

PRACTICE

Building Character Through Soccer



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Patience:

State of endurance and perseverance under difficult circumstances

Synonyms: even tempered, long-suffering, diligence, composure

Patience Story

Being patient can sometimes have a negative connotation in sports, but it doesn't have to. It can also be positive in describing the development of long term goals and an unwillingness to relent, regardless of obstacles or difficulty. In other words, Patience does not mean to sit idly by and wait, but rather the opposite; work, work, work and eventually, success will follow.

It is this second definition of patience that describes the career path of Pablo Morales and a gold medal that would not have come, had it not been for his drive, determination, and yes, patience.

Pablo was introduced to swimming as a 7-year old by his mother in Santa Clara, California not with the goal of becoming a world champion but with a simpler goal in mind; not drowning. His mother had nearly drowned as a ten-year-old many years before off of the shores of Cuba.

Pablo, as a young child, swam and learned all of the strokes but quickly showed unusual promise in the butterfly. Through years of competition and training, he showed incredible and steady improvement and by the age of 19 he swam the fastest time ever in the 100-meter event. (In 1984, Pablo set the world record in the event at the Olympic trials with a time of 53.38 seconds). A month before the Summer Olympics, Pablo was the favorite for the gold medal. In the prelims, again Morales had the fastest time and advanced to the final, but he lost by a fraction of a second even swimming a personal best and what would have been a new world record in the final, just missing out on gold. Michael Gross of West Germany won gold and set the new world record adding insult to injury.

Pablo used the disappointment in 1984 to fuel his training over the next few years, breaking the 53 second mark and regaining the world record in 1986 at the World Championships (a record that would stand for a decade). In 1988 Pablo had his eyes on Seoul, Korea, but during Olympic qualifying Pablo would underachieve and come up short, shockingly finishing third and not making the team, his dream of gold shattered.

With many self-doubts about his future, Pablo returned to school to study and was completely out of competitive swimming for a few years. His competitive fire returned a year ahead of the Barcelona Olympic games in 1992, Pablo started getting the urge to try to comeback one last time for a gold medal run. Now 27 years old, Pablo made it through the trials and was even given the unique honor of being named team captain of the US Swim team for the Olympic Games in Barcelona.

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A month later at the games, Pablo swam the fastest time in the prelims and earned a spot in lane 4 for the final. Pablo went out very fast in the final leading at the halfway turn, but started to tire and fade in the final 10 meters, just as he had done 8 years before in LA. It looked like a repeat of the past. Three swimmers hit the wall nearly simultaneously and for a few moments, Pablo thought he had come up short once again. This time however, Pablo Morales would take gold 3/100ths ahead of the second-place finisher, winning gold and achieving his dream.

Pablo's story is a strong reminder that success is never immediate and that those who patiently continue to work can achieve more. The journey that any athlete takes is never a straight line and the path is filled with ups and downs, successes and disappointments. Those that can manage the turbulence patiently while never wavering from the task at hand will always outperform their peers. Do you have the patience to reach your potential?

Follow Up Questions:

How can patience help you succeed in sports and in everyday life?

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Why is patience important in handling and working through adversity?

Describe a time when you have had to demonstrate patience in dealing with a setback or challenge?

Explain how patience can help in achieving long term goals.
