

News For

SWIM PARENTS

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Practice Objectives And Routines - What To Expect Notes to Parents from the Coaching Staff

Practices for our advanced age group swimmers are planned in advance based upon short term and long term goals. Short term goals are usually eight weeks to 26 weeks in time and revolve around increasing the quantity of work, improving the quality (times) achieved in practice, skill development, and progressing towards competition time standards. Long term goals can be summarized by simply saying we are preparing the children for higher levels of practice ability and higher levels of competition.

There is another aspect of practices beyond the improvement of physical abilities. We strive to teach and to provide opportunities for young people to learn responsibility, self reliance, team support, ability to face challenges, and satisfaction from meeting and exceeding challenges.

In general, on some days we focus on developing aerobic ability. Practices range from 3000 yards to 6000 yards in 90 minutes depending on ability. The practice is divided into "sets" of swims lasting 10 minutes to, sometimes, one hour. Within the set we will do a series of distances ranging from 25 yards to 1000 yards non-stop; for example, 12 times 100 yard freestyle leaving every 1 minute and 40 seconds. We work on all strokes during the course of a workout. We teach the swimmers to read a pace clock, to calculate their times, and to swim with control. Most sets are designed so that swimmers will descend (go faster) with each swim. Learning to use the pace clock and report their times to the coach helps the swimmers become accountable and to focus on their efforts. Coaches also make stroke corrections between swims.

In general, on other days, we do extended dryland work, then warm up swimming, then stroke drills, and then race pace or sprint work. These days are shorter in yardage, typically 2000 to 3000 yards, but very intense on quality of times as swimmers are challenged to achieve and exceed race pace times. It's not unusual to also do relays or possibly a game that improves speed, coordination, and team dynamics on these days as well.

Bottom line: We seek to create an environment where children are challenged, happy, and improving.

Thoughts About Leadership In the Pool

Coach Mark Schubert: "If you want to raise the level of your team, you have to center your workout around the best swimmers on the team. You don't ignore the other swimmers, but you tailor the workouts to challenge the best swimmers, so the others tag along and raise their level. You can set tough intervals, and adjust the way the sets are done for slower swimmers, but you certainly don't motivate the better swimmers by having them go a lesser workout centered around the majority of the team. I also feel that by giving extra attention to the better swimmers, you motivate the lesser swimmers to strive to be better, so they get that attention. As you gradually raise the team level, you will have people breaking through and challenging the good swimmers."

Coach Ira Klein of the Sarasota Swim Academy says it's natural that kids who lead lanes get more time between repeats for valuable feedback from the coach, and that the prospect of earning such attention motivates more kids to take a leadership position in practice, rather than habitually swimming in the back of the loop.

Some coaches, such as Chris Martin formerly with the Peddie School and now with the British National Swim Team, starts sets concurrently at both ends of the pool in order to create twice as many "leaders."