

News For

SWIM PARENTS

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One Day in The Life of an Age Group Parent

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(From a 2003 Newsletter)

My wife was off to a continuing ed class. My 12 year old daughter was at swim practice. I had the much needed chance to spend a couple extra hours catching up with some work at the office. That is, until my cell phone buzzed at 5:30. "Dad, can you come pick me up?" "What's wrong?" I asked. "I got kicked out of swim practice," she said. I was stunned! My daughter is a fairly standard 12 year old, as fully capable of getting into trouble as any other 12 year old – except at swim practice where she is unusually compliant and very coachable. I decided we would talk about it later and said, "Well, just come home with Coach Rob like you always do and we will talk about it when you get home." "Rob said you have to come pick me up now," she said.

The pool is 18 miles from my office by way of the most congested interstate in the whole metropolitan area. The last thing I wanted to do is drive 45 minutes out there and another 45 minutes back. My building anger focused on Coach Rob. I thought to myself, "OK, my daughter screwed up but just let her swim. It's no big deal. Besides, why do I have to pay the

price? If it really is that bad he should just make her sit out and then bring her home like usual. After all, that is what I would do.”

Important note: I am also a swimming coach and have been for nearly 30 years. Nevertheless, the parent side of me had taken over my thought process and I wanted to blame the coach for the inconvenience I was facing. “...the inconvenience I was facing.”

Looking for a way out I asked, “What did you do?” She told me she was three minutes late to practice and he wouldn’t let her in the water. “Three minutes? THREE minutes?” I asked. In my mind I was cursing at the coach. “How could you be three minutes late to practice? You get there 45 minutes before practice time!” I said. She told me was doing homework in the locker room and lost track of the time. “And he kicked Jackie out too,” she said. I asked, “Jackie was doing homework also?” “No, she was changing her swim suit and we came out together.”

At that point distant memories started coming back and with them rational thinking crept back into my brain. In my 30 years of coaching, how many times did multiples of 11-12 year old girls emerge from the locker rooms 3 minutes late and how many ridiculous excuses had I heard? Plenty. And how many times was it the same group of kids? All the time.

“If I were to ask Coach Rob if this was the first time you were late, what would he say?” I asked. I heard a faint “what?” I repeated, “If I were to ask Coach Rob if this was the first time you were late, what would he say? Have you been late before?” “Sometimes.”

And what did I do years ago with those who became chronically late by 3 minutes? I sent them back to the locker room, and told them to call their parents. This scene is all too familiar to me.

“OK,” I said, “I’ll be there in 40 to 45 minutes. I’ll be thinking of the consequences along the way.” As a last ditch effort for clemency and a play on my fatherly love, I heard my daughter faintly say, “I’m sorry.”

When I picked her up I was all smiles. And she lighted up right away. She might have been thinking I was going to be cool about this. I asked her what homework she was working on in

the locker room and she told me it was math. "You're pretty good at math, aren't you?" I asked. "Get out a piece of paper and pencil and solve this problem: a man drives a car that gets 15 miles to the gallon. He has to drive his car 36 miles. If gas costs \$1.79 a gallon, how much did the trip cost him?" She loves these kinds of problems and started dividing then multiplying and proudly came up with, "Four dollars and twenty nine cents!" "That sounds correct," I said. That's what it cost me to come pick you up and it's coming out of your next allowance." The rest of the trip home was on the quiet side.

The next day, Coach Rob reported to me that she was on the deck 15 minutes early and ready to go.