

# The Team Culture Aspect of "Success"

John Leonard

Think ahead to our end of season meets I would like to address both swimmers and parents about the team culture aspect of "success".

First, please understand that the coaches will be excited for the swimmers when they do well. Also understand that the "more excited" parents and coaches get about a good swim, the "bigger deal" it will be, and the HARDER it is for the child to continue to get better.

So, the coaches comments and attitude will FOCUS on how to get faster the next time the child swims the event, (how to swim better.) and we'd ask parents to offer a "restrained" congrats. I know this is counter-intuitive to parents, but TOO MUCH praise acts as a brake on further improvement.

We want to foster the idea that IMPROVEMENT comes from attention to detail, swimming correctly, and following instructions. "Well done, good swim" is a good parental comment. "AWESOME, UNBELIEVEABLE, FANTASTIC" is NOT a good set of comments. (Think about what those words MEAN.)

Also, we want to teach the children that joy over a good swim is a good thing. But perspective and recognizing that they are hard working swimmers with good coaching, is more important. NATURALLY they will improve! If they practice well, and consistently, they will improve -- maybe not every time, but very often. So the behavior of the athlete needs to follow the idea of "Act like you have been there before!" (Instead of the showboating pro football player, who does dances and calls attention to himself for an ordinary tackle or run. They get paid millions of dollars to run or to tackle....they should be doggone good at it. Just hand the ball to referee and get back in the huddle....) Same in swimming. Smile, shake hands with the swimmer next to you, go back and see the coach, accept a couple of congratulations and listen to the coach to learn how to continue to improve next time. Two minutes

after the race, forget it and start thinking through your next race. And do EXACTLY the same after a less than satisfactory swim.

Be happy, celebrate, but be respectful of both your fellow competitors and the process of improvement.

Parents, please share this with your swimmers, either in writing or your own words. Expect to hear the coaches explaining this to swimmers as well.

If the team culture is right, every swimmer will be "right".