

## **Riding the Wave: A Swimmer's Fight to Live above Water**

by Paul Gackle

AS HE DID every day after weight training, Kicker Vencill parked his blue Toyota 4-Runner in front of his apartment. He noticed a FedEx package against the door. Probably swimming gear. He and his roommate, both swimmers, got packages like this often, from the likes of Nike or Speedo seeking swimmers to sponsor.

The label said: United States Anti-Doping Agency.

Oh, shit, he thought, I'm in trouble. This was not a swimsuit.

He rushed inside and tore the package open. A letter said: "A-sample . . . urine-doping test . . . positive for 19-norandrosterone." The chemical was a form of steroid, banned in the world of competitive swimming.

A wave of nausea crashed in Kicker's stomach.

What am I going to do? He asked himself. He paced around his living room. Finally he screamed: "What the fuck? Fuck this! What am I going to fucking do?"

He telephoned his friend and training partner, Jason Lezak. Neither would forget the conversation and its urgency.

"Jason, you won't believe this. I failed my drug test."

"What? Have you talked to Dave?" Lezak meant Dave Salo, coach of the Irvine Novaquatics swim team, who was training Kicker for the 2004 Olympics.

"No."

"Man, that can't be right. Don't worry, this has got to be a mistake."

Kicker dialed Salo.

"Dave, you won't believe this. I tested positive on a drug test."

"What?" Their words, too, were instantly indelible. "This has to be a mistake, Kicker. Relax. Don't worry about it."

"There is a lot of material here: data, documentation, things that the machine read. I need your insight on this."

“Don’t worry, we’ll sit down and take a look at this. Just make sure that you don’t throw whatever you’ve been taking as a supplement down the toilet. Have you talked to anyone else?”

“Yeah. Jason.”

“Let Jason know that we want to keep this whole thing quiet. Not because we’re hiding something, but because we need to find out the facts so we can see what is going on.”

Hide it they could not. Life for Kicker Vencill, 24, silver medalist in the 4x100-meter freestyle relay at the World University Games and a contender for a spot on the U.S. Olympic Team, would never be the same.

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Kicker, named after what he did to his mother before he was born, made his first splash in competitive swimming at age 4. As a natural athlete, he eclipsed most of his peers in Richmond, Kentucky. By his senior year at Motel High School, he reached an elite level of competitive swimming by qualifying for Junior Nationals in the 200-meter freestyle.

In 1996 Kicker went to Western Kentucky University under a full athletic scholarship. But then he stagnated. During his first three years of college, when most Olympic swimmers hit their prime, Kicker waddled in mediocrity.

Assistant swim coach Steve Crocker decided to experiment. Maybe Kicker would do better in a shorter race: the 100-meter freestyle. During the summer before his senior year, Crocker sent him to Little Rock, Arkansas, for training under Paul Blair, a well-respected sprint coach.

Kicker trained alongside J. J. Marcus, who had made the U.S. national team for the 2000 Pan-Pacific Games. They spent most of their waking moments together and quickly became friends.

One day after practice, Kicker and J. J. discussed supplements. Kicker said he used supplements designed to help muscle recovery: flax seed oil, glutamine and creatine. J.J. told him about Super Complete, an inexpensive multivitamin made by Ultimate Nutrition, Inc.

“Those multivitamins that you’re taking are like \$25 for 180 capsules,” Kicker would remember J.J. saying. “You can get 270 capsules of Super Complete for \$20, and they’re just as good.”

Kicker was sold. He began taking three tablets of Super Complete three times a day.

The sprint experiment paid off. Back in Kentucky for his senior year, Kicker broke two school records and was named the 2002 Western Kentucky University Male Athlete of the Year.

Soon after graduation, he qualified for the U.S. national swim team and won a silver medal in the 4 x 100-meter freestyle relay at the 2001 World University Games in Beijing, China. At 23, when most college swimmers face retirement, Kicker blossomed. His dream of competing in the Olympics was suddenly realistic.

In early 2000, Kicker left for California and the world-class Novaquatic club team, Nova for short, in Orange County, which featured two of the world's best 100-meter freestylers: Jason Lezac and Scott Tucker. Kicker's childhood fantasy was beginning to materialize. His parents offered \$400 a month toward rent so he could focus as much as possible on making the 2004 U.S. Olympic Team.

As he trained with Nova, and Dave Salo became more than Kicker's coach: He was Kicker Vencill's friend, mentor, source of guidance and counselor in adversity.

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On the day Kicker's life changed, he tried to resume his daily routine. He went to practice at four o'clock, but swam without distinction. After practice, Salo reassured Kicker that he was going to help him and was on his side. But Kicker needed assurance that Salo could not provide. So he called his mother, Sylvia Vencill, a schoolteacher. "Mom, I have something to tell you. I know that there isn't any question of whether or not you'll believe me, but this is hard. You might want to sit down. I tested positive on a drug test."

"What's that mean? Oh, God, what's that mean?"

"I took a drug test on the 21st, and they said they found this stuff in there that is considered a steroid. I don't know where it came from, and I don't really know what to do. I'm working with Dave, and we're trying to figure out what's going on."

"Are you positive you didn't do anything? You can tell me. I just want you to be honest."

"Mom, I swear to you, swear to God on everything, on the family, everything that's holy, I would never do anything like that. I would never take drugs. It would never be worth it for my health or for me as a person. I've never tried to take any shortcuts."

"That's all you have to say."

In April, Kicker's parents drove from Kentucky to Indianapolis, Indiana to watch him compete in the 2003 Conoco-Philips Spring Nationals.

He was eligible to swim competitively until his hearing in front of the American Arbitration Association (AAA), a panel independent of the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), scheduled for June 21 and 22.

At night, Kicker tossed and turned for hours. Nonetheless, he swam his best time, leading off the 4 x 100 freestyle relay. After the race, he hugged his parents. Tears poured out of Sylvia's eyes. She whispered to him: "I'm just scared that this is the last time I'm going to see you swim."

Kicker heard his father's reassuring words: "Whatever we have to do, let's do it."

With uncertainty clouding his future, Kicker decided to be self-sufficient. He needed a job. So he added 40 hours a week at Home Depot to his rigorous training schedule.

Before long, he began to deteriorate both physically and mentally. He started to question himself. Everybody's calling me a cheater, he would think. Maybe I am a cheater.

His demons began to accompany him to swim meets.

Kicker would recall standing on the block at the Canada Cup in Calgary, Alberta, unable to focus on swimming.

One question kept repeating itself in his mind: Is this the last time I'm going to race?"

In May, he attended a swimmer's orientation camp in Colorado Springs, Colorado, for the Pan American Games swim team. On a flight from Denver, Kicker sat next to Beth Botsford, a two-time gold medalist at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. He had met Beth previously at a swim meet in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, but now they hit it off. Over the next three days, they spent time together whenever they could.

Kicker told her that he'd failed a drug test.

Okay, well, if you cheated, you should be punished, Beth would remember thinking. But Kicker was fun, charming and charismatic. As camp wound down, she suggested that Kicker drive out to Tucson, Arizona to visit sometime for a weekend.

A month later, he accepted her invitation. They started dating. Beth became a constant amid the turbulence in Kicker's life. She decided he wasn't the kind of man who would cheat to get ahead. She believed him when he said: "I'm 24. If I was going to cheat, I sure as shit wouldn't have waited until now."

Kicker raced on, posting decent times, through the Speedo Grand Challenge held at Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, California, on May 23-25. After the meet, Kicker received a letter from FINA, the international federation for the sport of swimming, informing him that he was no longer eligible to swim competitively.

Later that day, Kicker gave up.

Shortly after 4 o'clock, swimming warm-up laps at the Soka University pool, Kicker thought to himself, I fucking hate this. I really don't want to do this anymore. I just want to be alone. The desire, the camaraderie and the fun had vanished. Kicker lifted himself out of the pool. Water dripping from his 6-foot-3-inch, 195-pound frame, he approached Salo.

"What's going on, Kicker?" Salo asked.

"You don't have to ask me any questions, Dave. I just don't want to be here right now. It's not doing me any good this afternoon."

On Friday afternoon, June 20, Kicker flew into Indianapolis to attend his hearing before an AAA panel to determine his future. Joining him were Salo, his parents and two lawyers: Mike Eubanks, a Vencill family friend, and Howard Jacobs, who had been hired just a week earlier to handle the case.

Jacobs had represented nearly 30 athletes in doping cases, more than eight of them involving the cross-contamination of supplements. Because Jacobs had represented high profile athletes, including sprinter Tim Montgomery and cyclist Tyler Hamilton, Kicker expected him to be arrogant, even macho. Instead, he was a small man with piercing but kind green eyes.

June 21 was emotionally the longest day in the 24-year life of Kicker Vencill. The hearing started at 8 a.m. in a conference room at the Westin Hotel and proceeded for an exhausting 19 hours.

Jacobs intended to prove that Kicker's drug test had been positive because a supplement he took was contaminated. The level of NA-19 detected in Kicker's urine sample, 4 ng/ml, was an indication. It was the lowest positive level Jacobs had ever heard of. According to Jacobs, injecting norandrolone would have produced more than 100,000 ng/ml of 19-NA in a urine sample one day later.

The FINA rules clearly stated however, that: "Doping is a strict liability offense; that is, a doping offense has been committed where a prohibited substance, in this case the anabolic 19-norandrosterone, in excess of 2 ng/ml was present in the in the athlete's urine sample, whether or not the athlete knowingly used the prohibited substance. In other words, proof of the presence of a prohibited substance in the athlete's urine sample is all that is required for an offense to be established."

Jacobs and Travis Tygart, the USADA director of legal affairs, spent most of the day thumb wrestling over various legal technicalities: Did Dr. Don Catlin, director of the UCLA Olympic Analytical Laboratory, follow the proper test procedures when analyzing the B sample of Kicker's urine? Could the norandrolone level in Kicker's urine specimen

have been produced endogenously, since the concentration level of 19-NA in the sample fell into a so-called “gray zone” of between 2 and 5 ng/ml?

Jacobs argued the points to no avail.

At 11 p.m., after nearly 12 hours of expert testimony, Kicker was finally called to the stand. According to the official AAA arbitration ruling, he offered a detailed description of his achievements, his life-long aspirations to represent the United States in the 2004 Olympic Games and the sacrifices he had made to realize his dream. Then Jacobs questioned him about supplements.

“How common are supplements in the sport of swimming?”

“I would say that a majority of post-graduates do some form of supplements.”

FINA rule DC 9.10 says: “Every competitor has the personal responsibility to assure that no prohibited substance shall enter his or her body.” Tygart presented Kicker with e-mails and press releases issued by USADA containing warnings about supplement use. He would recall asking Kicker whether he’d received the warnings.

“No,” Kicker replied.

He couldn’t distinguish one document from another. For 12 hours, it seemed he’d listened to a stranger call him a liar and a cheat. He was angry. Why is he on me like this? he fumed to himself. I haven’t cheated. I never injected steroids.

The hearing adjourned at 2 a.m.

When it resumed later that morning, Jacobs and Tygart presented their closing arguments.

As he listened, Kicker thought to himself: I’m done.

That afternoon, he flew home to California in first class. He slammed down half a dozen gin-and-tonics. He stumbled off the plane.

Beth and Andrew Priest, his roommate, met him at John Wayne Airport.

Kicker spent the next day, his 25th birthday, with his head under a guillotine, anticipating the AAA ruling. The call finally came while he was cruising up the 5 Freeway from San Diego, where he had taken Beth to the airport so she could return to Tucson.

The AAA panel had suspended him for four years.

The official Arbitral Decision and Award said: “The Respondent’s testimony that he had never been told or received any communication that supplements might be contaminated is simply not credible... There is no evidence, nor do we have any reason to believe, that

the Respondent intentionally took supplements that were contaminated. We do believe, however, from the evidence presented, that in using supplements and declining to test them, the Respondent was negligent.”

Kicker had been expecting to cry. Instead he felt numb.

Later that evening, his mother called. She had heard the heartbreaking news from Eubanks, the family’s attorney friend. She wept.

Kicker would never forget her words: “I feel as a parent that your father and I have lied to you.”

“Mom, what are you talking about?”

“We’ve always told you growing up that if, morally, you made the right decisions, if you did the right things, said the right things, if you were a good person, that good things would happen to you. Well, you did all those things, and look what happened. I just feel like we’ve lied to you.”

Jacobs, his attorney, suggested appealing, but Kicker wasn’t keen on investing any more of his parents’ money – or his own emotions – on an appeal. In all probability, he thought, it would yield a similar result.

Jacobs told him about a laboratory, Aegis Analytical, in Nashville, Tennessee, that would test supplements for \$250 a bottle. Did he want to check it out?

Kicker didn’t care. But he wouldn’t stop his parents if they were willing to put up the required \$1,500.

On August 4, Jacobs left Kicker a message. It was urgent.

Kicker dialed his number.

“We got the test results back from Aegis,” Jacobs said. “EAS ZMA: negative. Ultimate Nutrition Glutamine: negative. Ultimate Nutrition Maximum MSM: negative. Ultimate Nutrition Super Complete multivitamin: positive for norandrostenedione, androstenedione and androstenediol.”

“Oh, shit. No way!”

Positive. Proof that the Super Complete had been contaminated. And he hadn’t known it.

Kicker’s happiness was short-lived, however. He had missed the Pan American games, which were supposed to have been the last ridge on the way to the summit that is the Olympics.

Beth remembers being frustrated with Kicker's melancholy.

"Kicker, you have to move on with this thing."

"Well, it's only been two months."

"You know what, when is it ever going to be enough time? You're going to be saying this forever. You need to get over it. There are a couple of things that you need to realize, and you need to realize it now. You didn't get to go to the Pan Am Games. You aren't going to swim the Olympic trials next summer, and you're not going to the Olympics."

Kicker's appeal loomed over him every day in the pool. He continued to train with Nova, but his head was not in it.

Every couple of weeks, he would break from his routine and drive to Tucson to be with Beth. One day in early November, Salo confronted him:

"What's going on? You're missing practice a lot. I want you to understand this, Kicker. You have your appeal case in November, and we have to think long term. What if things go your way in November? Let's hope that they do. What if you're on your way, and you're not training, doing the things you need to do? What if you do get to swim Olympic trials? I want you to be ready."

Kicker started to cry. "Look, Dave, I'm sorry. Maybe I am running away from my problems. Maybe the reason I go to see Beth in Tucson is because I want to get away from swimming."

"I like having you as a part of this group," Dave replied. "We still want to have you around."

On Friday, Nov. 17, the day before his appeal hearing at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Denver, Colorado, Kicker went to Tucson. He took Beth up to Mt. Lemmon, where they'd had their first date. Overlooking the city of Tucson, he asked her to marry him.

With tears in her eyes, she said yes.

Kicker flew to Denver the next morning.

With the proof of contamination, Jacobs hoped, Kicker's suspension would be reduced to the minimum of one year, making him eligible for Olympic trials the following June. USADA didn't challenge Jacob's presentation of the Aegis lab's detection of contamination. However, Tygart, the UDADA counsel, was adamant: Kicker should be denied any reduction to his suspension.



Tygart cited DC9.10 of FINA rules: “The minimum may be lessened if the competitor can clearly establish how the prohibited substance got into the competitor’s body or fluids and that the prohibited substance did not get there as a direct or indirect result of any negligence of the competitor. Every competitor has the personal responsibility to assure that no prohibited substance shall enter his or her body.”

Tygart’s point: Kicker was guilty of negligence because he did not have the Super Complete tested before he took it. Tygart was prepared to go through all 32 e-mails and press releases issued by USADA warning athletes of the contamination risk from consuming unregulated substances.

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This time Kicker said, yes, he had received the information.

When asked why he had chosen to consume Super Complete, he replied: My roommate told me that if I took it, I would swim faster.

Tygart displayed the Ultimate Nutrition website on an overhead projector. Tygart displayed the Ultimate Nutrition website on an overhead projector. Ultimate Nutrition was promoting pro-hormones. On the main page was a picture of a body-builder. Tygart told Kicker that he should have foreseen the possibility of cross-contamination of hormones in Ultimate Nutrition’s products.

Kicker knew his swimming career was over.

He sat outside, waiting for Jacobs, when Tygart, a fierce enemy in the courtroom, approached. They both would recall what he said:

“Kicker, I just want you to know how hard it was for us to prosecute you. I hope you can help others learn from this experience.”

A few days later, Jacobs confirmed what Kicker had been anticipating. The CAS panel had ruled to uphold the suspension.

Its official ruling said:

“The respondent had the opportunity to test the supplements he used. He chose not to do so. While this does not manifest in itself an intention to use a prohibited substance, the failure to test his supplements, particularly when coupled with the numerous warnings sent to him or as to which he was put on notice, amount to a lack of compliance on his part that obviate a reduction of the suspension under the applicable rules.”

Nonetheless, Kicker's suspension was reduced from four years to two.

That was because FINA had decided, apart from his case, to issue suspensions in accordance with the provisions of the World Anti-Doping Agency. The maximum WADA suspension for doping was two years.

But a two-year suspension meant he would still miss the 2004 Olympic trials.

Later that evening, Kicker would recall, he sat at his dining room table eating dinner with his roommates. He stared outside into the darkness.

All at once, a shadowy figure appeared.

"Who's that? Oh, shit, it's Beth." He met his fiancée at the door and wrapped his arms around her.

The next afternoon, he took her to Nova. Saying goodbye to his teammates was an unforgettable experience.

"I pretty much found out yesterday that my swimming career is over," he told them. "The arbitrators didn't feel that there was enough evidence to give me the kind of leniency I was hoping for."

Tears welled in his eyes.

Salo put an arm around him.

"They can take swimming away from me," Kicker went on, "but they can never take away the relationships that I have made here as a part of this group. I wish you guys the best. Go make that Olympic team!"

Beth wept.

Several teammates shook his hand and said goodbye. Jason Lezak, his training partner, hugged him.

Salo was the last to approach. "So I hear you're thinking about moving to Tucson?"

"You know, Dave, I'm a done man. I can't swim anymore."

"I want you here. You're a part of this group whether you're going to be in the Olympic trials or not. There are very few people that put a smile on my face when they come through that door because I know they're going to give 100%. You're one. I always know that you'll work as hard as you possibly can."

"Dave, I'm tired. I don't think I can do this anymore."

“I just want you to know that you’re always welcome here. If you decide to come back, you can always train with us. The door will always be open.”

Two months later, Kicker moved to Tucson. He had missed the Olympic trials, but now he had a new goal – proving his innocence.

Jacobs filed a legal complaint against Ultimate Nutrition in January 2005.

While Kicker waited for his day in court, 16 months of disappointment peaked in Long Beach during the week of July 7-14.

The Olympic trials.

Kicker attended to cheer Beth on. She was attempting to qualify one more time.

But he didn’t feel welcome. USA Swimming refused to give him a deck pass because he was “banned from swimming.”

Throughout the week, Kicker sat in the bleachers with Beth’s parents. He looked across the pool at his former teammates.

On Sunday, July 11, he watched the men’s 100-meter freestyle final. It was the moment he had trained so hard for.

He was overcome with anxiety. He felt dazed.

The following year was a struggle. The passion that had defined him was gone. At one point, Beth would recall, he told her: It doesn’t really matter what you do in life, because you’re going to get screwed in the long run. I don’t know why you want to marry me. I’m nothing but a loser who works at Home Depot.

She gave him the speech she had gotten from her parents when she was a 15-year-old Olympic gold medalist: Swimming is not the only thing that you’re good at. You have character, integrity, charisma and charm. None of that is affected by whether or not you make an Olympic team.

On April 28, 2005, Kicker Vencill walked into Orange County Superior Court in Santa Ana.

He was determined.

He had been called a liar, a cheater and a doper.

A Google search for his name produced an endless list of articles linking his suspension to steroids.

He wasn't going to allow Ultimate Nutrition to tarnish his integrity and his family name. He knew only one way to reclaim his reputation: by legal verdict.

Kicker's opponent turned out to be much like him. Brian Rubino, the vice president of Ultimate Nutrition, was a fresh-faced 25-year-old. He had just graduated from college. Rubino had recently inherited control of the company from his father. Like Kicker Vencill, he was also determined. He didn't want the reputation of the company that his father had founded to be tainted with a guilty verdict.

Ultimate Nutrition was liable, said Kicker's attorney, Howard Jacobs, because its website guaranteed the purity of its products – but the company had neglected to follow the proper guidelines to ensure that the guarantee was valid. He cited a website statement saying: "Ultimate Nutrition uses only the purest ingredients to produce sports nutritional supplements with quality that never waivers. [sic] From container to container, Ultimate Nutrition's product line boasts a consistency other companies can only dream about. You can be sure that what you see on the label is what you will get. That's the Ultimate Nutrition promise."

On Kicker's behalf, Dr. Tim Robert of the Aegis laboratory testified that what was on a label of Super Complete wasn't necessarily all that was in it. He described the test revealing norandrostenedione, androstenedione and androstenediol.

Todd E. Croutch, the attorney for Ultimate Nutrition, called to the stand Dr. Roger Clemons from the University of Southern California to discredit Robert's accusation. According to Jacobs, Clemons testified that at the level of norandrostenedione Robert claimed to have detected, Kicker would have had to consume more than 900 capsules of Super Complete in a day to yield 4 ng/ml of NA-19 in a urine sample.

Jacobs, in turn, called on Dr. Catlin, whose UCLA Olympic Analytical Laboratory had tested Kicker's urine. According to Jacobs, Catlin repeated what he had told the CAS hearing: "The level of contamination found in the Super Complete capsules was consistent with the 4 nanogram concentration level of Kicker's positive urine sample."

Then Jacobs hammered the point home. He called Tygart to the stand to testify that CAS recognized Kicker Vencill's positive drug test to be the result of Super Complete's contamination.

The attorneys turned to damages. Croutch said Kicker wasn't entitled to any because he didn't swim fast enough to make the Olympic team.

For his part, Jacobs would remember thinking that a verdict could yield anywhere from \$25,000 to \$2 million. Quantifying Kicker's emotional damage was ambiguous. Jacobs

called Beth to the stand to describe her Olympic experience, because it might shed some light on what Kicker had lost.

To show what an overwhelming experience it had been, she recalled standing on the pool deck in front of 17,000 people wearing a pair of headphones. But she said she couldn't hear the music playing through her Discman. All she could hear, she said, was the rhythmic chant of the crowd: "USA! USA! USA!"

Watching her testify was agonizing for Kicker. The most excruciating part was seeing the pain of someone he loved. Beth said the tragedy wasn't that Kicker had been robbed of his own Olympic experience, but that he would never know whether he would have qualified for the opportunity.

Tears filled her eyes.

Kicker's parents, Larry and Sylvia Vencill, were the last to testify. Like Beth, Kicker's mother cried.

For Kicker, though, the most heart-wrenching moment was yet to come.

His father took the stand.

"If you can think of one word to define your son," Jacobs asked him, "what would it be?"

Kicker's father began to weep.

"Brave," he said.

The trial concluded at noon on May 9. As the day passed, then another, Kicker grew more confident he would win. Shortly after lunch on May 11, the bailiff informed him that the jury had reached a verdict.

Foreman Betty Ray announced an award of \$578,635 to Kicker Vencill.

He smiled and shook Jacobs' hand.

Ultimate Nutrition contested the decision. On June 16, Jacobs and Croutch reached an undisclosed settlement to avoid a retrial.

Both Kicker and Jacobs were pleased with the settlement.

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Kicker Vencill sits alone. He is in the front row of bleachers, surrounded by swimmers in yellow and blue, at Belmont Plaza in Long Beach.

This meet, the 2005 UCI/Speedo Cup, is Kicker's first since rejoining Salo's Nova swim team last October. Salo wants to give Kicker a taste of competition to motivate him.

Kicker will swim the consolation race in the 100-yard men's freestyle.

He sits with his hands folded between his legs, his eyes staring at the white tiles on the floor. He clutches the bleacher bench with both hands and exhales. He straps on a pair of blue goggles, covers his head with a white swim cap featuring the Nike swoosh and walks over to the starting block.

"In lane five, Kicker Vencill," announces a voice on the public address system.

Kicker stands on the block, staring downward, his right leg forward.

"Take your mark!"

Kicker reaches forward with both arms, gripping the bottom of the block.

A beep signals the start. Kicker dives. Throwing his arms over his head in a rhythm that seems both frantic and controlled, he appears to be leading the eight-man pack.

Splashing through the final 10 yards, he is neck-and-neck with the swimmer in lane one. Kicker touches the wall with his last stroke. His white cap pops out of the water and he looks at the scoreboard expressionless.

Kicker felt short of first place by twenty-nine hundredths of a second.

He meets Salo, sporting a blue Soka University polo shirt, at the far end of the pool.

"That hundred was painful."

"Your rates are down."

Kicker smiles. "So you think I'm out of shape?"

"You're out of shape, your rates are down, you need to get off the block faster, and your turn isn't where it needs to be." But it will be.

Beth appears and gives her husband a hug as he changes out of his blue Speedo swimsuit in a corner. How did the race go?

He says he felt tight.

He kisses her, they laugh, and they walk out together.

*Author's note: Ultimate Nutrition, Inc. turned down repeated requests for information and representatives of the company refused to comment on the case.*

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