


At the state championship, I was assigned to swim a team relay. That day, I was feeling under the weather. My body felt weak and I was nervous I would not swim well. I summoned my courage and told my swim coach I was not able to swim the relay. Coach Rick Peterson looked me in the eye, and sternly reminded me, “Unless you are dying, you have to swim the relay. Your relay team is counting on you.”

I swallowed hard when I heard his unexpected response. I weakly nodded my head. He patted me on the shoulder in approval. Little I knew, my swim friends witnessed everything. I felt so embarrassed.

Later, I swam the relay and did not perform well. Surprisingly, my relay team was supportive and did not seem to mind my less than stellar performance that day.

I thought I would never forget that day for the rest of my life. I hated Coach Rick so much. I expected sympathy from him. Instead, I received a lecture and public shaming in front of everyone.

A few months later, Coach Rick started missing practices. My parents finally told me that he had leukemia. The day he showed up to practice, he lost his hair from chemotherapy. Despite being weakened, he tirelessly continued coaching us. He never stopped



cheering for us at swim meets. He consistently showed an undeniable sense of responsibility and accountability even when he was ill.

In the end, to my great sadness, Coach Rick lost his battle to cancer. I felt guilty and petty for hating him from that small incident at the State Championship. At the same time, I felt grateful I had the opportunity to write him a card to thank him for what he had done for me. It is indisputable that he touched so many lives and brought the best out of everyone in the North Shore swimming community. I was one of them. His coaching legacy would always stay within me. Any time I commit to something, I always try my best to follow through to completion.