

The Sport of HIGH SCHOOL Swimming Defined

By Vicky Dewey, College Park High School Head Coach

In the competitive sport of swimming there is no magic wand that can be the substitute for time, frequency, application, volume/energy systems and educated attitude.

Definitions:

Application – complete sets with best effort with mechanics and techniques prescribed by the coach. This includes proper rest, nutrition and mental attitude.

Time – in the sport of swimming; we cannot hope to cram more swimming into a shorter period of time, in hopes to gain advantage. The physiology of adaptation takes time over a period of cycles. It is a process that we cannot rush, wish, or look for shortcuts. If we desire results that match as closely as possible to our potential, we must be willing to be patient and perseverant.

Frequency – Within our given "time "meaning our swim season, adaptation also directly correlates to frequency. Each and every week a good coach has a plan in order for the team as a whole, as well as the variety of different individual specialties, to reach certain adaptive plateaus. It is my opinion, as well as that of many that coach teenage athletes in high school swimming and year-round swimming, that four days per week of attendance is the very least to obtain reasonable goals.

Volume/Energy Systems -Whether you are a sprinter or a distance swimmer, it is important at the start of any season to establish an aerobic base. The high school season duration being so short creates very unique challenges. Unless you are swimming year round, the provided three months of high school spring swimming does not technically provide enough time to establish an athlete to be at peak performance by their end of season championship meets. This means swimming at the high school level it is most imperative to follow the coaches prescribed protocol of application, frequency and time. The high school season means we have to get focused and started right away. Swimming is a sport for those that are high achievers, diligent, spirited, and educated in a deeper understanding of what it takes to derive success.

Which leads me to talking a bit more detailed about volume/energy/swimming cycles-I will talk about these in different orders.

There is a systematic plan as I mentioned before in periodization. At the start of any season the entire group regardless of specific stroke or distance specialties will be coached to obtain an aerobic base, (probably starting with approximately 2500 to 3000 yards for the varsity group)also incorporating general stroke technique and core stabilization (that we hope the swimmers retain and carry throughout the entire season) before moving on to the next adaptive cycle which includes other types of training including anaerobic, and threshold training as well as general strength training which includes dryland.

Generally speaking, adaptive cycles usually cycle in three week periods. Of course this in a perfect world.

So....there *is* a method to a coaches' madness. We carefully and systematically plan out the season looking at our top meet and what we want for results and work backwards. Each season has a plan. Each adaptive cycle has a plan. As each week has a plan for rotating different energy systems so that we are not over training one or the other and they are working together harmoniously to create the best athlete, and each day is also planned with much thought. That is why there is such an **Insistence Of frequency** in attendance by the coaches. We are trained and have the knowledge to have a plan. There is **no substitute** either, as in swimming on your own, making up your own work out, or swimming with your rec team at the end of the season. All are recipes for not reaping the planned benefits of a well-thought-out season. Being said, high school swimming is only approximately 12 weeks from the start of attempting to obtain our aerobic base training to the 11th week of taper. It is a tricky process to say the least.

Attitude--

I want to address attitude- particularly in the middle of the season. The attitude to have in the middle of the season when doubt can creep in, or the exhaustion of balancing school and sport seems overwhelming is that of calm, perseverance, and fortitude. Always try to be your best- that does not mean get to a point where you feel beaten to a pulp, frazzled and frustrated. It means application and communication. In addition to Applying best effort to each and every practice and race, it is important to apply your best communication skills with your coach about how you are feeling, your workload and the possibly if agreed; to tweak your program. It is up to YOU the swimmer, not the parent. to communicate. Don't make assumptions that we coaches just "should know."

Attitude at meets is as if every meet is the dress rehearsal for the championships. This does two things; it is an exercise in routine of the mind and the body. It also sets a team apart in spirit, teamwork and belief in each other that we will persevere and have a successful and winning season. We cannot perform at our best without the closest rehearsal of our final Championship meet.

Most can chart similar progress that will show peaks and valleys of what the athlete's body is experiencing during training which directly correlates with the athlete's meets/times. I suspect early in the season the meet directly after first time trials times there will likely be slight betterment of times. After that there should be some plateauing and leveling as we head into more intensity at practice and a hectic "many meet" schedule during our short season. There is no alarm when times are not dropping in the midst of our season.

As I mentioned, the most educated swimmers do not despair, they have the wisdom and understanding that this is part of the plan. This is part of the cycles the person and body must go through to achieve personal best results. The word "popped "times is not in our vocabulary in the sport of high school swimming. It is reserved for an amateur recreational level of swim competition. In the higher level of swim training and competition we cannot expect that every meet will bring or should bring a new personal best time. Take a look at the elite swimmers of the world, how often do they have best times? The reality.....maybe once every four years.

I would be more concerned if an athlete was hitting personal best times every single meet. Something is wrong with their training plan. Those that have only experienced recreational swimming have unfairly been conditioned to have this false belief. It also creates and justifies the "have it now "approach, i.e.: The magic wand or quick fix or more frankly the idea "I don't have to put in hard work."

Goals - There is a synergistic relationship between the coach and swimmers which together define not only what the Team ultimately desires to accomplish but in addition and most importantly the ROAD MAP TO GET THERE.

Team Goals might sometimes be lofty, but have you heard of Rudy Rudegar? Have you heard of Eddie the Eagle? Have you hear of Boise State football? The Hoosiers? Yep, No goal is too lofty if we have commitment, willness, unselfishness, and a positive attitude.

1. Number 1 on the Roadmap is Unselfish Team Commitment. This means sometimes you will be called upon to swim for the team. That means it might be an event that is not your specialty, maybe even something you don't particularly like. There are plenty of meets to be assured you will have opportunity to reach your personal goals.
2. Number 2 on the Roadmap is Commitment to Time. Your lane mates need you at practice; your teammates need you at meets. I like to reference the analogy of "We are in the trenches together."
3. Number 3 A Positive Attitude and unwillingness to give up.

Personal Goals (to be included in the bio questionnaire)

Here is a list of questions I would like each swimmer to answer regarding personal goals. Please define your goals based on the high school swim season. (Not summer league)

1. Look at a calendar and your ability to commit. How many days will you attend practice?
2. Are there any meets you anticipate missing?
3. What meet will be your big meet? DVAL? NCS? STATE?
4. What type of preparation are you going to have at practice and meets? I.e.: prepared, equipment, rested, nutrition, hydration.....other
5. Have you been in the water prior to the high school season? Where? How long? Yardage?
6. Do you have specific goal times?
7. Do you have any other goal that can be integrated into the program? I.e.: team captain, coordinate news articles and publications.....no idea is a bad one.

Swimming is most definitely a blend of physiology which requires hard work, learning proper techniques and application and the right mental attitude. Together I hope to set us on our road to win DVAL! And not just to win, but to WIN with upholding our integrity of Character, WIN with Our hearts of Commitment, and WIN with the Comradery of all our team mates with the belief that we could not have done it without each other.

**LET'S GO FOR IT COLLEGE PARK!
LET'S SET OUR ROAD MAP & POST A WIN AT DVAL!
GO FALCONS!**