GCSTO Families,

 Breaks are good so ENJOY your break that you're in (Novice, Level 1, 2 & 3) or will be in shortly (Level 4 & 5). ***In fact... these are absolutely GREAT for the physical growth & development of your athletes and for the mental recovery time away from it all.*** Heck... it's great for the parents and coaches in relation to that, as well.

   Some can be fooled into believing that they are falling behind during these breaks when, in fact, they could be jumping ahead. **SERIOUSLY, DO THE FOLLOWING IF YOU ARE THE PARENT OF ONE OF OUR Level 3 or younger swimmers**... weigh and measure the height of your child TODAY! Seriously... do it today!  Now... do the same the day before our season starts in spring. What I believe a majority of you will find is that your athletes went through a huge growth spurt during that break. It's the same from the end of summer activities to the start of school. How many times have you bought clothes several weeks before the start of school in the fall only to have your kids be out of those within a month of school? Now it may not be as noticeable if they are diving right into some other sport most days of the week but if they've simply taken a break you're probably going to see a BIG difference. Basically... the breaks allow these athletes bodies to focus more on growth as during heavy periods of training/activity it's all their bodies can do just to keep up with day to day energy needs let alone having energy to left over to grow. When they take these breaks away from constant, heavy physical activity it gives them a chance to focus on that growth and recovery. We can get back whatever training/conditioning an athlete loses in those few weeks in just a week or two but we cannot force them to grow with any type of training technique that we have today. We'd rather have an athlete come back to us a couple inches taller, more physically recovered, more physically developed and more mentally recovered than simply in a couple weeks better condition! We can recondition them quickly from there.

   **The Beauty Of Being Able To Use Times In Our Sport To Determine Comparative Success:** USA Swimming ranks our swimmers in each age group each year according to times. Unlike gymnastics, basketball, softball and such where you can have stats to rank kids but you really have nothing that "puts it all together" to rank them, TIMED sports do have that luxury. America youth sports participants have been led to believe that the earlier a child experiences success in this sport the better their chances to succeed. As such, we have kids specializing too early, people taking minor bumps in the road way to seriously, people being convinced that they must train hard all year around, people being convinced they must search elsewhere if their child has a simple plateau in performance where they are at and so on. The crazy thing is... is that our data in this sport shows JUST the opposite. The earlier an athlete national level prowess the less chance they have of ever being that good again. MUCH LESS... in fact! USA Swimming started tracking this in the 90's by looking at all of the athletes ranked as the Top 16 fastest swimmers in America in each event and then watching them throughout their development to see what happened throughout the course of their career (how they progressed based on a comparative basis with the rest of the nation). The results were shocking... in terms of the 9-10's they looked at all of the kids ranked Top 16 in all events and then then next year looked for them again in the Top 16 rankings as 11-12's, then 2 years later as 13-14's, then 15-16's and finally as 17-18's some 7-8 years later. Want to know how many of ALL of those 10 & under Top 16 swimmers showed back up as Top 16 17-18's all those years later? Around 1% of them did! They've followed this for years and the figure has not gone above 2-3%. Think about what that says... it says that if your child is a GREAT 10 & under that, for whatever reason, they actually have a 97-99% chance that they will never be that good again when compared to the rest of the nation! Some may want to claim that this is due to "burn-out" and while that may have something to do with it in some athletes it could simply be because they were much bigger 10 years olds than their peers and once their peers caught up with them in size things changed. It could be because they simply chose another sport. It could be because they simply quit sports to pursue other disciplines. It could be anything but the fact is that somehow 97-99% of the OTHER athletes developed enough along the way to get into the picture!

  Our main jobs as coaches are to keep our athletes interested in our sport until such time as the athlete decides they want to use the knowledge and training that we are giving them to take the next step. We cannot MAKE them change their strokes, we cannot MAKE them work harder, we cannot MAKE them grow, we cannot MAKE them do anything. All that we can do is give them an environment in which the LOVE to come to practice, they feel HAPPY when they are there and know that they are APPRECIATED for being there until such time as THEY MAKE the decision themselves to train harder, change their strokes, eat better, pace swims better and son on and so on.

  ENJOY YOUR BREAK and we hope to see you back in the spring so that we can keep developing their strokes, keep teaching them more about the sport and keep them happy that they have chosen swimming as one of their disciplines. Thanks!

Steve Nye

GCSTO