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News for Swim Parents

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Resting for The End of Season Championship Meet

By John Leonard

There are some things in swimming, that coaches tend to take for granted. For instance, understanding the nature of preparation for that all-important end of season meet. Coaches take for granted that parents understand the process. Truth is, they often don't without education. This is that education.

Swimmers train hard. They expect and desire good performances at end of season competitions. Parents similarly expect good performances from their children in these meets. Parents also play an important role in helping those good performances to happen. Here's how.

At most, coaches are with swimmers 6 hours a day. Most, more like 4 hours a day. Parents are supposed to know where their children are and what they are doing the other 18-20 hours a day. Those 18-20 hours are called "hidden training" by coaches, and what goes on during those hours has a profound impact on performance.

Let's step back...

First, some definitions. Age group athletes are 12 and unders. "Tweeners" are those athletes ages 13-15, and "senior swimmers" are 16 and older.

Second, what happens with age groupers at end of season competitions? The author believes that age group athletes don't "rest" for championship meets. They should train right through and if the level of training is correctly prescribed, they will improve from the work that they are doing. "Resting" twelve and unders is a dubious concept at best. Taper is predicated upon overload and we don't overload age group swimmers in the same sense that we overload senior swimmers. Work hard, work smart, Swim well and improve.

Tweeners are more like seniors than age groupers, and it is very individual, but most benefit from a day or two of rest (light training) just before a concluding meet. Seniors, depending on age, size, experience and most importantly, quality of training leading into the meet, may rest from a day or two, (for young immature swimmers...) to multiple weeks for mature men at the end of college years and older. Again, for emphasis, the amount and quality of "rest" is dependent on the amount and quality of training that has preceded it in the season and the career.

As hard as coaches work to plan training, they work just as hard or harder, to plan the rest heading into a championship meet. This is one of the many places where well-meaning parents

need to **“let the coaches Coach”** and determine the amount and quality of rest. It makes NO SENSE at all for the parents to have the coach plan all the training and then, accidentally or on purpose, decide to intervene with a few ideas of their own just before the championship meet. Talk about too many chefs in the kitchen!

The parents role in the days leading up to the final competition, is to remind the athletes of the coaches plan for the rest, and “enforce it” as much as is humanly possible with the athlete. The Coach of course, has to share the plan with the athlete and where appropriate, with the parents, in order for this to happen.

“Rest” is not bed rest. It is not lying on the couch watching TV, which is guaranteed to end up with a teenager who will say “I’m tired” after 5 hours in front of the tube. To have energy, the body needs to spend some energy. The key, is in knowing how much...and the answer, is “a little bit less expenditure” than your normal day, and a good night’s sleep of 8-10 hours for however many days the coach prescribes.

NO NO’s

1. In the days before the meet, don’t do anything you don’t normally do.
If you don’t normally play basketball, don’t start now. If you do play, play a little less. Don’t decide that NOW, you have some more energy, so a good twenty mile bike ride sounds like fun...since you never have time to do that during normal training schedule.....
If you don’t swim in the ocean, don’t start now. Open water swims are draining....salt, sun, waves, different stroke mechanics, etc. It can reeally mess you up for the pool race.
We love our beaches in south Florida but a few hours in the summer sun will sap energy out of you quicker than you can ever imagine. And by the way, after a good rain, that ocean water quality isn’t all that good once the goo from the streets washes into the sewers and out to the ocean....you say that nobody warned you the water was polluted after a rain? Gee, why not? Ever see the movie Jaws? Sometimes there are things in the water that aren’t good for people and even WORSE for the tourist industry. Go for an ocean swim, suck down a few of those germs and you’re sicker than a dog at your big meet. Don’t suddenly decide you want to learn how to do some gymnastic moves on the ground with your friends.....that sprained wrist will hurt a lot in the middle of a 400 IM.
DON’T DO ANYTHING YOU DON’T NORMALLY DO.
2. Don’t EAT anything you normally don’t eat. This is NOT the time for culinary exploration. Stick to the stuff that gotcha here.....and your system is used to handling.
3. Don’t think you can stay up later socializing....just cause AM workout is later or shorter...the idea is to INCREASE the amount of sleep and rest.

And parents, coaches need YOUR HELP in reminding young people (who think they are indestructible and not fatigue-able) that for a couple of days, they need to focus on their goals for their swims and give up a little bit of the things they’d “like to do”. Coaches aren’t around for those 20 hours a day that you have your children. Please help us.

PS. This is NOT to indicate that a swimmer needs to be carefully wrapped in cotton for a few days prior to the meet. IF they are USED TO doing chores, they keep doing chores. A bit of yard work, house cleaning, room repair (ok, room cleaning....in my house it usually looks like room

repair...) etc. is certainly a good way to while away some hours while waiting for the time to swim fast and be a hero.

Remember, nothing can be done in the final few days before a championship meet to have more WORK improve the chances of great performance, but a huge amount of damage can be done (and prevented by parents) by children who decide to do something new because they have a little more time and energy to do it. Save that extra oomph for the swims.

Clif notes Version:

Parents:

- 1) know the rest plan from your coach.
- 2) Don't decide you have some super dooper plan of your own to superimpose on the coaches plan. The hay is in the barn, just deliver it.
- 3) Enforce reasonable rest with no new activities.

Hope this helps you all to a more productive end of season experience.

All the Best, JL