

To All NLAC Families:

I hope this note finds you all well and looking forward to the Spring Session with NLAC (and hopefully better weather). As you begin to make plans for the Spring and Summer, I want to share with you my thoughts on the many benefits of long course swimming and hopefully debunk a few myths regarding long course swimming in the process.

Very soon you all will, if you have not already done so, make a decision regarding Spring and Summer Swimming. Do I just swim Spring and not Summer? Do I sign up for the combined Spring/Summer Session? What is the best approach for my child in helping them continue to progress as a swimmer but also having fun with the sport in the process?

As you attempt to answer these questions, I would like for you to consider my thoughts on long course swimming and how beneficial it can be for each individual. I honestly do not think I could overstate this enough.

The following are a few of the main reasons to consider participating in the long course season (Summer Session):

1. Come next Fall, you will be WAY ahead of the game:

There is no doubt that those who participate in a long course training program will find that they have made SIGNIFICANT progress by the time the next short course season rolls around. When an individual has more time to train under the same philosophy and training program, and thus they have consistency and continuity in training, they have the ability to progress more rapidly than when that consistency is not there. In addition, having this consistency allows swimmers to get into a rhythm, both physically and mentally, and if they work hard enough, perhaps even get into "the zone" and when this occurs, the swimmers absolutely THRIVE. Swimmers that participate and work hard during a long course training session often find that they are a COMPLETELY different swimmer come next September than they were before, capable of swimming and competing on a WHOLE NEW LEVEL. Just imagine how short a 25 yard pool will feel after a whole summer of swimming long course (50 meter pool)!

2. Improved Conditioning and Technique:

Training long course does wonders for an individual's conditioning. With less walls to use as a "break", I believe that swimmers who train long course all summer will find that their aerobic capacity has improved significantly. In addition, long course swimming can also greatly aid in improving stroke technique. In a short course pool with more walls, a swimmer can sometimes get away with flawed technique, at least more so than in a long course pool. In a long course pool, with more straight swimming, these flaws are often exposed causing the swimmer, with the help of the coach, to make the proper adjustments and thus improve their efficiency in the water. Often times, these adjustments are made during long course training without the swimmer even realizing they did anything different, especially with regards to their distance per stroke.

3. Like Opening up a Savings Account:

Many people do not realize that how you perform at a given swim meet or in a given period of time is not just a reflection of what you have been doing the past couple of weeks or for a few months leading up to that meet, it is a reflection of what you have been doing for the PAST 12 MONTHS and BEYOND even. This is why I always tell my swimmers that training to reach their goals is just like opening up a savings account. Every day that they come in and work hard, they put a little money into their savings account. The harder they work, and the more consistent they are with their training, the more money they will put into their savings account. Eventually, the time will come when they want to reach their goals, when they want all their hard work to pay off. When this time comes, how much money will they have in their savings account? How BIG will the payoff be?

4. Swim like the Olympians:

For our youngest swimmers who may have never participated in a long course session, or even swam in a long course pool, they may be excited to know that by participating in the long course session, they will be swimming the way the Olympians swim. The Olympics and most other major international swimming competitions are conducted in a 50 meter pool (long course). Consequently, much of the focus of these individuals is on long course training and competition. While I do not expect our swimmers to all of the sudden be Olympians, it may be fun for them to realize that they would share something in common with the greatest swimmers in the world. In a way, they would be just like Michael Phelps, Natalie Coughlin, Ryan Lochte, and Katie Hoff.

5. Morning swims...outdoors....fresh air.....get a tan while they swim....etc....etc:

I know what some of our swimmers would think, how is having to wake up to swim in the morning a benefit? Well, there is something refreshing to me about being outdoors during the summer mornings as the sun comes up and having fresh air to breathe in. It is very soothing in a way, especially as compared to being indoors and constantly being overwhelmed with the scent of chlorine. In addition, while swimmers may not find it fun on the way to practice, I believe that when practice is over they will feel good about themselves for having already accomplished something. Perhaps they may be even more motivated to be productive the rest of the day, like helping out around the house. Hey, it could happen.

6. You get to prepare for and participate in the NLAC Swim Fest:

We will once again be hosting the Swim Fest Meet with this year it being June 30 - July 2nd. I anticipate this meet being a BIG success once again and it would be great to have a whole slew of NLAC swimmers competing. This year we will even have an 8 & under session for those 8 & under swimmers who want to get a feel for long course competition in a fun environment. By participating in the long course session you will have the ability to prepare for this meet each and every day in practice in the same pool you will be competing in.

I could probably go on and on as there are many more reasons why participating in a long course session can be beneficial. However, now I would like to just mention a few myths there often are pertaining to long course swimming. Here are just a few:

1. You can not swim with your summer league team:

This is absolutely false. We, as coaches, do not have a problem with a swimmer also

participating on their summer league team. I think it is safe to say that most swimmers got their start in a summer league somewhere along the way. I know that summer league is fun for the kids, and the role that summer league plays is often different for each individual, especially considering their age. But, the fact remains, that summer league often does not provide the level of training and instruction necessary for an individual's continual progress towards their potential. So, why not give young kids the best of both worlds and consider doing both? They can have the fun, and have the occasional change of pace of summer league swimming while having the consistency in training and continued overall development with NLAC and the many other benefits of USA Swimming.

In addition, while I realize that summer league is a lot of fun, we intend to have a lot of fun here at NLAC too with many different team activities including a potential team Hershey Park trip. Just think, those young swimmers that are doing both will DOUBLE their fun.

2. Long Course is only for the "Elite":

This could not be any further from the truth. You do not have to be a superstar to participate in a long course swimming program, you just have to have the desire to improve. The long course season, like the short course season, provides opportunities for swimmers of all ages and ability levels to compete and gauge their progress. If there are swimmers out there who have never competed in a long course meet, THIS IS PERFECTLY FINE. There is no better time than now to start. The first meet they compete in they will establish new times (best times) which will provide a starting point and from then on, they have a foundation to improve upon.

3. Too young to swim long course:

If an individual is ready for and comfortable in a USA Swimming program, then they are not too young for long course swimming, as long as they have the desire to try it. Our summer training program will include the same training levels geared towards giving each group of individuals what they need to improve at the pace they can handle. If an individual tries a long course program at a younger age, then that will be when they begin to experience the many benefits of long course training that I mentioned above.

We as a program are committed to each individual's long term participation in this sport. The levels of our program are designed to ensure a natural progression through the ranks of NLAC. We want our swimmers to be challenged, but not overwhelmed. As a result, if a swimmer likes the progress they have made, and they think they may like to try the summer long course session regardless of what level they are at and what age they are, then why not give it a try?

Now, I understand that there will be some individuals who choose not to participate in the long course session with NLAC. Please understand that we will hold absolutely NO ill will towards these individuals for making this choice. However, if there are people out there who are still deciding what to do, or who have not done long course in the past but are open to trying something different, I only ask that you consider my thoughts above. I am confident that you will find it to be an extremely beneficial experience.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

GO NLAC!

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