



SUMMER 2026
LONG COURSE
EDITION



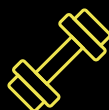
THE SWIM PARENT PLAYBOOK

A free resource to help parents navigate their child's swim journey, from their first swim to elite-level races



COACH INSIGHTS

Advice from top coaches on what matters most.



TRAINING TOOLS & GEAR GUIDES

The right gear for every stage of your swimmer's journey.



ATHLETE STORIES

Lessons from elite swimmers & college athletes.

MINDSET • TRAINING • NUTRITION • MEET PREP • RECOVERY

SUMMER 2026

THE SWIM PARENT PLAYBOOK



This playbook is here to support you with guidance, tools, and perspective at every stage of your child's competitive swimming journey.

Whether your swimmer is just getting into club swimming or chasing Olympic Trials cuts, your role as a parent or guardian matters more than you think.

We created this resource to help you feel informed, confident, and empowered to be your child's biggest cheerleader and offer support every step of the way.

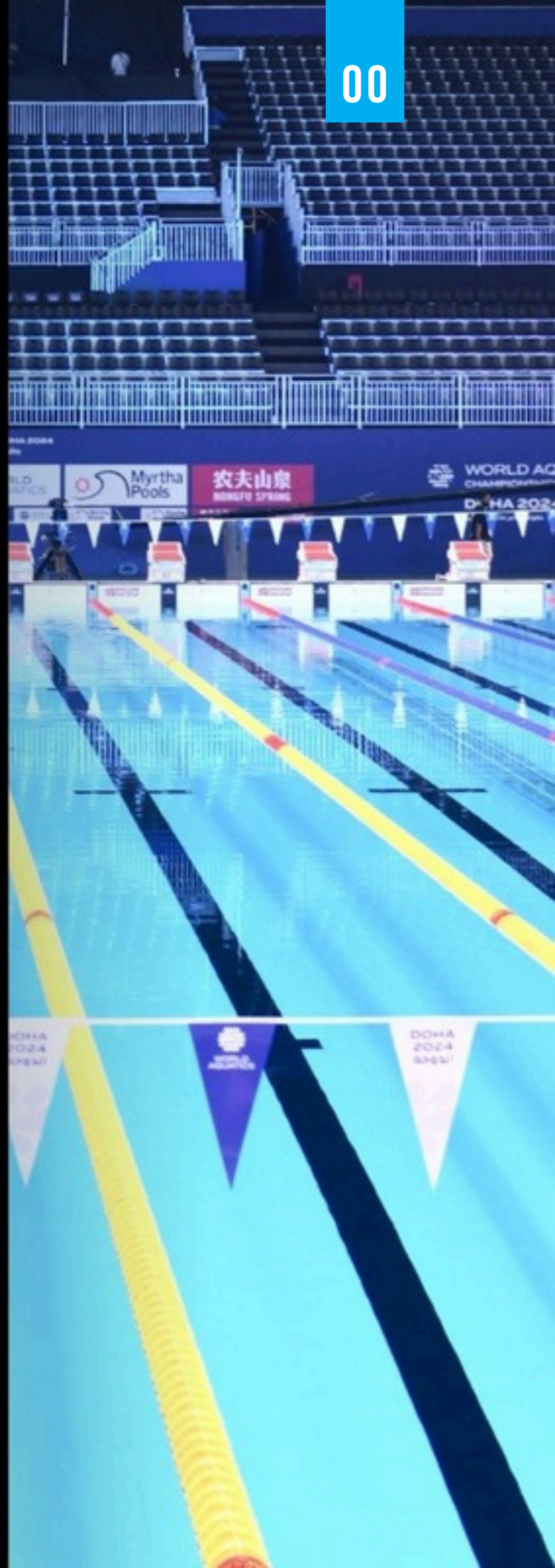
Help your swimmer unleash their unstoppable this season.

- The A3 Performance Team

OUR STORY



00





**YOU CAN'T CONTROL YOUR
SWIMMER'S NEXT RACE.**

**YOU CAN CONTROL THE
ENVIRONMENT YOU CREATE.**

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SUMMER 2026

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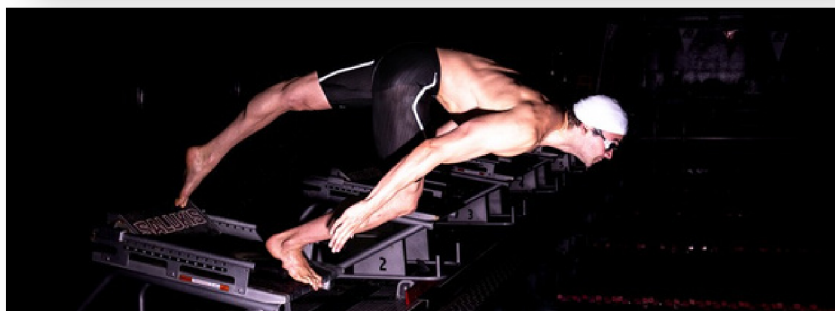
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WHAT TO SAY AFTER A RACE (AND WHAT NOT TO)

What you say matters, and the moments after a race can shape your swimmer's confidence more than the race itself. Here are some tips for post-race conversation:



SAY THIS:

- "How did that feel?"
- "What did you learn?"
- "I'm proud of how hard you work."
- "I love watching you race!"
- "You've come so far!"



AVOID THIS:

- "Why didn't you..."
- "You should have..."
- "That wasn't your best race."
- "You're better than that."
- "You should've won that one."



Some swimmers want to talk right away. Others need time. Follow their lead and let them know they have your unwavering support and encouragement, regardless of how they perform.

TIPS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR SWIMMER'S JOURNEY

You can't control your swimmer's next race, but you can control the environment you create as they navigate the ups and downs of competitive swimming. Here are a few tips to keep in mind as a swim parent:

BE A CALM PRESENCE

Swimmers feed off of the energy around them. When parents are calm, swimmers are grounded.

CELEBRATE EFFORT

Celebrate things like strong finishes, resilience, hard work, or focus to show your swimmer that winning isn't the only achievement worth celebrating.

LET COACHES COACH

Reinforce coaches' cues when appropriate, but as a parent, keep conversations simple and leave the technical aspects to the coaches!

HELP THEM FIND JOY

Swimming is an intense and time consuming commitment, so helping your child find joy in the sport is essential. Encourage them to make friends, bond with the team, and have fun!

THE RIGHT TOOLS AT THE *RIGHT TIME*

Use this guide to help choose equipment and gear that supports your swimmer's development at every stage of their journey.



AGE GROUP (6-12 YEARS)

Helpful Tools:

- Goggles
- Fins
- Training Snorkel

Focus:

- Comfort
- Body position
- Technique

INTERMEDIATE (13-16 YEARS)

Helpful Tools:

- Training Snorkel
- Power Paddles
- Pull Buoy

Focus:

- Strength
- Efficiency
- Consistency

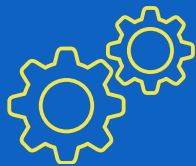
SENIOR / ELITE (16+ YEARS)

Helpful Tools:


- Power Chute
- Fusion Paddles
- BODIMAX Compression Sleeves

Focus:

- Precision
- Speed
- Endurance



The right tools aren't an immediate solution to drop time, but using the right gear the right way can accelerate your swimmer's progress.

A close-up, side-profile photograph of a swimmer. The swimmer is wearing a black swim cap with a white logo and the word "PERFORMANCE" partially visible. They are also wearing silver-rimmed goggles. Their right hand is raised to the side of their head, adjusting the cap. The background is solid black.

**UNSTOPPABLE IS A
MINDSET YOU BRING TO
EVERY PRACTICE, EVERY
SET, EVERY STROKE.**

LONG COURSE SEASON MUST-HAVES

We've got everything your swimmer needs for a successful long course season and beyond! For our full product catalog, visit A3Performance.com.

GEAR

**TEAM
BACKPACK**



SWIMWEAR

**TECHNICAL
RACING SUIT**



TRAINING

**FUSION
PADDLES**



TRAINING

**POWER
CHUTE**



ACCESSORIES

**MATRIX X
GOGGLES**



TRAINING

**SWIFT
KICK FINNS**



PERFORMANCE
ENGINEERED



BUILT FOR
CHAMPIONS



TRUSTED BY
ATHLETES

KATHARINE BERKOFF

OLYMPIC MEDALIST | US NATIONAL TEAM MEMBER |
AMERICAN RECORD HOLDER

We spoke with A3 Athlete, Katharine Berkoff, and asked her to weigh in on how her parents' support helped shape her mindset and performance.

1

What's something small your parents did that made a big difference over time?

My parents always believed in me and never pushed me to do anything I didn't want to do. They were supportive of me, but never overbearing.

2

How did your parents support you during a setback or after a disappointing race?

Whenever I've experienced a setback, my parents would let me vent about whatever it was, and provide perspectives on how it could be beneficial in the long run. They've taught me that the toughest experiences are the ones we learn the most from.

3

How has having an Olympic medalist as your dad shaped your swim career?

My dad was the reason I ever had the goals of making the Olympic team and winning gold. I was really lucky to have a super early inspiration like my dad!

4

What lessons from your parents have stuck with you beyond swimming?

The importance of having a life and values outside of swimming. Swimming isn't going to last forever. It's great, but life is so much bigger and so much more than competition.

5

What did your parents do on meet days that helped you feel your best?

My parents drove me to all my meets and just took good care of me. They never put pressure on me and just supported me.

ATHLETE STORIES

AJ POUCH

US NATIONAL TEAM MEMBER | 2X OLYMPIC TRIALS FINALIST |
5X NCAA HONORABLE MENTION ALL-AMERICAN



A3 Athlete, AJ Pouch, reflects on how support from his family, friends, and coaches have helped shape him into the swimmer he is today.

Who would you consider your biggest supporter and why?

I have so many people who are behind me supporting me throughout this journey, so it's hard to pick just one, but I would say one person who I know is always by my side and pushing me to be my best would have to be my coach, Sergio Lopez Miro.

He comes into practice each day ready to help push me to become not just a better athlete, but a more well-rounded individual ready to take on whatever gets in my way, in AND out of the water!

How do you stay motivated after a setback? What keeps you going?

There are going to be PLENTY of setbacks within a swimmer's career, whether it's a swimmer missing a zones cut or someone coming back from an injury, there is absolutely going to be something that is going to be an obstacle for an athlete.

But one thing that keeps me motivated and driven to keep pursuing my dream, starts with me sitting down, taking a deep breath, and remembering what my ultimate goal is. I see my end-of-season goal, or my long-term goal, as the finish line, and every setback or deterrent is just a bump in the track. The only person who can get back up and keep pushing toward your goal, is yourself.

How have your family, friends, and coaches shown support at different stages of your career?

My family has always been the base of my support system. I wouldn't even be in the world of swimming if it weren't for them. Plus they are always the loudest ones in the pool whenever I stand behind the blocks.

My coaches are another strong foundation within my support system, all of my coaches, starting back from my age group club swimming days, all the way up to now into my professional career, have always done a great job coaching me in the water, but also developing me as an individual. All of my coaches want to see me do great things within the sport of swimming, but at the end of the day they also want to see me do even greater things after I'm finished as well. No matter what meet we go to, or what events we swim and how fast, my coaches still see me as an individual, not just a medal count or a number.

What do you wish more swim parents understood about the athlete experience?

Times, medals, and meets are fun and awesome, even more so when your swimmer is experiencing it all for the first time. But this sport has A LOT of ups and downs, so just be patient and supportive through it all. A swimmer isn't going to go to a meet and go a best time EVERY SINGLE TIME, and it's unfair to assume they will.

This whole sport is a process, as long as you are providing what your swimmer needs and they're putting in the work, the best thing you can do is just be supportive.

AJ POUCH

CONTINUED...

How have you balanced swimming with school, friends, and life outside of the pool?

Growing up, I found it hard to balance swimming with a social life with my friends. I would go to school, come home, go to swim, come home, do my schoolwork, sleep, and repeat. I knew what I wanted to try and do within this sport, my coaches told me what they saw me doing within this sport, and so I chose to give it everything I had and put my focus into swimming.

I sometimes think I regret not hanging out with my friends more on Friday nights, or skipping a practice here and there to go to a birthday party, but then I look at what I have done so far, and what my goals today are, and those thoughts instantly leave because I LOVE what I am doing and can't wait to continue this journey.

What's one piece of advice you'd give your younger self?

Don't sweat the small stuff. Growing up, when you just miss tying your best time, just miss out on a final, or you had a race that felt awful, it seems like the biggest problem ever and nothing can be worse than whatever just happened at that meet or at practice.

But looking back, all I was doing was adding unnecessary stress on myself. Nothing will be perfect, no swim, no practice, no race will ever be perfect, so just go and do what you know you can do, give everything you do the best effort you have, and the rest will follow. Enjoy each and every aspect of the journey of swimming!



INTERESTED IN BOOKING AN A3 ATHLETE FOR AN UPCOMING EVENT?



MEL STEWART

OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST | FOUNDER + CEO OF SWIMSWAM



Olympic medalist and SwimSwam CEO, Mel Stewart, weighs in on the evolving landscape of competitive swimming and how parents can best guide and support their athletes along the way.

Q: From what you've seen across the sport, what shifts or trends have you seen in how young athletes develop today compared to previous generations?

Every generation has improved strength training. Dryland exercise and weight lifting have become so defined, so specific to performance, that swimmers have improved in ways I did not believe were possible. The upside is that this type of training takes less time and requires more recovery (time away from the pool). We used to swim 10 miles a day, 6 days a week. That era is over, and swimmers are happier and fitter because of it.

Q: How have social media and online resources changed the swimmer (and swim parent) experience?

Social media has cut both ways, positive and negative. Social media has been a great asset to celebrate every aspect of our culture. And, it has also been negative for all of the reasons we hate social media – too much screen time, too much comparison with others, too much judgment and self-judgment. Keep social media in balance. Do what 10x Olympic medalist, Caeleb Dressel, does. Celebrate and share your experience when you're comfortable doing that. Support your friends and competitors, and then log off.

Q: In your opinion, what separates swimmers who stay in the sport long-term from those who burn out early?

We have witnessed this over and over with each generation of swimmers. If you stay engaged 4, 6 or even 8 years training year-round, the dream of competing in college becomes very realistic. Swimmers (really parents) who push too hard too soon, lose out. Keep it fun for as long as possible. Don't worry about or overly judge performance until high school.

Q: Any advice for parents on how to support their swimmers, without adding unnecessary pressure, as they gain visibility and recognition?

I watch the parents of Olympic medals like a hawk, always striving to glean some nugget of wisdom. One stands out. They all share this one thing in common: their sons and daughters know they love them beyond any level of achievement. It does appear to be this quiet superpower.

Most Olympic medalists lose far more than they win. Parents live with and suffer through the disappointments with them, always steadfast in picking them up and encouraging them to have context on the entire experience – not the color of any one medal or if they have fallen flat on their faces. Let the coach coach. Parents only need to support and love their kids.



**A HAPPY SWIMMER
IS A FAST SWIMMER.**

**DO WHAT YOU CAN
TO KEEP THINGS FUN**

SERGIO LOPEZ:

VIRGINIA TECH COACH | 4X OLYMPIC COACH | OLYMPIC BRONZE MEDALIST

Training for Long Course Season

"When we move from short course yards to long course meters, we are not simply changing the pool. We are changing the demands of the sport."

That is something I have told swimmers for many years. Long course swimming exposes everything:

- Your conditioning
- Your patience
- Your technique
- Your discipline
- Your mental strength

In short course, walls can hide weaknesses. Underwaters, turns, and momentum help cover technical inefficiencies. But in long course, there is nowhere to hide. You must learn to hold velocity through the water itself.

That is why the transition matters so much.

“ WHEN FATIGUE RISES, DISCIPLINE MUST RISE WITH IT.”



SERGIO LOPEZ:

VIRGINIA TECH COACH | 4X OLYMPIC COACH | OLYMPIC BRONZE MEDALIST

What Swimmers Must Understand About the Transition to Long Course

1

Long Course Rewards Efficiency

In a 25-yard pool, there are more turns, more push-offs, and more underwater recovery. In a 50-meter pool, you spend far more time swimming, and stroke efficiency becomes critical. **The swimmers who succeed are the swimmers who maintain line, hold water, and stay patient technically.**

2

Your Tempo Must Change

Young swimmers often make the mistake of trying to swim long course with short-course rhythm. This creates spinning, tension, and early fatigue. Long course requires controlled aggression, rhythm, and sustainable power. **Great long course swimmers do not look rushed – they look dangerous while relaxed.**

3

Conditioning Becomes Exposed

You can survive short course with great walls, elite underwaters, and speed. But long course punishes poor conditioning. The second 50m becomes harder. The third 50m becomes honest. **The last 50m reveals character.**

4

The Mental Shift Is Massive

Long course teaches patience. Races feel longer, momentum changes, and there are fewer opportunities to recover. It's important to become comfortable being uncomfortable: holding stroke under fatigue, staying technically disciplined late in races, and **learning confidence in the middle of pain.**

DAN MEINHOLZ:

A3 PERFORMANCE FOUNDER & CEO

Advice from a Fellow Swim Dad and Coach

Swimming has shaped almost every part of my life.

I was fortunate to become a Jr. National Champion and National Record Holder in swimming. I received a full scholarship to a Division I school; I married a Big Ten Champion and Olympic Trials qualifying swimmer. Together, we raised four children who swam, and our two oldest daughters went on to swim at the same Division I school.

So when I speak about swimming, I am not speaking only as a former athlete or as the founder of A3 Performance. I am speaking as someone who has lived this sport from almost every angle – as a competitor, husband, parent, business owner, coach and fan of what swimming can do for a young person's life.

The biggest thing I would say to parents and athletes is this: **Swimming is about so much more than times, medals, scholarships, or championships.**

Those things are exciting. They matter. They can be goals worth chasing. But they are not the whole story.

Swimming teaches discipline. It teaches patience. It teaches young people how to show up when they are tired, how to handle disappointment, how to work with others, and how to pursue something difficult over a long period of time. Those lessons and that process last far longer than any personal best.



Advice from a Fellow Swim Dad and Coach

FOR PARENTS:

Looking back on the years, I would say: support the journey, but don't own it.

That is not always easy. As parents, we want the best for our kids. We see their potential. We see the sacrifices. We pay for the meets, drive to practices, sit through long weekends, and ride the emotional highs and lows right alongside them. But swimming has to belong to the athlete.

Your job is not to make every race perfect. Your job is not to analyze every split on the car ride home. Your job is not to turn every meet into a judgment of progress. Not that I haven't done this at times. I have learned that this is not beneficial in your child's development. If they want to discuss these things, by all means. If not, then don't.

Your job is to be steady.

After a great swim, celebrate them.

After a bad swim, love them the same.

After a disappointing season, remind them that one chapter does not define the story.

The car ride home is powerful. Use it wisely. Sometimes the best thing a parent can say is simply:

"I love watching you swim."

Not, "What happened on that turn?"

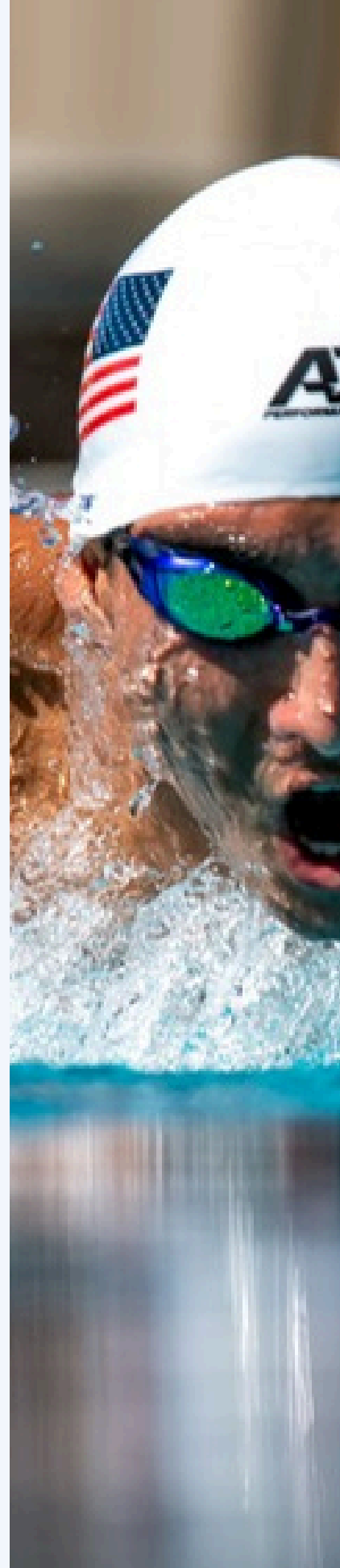
Not, "You need to go out faster."

Not, "You were so close."

Just: "I love watching you swim."

That gives a young athlete freedom. **It tells them they are valued beyond performance.**

Swimming is a chapter and this too shall pass. The benefits are in the process, not the podium.



Advice from a Fellow Swim Dad and Coach

TO SWIMMERS:

To the athletes, I would say: don't underestimate what this sport is building in you.

There will be days you don't feel like going to practice. There will be races where you fall short. There will be swimmers who are faster, stronger, taller, or more naturally gifted.

But swimming rewards consistency.

Not perfection.

Not hype.

Not excuses.

Consistency.

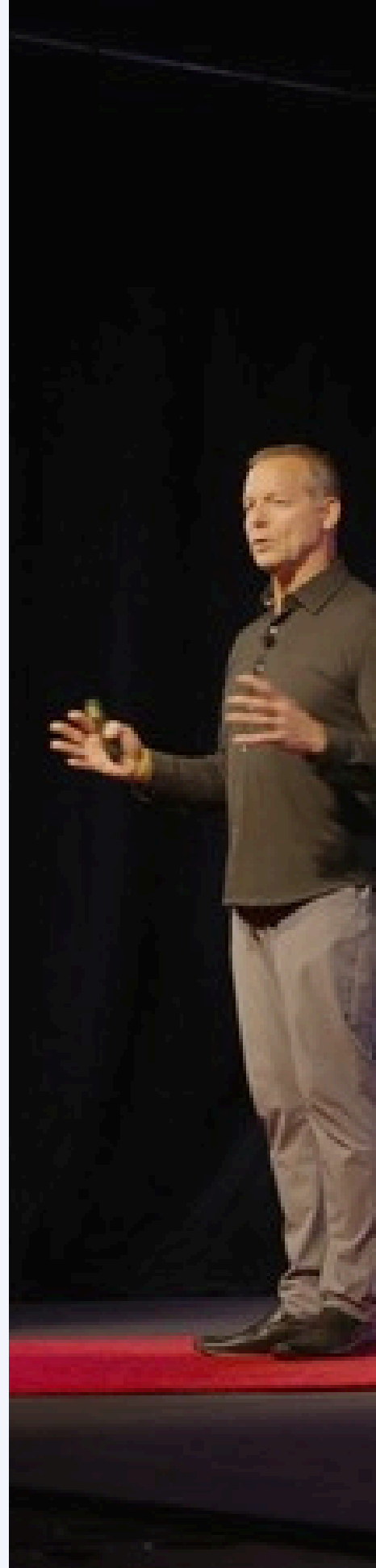
If you keep showing up, keep learning, keep listening, and keep believing, you will become stronger in ways that go far beyond the pool.

You may not understand it now, but the discipline you build in swimming will follow you into school, business, relationships, leadership, parenting, and life.

Swimming teaches you that growth is earned. It teaches you that success is not immediate or even guaranteed. It teaches you that failure is not final. And it teaches you how to keep going.

That is a gift.

So often we get caught up in the performance of others. Why? None of it matters. After all, you're there to get better and no one else's performance will impact that. When you shift your focus onto someone or something else, you take your focus off of what you need to do to be your best. Chasing greatness is a valiant endeavor, but this requires 100% of your focus. Don't give that away.



MEET DAY CHECK LIST

XX



Cap + Goggles

Pack your favorite cap and goggles, and don't forget to bring a spare just in case!



Training suit

Bring a practice suit (or two!) for warm-ups and cool downs.



Racing suit

Pack a tech suit that helps you feel and swim your fastest.



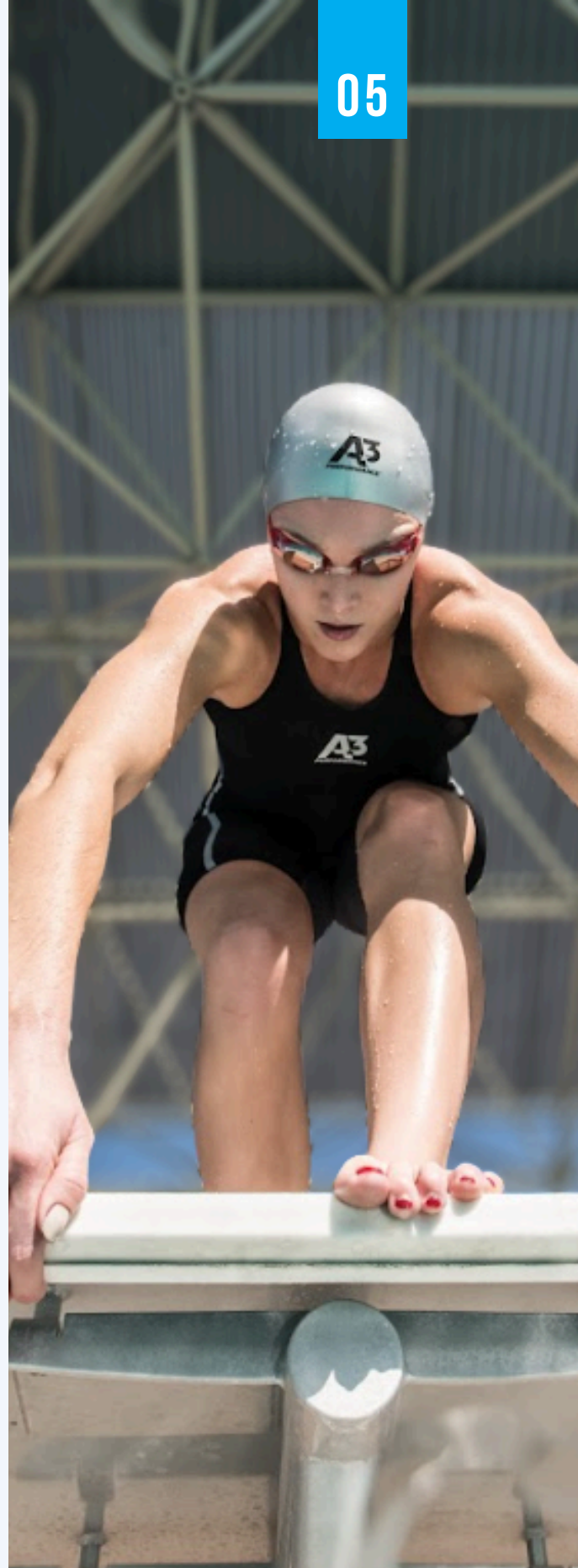
Training Gear

If you like to use training gear pre-race, throw in your paddles or fins.



Snacks

To keep energy levels high and muscles fueled, pack the right snacks for in between races.



MEET DAY

FOOD TO FUEL YOUR ATHLETE

Every race drains glycogen, electrolytes, and energy, so swimmers need to fuel their body at the start of the day, between races, and between sessions, for peak performance.



PRE-MEET MEAL FOCUS

- Mainly carbs
- Small amount of lean protein
- Small amount of fats
- Low-carb electrolytes

DURING-MEET HYDRATION

- Water
- Electrolyte drinks

SNACKS BETWEEN EVENTS

- Short break: liquid carbs
- Medium break: lighter carb snack
- Long break: substantial but mostly carb focused

POST-RACE RECOVERY

- Within 30-minutes of the last cooldown, get an equal balance of carbs and protein.

LUNCH & DINNER

- Focus on a balance of protein, fat, and carbs.
- For lunch or longer breaks between sessions, the more protein and fat that can be added to the meal.

FOODS TO AVOID

- Fried or greasy foods
- Heavy fast food
- Spicy snacks
- Apples
- Cruciferous veggies
- Candy or soda

From our trusted partner in nutrition and wellness:



Erica Beine is a Board Certified Holistic Health Practitioner and Certified Sports Nutritionist, with a collegiate coaching background of thirteen years in NCAA Division I swimming.




YOU'VE GOT THIS!

At the end of the day, what matters most is showing up for your swimmer with love and support at every stage of their swim journey.

A supported swimmer is a happy swimmer.

A3 Performance is here for you and your child, every step of the way!

 [A3Performance.com](https://www.a3performance.com)

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**UNLEASH
YOUR
UNSTOPPABLE**

