

3 TIPS FOR SWIM PARENTS ABOUT PERSONAL BEST TIMES

Courtesy of Elizabeth Wickham

I have a freshman swimming in college and I have to remind myself that this is a transition year. Her coaches, workouts and team are new to her, she's working out harder than ever. And she's not getting best times at dual meets. I'm not freaking out about it. The shaved and tapered meets are still to come. It's also possible that she won't get best times this season.

When kids are little and learning this great sport, they seem to drop time often. As their bodies grow stronger and bigger, they drop and drop. In their late teens, they may not get a personal best except when they are shaved, tapered and wearing a fast suit.

I was asked repeatedly by parents of youngsters at age group meets when my daughter was age 16 to 18 — “Was that a best time for her?”

I'd say, “No. Not close.”

“Why not? What do you think is wrong?” was the typical concerned question that followed.

I would explain about the phenomenon that swimmers don't get best times at every meet when they are older — in my daughter's case, age 16 on. I described training cycles and that best times would come at target meets.

Here's my three tips about best times:

ONE

You have to trust your kid's coach. Don't second guess what they are doing — especially in front of your swimmer. “Coaches Coach. Parents Parent. Swimmers Swim.”

TWO

Don't focus on the times — or you may kill your swimmer's enthusiasm for the sport.

THREE

Trust the experience. If your child is swimming as an older teenager, they must love the physical and mental toughness of practice and competition — or they would've quit long ago. They are building life skills of grit, determination and perseverance.

Some Comments to the post:

- Another tip- If they are working hard at swimming and having a good time with their team mates, coaches, and school, that is even better than best times. Because if they are happy, time drops will come when taper meets occur. My son is a freshmen and loves everything about his college swimming and it's ok with him to be at or near best times now. He wouldn't trade this experience!
- I really need to show this article to my mom....
- Well said! As a teen athlete myself, it can be really hard not to get best times every meet like I did 5+ years ago. My best times now—especially in my focus events—only come when I'm shaved, tapered, and suited. It's hard only getting best times 2-4 times a year, but it's important to remember the process. I still love going to practice and working hard. It makes those best times on rare occasions extra special.
- One thing I always encouraged my kids to do when they were in the middle of hard training and not even nearly tapered was to do an off event that they only had a chance to swim once or twice a year, if that. They would often drop time in it, giving them a slight mental boost, even if the time really wasn't that good in the bigger scheme of things.