

Coach Hans

## **Meet Selection**

There are always multiple factors involved in the selection of meets for our swimmers. I will try and explain a few of them here. The importance of each of the factors will often depend on the time of year and the needs of the particular swimmers involved.

### **Convenience**

This boils down to timing and location!

### **Timing**

Normally we would like to give everyone a chance to race at least once a month, sometimes more and sometimes less. Naturally, this will depend on their level and needs

### **Location**

While it is important to travel to meets as they make great family or team road trips, it can be far less disruptive, for family and training reasons to go to meets that are less than an hour away.

### **Reciprocal Arrangements**

One of the facts of swimming life is that we go to meets so other clubs come to our meets. Meets are an important budget factor for most clubs. Therefore, we try and attend meets which are run by clubs who also attend our meets.

### **New Competition**

It is very important for swimmers to face new competition every now and again, during the season. Often, when we become too familiar with our competition a pecking order is set up and swimmers will race only to stay within the pecking order. New competition encourages them to get out of their comfort zone and learn to race.

### **Team Travel**

We do team travel for two reasons, to make it more convenient for swimmers to attend and for swimmers to experience team travel. The latter is important for two reasons, one, most Championship meets will require travel and often team travel. It is best swimmers experience this and learn coping strategies before it becomes critical. The other, is that swimmers have fun and enjoy team travel.

### **Size of Meet**

Going to shorter meets, one session or two sessions are less disruptive of training. Same as above. Sometimes we will attend a 3 day meet and only attend one or two days if that is what we need. Generally speaking the longer meets require more time for the swimmers to recover and get back to normal training again.

### **Format of meets**

Is it a timed final meet or one with Heats and Finals. If we go to a meet with heats and finals it is because we would like to have the experience of swimming finals. Most championship meets have finals and it is important that swimmers experience that prior to championship meets.

### **Events swum**

Most competitions offer a full slate of events, but some do not. What events do the swimmers need to swim and at what level? It is also important for all developing athletes to swim as many different events over the course of a season as they are ready for.

### **Level of Competition**

This is a very important factor and are athlete specific. This is like the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. She had to find the one that was just right.

*Scary* - Sometimes swimmers need to be introduced to a higher level of competition. For example you may take a National level swimmer to an International meet, a Regional level swimmer to an Invitational with a lot of high level competition present. This should only be done once or twice per season.

*Easy*: Every once in a while a swimmer should attend a meet that is a little below their capabilities. This allows them to be in a more relaxed atmosphere but still at a real competition. Can be helpful to increase confidence, but just like the Scary meet, should not be too often.

*Just Right*: Most of an athletes' meets should fall into this category. It means the swimmer will need to swim at or close to their best in order to be competitive.

**Why we go to Meets** - The scholastic equivalent of meets are tests. In season meets are regular tests conducted several times per term to give the coach a rough idea of where the swimmers is at. Championship meets are the same as final exams!

**Learning and Consolidating New Skills** - Often, swimmers will attend meets to try out new skills which they have been working on in a competitive environment. Adding the stress of being in competition will determine whether or not the new skills have been learned and "owned" by the individual athlete.

**Qualifying** - A meet will often be used as a stepping stone to another, higher level meet. The swimmer will use a meet to help them qualify for another more important meet.

**New Strategies** - In a similar fashion that a swimmer and coach will use a meet to work on new skills, swimmers will often try different race strategies to see which ones will work better or simply to familiarize oneself with a new way to swim the same race.

**Check on Progress** - The races are often a test to determine if the swimmer has progressed to a higher level of speed and/or execution. Progress increases confidence, lack of progress sends coaches and swimmers back with something to work on.

**Developing Routine** - A swimmer can use meets to develop a routine that works best for them. Activation, warm-ups, suiting, briefing, prepping, racing, swim downs, de-briefing, nutrition and proper attire should all be part of a swimmer's routine. Practicing that routine makes it better.

**Building Confidence**: Good races will build confidence in swimmer, helping them to continue the cycle of improvement.

**Competition** - Learning to race and enjoying the competition is probably the most fun and possibly the most important aspect of this.