

April 6, 2005

Standing behind my block I was strangely calm. I shook hands with my nearest competitors, openly and sincerely wishing them luck. I was about to swim my 200 free.

Standing behind my block, another part of me was unusually nervous. I shook hands with my nearest competitors, secretly wishing them a bad swim. I was about to swim my 200 free.

After yesterday's disappointment in my 100 back, I knew my 200 free was the last realistic chance of making finals in an individual event. I realized this yesterday, and had time to contemplate this over the past 24 hours. I was going to be at piece with the outcome, whatever it may be.

If others beat me, I would be happy for their accomplishments; however, I wanted to be happy for my accomplishments. I wanted to beat everyone else.

I dove in the water, and did not hear any other splash. I knew I had the fastest start. I decided then that I wanted to win. 25... 50... 75... 100... I was ahead of the entire field. I knew I was in the fastest heat of the 200, and that I was ahead. After 100 yards, I began to feel the consequences of splitting 48.8. My arms and legs, which before had felt light, now turned to stone. I told myself that if I were able to hold on I would be able to make not just consolation finals, but the top eight. I held on to my lead for another 25 yards, but this lead soon fell victim to others stamina and my weakness from my cold.

In my last 75 yards, I knew I had to hold my stroke together, I knew I had to work harder to keep my dreams of reaching the top eight alive. I worked harder than I have ever worked before.

I finished, completely exhausted, and looked up. I had managed to place 4<sup>th</sup> in the final heat. I floated on my back with a splitting headache, feeling dizzy, queasy, and utterly spent, while hoping my time would be fast enough to place me in the top eight.

Looking back on my swim, I know that I would have been happy with consolation finals or the top eight. The effort and guts it took to lead for the first 125 in the fastest heat was more than I had hoped for, and more than enough to be proud of. I had come from disappointment the day before to do great things. I had shown my commitment to my sport, my team, and myself.

I, Sam Thompson from Spokane, Washington, will be swimming as the eighth seed in tonight's 200 free for Spokane Area Swimming.