

Commanding the Workout

by Don Heidary (Excerpts from a Clinic Talk -2007)

I want to touch on these simple clipart presentations (on screen), which I think are very significant. You can clearly see that there are two people making a presentation. One might be the head coach and one might be the assistant coach. They look very professional which is one of our themes. What is behind the sheet, the audience, would be the swimmers and the stage would be the pool deck. We like to create this feeling every day on a pool deck and ultimately when the sheet is revealed – there is a great presentation, not dissimilar to a performer on a stage.

It may seem a little bit trite, but after 30 years at age 46, I get that feeling of performing every day. When I walk on the pool deck I almost feel like somebody walking on a stage. I have an obligation to the people that paid money to be there to do the best job possible. As with a performance, whether it is a play or a musical, there are written words but the real difference is how it is presented. Now, I don't want to trivialize anything that you learn here. I do not want to trivialize the quality of workouts; the objective of this talk is to maximize every workout from every perspective and I believe you can do that.

If you could visualize wringing the water out of a towel, if you kept going, could you get another drop? Yes. As with a workout, if you kept going, could you get a little more effort and a little more productivity? We ask our kids often, "Can this be the best workout of your life?" When we used to do that early on they would chuckle a little bit. We ask it very seriously now, "Can this be the best workout of your life?" So I am going to ask you as a coach, "Can your next workout be the best workout you have written and you have presented of your life and if so, how do you do that?" Voice, position, intensity, rapport, compassion, flexibility, motivation, dialogue;how will you add value to the workout? And again, this is not a pump-up speech, it is not a rah-rah, it is not a get excited, get the kids up, it is an everyday thing. It is a way of life.

The next slide is a quote that I am sure most of you have seen, "The mediocre teacher leads, the good leader explains, the superior leader demonstrates and the great leader inspires." The real question behind this is, "Can you inspire every day?" The more important question is, "Can you inspire everyone, every day?" If that was your mission when you walked into the office or walked on the deck, what would you do, or change?

The next quote is from a small book that I read by Michael Lewis, called "Coast." In the book there are teachers with a rare ability to enter a child's mind. It is as if their ability to get there at all gives them the right to stay forever. What if that was your objective? To get into every kid's mind. Can you do thisand if you could, what would happen?

The next slide summarizes this presentation – "Commanding the Workout."

- Preparation - is fairly obvious.
- Organization – I would like to talk a little bit about.
- Focus – is presence and presentation which I think really defines workouts and I would say, ultimately, careers.
- Evaluation – I think needs to be done more. (One of the reasons for having coach meetings.)
- Respect – which is not really a part of this process, but is I think the glue that binds everything together.

The next page is thoughts and one analogy that I had years ago. We all go to restaurants. We all get something to eat. Sometimes you go to a restaurant because the food is great, you really like the food, but the experience is not positive. Sometimes you go because the experience is so positive you like being there. It is a good feeling and you want to go back. You do not think as much about what you order or what you eat. As with a workout, the written words are absolute, but it's everything else that is added that ultimately makes

the difference and creates the desire to go back. We know with swimmers for the most part they have to go back, but how much of it is the desire to go back and to keep going back and do a better job?

I am going to ask a few questions. I would like you to respond as quickly as you can, just think briefly about these things.

- Would you rather coach swimmers that love the experience but do not improve or swimmers that do well but do not enjoy the experience? If you had to choose, and I realize they are extremes, which one would you choose?
- If a parent observed your coaching style, how would they rate your presence on the deck?
- If a parent observed all the clubs in your area, how would they rate your effectiveness on the deck in relation to every other club?
- Do you watch every swimmer every day?
- Does every swimmer know they are being watched?
- Does every swimmer in the workout feel your presence, regardless of where they are in the pool or where you are on the deck?
- Does your appearance foster professionalism and respect?
- Does your command change or deteriorate with larger groups or conditions; if the weather is bad, if the group is larger, does the effectiveness of the workout change?
- Do you believe that every thought, word, action will collectively define the team, the attitude, the workout and the work ethic?
- Do you believe that your command of the workout will ultimately determine your productivity and the team's success?

Editor's note: Discuss what you need from your team to "Command the Workout". Is it better preparation? Clearer direction? Better training or learning opportunities? Underwater video system? ASCA membership? Does this cost more money, or time, which also costs money? Can your head coach give this to you, or is it the responsibility of your BOD? As the presenter explains, he imagines being on stage to give a great performance. What creative ideas can you come up with, to present to young swimmers that will command their attention and inspire them to be better? Come up with one and bring to this week's coaches meeting.