

Hello 757 Family,

I hope you all are doing well during these difficult and uncertain times. I know I speak for the entire coaching staff when I say that your social media engagement has provided some much-needed levity over the past week. We unquestionably have the best mascot lineup of any Virginia Swimming Team!

Today I wanted to share an article about summer league swimming. Like all of you, I have greatly missed being on deck this past week and have found my thoughts turning to the summer season as something to look forward to. I'll leave you with this article about the merits of summer league, and then provide some of my own insights below. Before proceeding however, I should note that this email is not to dissuade you from attending 757 practices this summer in favor of your summer team. In fact, all good summer league coaches who have their swimmers' best interests at heart will encourage committed year-round swimmers to attend their club practices whenever possible.

<https://www.swimmingworldmagazine.com/news/an-open-letter-to-summer-league-swimming/>

At the start of each summer season I have my staff and senior swimmers alike write down their goals for the season. And every year, like clockwork, I get the same responses: have fun, foster friendships, and create a lifelong love of our wonderful sport. In essence, that's what summer league is all about. While racing and competing are inherent in sprint-centered summer leagues and provide a valuable change of pace for club swimmers racking up insane yardage over the year, summer swimming is a time to decompress from the rigors of our sport, and reassess what motivate all of us to come back year after year.

The first and most important feature of summer league is that having fun should be prioritized over anything else. Be silly, be carefree, and dare I say, even be a little mischievous. Our sport is predicated upon hard work, commitment, and accountability. Summer league offers the introduction to these core tenants through a much more relaxed vein. Encourage your swimmers, kids, and friends to be themselves, and cherish their introduction to swimming in a way that leaves them wanting to return each year.

Fostering lifelong friendships is the second goal of any successful summer swim program. Summer swimming provides an opportunity for swimmers to make friends they can return to every summer until they leave for college. In the world of summer swimming, school attendance is unimportant, and club allegiance is irrelevant. The summer pool is a chance for swimmers of differing backgrounds to form friendships that will hold throughout the winter and motivate swimmers to return every summer. As a coach or parent, do your part to foster these bonds. Let your swimmer to hang out at the pool all afternoon with their buddies, give your kid a deck of cards for after practice, and encourage your swimmer to cheer for his friends at every meet. As a coach, the fostering of friendships is an invaluable tool for teaching teamwork in a generally individualized sport.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, summer league provides a venue to create a lifelong affection for the sport of swimming. Some kids like myself, grew up in a family where

swimming was paramount. My mom swam D1 at Virginia Tech, and literally pushed me into the deep end of our summer pool when I was five. From there on, I was hooked. For other kids, there is uncertainty and hesitation. And while all coaches will do their best to support all their swimmers, it is the unfortunate truth that many of these swimmers get left behind. As members of a club team, I encourage you all to support the kids who may not love swimming right away. Provide encouragement, urge them to make friends, and ensure that they engage fully with the activities that take place outside of the pool. Jumping into the deep end can be daunting, but swimmers who are provided with a plethora of support are more likely to dive in headfirst.

I hope this email has allowed you to reflect upon why we all love our sport, and what we can do to ensure this love is passed down from one swimmer to the next. I look forward to seeing all of you on deck whenever that may be. In the meantime, I hope you can all manage to stay healthy, productive and positive during these trying times. As always, your 757 Family is here for whatever you may need.

All the best,

Coach Riley