

I can't believe it's already time to give this speech. I remember Justin Crew giving his senior speech and telling us to enjoy our time at SPY in high school because time flies. Of course I blew that off, being the ignorant 7th grader I was, but now I realize what he meant. Looking back on all of the memories I've made on this team it's pretty crazy to think I've been swimming on SPY for 14 years now. SPY is more than just a team, which is something that we can all attest to. SPY truly is a family, and through it, I have made many lifelong friends both on and off the team. I can't even remember how I decided to start swimming for SPY, but I guess it was a pretty good gut feeling. My career with SPY started with a swimming test where I was barely able to swim a length of the pool. It ended with anchoring the 400 free relay at Y Festival. Although, even after ending my career with SPY, it will always be a big part of my life. It's been quite an experience to say the least. Today I would like to talk about what SPY has taught me throughout my swimming career.

First, SPY taught me hardwork and dedication. The one thing I love most about swimming is if you truly put in the work, and swim to the best of your ability every day, you will improve. Your efforts in training will translate to better times in the water if you apply yourself at every practice. Even if it's only the smallest margin of improvement from a year's worth of training, all of the sacrifices and dedication are worth it in the end. The thing I admire about SPY is everyone shows up to practice ready to work their hardest no matter what, which is what keeps me going.

Another big thing that SPY has taught me is how to adapt. This past year was by far the most unusual and difficult year for swimming training because we were out of the pool for months, and had to find other ways to train outside of the water. Unlike other sports that could still get hands-on practice for their sports, swimmers were forced out of the pools, which was when we all had to get creative with our training methods. I briefly joined Calvin's cross country training group and was injured numerous times, while trying to convince myself that I could run too. Spoiler alert, swimmers were not built for running.

SPY taught me how to compete in different environments. My favorite part of training was pushing myself with Calvin in morning practices. John was always there to give us crazy difficult practices when we showed up, and Calvin and I did our best to pace each other. I was so exhausted that I could barely stay awake at school for the rest of the day. After Calvin went to college, I was lucky enough to have Jarrett take the job of being my IM training partner. I've also been pretty fortunate to have Evan pace me in breaststroke sets; even if that meant sprinting warm ups to try to keep up with me and Jarrett :). In all seriousness, I've been very lucky to have a great group of guys and girls to train with. With Reese, for example, I would swim breaststroke while she swam backstroke and try my best to keep up with her. In our new social distanced practices, we all had to learn to adapt and compete with each other even while spaced out.

Another useful lesson SPY has taught me is to NEVER give up. I've had my fair share of unfortunate races where I kept pushing through even when I thought death was coming my way. In both my first meet ever and my first Zones meet, I came very close to drowning. In the 25 fly at 4 years old, I choked on water and got my first DQ. I remember Mickey running over to the

wall to make sure I wasn't unconscious. But hey, like I said, I never gave up. In my 50 fly at Zones, Carson told me "bad luck" instead of "good luck" as a joke before I went up to race. I remember being a little more nervous than usual while swimming. I got so worried about the "bad luck" thing that I forgot to lift my head out of the water when I took my first breath out of the wall. I literally inhaled the water and struggled on my way back to the finish, imitating Carson's technique, ironically. I nearly passed out after finishing my race and after coughing up water for 15 seconds, the timer said to me, "Jesus Christ kid, are you okay?". Well, I wasn't, but, like I said, I never gave up. No matter how hard the set, I will always give it my all until I pass out if I have to.

Unsurprisingly, through SPY I have learned how to have fun while getting the work done. Some of my favorite SPY memories are hanging out with the team and joking around during and after practice. Jaden has never failed to give me a good laugh after a hard practice and the rest of the guys on the team can confirm. It was the end of the summer in 2018 when I got my first national cut. It wasn't the normal story everyone else has where they touch the wall, look up, and celebrate with the team after achieving their goal time. It was a rather boring meet with just me, Calvin, John, and a few others who were trying to get the national cuts we barely missed at the League Championship meet. Calvin was kind enough to come down and pace me for the 200 meter breaststroke national cut but he of course ended up destroying me without putting in much effort. Looking back on it, this was one of the best meets of my life, because it allowed me to qualify for nationals even if it meant embarrassing myself. While it was only a two-man team, we got the work done while enjoying the moment. Instead of having the team celebrate my first national cut, I got a high five from Calvin and a monotone "good job".

Most importantly, I would like to thank everyone who has helped me along my journey. Thank you to Mickey, John, Morgan and the other SPY coaches who guided me, have been there, and supported me throughout my entire swimming career. Thank you to all of my friends and teammates who have pushed me to my limits in the pool and allowed me to better myself as a person. Thank you to my family for taking me to every practice and meet since I was four. Thank you to the guys on the team for always giving me a laugh in the locker room when I was feeling down. Thank you to all the supportive SPY parents who have also cheered me along. I'm beyond excited to be able continue my swimming career in college, and without the help of everyone in this room, my dream would not have become a reality. I'm truly thankful to have the opportunity to be here speaking to you today after this crazy swim season. To finish my speech off I would like to give some words of wisdom. As Dory from *Finding Nemo* always said, "Just keep swimming".