

Moving to Year-Round Swimming

“I Have A Nine Year Old Who Has Been Swimming In A Summer League For The Past Three Years. As He Begins Swimming With A Year Round Program, What Things Should Be Emphasized?”

Answered by: Rick Curl, Head Coach of the Curl-Burke Swim Club

I have coached in the summer leagues in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area for 18 years. In addition, I worked with the Solotar Swim Club for six years and founded the Curl Swim Club eight years ago.

Each summer many parents get involved in their child's primary activity, such as summer league swimming. Summer leagues are very popular in the Washington, DC area. There are more than 300 teams that are divided into several leagues. When the season ends in August, the local United States Swimming teams will conduct tryouts and give presentations for individuals interested in continuing in a swimming program.

The summer league program is such a short season and each swimmer strives to improve from the past summer. Their main goal is to improve their performances and have a successful season each summer. Also, most parents want children to participate in a healthy activity with intangible benefits offered by a team sport and goal setting.

I feel that it is very important to present a well-rounded program for each age group swimmer. They must enjoy themselves certainly, we all learn more effectively in a pleasant environment. Stroke development is of utmost importance to the young swimmer. They should not be allowed to focus on any one stroke. Long distance training is not necessary in the developing years. Poor stroke habits develop and the boredom of long distance training will most likely have a negative effect on them. A young swimmer must learn proper starts, turns and stroke mechanics so that he or she will develop in many other areas as he progresses and gets older. They will also specialize in a certain area and stroke as they mature.

Parents should encourage their children to be involved in a number of activities. When a youngster devotes too many hours to training each week, he or she will be unable to experience other sports and activities such as music, dance etcetera. I believe that we should give each child the opportunity to be well rounded. Often times, a swimmer will drop out of the sport and not have another activity to fall back on.

Swimmers should be taught and trained in a progressive manner. Each step should include continued stroke development. Other important areas of competitive swimming should be introduced as the swim progresses. If a youngster is having fun while he learns, he will show the greatest amount of improvement.

Parents throughout the competitive swimming experience hold a vital role in the success of the swimmer. They must continually reinforce the swimmer and support the program and coaching philosophies that they have chosen.

Communication between the parent and coaching staff is important so that a child does not experience conflict and become confused.