

# Pedal Closer Towards Your Goals: *Tips and tools for effective goal setting*

Written For Team Swift  
By, Carrie Cheadle

Goal setting is an essential tool for any athlete. Goals help you direct your energy and focus, increase your motivation, boost your confidence, and can help improve performance. The difference between someone who *WANTS* to get better and someone who *DOES* is that they know what they want and they have a **plan** for how to get there.



One of the keys to effective goal setting is to make sure that you are setting the right types of goals. How many of us set goals and never follow through with them? The journey of goal setting is like going on a road trip. Your goal is at the end of the road and you have to figure out the best way to get there. To help us navigate this road trip we have three Team Swift riders who will share their thoughts on goal setting as well!

## OUTCOME GOALS

**The Destination:** If you don't know where you're going, then you certainly won't know how to get there! The first thing you need to do when you're headed out on a road trip is to figure out where you want to go. *What is your outcome goal?* An *outcome goal* focuses on the result of an event. Think of your outcome goal as your long-term goal, providing you with the vision of where you want to go and what you want to achieve. Your outcome goal might be to get onto your 1<sup>st</sup> podium this season or to enter your very first race and stay with the pack.

### Tips for setting your outcome goal...

#### 1. *Challenging, but realistic*

What would you be really excited to accomplish; something that feels like it's just on the outside edge of what you think is possible? When setting your outcome goal it is important that your goal is challenging, but realistic.

Before joining Team Swift this season, John was a high level soccer player competing on the state team. John says, "Don't make [your goals] too easy to accomplish because then you will not go as far, and accomplishing it will not be as rewarding. Even if you do not accomplish them, but still *stay focused* and *work hard* towards them, you will still have progressed as a rider."

## 2. Write it down

Write down your goal and post it up in a place where you can see it. Stick it on your bedroom door, bathroom mirror, inside your locker, or next to your cycling gear; make sure it's in a place you will see and read often. Having your goals posted helps to serve as a visual reminder and motivator of what you want to accomplish.

Tyler has been racing with Team Swift for four years and is the team captain for the 2008 season. Here is Tyler's tip for writing down goals, "I post these goals on my roof above my bed so when I go to sleep I can see them and remember what I am working towards. The season is long and sometimes you can lost sight of what you want to achieve and if you have them written down you can refer to that and help keep you motivated."



### PROCESS GOALS

**The Map:** It's time to hit the road! Now that you know where you want to go, you have to figure out the best way to get there. *Process goals* help you get specific. Effective *process goals* should answer the question "What do I need to do in order to achieve my outcome goal?" Think of your process goals as your short-term goals that provide you with the steps you need to take in order to achieve

your outcome goal. Be specific. Setting goals that are too general is a common pitfall of goal setting. The more specific you are with your process goals, the more likely you are to follow through with the steps you need to take to achieve your goal. Use this format to help you get specific with your process goal:

WHAT is your process goal?	
WHY is it important?	
HOW will you work on it?	
WHEN will you do it?	

### Tips for setting your process goals...

#### 1. Chart your progress

Every once in a while you need to pull out the map and see how far you've gone. Seeing progress towards your goals can both build your confidence and help motivate you to keep moving. John says, "Set short term and long term goals. This way you can watch yourself progress, while maintaining what you want to accomplish in the long run."

## 2. *Adjust your goals as needed*

When you're on a road trip, sometimes you might have to change your agenda. You could encounter road blocks, get bad directions, run out of gas, decide to take a cool side trip - it's all part of the journey. It's important to be able to adjust your goal if needed.

Ashlyn has been racing with Team Swift for the past 2 years. She has two national championship titles and has been on the podium six times at national races. Ashlyn says, "It is important to remember that if you want to make cycling your profession you have your entire career ahead of you. Even your main race for that year is just a small piece of the puzzle."

## EVALUATING YOUR GOALS

**The Journey:** Your ability to progress with your goals is directly related to the feedback you receive. Feedback lets you know what is working and what isn't so you can make adjustments and continue to build on your performance. A good goal setting plan needs to have a check-in time built into it. After you write out your goals, pick three future dates to check-in on your progress.

### Tips for evaluating your goals...

#### 1. *Reflect*

After your road trip you should figure out how it went and where you want to go next. Take time to reflect on your goals. Ask yourself:

- How much progress did I make towards my goal?
- What went well?
- What was challenging?
- How did I overcome those challenges?
- Do I need to adjust my goal?
- What did I learn about this process and about myself?
- What do I want to carry forward into the next goal I set?

#### 2. *Accomplishments*

After a road trip - you can bring out all of the pictures that you took along the way and remember all of the amazing things you did. The same is true for your cycling season. Make sure you take the time to think about all of the things that you have worked on over your season. Recognize your hard work and your accomplishments.

*"I try not to get myself down with a poor race result. I always try to take something positive from every race and learn something to take to the next one." Ashlyn*

As a cyclist, you gauge your success through the goals that you choose to set; therefore, it's important that you choose to set the right goals! The question you want to answer through your goals is "Is my performance improving?"

*"Make sure that every time you get off the bike that you have learned something and are one step closer to reaching your goals." John*

Like any skill, learning how to set effective goals takes some work in the beginning, but once you develop the skill and see the progress you've made - it'll be worth the effort!

I think Tyler says it best, "The main goal that has been accomplished throughout my time on Team Swift is just to have a good time, race hard and always reach for the top. Bike racing is already so tough that you need to have a good time, because that is really what it is all about."

Well said.

Carrie Cheadle, M.A. is a certified sport psychology consultant through the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP). She specializes in working with cyclists, track racing, mountain biking, and endurance athletes. For more information about the services she provides and to sign up for her sport psychology newsletter *Game On!* go to [www.carriecheadle.com](http://www.carriecheadle.com)