

These are guidelines for mental preparation going into an important performance situation.

- 1) Do it before you do it. Use your imagery skills. Form a clear and compelling image of the kind of athlete you want to be at the next competition and at OUA's or CI's. Rehearse in your head what you (ideally) will do in typical situations you are likely to face in these competitions. This will have the greatest impact if you do it when you are relaxed, such as when you are lying in bed before falling asleep.
- 2) Face the real facts. You are going to be facing some strong competition. Your skills and abilities and those of your teammates will be tested to the max. Confront that truth or you will be too far removed from reality to bounce back when you are seriously challenged. But acknowledge the all of it – sure you will face tough, tough challenges – but that's not the all of it – it's also true that you and your team are well-prepared, fit, skilled, focused.
- 3) Manage your energy. Competitions take a lot out of you. And for the student athlete there are numerous demands upon your time and energy. Leading up to the competition, reduce or eliminate non-essential activities. At the competition, know when and how to be up for races and how to calm down and recover in between (and at night). Pay attention to nutrition, hydration, electrolyte replacement, rest. What is your hydration strategy? Dehydrate a muscle by as little as 3% and it will lose 10% of its' strength and 8% of it's speed. Can you afford this? Notice if the big race or big opponent is getting you too amped up so that you are burning off energy between races and getting away from doing what you have practiced – take a deep breath, get centered.
- 4) Draw strength from your teammates. And be a good teammate in return. One of the best ways to help keep yourself calm under pressure is help out a teammate. That could be a word of advice, a pat on the back, lending them goggles or giving them space. No one does it alone.
- 5) Check yourself in the morning. Sometimes we have been churning things over in our minds while we are sleeping and don't feel so good when we wake up. If that's the case, smile to yourself, take a few deep breaths, tell yourself what you want, see yourself as the kind of player that you want to be.
- 6) Deal with it. If a negative image comes into your mind, or you hear a negative voice in your head, stop whatever you are doing and replace that image or voice with one that supports the performance. Think about your best performance ever. Focus on that image. Establish the priority of taking care of business.

20-30 Minute from Race Time

- 7) What ever you are doing, do it with 100% focus. IF you're having a conversation, have a conversation, if you're working on starts, work on starts. It's easy to be doing two things at once, but in the few moments before you head over to the starting blocks practice being in the habit of focusing all your attention on doing one thing at a time.
- 8) GET OUT OF YOUR HEAD! Look at your teammates. Make eye contact. Talk to people. Simulate your stroke. Be focused, but fully aware taking in the present moment: right here, right now. Move away from thinking and move toward doing – and actions take place out here.