

Great Read - The Stopwatch Doesn't Lie But It Also Doesn't Tell The Full Story

Below is a great article by Coach Paul Yetter of the North Baltimore Aquatic Club.

The stopwatch doesn't lie, but it also doesn't tell the full story.

Athletes can improve over time without going "best times" each time they compete!

From my perspective as a coach of athletes age 14-19, I look for a few times per year when we go for strong progression on the "best times".

But we race almost every month!

A team full of High School-aged athletes are not going PRs every month for 48 straight months.

Adults (coaches and parents) have to let these kids know that they can continue to get better and make game-changing improvement — without the achievement of Personal Best Times" every time out.

That way when the athlete "puts it all together" they get big progress. It may seem at the moment of victory that the progress has happened all at once, but really the progress has been happening the whole time, just not seen clearly.

A few years ago, after a 16 year old female athlete on our NBAC squad achieved her first US Olympic Trial time standard, I was struck by the thought that she had walked a road to the achievement that was paved with plenty of rocks and sticks. There were mirages that looked like obstacles to us at times.

I researched and found that this 16 year old athlete had raced the 200 Free LCM 26 times in her life. The 26th race was an Olympic Trial time standard. The rest of her races age 12-16 looked like this, in linear order- *starred* for "Personal Best" times:

2016 - 3 Races

2:15.3
2:12.7*
2:16.7

2017- 5 Races

2:16.3
2:18.7
2:14.5
2:11.8*
2:11.7*

2018- 9 Races

2:07.6*
2:04.7*
2:07.8
2:10.5
2:03.8*
2:05.7

2:14.5
2:12.5
2:05.8

2019- 9 Races

2:06.4
2:04.9
2:05.1
2:04.3
2:08.0
2:06.3
2:04.4
2:03.2*
2:01.1*

Of the last 13 performances leading into an Olympic Trial time standard, only the final 2 were personal bests for this athlete! There was a lot of learning and honing of skills though. And a lot of not giving in to many people saying the athlete was on the wrong path.

This is just one person and one example. There are always going to be exceptions. My goal with this post is to give everyone something to consider as we work towards higher levels of personal achievement for ourselves, our athletes, and our kids. Their achievements and ability to cope with life's challenges depend on it.