

News For

SWIM PARENTS

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Two Practices Each Day... The Argument for Morning Training.

By John Leonard

One of regular questions we get in the American Swimming Coaches Association offices is in relation to the importance and effectiveness of swimmers attending morning workouts. To our knowledge, no reliable scientific research exists to support or discredit this practice. On the other hand, anecdotal evidence and the history of swim training provides a rich resource of information.

Double workouts per day have been around for at least 6 decades in our sport. Typically they are used with teenage athletes and not with pre-teens. The primary purpose is to allow for an increased volume of training. If the team already provides unlimited time in the afternoon practice, there is still an advantage to having two shorter workouts which allows for great intensity in each workout, rather than a longer and less intense session in one training bout in the PM.

A typical pattern over time might be (during the school year) one AM session before school at age 13. At age 14, two AM sessions per week and at ages 15 and older, 3 AM sessions per week. Plenty of teams use 4 or even 5 AM sessions during the school year. The operative question concerns balancing the young athletes' need for sleep, rest and recovery versus adding a progressively larger training load.

Many good programs in the USA train twice daily during the summer (non-school) vacation period.

Historically, coaches report significant gains from athletes who begin a two workout a day regimen. Also, athletes and coaches tell us that it takes 3-6 weeks for the young bodies to adjust to the change in schedule and then it becomes much easier to “get up and get going” in the morning, with some athletes even preferring the school day where they have been “awake and moving” for 2-3 hours before school.

Length of morning practice varies wildly from 1 to 2 plus hours in each session.

Swimmers are typically good students, perhaps partly because the training schedule forces them to “do it now” when it comes to studying and not procrastinate. Certainly many hundreds of thousands of young people over the 6 plus decades that this practice has been common have been successful in getting good grades, training twice per day and getting their rest. To think that “today’s children” are any less capable of doing so, is supremely disrespectful of their capabilities.

Finally, it is important to note that many excellent programs exist and thrive on only one outstanding workout per day. There is no magic to “having to have” two workouts a day to succeed. American Swimmers have proven that they can succeed under any variety of training conditions.

Conducting two workouts per day for your team is neither the “holy grail” of training, nor is it an option to be feared. It’s been successful in the USA for many years, fitting into our educational system for young people. It’s also “not the only road to success.”

All the Best for Good Swimming,
John Leonard