SST NEWS

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**WHY DO WE COMPETE?**

While competition is not required on the Stingray Swim Team, it is encouraged. Why is it important and fun to compete? Will our swimmers get more out of their experience from competition? What about those who are nervous to compete?

Swimming is a fun but difficult sport. We train hard mentally and physically, the coaches expect a great deal of focus from each swimmer, and we put in a lot of yards throughout the season. From the Bronze Group to Senior level, our swimmers train between 34,000 and 400,000 yards per season. That’s between 20 and 240 miles! With all that training, how do our swimmers stay motivated to keep going up and down the pool?

One motivational aspect is skill improvement. When we work on technique and drills, our swimmers improve their skills and become more effective athletes. This improvement increases their self-confidence, independence, and self-worth. Along with having fun with their friends, the skill improvement they receive during practice is one of the most important areas of a swimmer’s success…but what else is there?

The answer is competition. When a swimmer gets the opportunity to show off all their hard work, they begin to understand the importance of all those training yards and drills. They are able to race their teammates, other swimmers, and themselves. They get objective results on their speed improvement and race strategy. This shows they are improving physically as they become stronger swimmers and demonstrate improved technique. This also shows they are improving mentally as they understand how to construct a proper race plan, manage their emotions, and demonstrate sportsmanship. Competition breeds confidence, team pride, an understanding of the big picture, and how to manage disappointment. Not every race will go as planned, but the ability to learn and move forward will last a lifetime.

Being nervous about competition is normal; and necessary. Once a swimmer is ready to race, they will learn how to manage their emotions to their benefit. The correct level of nervousness and excitement will lead to a heightened sense of awareness, putting them in their optimal performance range. If we remember that competition is fun and pressure is low, we can all enjoy racing and improving our times.

While competition is not for everyone, we hope to see our meet attendance increase. It is not about winning or being the best; it is all about improving their individual times, their technique, their strategy, and their self-confidence. Our coaches are there to help each athlete succeed, and we hope you are all excited for each racing opportunity.



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**PLANNING IS PERAMOUNT**

Have you ever wondered what our coaches do when they are not on the pool deck? They are making sure each swimmer, each group, and the entire team and set up for success. This process requires a great deal of planning and preparation. Everyone would suffer without this advanced planning, and the Stingrays work very hard to make sure our planning is one of the best in the state. Each coach spends many hours per week planning and analyzing their workouts. They have developed a seasonal plan (macro-cycle) after months of preparation, break that plan into 6-20 week phases (training phase), further narrow their plan into 3-4 week phases (meso-cycle), and finally their weekly plan (mico-cycle). They know their target yardage for each week throughout the entire year, the optimal skill progression and physical development for each week, and what they want to accomplish during each practice. Rest assured, your swimmer’s improvements are intensely analyzed and planned for. “Proper preparation produces perfect performance.”

What can you do in the planning process? It is extremely important that our swimmers and parents trust their coach’s preparation, instruction, and seasonal plan. As a swimmer, you must be able to give your best effort each day. When your coach asks you to sprint, you must be able to do so. When your coach asks you to focus on a high-elbow catch, underwater kick, and not breathing on your first stroke, you must do everything you can to accomplish these tasks. We will not swim “garbage yardage”; each set and practice has its purpose and is planned to every detail. As a parent, you should encourage your swimmer to take practice seriously and try hard. Your swimmer should have fun and enjoy time with their friends, but they should also listen to instruction and put feedback into action. As long as your swimmer is a “coachable” athlete, they will see success and enjoy their time in the water.

**#1 SUPPLEMENT FOR BETTER PRFORMANCE**

If you are looking for an easy way to increase your performance, both speed and technique, here it is! This article was released last month by Dan McCarthy, USA Swimming’s high performance consultant.

Cheri Mah’s unexpected discovery during her initial research in 2002 at Stanford has taken root in professional and collegiate sports, forcing coaches and administrators to rethink their approach to helping their athlete’s recover. What athlete would not benefit from being sharper, having a more positive mood and possessing quicker reaction times? When she narrowed her study to find specific responses, she turned to the Stanford Men’s Basketball Team for a three-year study. Her published work suggests that when supplementing for five to seven weeks, the player’s specific skills improved as well. They ran faster, their three-point shooting improved by 9%, as did their free-throw shooting.

Did I mention it is free, organic, non-GMO and available to everyone? The supplement in question? More Sleep!

More specifically, Mah’s study examined the concept of Sleep Extension. The players in the basketball study got their normal amount of sleep for two to four weeks. For the next five to seven weeks they added naps to their schedule and tried to get 10 hours of sleep each night. Scientists are now researching exactly why extra sleep seems to produce such improvements. Some interesting and useful investigations have turned up great insight for all athletes, including swimmers.

* The neural pathways of activities from the day’s practice are reinforced at night during sleep, but it seems as if the big benefits don’t begin occurring until seven hours of sleep.
* Teen athletes that regularly get eight or more hours of sleep each night are 68% less likely to get injured than those that regularly slept less than eight hours.
* Eliminating certain practices helps athletes get a better night sleep. On the list? Bright lights, iPads and lattes, to name a few. Dim the lights for a ½-hour before going to sleep to help create a more restful atmosphere; no blue-light emitting electronics in bed (the blue light tricks the brain into thinking it is daytime); and no caffeine or other stimulants after 4:00 PM.

The USOC, the NBA and the US Army have all invested money in sleep research and either changed or proposed changes to the way they do things, not only to help athletes and soldiers get quality rest, but to improve their performance when it counts.

**SWIMMERS OF THE MONTH IN SEPTEMBER**

To be selected as the Swimmers of the Month, athletes must show their dedication to our team through their hard work, attendance, desire to improve, teamwork, and ability to listen to instruction. We are proud to look back at October’s Stingray Swimmers of the Month.

**Bradley Birkholz**

Bradley began swimming with the Stingrays in November, 2011. Growing up in a family with many Stingray siblings, he immediately took to the water with success. He has worked his way through the group structure and now swims with the Platinum Group. He has improved his work ethic, listening skills, and attendance. He works hard each day and puts his coach’s feedback into action. Bradley is a pleasure to coach and will continue to improve. He has competed in many meets over his 3 years of swimming, most recently the Fall Equinox Meet this September. He dropped time in all three of his events, including 0.6 seconds in the 50 back, 6 seconds in the 50 fly, and 2.3 seconds in the 50 free. He has qualified for this year’s Age Group Championships in the 50 back and is closing in on his first Junior Olympic Championship cuts. We are very proud of Bradley and congratulate him on being October’s Stingray Swimmer of the Month.

**Raven Drake**

Raven joined the Stingrays in September, 2011 and has been impressing her coaches ever since. She works very hard and is a leader in the Junior Group. Her work ethic is wonderful, she attends nearly every practice, and she improves her skills each practice. She has shown great improvement this season as her hard work is paying off. During her last meet, the Halloween Meet in October, Raven dropped time in all of her events and won two of them. She dropped 1.6 seconds in the 100 back, 3.2 seconds in the 50 breast, 2.2 seconds in the 50 fly, and 3.4 seconds in the 50 free (breaking the 30 seconds barrier for the first time). She has qualified in 10 events for this year’s Age Group Championships in Juneau, as well as 5 events for the Junior Olympic Championships in Anchorage. She is named on the All-Time Stingray Top 10 Times List in 8 events as well as being a member of 4 Stingray Team Relay Records. Congratulations Raven, keep up the great work!

**NOVEMBER AT A GLANCE**

* November 8 – Jadyn Hatley’s Birthday
* November 11 – Tatum Weckwerth’s Birthday
* **November 11** – Board of Director Meeting
  + Location: Madden Real Estate on Barnette Street
  + Time: 6:30pm
  + All members are welcome to attend
* November 12 – Grace White’s Birthday
* November 12 – Greta Johnson’s Birthday
* **November 14-16** – Wishbone Invite
  + Friday warm up at 5:00pm
  + Saturday and Sunday warm up at 8:00am for prelims
  + Finals warm up TBA. Please check website and emails as time depends on prelim duration
  + All 10&Unders and relays are swum during finals
* November 17 – Helen Johnson’s Birthday
* **November 18** – Platinum Group Advancement Test
* **November 19** – Bronze/Silver/Gold Group Advancement Test
* November 24 – Owen Bunch’s Birthdy
* **November 26** – Raffle Tickets Due
* November 29 – Marissa Strauss’ Birthday

**SST 2014-2015 Meet Schedule**

Fall Equinox Meet September 20 – Wescott Pool

Warm ups: 8:00 am

Halloween Meet October 18 – Patty Pool

Warm ups: 2:30 pm

Wishbone Invite November 14-16 – Hamme Pool

Prelim/Final Meet

Coach Robb Coady Novice Invite December 6 – Hamme Pool

Warm ups: 8:00 am

Candy Cane Swim Meet December 13 – Wescott Pool

Warm ups: 8:00 am

Spring Will Come Meet January 10 – Hamme Pool

Warm ups: 8:00 am

Valentine’s Day Meet January 31 (scheduled to change) – Patty Pool

Warm ups: 8:00 am

AK Age Group Championships February 13-15

Juneau, AK

Region XII Championships March 5-8

Gresham, OR

St. Patrick’s Day Meet March 14 – Wescott Pool

Warm ups: 8:00 am

Northern Area Championships March 27-29 – Hamme Pool

Prelim/Final Meet

AK Junior Olympics April 23-26 - Bartlett Pool

Anchorage, AK