

My coaching philosophy has been molded from years of dedication to the sport of swimming, first as an athlete and now as a coach. From these experiences three elements have become foundational to that philosophy:

- An approach to coaching that simultaneously recognizes the importance of science and the uniqueness of the individual
- An appreciation for the relationships with my athletes
- An obligation to challenge my athletes to grow as people

To give my athletes every opportunity to perform to the best of their abilities, I structure my training on science, specifically the physiology of human performance. In every aspect of training, careful thought is given to the appropriate stimulus to illicit the desired response. Although there is much to be gained from a scientific approach to coaching, science doesn't have an answer to what is most appropriate for my individual athletes. Science deals with large populations and can make useful generalities, but consideration must be given to the fact that individual human physiology is unique. I believe that taking a scientific approach while recognizing the individuality of my athletes is critical in the physical conditioning of my swimmers. However, as a coach my ambition exceeds the physical preparation of my athletes.

I consider the relationships with my swimmers to be an important part of both their athletic performance and personal growth. Philosopher Martin Buber has laid out two types of relationships, the I-it and the I-thou. The I-it relationship is centered on use, or what one can get from another. All too often this type of relationship is present between swimmers and coaches. Coaches see swimmers as points at the championship meet or as a way to look good in front of their peers. The swimmers are a means to an end. The I-thou relationship is one in which the other person is regarded as an end in themselves. I appreciate the relationships possible with my athletes and have an authentic commitment to them and their journey in life. This type of relationship not only enhances athletic development, it also makes possible a level of personal growth not otherwise possible. As Buber contends, human life finds its meaningfulness in relationships.

This existential search for meaning is a key element in the development of my athletes, as only then can they give themselves fully to their endeavors. Sport provides one of the best vehicles for deep learning because the same existential issues that confront individuals in life also confront athletes in sport. Meaning can be difficult to find when athletes recognize as they work to be the best that they can be, this goal can never be fully realized. Instead, the excellence they desire is in the striving. In their dogged pursuit they are like the character in Albert Camus' *Myth of Sisyphus*. As the story goes, Sisyphus is condemned for eternity to roll a rock to the top of a mountain only to watch it roll back down. The gods evidently believed there existed no worse fate than futile labor. However, Camus finds Sisyphus victorious at the moments when he is conscious of his fate. As Camus asserts, "The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart." I believe if my swimmers can find meaning in their struggle in the pool, they will be better prepared to find meaning in their lives outside of the pool.

My goal is to develop in my athletes the potential to live as fulfilled human beings. Through our shared pursuit of excellence, swimming gives me the opportunity to assist my athletes in their personal growth and bring them closer to this goal.