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A RIGHT WAY AND A WRONG WAY

No matter where in the swimming world you are, it is the case that the strongest team or teams in an area will attract strong swimmers from the surrounding teams. Families will see that good things are happening at that strong team, and they will want to be a part of it. This is often painful for the team and coach losing the swimmer, and it often causes resentment, sometimes warranted, sometimes not. I have been on both sides of this situation.

Also, if we are running a very good program, our swimmers and swim families are going to be happy here and will want to share their joy. I definitely want our membership happy with their experience at KING. And I want them sharing their joy. But I do not want them recruiting. There is often a fine line between the two.

To clarify:

If you are asked, you may sing the praises of KING – but only if asked. It should go without saying that you cannot and should not be badmouthing other programs or coaches.

We cannot approach swimmers on other teams and tell them that they would be better off at KING. We cannot approach swimmers on other teams and tell them that their program or coaches are less than optimal. We cannot approach swimmers on other teams and tell them that the only way they can succeed or make it to the national level is to join KING. These behaviors constitute improper recruiting and are violations of USA Swimming's code of conduct. They are also

bad manners and show our team in a very bad light.

This applies to KING coaches. This applies to KING swimmers. And this applies to KING parents.

Coaches have a further responsibility. Not only should we not ourselves pressure or solicit other teams' kids on King's behalf, but also we cannot encourage our swimmers to do it for us. Further, we cannot connive at its happening; in other words, if we know that a King swimmer or swimmers are pressuring other teams' kids, we must do what we can to stop it.

There is a right way and a wrong way to become a great team. We need to take the high road to get there.

WE BE JAMMIN. OOPS!!!

So many times this past weekend at the 14&U champs meet I watched with pleasure as King swimmers raced well into the wall. Then I watched in horror as they took one or even two too many strokes into the wall and jammed their turns horribly, in a millisecond shooting backwards a full body length compared with their competitors around them.

A jammed turn is a common and instructive instance of one mistake causing multiple mistakes 'downstream.' First, the swimmer takes one or two strokes, which take time, while the opponents have already started back the other way. Second, by making the turn a 'scratch and sniff' experience, the swimmer gets so close to the wall that he cannot somersault quickly (let's assume a freestyle turn, though the principle applies to open turns as well). Next, because he is so close when flipping, his feet hit the wall at a sub-optimal place and depth and his body is at a sub-

optimal orientation, so he cannot push off the wall powerfully, or in the right direction, or with a taut body line. This leads to weak and ineffective dolphins immediately afterwards. One mistake begets many more.

The approach to the wall is an often overlooked part of the turn. You can lose, or gain, as much ground in the five yards from the flags to the wall as you can on the wall doing the 'actual turn,' or on the sendoff (underwater dolphins or pullout and breakout stroke). And every day in practice, you can and should practice the approaches to the wall just as conscientiously as you do (or at least, as you should do) those other parts of the turn. The approach is a skill that can be practiced and developed. To maximize your race, you must maximize your walls, and that means adopting ATTACK MODE in, on, and off of every wall.

Remember the old adage, 'What's well begun is half done.'

WORDS OF WISDOM

"When the broad sweep of life is viewed, sport, though instinctive, physical and ephemeral, illustrates a universal truth that most of us find effort and struggle deeply satisfying... It gives us all a challenge, a sense of purpose and freedom of choice. It is increasingly difficult to find this in our restricted twenty-first-century lives. The particular target we seek may not be important. But what is important is the profoundly satisfying effort in thought, feeling and hard work necessary to achieve this success."

Roger Bannister, the first man to run the mile in under four minutes

Signing out, Coach Michael