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News For

# SWIM PARENTS

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## Are All Efforts Good Efforts?

**Concern:** My 12 year old is a good swimmer who regularly places in the final 8 in several events at swim meets. The coach, however, is sometimes unsatisfied with my child's performance. I believe that all my son's efforts are good efforts, regardless of time or place. The coach should not be unsatisfied.

**Response:** Congratulations! You're right on! Your approach is outstanding for a parent. Why "for a parent"? Because the parental role is different from the coaching role in swimming. You are doing a perfect job of parenting -- unqualified support for your child's efforts. That is exactly as it should be, and your child should feel loved and respected for his efforts.

The coach, however, has a different role. The coach role is that of the technical evaluator. That is a role that a parents cannot, and should not play. As a technical evaluator, it is important that the coach never appear to be "satisfied" with a swim. The coach will typically make a "sandwich" of their comments. For example:

"John, that was a good swim, I really liked your turns, and the streamlining out of them. You were kind of slow on the 2nd and 3rd splits, then you did a good job of bringing it home."

Positive comment, correction, positive comment. Sometimes, it might be two corrections sandwiched around a compliment. In any case, this is the function of the coach. Your coach probably recognizes that you are already doing a good job reinforcing the positive things that are happening for your child, and feels free to evaluate the swim quite honestly.

You want the coach to do this evaluation because it tells the child that there is more that can be done to improve. What would be the purpose of telling someone, "John, that was perfect swim!" Perfect means there can be no more improvement!

The only problem I can see here is if the child is perceiving the post-race comments as negative only. If this is the case, the coach and athlete need to sit down and understand mutually what the purpose of pre and post race comments is.

Congratulations on your approach, its terrific!