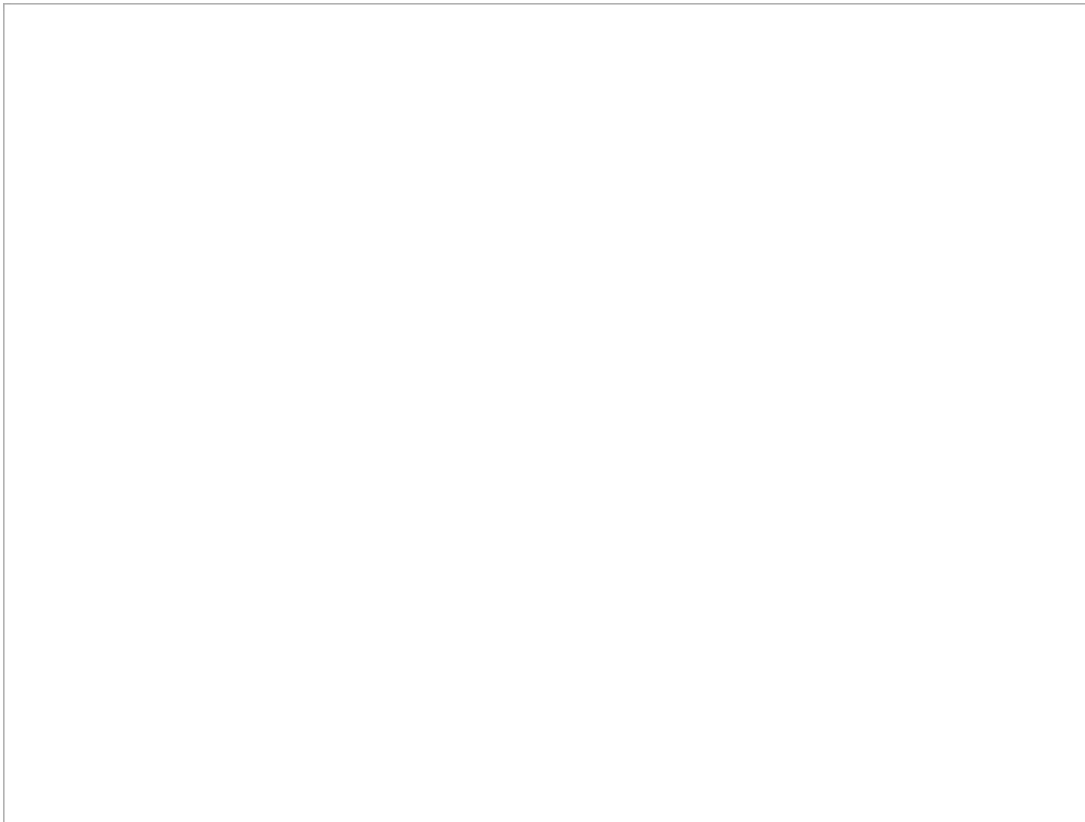


This is how I keep learning

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This is how I keep on learning and staying enthused. Each time I share some thoughts or illustrate a coaching situation I face, I get some extraordinary replies and support. This one from my old mate Greg Thompson. In his first few lines he illustrates the essence of his teaching and coaching:

"She needs to learn to love holding her shape".

"Great questions. My main concern is her age when it comes to spinning up cognitive demands of holding shape while fatigued. Somehow, she needs to learn to love holding her shape so that it is stable despite fatigue, unpredictable things like what other runners do, changes in weather, how she feels that day etc. I am drawn to the idea of finding as many ways as you both can to try and get her out of her shape so that she begins to trust and love the way it feels when she dials back in. In my mind, she is then getting control of how to apply strong shape as a weapon to battle fatigue, distraction, etc. Strong shape is her superpower. She just needs to believe it. That will come when she feels it work. I'm guessing after a time she will need to maintain her shape with different speed outputs. Ultimately, this is neuropatterning and just as a thrower can warm up with the same pattern applying varying amounts of power, she can learn to put her foot on the gas smoothly without unraveling. Great journey you are undertaking."

My reply

"Spot on as usual Greg. I use variability via task changes to try to get her to seek out where the shape is in all the confusion. I have changed the reps from grass to synthetic track; changed the actions of other body parts; changed in the speed she runs at; running into a headwind and vice-versa; run in straight lines and running on a curve; finding shape from a start (acceleration shape) and finding the shape in a flying repetition; run a distance where she is in shape, then out of shape, then in shape, then out of shape, etc.

In a swimming session last night we did the same thing with Backstroke. "Hips up" is a vital component so she did 8 strokes hips up, 8 strokes in a sitting (low hips) position, 8 strokes hips up, etc. Didn't take her long to let me know which action was the best one. This also helped when we experimented with the head position – "Chin down" dropped the hips, "Chin up" lifted them.

This is another example of me not having to say much. The task changes give her the feedback (as long as she is trying to feel the difference each task makes. "Strong shape is her superpower" is the best thing I have heard in weeks! First thing we will do this afternoon is get her to read your email." A good task is always better than a good explanation.

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