

Motivational Food

I wasn't going to write about how I swam here. Mostly because there are more interesting things to write about than being in heat six of the hundred-freestyle-trials. I mean, we can't all swim as fast as my friend Phil did in the fifty breaststroke the other day. He jetted off the block so fast that he was a body-length-an-a-half in front of everyone else. When he got twenty-five meters down he stopped, *actually stopped* swimming, and looked around him to see if there was a jump. There wasn't, and he kept swimming. The officials didn't notice. He still ended up winning the heat, and beating his personal best. If he didn't stop, he probably would have shaved off three more seconds. And just because I made cuts in short-course-meters or yards, doesn't mean that I will swim the cut in long-course-meters, which I'm hardly use to.

My five-foot-four, one-hundred-thirteen-pound frame does not look like it can support a lot of food, but you'd be surprised at how much I eat. There's two breakfasts a day in the summer (one before and one after practice), lunch, the meal between lunch and dinner, dinner, and the meal between dinner and bedtime. That said, not a lot of the food is healthy. Actually, most of the food isn't healthy, a mix of french fries and cookies and popcorn and chocolate and god only knows what else. That's not the way my coaches recommend I eat, but I'm still alive on this diet so I pretty much plan to keep eating that way.

Since my coach knows this, his goal was to bribe me with food. Krispy Kremes to be exact. If you didn't know, Krispy Kremes are the best donuts ever created, and quite hard to find in my city. My swims have been pretty much in a slump. I have not done a best time since High School Champs last February. *Last February* for crying out loud, and my attitude towards my swims has dropped in the way that I wanted my times to. Every time I got in the pool it was a fight with myself to keep going in hopes that maybe I'll break my time. Maybe. Or something. I was swimming only on hope. I came to this meet fighting myself, but also with the goal that I would break thirty for my fifty free on the first day, and see how the rest of the week goes. No dice. No hope. And no Krispy Kreme.

Today, the third day of the meet, I figured I'd get up there and race, hopefully better than I have, and see what happens at the end, my only goal to match my long-course time of one minute five. After words of wisdom from my coach (when he rudely woke me up by placing a Krispy Kreme under my nose) I went up, not feeling feverous, not really feeling anything; just not knowing what to expect. Dived off the block at the start, probably not my best dive, but who cares?? I kept up with the rest of the heat like I usually do for the first half, then used my arms more and kicked harder on the second half, like my coach advised. Towards the end of the second fifty I got that burning feeling, when you just don't think you can go on any more, but I took a breath, put my head down and kept swimming, thinking of nothing but the movement and maybe of a donut. I slammed into the touch-pad, got out as quick as I could, rolled over on the bulkhead, and looked at the time. And looked up at the time again. 1:05, I couldn't believe it. All this time, all these months of training, and I finally match my time again. The feeling is one of contentment and a little amazement. That the hard work does pay off someday, although I don't have the patience to wait for it. That if I finally swam the time again, maybe by next year I'll be swimming one-oh-four, one-oh-three. And at the end of the race, I finally got that Krispy Kreme. And it tasted better than Krispy Kremes I've had in the past.

-Michelle Varga, Flushing Flyers