

## **Select**

Welcome to the Select training group. As with all age group programs, there will be a mixture of abilities within the group of swimmers but they all are working to develop the skills needed to become successful Senior level athletes. These skills include time management, goal setting, teamwork, a strong work ethic and the technical skills required to improve swimming stroke mechanics. The Select group utilizes kick boards, pull buoys, paddles and fins as training equipment. A list of topics frequently discussed is listed to help answer questions you may have about your athletes training group.

**Practice Attendance:** The group requires a high rate of attendance (80%). This rate is recommended for a couple of reasons. Firstly, the body doesn't keep what it doesn't use. So the muscles in the shoulders and back that support the shoulder joint diminish in strength when not used regularly in the water. When they weaken, it can cause problems with the shoulder joint. This is one of the most common causes of a shoulder injury. It does not take long for the body to determine that muscle is not needed. After three days of disuse, the muscles will already be weaker. Thus, regular activity is needed to help prevent injury. It is also one of the reasons why Saturday practice is important to attend because a long weekend without swimming is enough to lose muscle.

Secondly, swimming is a time demanding sport. One of the most important skills an athlete can develop is Time Management. Like most life skills, it is better learned earlier than later. By finding a way to balance schoolwork with swimming at a young age when the homework load is less intense than later years, they will be able to excel both in school and the pool when they get older and the work load increases. As a bonus, a number of scientific studies have found that including daily exercise in your life helps mental development. Long term studies have shown on average that people who exercise (one study even focused on swimming) maintain a higher GPA than those who do not exercise.

Participation during the Long Course and Preseason training (both held at Pinetree Country Club) are expected for swimmers in this group.

**Goal Setting:** This is a life skill that the swimmers need to take ownership of at this stage of their swimming. If it is to become a tool to help them reach their dreams, they have to begin learning how to evaluate their efforts and decide what they can do to improve themselves. It has to become a regular part of their daily routine to be truly effective. This will not happen if someone else is setting their goals. In the end, goal setting will be one of the most important skills in determining if they continue swimming through high school and college. Short term goals such as rewards for meet performances serve as temporary carrots and delay the process of swimmers competing for their own dreams. People are trained through repetition. If what they learn is that swim meets are for a reward, then what motive do they have to continue once the rewards disappear? Teach them to swim for themselves and they will be happier and have a greater chance to pursue a long swimming career.

**Teamwork:** Teammates can be a valuable resource for those who nurture a healthy relationship with them. They can boost you up on a bad day and celebrate with you on a good day. The trick is to develop a relationship of mutual respect. In that sense, it is a good lesson for learning how to develop relationships whether at school, work, social or the pool. A healthy training group can elevate the level of performance of everyone in the group. A bad environment can make the sport tedious and bring an early end to the career of a swimmer.

**Competitions:** Competitions have different purposes throughout the season. Early season meets are about evaluating the condition level of the swimmers due to training and looking for stroke technique improvements. They will swim the maximum amount of events offered per day. The December Invite is a

mid-season test to see where they stand on conditioning, technique and racing habits. It is also the first introduction of the prelim-finals format. The increased time at the pool and increased number of swims serves as a learning experience for maintaining their energy level through proper post-race warm-downs, eating, staying hydrated and getting rest. These lessons will be very important to the championship meets later in the season. Once we pass the December invite, there will be another prelim-final format meet and a couple of qualifying opportunity meets. Again, these serve the purpose of measuring progress and learning how to manage their body through the course of the competition. Lastly, we will hit the championship meet stretch starting with Age Group State and ending with Divisionals. This is where the racing habits, conditioning, technique improvements and body management lessons learned over the course of the season should come together for some nice swims. The great thing about developing age group swimmers is that another seasons starts after the Championships. So, they have the continued opportunity to build on their progress and improve their habits in the pool and at competitions.

**Travel Competitions:** These opportunities only occur once or twice a year. They are a great way to develop and enhance team chemistry. When I speak to former swimmers, they always tell a story or two about a travel trip. It can be one of the longest lasting memories for a swimmers career. It also serves as a valuable learning tool. It makes a swimmer learn to be responsible for more than just the pool portion of a swim meet. They have to plan what to bring to the pool, how much to eat and how to manage their energy away from the racing environment. Not only will these be valuable lessons for when they attend Sectional, Junior, Zone or National level competitions but, they are essential lessons for taking care of oneself when they go off to college and leave their home. Swimmers in this training group are strongly encouraged to participate in Travel Trips.

**Competition Suits:** We live in an age where anything can be purchased on the internet. This makes life convenient but it also makes it easy to misuse items that are easily obtained. High Performance racing suits are one such item. They are a must for National level swimmers and pretty much any competition shown on television will have swimmers using them. What has to be understood is that what is good for these older, more physically mature swimmers is not always what is best for younger athletes. Older swimmers spend months or maybe years training for a big competition. They have reached a stage where they are no longer growing, have the strength that comes with physical maturity and years of technical development with their strokes. They need the extra boost that comes with a High Performance suit to help them attain their goals. On the other hand, the younger swimmers in this group have none of those attributes. They are still growing, their bodies are muscularly immature and their technique is still evolving. Improving just one of those factors is enough to reach a goal. So it is important that they learn to swim fast without the High Performance suit. This will help them to gain the confidence of knowing that they are fast without needing a special suit to help them. Thus saving the big psychological boost of wearing these special suits for a time when they are older and in more need of them. So please, do not provide High Performance suits for your age group swimmers except for championship competitions. The coaches try to train them for the long term of their career.

**Summer Swim Camps:** Summer camps are offered by most college programs. They can be a fun experience and can provide some extra video opportunities. While this can be beneficial, there are also negatives for the Select level swimmer. Often the training is not the same as the program. This would be less of an issue during the short course season that is 7 months in duration. But the long course season lasts only 4 months and lost training time is hard to make up. These camps are best suited to the Elite group and younger swimmers.