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News For SWIM PARENTS

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Thoughts on Age Group Development

We do not need to give all the available meets, awards, training time, or even training techniques to all levels and all ages of swimmers. Life is progressive. We cannot drive until we are sixteen, we cannot vote until we are 18. Just because we have seniors swimming at prelim and final meets doesn't mean that age group swimmers need to also. Age group swimmers do not need the same kind of awards which seniors receive. Our system gives too much too soon and sets up for a serious problem because every level looks the same. Let the swimmers grow through the sport rather than giving it to them. Let them experience racing, winning, and losing but they do not need twelve solid years of these things to become effective prelims-finals swimmers.

- Peter Malone
ASCA Level 5
K.C. Blazers

Sometimes young swimmers perform exceptionally well quite simply because they are "big for their age" and, or, they are capable of working harder. They do not need to depend on technique and they may, or may not have better technique than slower swimmers. If we could go back and get a physical description of all the 10 and under swimmers who were nationally ranked, I think we would find that these young athletes were all more physically developed than the average 10 and under.

Most of these children will not continue dominating their age group into the senior years as other swimmers catch up in size and ability to work. Unfortunately they may not have developed the quality of skills other swimmers have. Too often the result is a young senior swimmer who becomes frustrated at losing when he had been so used to winning.

There are two important points for parents to keep in mind:

1. Skills need to be the basis of an age group program, not distance.
2. It is a mistake to seek a distance oriented age group program to place your child in so that he can keep up with other faster swimmers.

Age group swimmers should concentrate on fundamentals and not senior oriented yardage so that they can learn correctly. There is a proper time and place for athletes to take part in a serious training program but it is not for our younger swimmers. We must accept the fact that we are not dealing with miniature adults.

- Jim Lutz
ASCA Level 5