

ISSUE

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# BAC Times

February 8,  
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Weekly Updates and Reminders for BAC swimmers, parents and coaches

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## Season-Ending Meets are Coming up!!!

Season ending meets (Regional Championships, State Meets, etc.) are all coming up. If you have any questions about how these meets work you can read our archived January 2017 Newsletter, read the posted info for each meet, or ask a coach. Get your swimmer signed up today!

## Spring and Summer Sessions

We're all wrapped up in the excitement of a season-ending, but just a reminder about our spring and summer sessions.

Spring practice schedules should be posted sometime in mid-February, and registration will be open at that point as well. (Our spring session runs from April 2nd to May 25th, and summer session goes through the end of July.) We're proud of the progress our swimmers have made this season, and we hope to see everybody back this spring!



Hey BACers! The calendar has turned to February, which means that we're in the home stretch of our SCY season. We had some great swims at PX3, Sun Prairie, and A+ this past weekend, and the coaches are excited for even more fast swimming as we roll into the season-ending meets.

The focus on this newsletter is on parent education. There is some great information in here on how to be a fabulous and supportive swim parent, as well as a thank you to all of our awesome parent volunteers! Go BAC!

## Coach Connie Martin's Advice on Being a Great Swim Parent

On a recent weekend, we cancelled practice for a few of our groups, and instead got together many of our older female swimmers and their parents for a discussion. Much of what we discussed was geared more towards that age/gender of athlete (several of our current younger female coaches were on hand to discuss their journeys through the sport of swimming), but a big topic that applies to everyone on the team was how to be a great swim parent. We thought it would be worth passing that information along to everyone!

The discussion was led by Connie Martin, the lead coach for much of our ES programming, especially the Junior Group. In case any of you aren't familiar with Connie's 'bona fides' as a swim parent, they are impressive. Connie (and husband Tom) have three daughters (Ruby – now 26, Ivy – now 24, and Maddie – now 22 and a senior at UW) who are all former BAC swimmers. All three girls were standout age group swimmers with BAC and in the

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## Coach Connie Martin's Advice on Being a Great Swim Parent Continued

All-City league. All three continued to excel at East High School, with several state championships and state records collectively. All three went on to swim collegiately for UW Madison. Ruby was a multiple-time All American and was a part of several school record setting relays. Ivy was also a part of those All-American relays (16 different All-American accolades), won 13 different BIG10 titles, and had the most distinguished career outside of college. She won a Gold Medal at the US Open in the 50 free, earning a spot on the US National Team. She got to do Team USA training camps in Australia and Europe, meet a ton of other famous swimmers, and compete at the World Championships in Russia! Perhaps most impressively, all three girls were selected as team captains their senior years, showing they earned the respect of their peers outside of the pool as well as in it. Basically, you can't ask for a group of nicer young women who also happened to be elite athletes.

What was Connie's secret? What does she feel was the key to her helping guide these 3 girls through the sport of swimming?

SHE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING.

More accurately, she feels that what she *didn't do* was far more important than anything she did, any secret trick or tactic.

Of course, she did a lot of the basic things

that every swim parent does.

- She kept them healthy and fed and got them to and from practices and meets.

- She was supportive – but appropriately so. She was always there to say “Good job – did you have fun?” after races when they were younger, and was there for them as they got older too.

- When they did want to talk about races or about practice, she made sure to express empathy.

- She helped provide a consistent environment at home. Dinner, bed, practice, and homework all on a steady schedule.

- She made sure they knew she was always there for them – with regards to swimming and to anything else.

- She taught them persistence. If they wanted to quit she made sure they saw their commitments through and finished the season, but whether they started back up next year was all up to them.

- She provided for them, but never obsessed about getting them ‘the best of everything’. They trained year-round with a great club :^) and suited up at appropriate meets, but she never worried if they had every little possible advantage. (When that hyper-support gets taken away or the playing field is evened – like in college – kids that haven't had adversity can't adjust.)

- It was important that they had a life outside of swimming.

## Coach Bios Updated

You may or may not be aware, but all of the coaches have their pictures and a brief bio on our web (the link is ‘coaches’ on the way upper left of the home page). We had some of this posted earlier in the season, but we've recently updated everything after a glitch, so check it out!



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## Coach Connie Martin's Advice on Being a Great Swim Parent Continued

They took plenty of family trips, spent lots of time on non-swim activities, and did all of the 'normal' things any kids would do. Engaging in other activities can help build up a swimmer's confidence.

Connie spent most of the discussion talking about all of the things she didn't do – many of them behaviors she's unfortunately seen modeled by other parents then and since. It's important to note that while this talk was aimed at teenagers and their parents, these aren't behaviors to avoid solely for that age group. Like establishing any good habit, it's important to start early!

- She didn't force them to talk about races (good or bad) afterward. She realized that sometimes what they needed was time to decompress, or move on, or just go and get Noodles after a meet. She was always there to listen and support, but never pressed. It can be really hard on a kid mentally to feel forced into rehashing a swim that didn't go well.

- She let them **MAKE MISTAKES**. Kids learn from mistakes, they learn what **NOT** to do.

- Never let **THEIR** swims feel like a reflection on **YOU**. It's their sport and not yours – don't ever let them feel like their swimming had a negative effect on the parent.

- She also stopped telling them 'good swim' when they were older and knew that the swim had been a disappointing one. You can tell them you're proud, or tell them they're loved, or maybe just don't say anything at all.

- She didn't provide external motivators (prizes for best times, rewards for certain cuts, etc.). This helped them develop their intrinsic motivation which is far more powerful. (More on that later.)

- She didn't contradict or bad-mouth their coaches. Connie has been a coach with BAC almost as long as

her kids have been swimmers, so she definitely knows her stuff. But she also knew that the appropriate role for her as a parent was to be part of the support system and not their coach. **COACHES COACH AND PARENTS PARENT!**

- When the girls did have issues with their coaches (as every swimmer does) she forced them to discuss things themselves, directly with the coaches. This gives kids ownership of the sport and of their development. (That doesn't mean she didn't talk with them as well, but she kept that private at home and off of the pool deck and away from the stands.)

- She didn't 'cushion their fall' or 'shelter them from the storm' when things went badly and she never made excuses for her girls.

- She maintained her self-control and was a good role model in the stands. A parent reacting inappropriately to a 'bad' swim in the bleachers is awkward (we've all seen it) and does nothing to help the swimmer feel supported.

- Don't let your swimmers become dependent on you. Connie made sure they packed their own bags, water bottle, snacks, etc. If they forgot something it was their own responsibility and it'll help them remember for next time.

- NEVER** cause them to feel that your love/support/happiness is contingent on their success in the pool.

At BAC, we're proud of our swim parents. We know from talking to coaches around the area and around the state how damaging a toxic group of parents can be to swimmers and to the club. We're pleased that our parents are passionate about their swimmer's progress, but also interested in getting educated about how they can best help their swimmer. Everyone involved just wants the best outcome for the athletes, so hopefully you'll find Connie's advice helpful!



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## How to Motivate Your Swimmer

One of the most important of the ‘intangibles’ that drive a swimmer’s success is motivation. It’s important for athletes to develop intrinsic motivation – motivation that comes from within. Supportive parents, excellent coaches, and cheering teammates can certainly help a swimmer push through a tough set, race, or season- and so can external motivators like rewards and awards - but ultimately a swimmer needs to be internally motivated in order to be successful.

Pretty much any swimming website you might come across has articles on how swimmers can stay motivated (check out <https://swimswam.com/25-powerful-ways-for-swimmers-to-stay-motivated-all-season/> for just one example). Swimmers can explore and find some things that work for them, but again, it’s important that this motivation comes primarily from within rather than due to external factors.

As we get towards the end of the season, it’s tempting for well-meaning parents to try and motivate their swimmers with prizes, bribes, and/or rewards. (Examples of this includes providing incentive for trying a certain event, for getting a ‘best time’, or for getting a state cut.) The first problem with this strategy is that it is (at best) a short-term solution to a long-term issue – helping your swimmer discover their passion for sport. The second stems from how these ‘deals’ are often perceived by young swimmers. (Credit to Coach EJ – he’s been using this example/analogy for years.)

Let’s say that you’ve told your young swimmer that if they get a state cut in the 50 free you’ll give them a puppy. (It’s happened...) You know that they really want the puppy, so you know that they’ll try their best to get that state cut, so what’s the problem?

One main issue is that your swimmer might be so excited about that puppy that they consider it already as good as gotten. In their mind they’re going to achieve that standard, and they’re going to get that puppy. If/when they fall short of their goal, it can be devastating. Not only did they fall short of their own swim goal(s), they also basically got their puppy taken away from them. All because they didn’t swim ‘fast enough’ and totally independent of whether or not they tried hard at practice, listened to coaches, or did their best.

Another issue with this type of motivation is how to take the next step. Are you going to offer them another puppy next year to get a long course cut? How about a pony if they make the Zone team or a pet walrus if they’re state champions? This type of motivation not only has it’s limits, but it also prevents swimmers from developing the internal motivation that they’ll need to stay happy and successful in the sport long term.

If you feel like your swimmer might benefit from some outside motivators, there are better ways to offer them than in exchange for best times or state cuts. Instead, reward their attendance at practice on nights they might be reluctant to go. Incentivize trying a new or difficult event at Regionals. Find a way to prize their effort in practice or a meet.



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## 8 Types of BAC Parent Volunteer

If you follow BAC on Twitter (and, really, why wouldn't you: @SwimBac) you might have seen a SwimSwam article that we retweeted a while ago on '8 Swim Parents You See at Your Local Swim Meets'. (If not, you can check it out at <https://swimswam.com/8-swim-parents-see-local-swim-meets/>)

We thought we'd do our own version celebrating all of the different types of BAC parent volunteers. It's been another great season of hosting meets, and we couldn't do it without our army of talented parents. We wanted to write this as a bit of a 'thank you' ahead of our final BAC-hosted meet of the year, the Regional Championship Meet.

### 1. "The Swiss Army Knife"

This parent is ready, willing, and able to step up and fill any job needed. They transition seamlessly from timer to concessions to meet marshal – no job is beyond their capabilities!

### 2. "The Host or Hostess"

Caring, compassionate, and concerned, this parent is always wandering the pool deck to make sure that everyone is well taken care of. Waters for the timers? Snacks for the officials? This volunteer has you covered.

### 3. "The Lifer"

Their kids were super involved in swimming...15 years ago. This volunteer has been doing it for decades and just because their kid isn't at the pool anymore doesn't mean they aren't. At this rate they'll still be volunteering when their grandkids are on the team!

### 4. "The Newbie Eager Beaver"

They don't know a stopwatch from a hot dog, but they're excited and looking to help

out! This parent type exists for only a brief time in nature because they quickly catch on and lose their 'newbie' status.

### 5. "The Grizzled Veteran"

This volunteer has been through it all and they aren't fazed by anything. Bloody nose on the pool deck? Missing swimmer? Broken stopwatch? No problem. The grizzled veteran makes for a great 'meet marshal'.

### 6. "The Baker or Chef"

Everyone knows BAC hospitality is on another level, and we often have the bakers and chefs to thank for it. No one is ever going to complain about 'store bought' food and treats, but the bakers and chefs provide that special delicious 'homemade' touch. Yum!

### 7. "The Overachiever"

Their kid is only signed up for Saturday morning, but here they are; timing Friday night, working concessions on Saturday, and asking if we need anyone on Sunday. The overachiever is closely related to, and often an early version of, the Swiss Army Knife.

### 8. "The Unsung Hero"

Meets don't happen without these folks! They often take the most difficult or technical jobs – you'll see them officiating, working the computer and Colorado, or serving as Meet Director. All of our volunteers are essential, but these folks are the 'essentialist'!

Regardless of which type of volunteer you are, we're incredibly proud of the job you've done this year and incredibly thankful for your help. You help us continue to be a great organization – Go BAC!



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## Outside the Lanes

At BAC, we're obviously proud of everything our swimmers do in the pool. But we're also frequently impressed and amazed by how multi-talented some of our swimmers are, and this section highlights their achievements 'outside the lanes'. This month we thought we'd focus on something warm to take the edge off from all of the winter weather!

Ella T is in the ES Little Badger Group. She has been waterskiing since she was 2 years old with the Mad City Ski Team. The ski team performs free ski shows all summer long at Law Park on Lake Monona. In 2017, at the age of 6, Ella joined the competition team as the youngest member of almost 90 skiers. Ella's role in the show was during the "big act" where she rides on the shoulders of another skier while performing two tricks in unison with other skiers along with some stage acts during our performance based on Dr. Seuss. Ella also loves to slalom ski and was most proud that she learned to hold the rope between her legs while skiing this summer, a trick that the ballet line performs in the ski show. You can see Ella perform with the Mad City Ski Team next summer as they perform a show based on Alice In Wonderland. For more information, visit [www.madcityskiteam.com](http://www.madcityskiteam.com) or like them on Facebook.



## Team Fun Night to Celebrate the Season!

Join your coaches and teammates for a fun night at the SkyZone Trampoline Park to celebrate another spectacular BAC season together!

### WHEN:

Tuesday, March 6, 2018  
5:00 - 8:00 PM

### WHERE:

Sky Zone Trampoline Park  
2134 W. Beltline Hwy  
Madison, WI 53713

### COST:

\$20 per person includes pizza and drink  
No difference in price if you do not eat

Sign-up by 2/20 on the BAC website  
No refunds for cancellation after 2/20



**SKY ZONE**  
**TRAMPOLINE PARK**

