- Three pancakes with syrup and low-fat milk
- One breakfast egg sandwich with ham and orange juice.

## Comparing Yourself To Faster Swimmers - Good or Bad?

By Craig Townsend

One of the worst things (for self-confidence) and one of the best things (for improvement) is to regularly compare yourself to better swimmers in your own team or squad. Yes - I know this doesn't seem to make sense, so let me explain. Laura Broadbent, a swimmer with Stratford Kinsmen Y Aquatic Club in Ontario Canada asked me about this recently, and the answer is that comparing yourself to others can be a 'double-edged sword' - meaning it can be good OR bad for you, depending on your personality type.

Swimmers who may be a little low in confidence may only drive their confidence down further by comparing themselves to the faster swimmers in their team, whereas the more competitive types often thrive and improve even faster by doing this. It all depends on what type of person you are and your level of confidence in your own ability. It's important to work out which category you fit into, as otherwise you may be tearing down your confidence each time you are beginning to build it up again. I must say that the majority of swimmers I have worked with have generally been far better when they simply worked upon improving their own PB's - as this keeps them focused upon their own performance and off their competitors'.

This fits in with my philosophy of 'focus upon the goal, not the obstacles' - but this is not to say that you couldn't be in the other category - it is up to you to work this out for yourself. One sure way of knowing is if you find yourself obsessing about other swimmers' times, this is a sure sign that you should bring your focus back in upon your own swims.

However, regardless of which category you belong to - never, ever allow your competitors' performances to dominate your thinking - your prime focus should always be your own lane, and your own swim. Otherwise, you may find your own performance is beginning to suffer due to lack of mental focus and attention - and this often occurs with overly-competitive swimmers. These swimmers often want to win so much they almost try to will their competitors to lose rather than focus upon their performance - and this simply does not work. Your mind requires a very clear goal to act upon (to give you the result you want) and so if your goal is totally focused upon another swimmer, your subconscious mind's role in your swim is basically rendered useless - as it cannot directly influence another swimmer's race.

This means that even the highly competitive swimmers (who thrive on trying to beat their team mates and competitors) focus upon what they are doing, and then they check out the other swimmer's times later. The more you know about yourself, the better a swimmer you will be - so it's worth discovering which motivations which bring out your best, and use them to your advantage.

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### Swimming jokes!

*Q: What kind of stroke can you use on toast?*

*A: BUTTER-fly!*

*Q: Where do ghosts like to go swimming?*

*A: Lake Eerie!*

*Q. Why can elephants swim whenever they want?*

*A. They always have trunks with them!*