



Why the Coach picks the Meet Events

By Coach Mike Werner

In every sport, the coach picks the position that they feel the player will be the most beneficial to the team. Does this mean it's the same position every time? Not necessarily, but unfortunately in a lot of youth sports, there is little variation. Swimming is an amazing anomaly this way.

In order for a swimmer to have a successful competitive swimming journey, they need to be versatile and experience everything the sport has to offer. How often in youth sports does a child get to experience every position? How often does every single player get the opportunity to have equal playing time or participate in the same number of plays? Off the top of my head, I'm not able to think of any team sports like this. Again, swimming is an amazing anomaly this way!

For the majority of meets, the coaches will sign up the swimmers for their events. There will be some meets that the swimmers are allowed to choose their own events, but for the most part, the coaches will do the picking. There are often times when groups are focusing on specific strokes and strategies, and the coach wants to see the swimmers implement these lessons from practice into a race situation.

Also, the biggest factor of this methodology is that we need the swimmers to try *each and every* event. Uncomfortable equals growth. The swimmers see every stroke and different distances of that stroke in practice each week. We don't put swimmers in events that they aren't ready to handle. Just because they don't like a stroke doesn't mean that they aren't good at it, or capable of swimming that event.

A swimmer may verbalize that they want to go for a cut (qualifying time) or time standard at a specific meet, but this may be different than what the group is focusing on at a particular training phase of the season. So the coach may not put them in that event right then. Plus there are so many factors to look at when picking events.

If age group swimmers swim the same events over and over, it gets pretty boring. Over the years, we have found that swimmers need a variety, both in practice and at meets. As they finish growing/developing, which is usually in the late teens, then you will start to see more specialization.

All of our swimmers are IM'ers, distance swimmers, stroker's and sprinters. We don't just make 50 butterfly's, 100 breaststroker's, etc. Our swimmers are just that, swimmers. They swim everything. They will always have their favorite events, but that doesn't mean it's their best event(s). We work with youth swimmers during their developmental years. Our philosophy is based on making them well rounded, versatile swimmers. Physiologically, this time is the most crucial to develop their endurance levels for the rest of their careers. And history has repeatedly shown us that a well-rounded focus provides greater longevity in the sport. Almost every "drop dead" sprinter started out in the distance lanes. These were the events that they got their first junior national or national cuts in!

We hope this gives you a glimpse behind the curtain to see how the wizards work. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact your swimmer's coach. Just remember, do it before the meet entry deadline!