**Anatomy of a Swim Meet**

I have three kids and they all swim on a swim team every summer. I decided to capture my experience at a morning swim meet, for those of you not in the water cult.  
  
**6:00am:** Wake up, drink coffee. Wake up grouchy children.  
 **6:45am:** Arrive at pool. Parking lot is already full. Let the kids out and park far away. Carry/drag chairs, bags and a cooler as if I were large pack animal. It occurs to me suddenly that as mother of three *there is no denying that I am a large pack animal.*  
 **6:58am:** Small miracle occurs. I find a great place to set up chairs, etc. Next to friends. With a good view of the pool. In full shade. Wish I'd brought a sweatshirt actually, is kind of chilly.  
  
**7:00 am:** Kids jump into the freezing cold pool for warm ups and exchange looks with each other like - WHY DO WE DO THIS AGAIN?  
 **7:30am:** Children begin harassing me for money for the snack bar. I try to hand them something healthy from the cooler. Suddenly every other kid at the swim meet is eating large, chocolate-frosted donuts.  
 **8:00am:** A 10th grader is now singing the National Anthem. She is really good. Why do I get slightly (and embarrassingly) choked up by this, yet again? And why is it a surprise every time when it does? I am dumb.  
 **8:05am:** Child #1 swims and makes it across the pool without a near-fatal drowning accident occurring. Success!  
 **8:25am:** Children 2 & 3 have raced and I screamed my head off to KICK! KICK! KICK! even though I know perfectly well that they can't hear me underwater and so it's pointless. I don't want to yell KICK! KICK! KICK! But it just comes out.  
  
**8:30am:** Give in and take kids to the snack bar for donuts (as I am out of coffee anyway).  
 **8:55am:** Child #2 runs over to me, dripping wet and beaming. "Did you see that, Mommy?! Did you see that?!" I blink twice and answer: "Yes! That was awesome! Here have a dollar! Go get another donut!" The moms sitting next to me giggle.  
 **9:00am:** Still cursing myself for participating in a sport where if you get distracted for literally 30 seconds you miss the whole thing.  
 **9:20am:** Child #3 swims her best time ever and is so happy she can't stand it. It might be the best feeling in the world.  
  
**10:05am:** At some point, the kids drag the cooler of healthy snacks over to the picnic area. I go to retrieve it and observe that all of the food in it appears to have been consumed by wolves.  
  
**10:15am:** Get to see lots of familiar faces and families from last year, which is great. Why do all these kids keep growing so much? Dear GOD - that one has a mustache. Last year he was playing with Pokemon.  
 **10:20:**Child #2 has apparently forgotten how to do the backstroke and gets disqualified. He is devastated for five minutes and then says: "I'm hungry! Can I have a donut?"  
 **10:30am:** A kid is swimming breaststroke for the first time. He is tiny and can barely make it across the pool. All the other swimmers in the race have finished and are hanging onto the wall, watching him. He looks around and sees he's dead last. He starts to sag in the water. Parents who don't even know the kid begin to cheer their hearts out. KICK! KICK! KICK! Teenage coaches from the other team start clapping for him and running up and down the side of the pool. He touches the wall and the whole place goes nuts for him. The swimmers in the lanes on either side of him shake his hand and pat him on the back.  
 **10:40am:** Still thinking about how happy I am for participating in a sport where a kid who comes in last still walks away feeling awesome.  
  
**10:45am:** My chair is now in full sun and it's sizzling.  
  
**10:49am:** The timers are switching to the other side of the pool and "Gagnam Style" starts to play over the speakers. A horde of small children start to boogie down. Some of them know all the moves and it quickly becomes a dance battle for the ages.  
  
**10:55am:** Child #3 swims her hardest and gets crushed by the kids who train all winter. She's still smiling because she beat her best time.  
  
**10:59am:** Child #2 wanders over and says: "I'M HUNGRY".  
 **11:05am:** Misplace my youngest child, age 5. Find her sitting with John Ross, a 15 year old boy she adores, who is very patiently discussing Spiderman with her. I ask her to come back to our chairs. She glares at me and says: "WE ARE TALKING. ABOUT SPIDERMAN."  
  
**11:30am:** The crowd has thinned and the meet is winding down. Watching the teenagers swim Butterfly now. It's kind of beautiful. I make a comment about this to my kids, in the hopes that they'll watch and really observe how it's done when it's done well. The big kids glance at the race for 2/5 of a second then go back to playing Uno in a towel fort with their friends. The little one is asleep in a lounge chair with a ring pop dangling off one finger.  
  
**Noon:** Arrive home. Face sunburned to a bright red. Want to collapse into the dark, air conditioned living room and not move ever again.  
  
**12:05pm:** Child #3 wanders into the living room and says: "I'm bored. Can we go to the pool?"

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