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Here at St Hilda's, we tend to be a competitive bunch. We work hard, we play hard, and we like to do well. Now, there's no harm in that. Competitive people often exhibit strong characteristics of grit, determination, and self-motivation, which are key for success in almost any pursuit. However, although it's often the desired outcome, being the best isn't everything.

Although winning is nice, I'm here to remind you that it's not about being the best. It's about being YOUR best.

Though it can be hard to remember when you've had a disappointing result, whether you've missed out on making it to a podium finish by one place, you've got an achieved on an internal that your friend got excellence on, or when you didn't make it into a team you desperately wanted to be a part of, what really matters isn't the outcome. The important thing is that you did your best.

So I'm going to share with you a personal story, of a moment when this idea was reinforced for me.

Earlier this year, I competed in the Otago Secondary Schools Triathlon in Wanaka. However, I struggled to decide whether to also compete in the nationals event, which was held 3 days later. I've done a couple of triathlons over the last few years, (but only as a hobby, as I lack the time to train properly), so I felt like I was in no position to do well at the national champs event, against much more committed athletes. This led to many hours agonising over my decision (although my tendency to overthink things is a whole other story), but I ended up entering. This was way, way out of my comfort zone, but I took the plunge. I went out there ready to do my best, but also dreading having to potentially face the worst-case scenario, where I arrive dead last, crawling over the finish line.

I got to race day, and quite honestly, it was a mess. The lake was freezing and choppy, and my competitive swimming days are well behind me, so I came out already tired and at the back of the field, and it only went downhill from there. I almost gave up as I struggled through the bike, and felt even worse as the winners in my category came in at the same time as I went out for the run. I was exhausted, struggling, and ready to stop trying, but I battled through those kilometres. I did arrive last, but I was still

running, not crawling, over that finish line. It was my worst-case scenario, but honestly, it actually wasn't that bad.

I was last and by a couple of minutes, not seconds. I'm not going to lie, I felt pretty terrible for a while, though I was mostly relieved it was done. Then, I thought about it differently. Firstly, it was a national event, so I was up against some pretty tough competition, against people who devoted their entire lives to the sport (and, I can still claim I came 14th in New Zealand). Though that did make me feel better, it was my next thought that was really important. What matters isn't that I came last, or 14th, however, you want to look at it. The placing still wouldn't have mattered had I come first, or second, or somewhere in the middle. The outcome is never really the vital part. What really counts, is that just like every other competitor that day, I went out there and I did my best. I was always destined to be at the back of the pack, considering my relative lack of skill and fitness compared to the rest of the athletes. But that's okay, because I gave it a go, and I tried my hardest.

Sometimes, you have a bad day. You make mistakes. Other people's best, based on their circumstances, their achievements, and how they're doing that day, might be better than your best. What matters is that it's **your best**. It doesn't matter what situation you're in, whether it's an assignment, a competition, a trial or a race. What matters is that you gave it 100%.

So going forward, give it your all and stop comparing your efforts to everyone else's. When you compete, compete against yourself, not someone else. Remember that every time you make an improvement, do a little better than you expected to, or than last time, you are the winner. So, award yourself that gold medal, because every single time you give 100%, you deserve it.