

## **School Schedules and Elite Level Swimming**

### **Bob Gillett, Swimming Coach**

**There is probably nothing more important to your swimming success than the interaction of your school schedule and swimming schedule.** It is absolutely essential that you are able to get a school schedule that will allow you to participate fully in all of your scheduled workouts throughout the year. It has been done by thousands of swimmers over the years. It does not take away from your academic success; in fact, for almost all who take on the challenge, it increases their academic success. Some reasons that your academic success will increase are: a more even class load through your four years of high school, one least class during the regular school day during most students' first three years of high school (most seniors only take three or four classes anyway), such a good resulting lifestyle schedule that the stress levels are reduced tremendously, better organization of time appropriation, and knowing that you can do your best because everything fits together without slighting any of what you are trying to do.

We have 3 to 5 morning workouts each week; usually three mornings (T-W-T). We do the workouts from 5:30-7:30 AM. We need to do these three workouts for two hours. The reason is that we have identified a total workload that acts as a "threshold" for success at the Jr. and Sr. National level swimmers in the US. That threshold is about 54,000 meters per week. Some sprinter can do a little less—50k; while some distance swimmers need more—70K per week. Of course you always can name an exception that was great and did less, but it is such a low probability thing that it is not going to happen—never had one in my whole career! With our three mornings, five afternoons and Saturday we get our nine workouts per week. If we are swimming about 6,000 meters per workout, we get our 54K!

If you do not have a school administration that will give you release time during the first hour of your school day, most call it zero hour, then you can not stay for the full two hours. If you do not come to morning workouts, you miss 18,000 per week or 72,000 per month. At that point you are a PART TIME SENIOR ELITE SWIMMER! Please do not think you can swim at the same level that the full time athletes are achieving with such a schedule! If you want to try to swim at the National level in the US, you will have to be in the full workout program.

If you take the zero hour off each year, you will need to take a summer school class, correspondence class, an online class, an independent study credit, or get a credit for swimming—such as a PE credit. You will need three of these during your high school years. Again, we have had generations of swimmers doing this, so we know it can easily be done. Some school administrators resist doing this for the student-athletes, especially during the freshmen year. As parents, you may have to be very demanding and forceful to get it done. But you can get it done! If for some reason you can't, then you should change schools! It is that important! It will be worth it to get the schedule that offers you swimmer everything that they need to try and swim at the national level and be a great student.

The educational value of swimming at or even near National level is tremendous. The scholarship money is extreme for the girls, but less for the boys because of Title IX. However, the real value may not just be the scholarship money. ACCEPTANCE into the university that your swimmer would like to go to may be the greatest benefit! Some

swimmers do not get the scholarship money, but get accepted into schools that they would not normally have the opportunity to attend because of swimming! I have seen it happen for a huge number of swimmers!! Fair or unfair, for 99% of those seek admission, you have a higher probability of getting into most top level universities with swimming and good grades than trying to gain admissions based upon the highest grades you can achieve.