

CONSISTENCY IN TRAINING

By Jim Green

I get asked all the time how I manage to maintain consistency in training with the all the other time constraints I have. Owning a Forensic Engineering firm with weekly travel and having all the other usual family obligations, I still have managed to finish near the top in the Go the Distance each year. I have come up with several axioms for consistent training, which I will call:

Jimmy's Rules for Training:

Rule No. 1: Mornings are best use them wisely. The time from 5-7 AM is precious. There are no clients, kids or interruptions in the mornings. I know, I know. It is brutal getting up. But, once you are done with the workout the rest of the day is yours. A little subset here is that you really need to get to bed at night for this to work. This does mean turning off the idiot box.

Rule No 2: If you travel, the Places to Swim on the USMS web site is golden. I have swum with teams all over the country and most of them have morning practices. (See No 1 above). The best way to find out about an area is to make friends with local swimmers. I find that they still tend to pick on me during practice but that may have something to do with my personality rather than the swim team.

Rule No 3: If you cannot get to a pool then do something; run, walk, tai chi, or calisthenics. Some kind of workout is better than feeling sorry for yourself in a motel room. Of course you may still feel sorry for yourself in a motel room even if you do swim. I can't help you with that problem.

Rule No 4: Open water swimming can be fun. Sometimes there are no pools but there is open water. When traveling in the summer it is pretty easy to find a local park and lake. Of course checking with the locals about the water conditions is a sensible precaution. A high E-coli count should be avoided.

Rule No. 5: As you get older you must maintain consistency. I am convinced from my personal experience, and the many coaching articles I have read, that swimming is literally a magic bullet for good health. But as you get older you cannot start and stop like you did when you were in your 20's.

Rule No. 6: Stroke is as important as miles. As you get older it is much easier to get injured. Stroke technique has changed drastically in just the past 5 years. I have kept my Coaches certification through the years principally to stay up with the coaching literature. It is fascinating to read how technique has changed. Instead of big training miles the newer coaching literature has gone to Specificity of Training. That really helps us older athletes because 10, 000 yard days can be a bit daunting when you have other demands on your time.

Rule No 7: Sometimes you will not swim fast at practice. Sorry folks but that is just the way it is. Your body cannot take the workload it could take when you were 30. Some days you are going to come into practice and go off the back during warm-up and basically stay back there the whole practice. That is an excellent time to work on stroke technique and ignore the comments that would have caused you to burst into tears 30 years ago.

These seven rules are a pretty good starting point if you want to maintain consistency in training. You will probably add some of your own as you go along. Remember: it is better to be in there every day than to lay in bed making excuses. Although admittedly listening to the sleet hit the window in the winter up in the mountains does make going out the door a mental challenge on some mornings.