

WEYMOUTH WAVES SWIMMING TRAINING GROUP PROGRESSION

As swimmers age and develop their training needs change dramatically. What is proper training for a 10-year old is not at all appropriate for a 14-year old or a senior in high school. And the level of commitment expected of a senior athlete training for senior nationals cannot be expected of a novice trying to learn the rudiments of freestyle technique. Our team as a whole is split into distinct training groups to meet swimmers' changing needs as they grow, and to ensure their continued development and improvement.

While all of our training groups will work to develop the elite athlete triad of **training, technique, and competitive psychology**, they will do so with different methods, priorities, and expectations, to take advantage of physical and mental "sensitive periods" as children grow. These distinct training groups have:

- different kinds of training, developmentally determined;
- different volumes and intensities of training, developmentally determined;
- different speeds of training;
- different expected levels of commitment to swimming.

Generally, as swimmers age and develop, the demands – and the performance levels – rise gradually.

Our aim is to put swimmers where they belong physiologically, psychologically, and developmentally. It is important to note here that swimmers show which groups they belong in, and which groups fit their needs best, not by what they say, but by what they do every day in practice. And it is important to note that swimmers' day to day practice performance is much more important than their race results in determining where they fit best. When considering promoting a swimmer from one group to the next in the team progression, three factors are most important:

1. The swimmer is leading the group he or she is in currently.
2. The swimmer is consistently training at least at the level of the lower tier of the higher group, and across the board, not just in one favorite stroke. The principle here is simple: you will not fit in with a higher group if you cannot train at their paces. (And we will not slow a group down to fit a slower swimmer.)
3. The swimmer has the commitment level of the higher group. This idea of commitment has three prongs: attendance at and full participation in team meets, in particular championship meets in and out of state; practice attendance recommendations or requirements of the higher training group; work ethic and attitude. Again the principle is simple: you will not keep up with the progress of a group if you do not come to practice as much, work as hard, or go to the team meets where that attendance and work ethic bear fruit.

Other factors that weigh in the decision for group placements are the swimmer's age, psychological maturity level, physiological needs/opportunities, competitive maturity, independence and self-reliance, leadership abilities, coachability, and willingness to be held accountable for training and racing. Also, and very importantly, the swimmer's parents must understand and accept the demands of the higher group placement; it is common, and problematical, that a swimmer wants to come to practice but his parents will not or cannot take him.

Once placed in the higher group, a swimmer's remaining there is contingent upon maintaining the training levels and commitment levels of that group.

Decisions regarding group promotions are **always in the hands of the coaches**. We know the different training groups and their demands; we know the swimmers and their daily performances & attitudes; and, putting these two together, we know where swimmers would best fit in the program.

It is sometimes the case that, at the time of group promotion decisions, a swimmer will be "on the bubble," his performance and commitment straddling two groups. Here it is best to err on the side of caution: when in doubt, stay put. It is much easier to promote someone mid-season if necessary, than it is to demote him when it becomes obvious he can't handle the work and doesn't yet fit into the higher level group. Demotions always ruffle feathers and bruise the egos of swimmers and parents; promotions rarely do. Also note that mis-matches, when a swimmer is moved up but cannot meet the demands of the new group, hurt performance and motivation: getting hammered and missing intervals and thus swimming straight continually neither motivates nor helps to develop abilities...

It is interesting to note that every one of the mistakes I have made concerning group promotions has happened when I moved someone up before they could really handle the workload, and I moved the swimmer up at the insistence of a parent and against my better judgement.

With exceptions at coaches' discretion, training groups have regular promotions twice a year, in April after the short course season, and in late August after the long course season.

It is important to realize that each training group has a fairly broad range of training capabilities; further, as the level of the swimmers in the program rises, so do the standards of each training group. As of the fall of 2019, the Weymouth Waves training group progression, with brief group descriptions and membership parameters, is as follows:

"SENIOR A" TRAINING GROUP

This is our highest, most demanding, and most competitive senior training group. Swimmers range from New England champs to Futures and Junior National level swimmers. Ages are generally 14 to 18. During the school year swimmers attend 6 to 8 training sessions per week at 2-1/4 to 2-3/4 hrs per session; during the too-short summers and peak training periods during the school year, this number increases. These swimmers are committed to high-level performance. They represent the team in various national-level travel meets.

“SENIOR B” TRAINING GROUP

One level below the Senior A in both performance and commitment levels is the Senior B training group. This is a more diverse training group than the Senior A group, and is aimed at athletes, generally at the local level, who are increasing their commitment to swimming and working to the New England champs and Sectionals levels of performance. Senior B swimmers are aged 12 to 16, and there is a range from 4 to 8 practices per week at 2-1/4 hrs per session.

“JUNIOR A” TRAINING GROUP – SEAL TEAM 2

The Junior A group is the highest training and commitment level in the junior program. Swimmers are aged 10 to 14 years old, with the 10 year olds at the AA level and higher, the 11-12's usually at the AA level and higher, and the 13-14's ranging from BB to A levels. The competitive focus for this group is on the New England championships. Swimmers are expected to attend 4 to 6 practices per week at 1-1/2 hrs per session, with perhaps more during the summer, as determined by the coach. While still focused on technical improvement, we also train. There is a strong focus on preparing the Junior A swimmers for future high level senior swimming.

“JUNIOR B” TRAINING GROUP

The Junior B group is for swimmers aged 8 to 12 at a local/regional performance levels. Swimmers attend 3 to 5 training sessions per week at 1-1/2 hrs per session. The training focus is on developing a very strong technical background, beginning the aerobic buildup that will be emphasized in the Junior A group, and teaching the kids to “think like champions.”

Michael Brooks, Head Coach
Weymouth Waves Swimming
Fall 2019