

## **VAST**

### **Swim Meet Protocol For Parents**

Enthusiastic parental support has been a hallmark of the Valley Area Swim Team. This kind of parental involvement is not only strongly encouraged, but it is absolutely essential to the success of our program and each of our swimmers. In order to channel this support in a positive and effective way, however, it is necessary to establish clearly defined parameters and guidelines that will enable us to provide a competitive environment for our swimmers that will be the most conducive to their success and development.

The first of ten “Do’s and Don’ts for Parents” published by USA saying is about not having, “too many cooks in the kitchen.” (swimmers, coaches and parents). When the kitchen is too full, it makes it more difficult to establish a distraction free environment that is necessary to better enable the swimmers to focus and concentrate on the task at hand.

- Often times when this happens, swimmers will often feel an inordinate amount of pressure from a well-intended but “overly-supportive” parent.
- Although the parents make many significant sacrifices in support of their swimmers, it is the swimmers who work together lap after lap, day after day, week after week to prepare for competition. Over time, they develop a special bond that is almost always stronger and more effective in an “athlete only” environment. The competition is their show and the pool deck is their stage. Needless to say, there can be some common sense expectations to these guidelines.

The second of the ten Do’s and Don’ts is, “Don’t advise the coach on how to do the job,” and the third is, “Don’t coach your child during the meet.” The “Parents’ Handbook” published by USA Swimming cautions parents not to “undermine the professional coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to provide love and support and a safe (and warm) place to return to at the end of the day ... The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. You should not offer advice on technique or race strategy or any other technical area. You should be encouraging and never criticize your child or the coach.”

You may be wondering if this applies in a situation where the parent believes that he/she knows more about the technical needs of the swimmer than does the coach. The answer is a resounding “YES!!!” The reason is that confidence in the coach and the program is even more fundamental to the success of the swimmer than is the technical competency of the coach or the soundness of the program. If the swimmer senses that the parent questions the technical competency of the coach, this confidence can be undermined, especially if the swimmer respects the technical knowledge of the parent! Even if the parent does not directly challenge or contradict the coach, confusion and uncertainty will result if the swimmer is getting mixed signals from the coach and parent.

USA Swimming has noticed that overall kids seem to be implying, “Mom and Dad, support my efforts but don’t try to help me swim faster.”

The 6<sup>th</sup> of 10 Do’s and Don’ts is, “Cheer for your team” and the 7<sup>th</sup> is “Show interest, enthusiasm, and support for your child.”

Again, enthusiastic support and involvement of the parents has always been a hallmark of Valley Area Swim Team and it is essential to its ongoing success.

Parents. Thank you for your support and sacrifices!