

Bennett Apostol

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Zone Diversity Swim Camp

They say unity is defined by the state of being united or joined as a whole, but the USA Zone Diversity Select Camp was much more than that. When I heard that I could apply to attend the Select Camp I was curious to know what it would be like. Two weeks later, I was ecstatic to learn that I was accepted and given the opportunity to fly down to San Diego. Not only that but I was able to travel alongside my swim coach, Kristen Wyatt, close friend and teammate, Oshay Birdinground, and fellow competitor from Bozeman, Sara Guillen. At first, I thought the camp started once we landed in San Diego. However, our trip started after we hooked up with Miss Susan Huckleby from Butte and met some very fun and energetic people in Salt Lake City. Sohnnny, Sebastian, and Coach Audrey were the zone representatives from Utah and they flew down with us to San Diego. Once we arrived at the dorms, we immediately unloaded our luggage and started to meet and greet other swimmers and coaches.

As we started to get to know each other, I realized there were swimmers from the west coast who were of very high caliber and could achieve times that were equal to AAAA standards. While this did make me feel a little intimidated, it also inspired me to achieve goals similar to the ones that they were striving for. Everyday at each 2 hour long practice, I never lost sight of what I wanted to accomplish despite the practices being more intense than what I was accustomed to. What really helped me be more

insightful and passionate in achieving these goals were the talks presented to us by various people.

One such person was US national swimmer, Giles Smith. He really gave a new perspective into the life of an experienced and talented swimmer and how he overcame his struggles in his swimming career. Giles really helped me understand the true meaning behind the sport of swimming. What I took away from his speech was "It's not the idea of becoming a future Olympian, but rather being the best swimmer that you can be." This completely changed my perspective of swimming and I still hold onto that idea to this day.

Now our days weren't fully filled with just swimming and dryland exercises. We also had fun in the sun and had an opportunity to give back to the community by picking up the litter off Moonlight State Beach. Before concluding the Camp, we also had fun at the bowling alley scoring a few strikes and gutter balls alongside our new friends and inspirational coaches.

In conclusion, thank you Montana Swimming and the executive board for giving me this special opportunity to strengthen my skills as a swimmer, and more importantly, to further grow and develop my personal character. I feel blessed to be part of an amazing LSC and am proud to have represented Montana in San Diego.