

“What would you tell yourself as a high school swimmer?”

Bolles Alumni: “What would you tell yourself as a high school swimmer?”

You have to be open and honest with yourself about what is to come. The training will be different and you have to trust the work you are doing will work. There are no shortcuts.

-Grady Heath

I wish I could have told myself to trust and believe; in both my coaches and myself. I have always struggled with worrying about failing or not meeting everyone’s expectations. Going through college and learning more about myself and my swimming I realized I don’t have to be fearful of those things because I know that I have put the work in and I trust that my coaches have trained me and prepared me.

-Sherridon Dressel

Remember that there are always people behind me that would kill to be in the position I am in. I have to earn it each day.

-Thomas Heinzl

Don’t skip reps, don’t cut corners, because coming to practice and doing the practice is a bare minimum to being successful.

-Gabby Hillis

Remain passionate about the success of your TEAM and it will lead to personal success and set you up to contribute to your TEAM in college.

-Jake Gibbons

Learn to have patience.

-Dillon Hillis

I think I would tell myself that 1. It’s supposed to be fun and 2. Adjustment is a process and success doesn’t always follow a linear path. The process will not always be easy but it will be worth it.

Ashley Neidigh

The best advice I could have given myself is to truly trust the process. You will have amazing practices and awful practices. You will have days when you feel incredibly strong and others when you feel incapable. You will have races that you can't execute and days where you dive in and you know it will be good. Keep putting in the work and trust the process. If you do you will create opportunities and YOU can turn opportunities into accomplishments.

Kensey McMahon

I would tell myself that anything worth doing is worth overdoing. Swimming is a serious commitment and if you are not fully present for every workout then you are wasting your time. Let practice be the time to forget about every other distraction and focus on solely swimming. If I am not fully present, then I am not present at all. I have learned that to improve my swimming, I can't be thinking about how much homework I have to do, or the test coming up tomorrow, or the drama going on with my friends. To truly prepare for practice, leave every thought that isn't about swimming in the locker room before practice.

I would also tell myself that high school swimming is too short to not be the best competitor you can be. Over the years I have learned that I have to hate losing more than I love winning. Having a "hate to lose" mentality in every practice will help give you a competitive edge in championship season. That also means that you can't worry about who you're racing, because if you let someone else get in your head then the race is already over.

I would tell myself to have fun with the sport. Too many times during high school and even in college have I let the pressure of a meet or a race get the better of me and affect my performance. My best racing has come from situations where I am genuinely having fun racing for my team and for myself.

Lastly, and most importantly, I would tell myself that humility is essential to genuine success. That rule applies in and out of the pool. I would say that it is much more rewarding to let my actions speak louder than my words. A humble person is never satisfied and will want to keep improving.

Graham Ungrady

As you get older, you will start to realize that there are many things in your life that you can control. As an underclassman in high school, this was something I never fully grasped. I was quiet and shy and rarely spoke up for myself. I was afraid to be outgoing and speak up because I was younger and lacked confidence. However, as I grew up and began to find my role in the team, I felt more comfortable and was able to speak up and be more outgoing. As a result, I started having more fun and felt like I had more control over my life in both swimming and school. Now as a sophomore in college, I'm just beginning to realize the significance of surrounding yourself with positive people. I, just like many other people in the sport of swimming have gone through times where I wasn't 100% enjoying it, and that's perfectly okay. This year, I began to surround myself with positive outgoing people who are grounded and committed to swimming. Their positivity and love for the sport helped me to climb out of my rut with swimming and led me to having one of my best seasons in a while. If I could go back as a freshman in high school, this is a concept I would've tried to grasp sooner. I'd also say that not being afraid of forming relationships with your coaches helps significantly. You might not always think this, but your coaches are there for you and truly want the best for you. Because I wasn't the most outgoing person, I was sometimes afraid to talk to my coaches and get to

know them or speak up about myself. However, the more your coaches know about you, the more they can help you and make you a better swimmer and person.

Going hand in hand with having fun with the sport comes putting less pressure on yourself. I really wished I had realized this sooner. I've always been someone to put too much pressure on myself, not only in swimming but in school as well. Specifically, for swimming I've found that the more fun you have with the sport, the less stress you put on yourself. Personally, I've had some of my best practices and meets when I'm relaxed and having fun. I know you've probably all heard that said by so many people, but I truly believe that it makes a significant difference. For example, at practice I try to find someone to essentially swim the practice with and encourage and cheer them on throughout practice. Just being able to smile and laugh at practice makes it so much more enjoyable. That motivates you to try harder and it helps your teammate out which ultimately makes the whole team better. Furthermore, working hard at practice was something I used to take for granted sometimes. But something that really resonated with me this year was the idea that, if you are going to show up to practice, you may as well work hard and get something out of it or else there is no point in you showing up in the first place. As an underclassman in high school I sometimes took for granted the opportunities to get better. But by no means does this mean you will have your best practices every day. It's ok to have a bad day sometimes. No one can be 100% all of the time.

As for school, its important, but you don't need to put so much pressure on yourself, especially as a freshman and sophomore in high school. It's ok to mess up, it's all part of the process of figuring yourself out and what you want to do. And in my opinion, freshman and sophomore year is the time to explore and figure that out. Take that class in something that interests you and really figure out if it's something you want to do in life. Also don't be afraid to make a bad grade here and there. I was always way too uptight with myself about school and some might call me a perfectionist in that category, never letting myself be ok with anything but an A. However, that's just not ideal. I'm by no means saying to go and bomb your classes, I'm just emphasizing that an occasional bad grade, especially as underclassman, isn't going to ruin your chances of getting into your dream college or getting your dream job later in life.

Abi Wilder

Additional Feedback from non-Bolles Students

Freshmen Female at D1 ACC School - Scholarship

One thing I definitely would've told myself is to just chill. It's much easier to say than to do, but looking back, if it weren't for my nerves I would have swam so much better and honestly probably would have had more fun.

Second, I would've told myself to trust my training more. Of course I did to some extent but deep down I was always nervous that I would die before I got to the last 25 or that I wouldn't be able to hold 6-8 kick-outs off the walls. This year I've learned to just let all hell break loose during a race and be able to hold on for dear life and have some of the best swims of my life and be able to finish well. I let my training give me more confidence in what I CAN do versus what I want to do/could do if I get it right.

Third, it honestly doesn't matter what the environment around me looks like. When I qualified for NCAAs I was with 2 other girls in my heat at our home pool, at a one day meet, and it was so much more low key. But I didn't need the hype and big lights to decide that I was going to get after it. Especially in dual meets I just would pop off and go really fast (yes the atmosphere is a lot more exciting there) but compared to ACCs and NCAAs where there's a huge crowd and it's on TV and I'm wearing a suit and I'm shaved and tapered it was honestly surprising that I was able to perform the way I did because in the past (in season meets) I had such a hard time performing well and reflecting my training.

Fourth, I learned to not be scared of pain. Especially at the beginning of this season I was "balls to walls" as they say these days. I wasn't scared to hurt or even die in practice and I had confidence that if I put my mind to something, I did it and I did it damn well. I think that gave me a lot of confidence in my training. I knew I could do those 9x200s backstroke on a Saturday morning after a hard dual meet and I knew I could do them really well and that helped me to understand a little bit more of the mindset that I personally need in order to swim fast.

Freshmen Male at D3 Engineering Focus School

I guess I would say focus on myself more. Not everyone needs the same things to get better. Don't get obsessed with what other people are doing because that may not be what you need. Know what you need and do it every day.

Freshmen Female at D1 ACC School - Scholarship

I think the most important thing I learned is how much better I swim when I enjoy what I'm doing. Obviously it's still something I'm working on but I really do notice a change when I'm having fun and when I'm not enjoying what I do.

Having a cohesive team with similar goals helps everyone out in the long run. It makes communicating easier within the group and helps to keep people in check. Also, learning how to handle being called out is huge because when you get to college it will happen a lot more. All in all learning to be a good teammate is crucial.

Learning how to be organized. High school is the perfect time to create habits that will help you be successful. Being in college I've witnessed many people struggle simply because they were never taught how to handle doing stuff on their own and heavily relied on their parents. Learn how to be independent. It's a life skill.

Sophomore Male at D3 School:

I wish I would have been willing to stick my hand up and ask for help more often. I think it was a pride thing, not being able to except that I was wrong in some areas and needed improvement.

Freshmen Male at D1 Top 5 School Walk On

As a swimmer in high school I did not have a good perspective on the sport as a whole. I was better than most at practice and I thought that as pretty good. The reality is there is a lot of really fast people out there and I wish I would have been chasing them a lot earlier instead of just the people around me.

Also, as a high school swimmer I really relied on my strengths a lot – for me that was kicking and freestyle. Since I've been in college I've really had to develop my weaknesses (like pulling, backstroke, and breaststroke) and I could have had a better mind to do that earlier. It looks like I am going to go for the 400IM next year so I will need to learn some different techniques.

Freshmen Female at D1 SEC School Walk On

If I could go back and tell myself something, it would be to trust the process and to stop being afraid. For me i think the biggest thing was dropping my expectations, and realizing that i had nothing to be afraid of. I came to USC kind of at the bottom of the food chain. I didnt expect to travel to any meets or make SEC's, but i wrote those things on my goal sheets at the beginning of the season. I gave myself the mindset of having nothing to lose here, all i could go was up. after i swam well at the first duel meet, my confidence kept going up. no matter how tired i was in season at duel meets i was still finding a way to swim faster at each one. Now I have traveled to every duel meet, made the SEC team, and earned some scholarship. Junior and Senior year me would have never saw that coming and i should have believed in myself then!