

News for Swim Parents

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SHOULD MY CHILD SWIM SUMMER LEAGUE?

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We're in the midst of the summer league season as I write this, and we have quite a few athletes who compete for both their summer league team as well as our year-round USAS team. Should they? Sure! Simply put, it's fun!

However, older children, injury-prone athletes, and national caliber swimmers need to approach summer league carefully. Pool time during summer league practice is limited, and older children would be better off evaluating their goals to decide whether competing with a summer league team supports the goals they hope to achieve. They might consider practicing with their year-round team while still competing at night for their summer league team. What's more, summer league coaches appreciate less crowded lanes while teaching the novice swimmers.

Summer league races focus on sprint events, often not the focus of a year-round swimmer's training. Additionally, summer league meets offer little warm up and warm down opportunities. This set of circumstances creates a situation where athletes are more likely to get injured. Responsible year-round swimmers would be wise to do a proper warm up at another pool and to stay after the summer league meet is over to do a thorough warm down when they can. Swimmers with a history of shoulder injuries should be especially wary about swimming summer league and should probably avoid it altogether if they are serious about being long-term competitive swimmers. It is imperative that those with shoulder problems continue with any exercises they have been prescribed to help keep their shoulders healthy throughout the summer.

National caliber swimmers need to keep their goals in mind when considering whether or not to join a summer league team. The intense demands on time and energy, and the dedication required to meet long term objectives, mean the distractions of summer league swimming will impair progress toward those objectives.

Summer league meets that last late into the night cause swimmers of all ages and abilities to be tired, and their training the next day will suffer. This means athletes should be scheduling naps, staying out of the midday heat, and taking care to hydrate and refuel.

Summer league swimming is often a youngster's first introduction to our great sport. Having the more accomplished year-round swimmers compete on the same team creates a friendly bridge between summer league and more dedicated year-round swimming. Just make sure if your child decides to join in on the fun that he understands how summer league affects training, injury rates, and goal outcomes.

After considering all of the above, make sure you speak with your year around club coach before making a final decision.