

PROCESS VS. OUTCOME: FOCUS ON THE RIGHT THINGS



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As most of you reading this are aware, we are less than 11 months away from the first day of swimming at the Olympics. We are only 9 months out from the start of our Olympic Trials. At this point in the quad, a lot of time and energy is being put into the goal-setting process, and while the end goal will be different for every swimmer, I would always argue that the most important word in this sentence is "process." Unfortunately, for competitors at both Olympic Trials and the Olympic Games, success is most often judged on the outcome and who gets their hand on the wall first.

So how do you set process-based goals to prepare for outcome-centered competitions? Focus on these three things:

1. **Work on both strengths and weaknesses.** Just because you are great at underwater dolphin kicking, doesn't mean you should stop working on it. If your turns are great and your starts are not, you should be working to make both of these things better. All of the best athletes across all sports work every day to improve on both their weaknesses and their strengths.
2. **Make better choices.** Maybe you are the hardest worker on your team, and you focus on eating the right things to fuel your training, but you aren't getting enough sleep. Or maybe your sleep habits and training are on point, but your diet isn't meeting your needs. It could be that you think you are doing all of the right things, but you aren't focusing enough on recovery. In my experience, very few people are making the best possible choices in every facet of their lives. The key is to identify the choices you can improve, and then to actually do it!
3. **Have a plan.** The best swimmers in the world become fairly predictable in terms of race strategy and execution. This is because they have a very specific race strategy which they have executed over and over again. Stroke counts, dolphin kicks, breathing patterns, and splits are all important elements of a race plan. The more you rehearse this plan, the more automatic it becomes when it comes time to race.

All three of these suggestions are process-based and can have a positive impact on performance. The most important part of this is to focus your energy on the things that are within your control (process) so you don't waste your energy on things that are outside of your control (outcome).