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News For

SWIM PARENTS

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Moving From Summer League to Year Round Swimming

"I Have A Nine Year Old Who Has Been Swimming In A Summer League For The Past Three Years. As He Begins Swimming With A Year Round Program, What Things Should Be Emphasized?"

Answered by: Rick Curl, Head Coach of the Curl-Burke Swim Club

I have coached in the summer leagues in the Washington D.C metropolitan area for 18 years. In addition, I worked with the Solotar Swim Club for six years and founded the Curl Swim Club eight years ago.

Each summer many parents get involved in their child's primary activity, such as summer league swimming. Summer leagues are very popular in the Washington, DC area. There are more than 300 teams that are divided into several leagues. When the season ends in August, the local United States Swimming teams will conduct tryouts and give presentations for individuals interested in continuing in a swimming program.

The summer league program is such a short season and each swimmer strives to improve from the past summer. Their main goal is to improve their performances and have a successful season each summer. Also, most parents want children to participate in a healthy activity with intangible benefits offered by a team sport and goal setting.

I feel that it is very important to present a well-rounded program for each age group swimmer. They must enjoy themselves certainly, we all learn more effectively in a pleasant environment. Stroke development is of utmost importance to the young swimmer. They should not be allowed to focus on any one stroke. Long distance training is not necessary in the developing years. Poor stroke

habits develop and the boredom of long distance training will most likely have a negative effect on them. A young swimmer must learn proper starts, turns and stroke mechanics so that he or she will develop in many other areas as he progresses and gets older. They will also specialize in a certain area and stroke as they mature.

Parents should encourage their children to be involved in a number of activities. When a youngster devotes too many hours to training each week, he or she will be unable to experience other sports and activities such as music, dance etcetera. I believe that we should give each child the opportunity to be well rounded. Often times, a swimmer will drop out of the sport and not have another activity to fall back on.

Swimmers should be taught and trained in a progressive manner. Each step should include continued stroke development. Other important areas of competitive swimming should be introduced as the swim progresses. If a youngster is having fun while he learns, he will show the greatest amount of improvement.

Parents, throughout the competitive swimming experience hold a vital role in the success of the swimmer. They must continually reinforce the swimmer and support the program and coaching philosophies that they have chosen.

Communication between the parent and coaching staff is important so that a child does not experience conflict and become confused.

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Lifetime Fitness

Growing recognition that many American children are neither developing sufficient fitness, nor learning appropriate lifetime health habits has caused leading physical educators to re-evaluate their long-time methods and shed the traditional coach/drill sergeant image for an educational approach that gives young students the tools for lifetime fitness. Ron Feingold, Ph.D. of Adelphi University in N.Y., and one of the leaders in this movement explains.

"To me what's relevant is what they learn about fitness, and how do they feel about physical activity," Feingold says. "The goal should be to get them to enjoy fitness and physical activities and to understand their benefits."

Accordingly, progressive P.E. teachers are exchanging their former emphasis on teaching competitive sports skills and administering competitive fitness tests for an approach that encourages students to adopt "appropriate lifelong exercise behavior," and a healthy appreciation for physical activity. The proverbial "ounce of prevention" will help children improve their long term health prospects by developing healthy lifestyle habits from an early age.

The new priority is that kids should know how their bodies work after they've had 12 years of physical education. As one teacher said: "It's more important that they understand how to develop strength and cardiovascular fitness, how to train safely, and have a basic understanding of what happens when you move, than that they know how to shoot a basketball."

The changing focus of thinking about youth fitness is also leading to a re-examination of fitness testing methods. Such competitive tests as the Presidential Physical Fitness Test tended to discourage those

children who needed help the most. Kids who performed poorly were embarrassed both by taking the fitness test and by their results, while better athletes were rewarded for their performances.

That test has now been adjusted to make it an educational process and to focus on personal improvement rather than performance level with rewards and recognition to those making progress from previous tests. "We want kids to buy into the idea that it's the activity that's important and the performance score is secondary," says Dr. Marilu Meredith, director of youth fitness programs for the Institute of Aerobics Research. "If we can impart an activity habit - and keep it fun - they'll stay active and they will be fit."

What actions can both parents and age group coaches take to import these ideas into age group swimming?

- 1) Consciously communicate to kids the importance of aerobic fitness and "healthy hearts" by raising their level of awareness of swimming's aerobic benefits.
- 2) Be more conscious of the importance of your own role modeling in maintaining good health through personal fitness programs.
- 3) Balance emphasis on achievement and performance for age groupers with emphasis on the simple values of participation for the long term and communicate swimming as simply the first step in a lifelong fitness habit.
- 4) Tie in the value of good nutritional habits, not simply for better performance, but for health's sake.

If we adopt a health-related outlook for age group swimming we'll be giving the kids in our programs a form of lifelong health insurance that can't be purchased at any cost.

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Swimming Is An Investment

With time at a premium in the two-career family, many parents are now asking "Is the sacrifice and expense of joining an age group program worth it?" Here are some thoughts on why it is from Coach Cindy Anderson, head age group coach of the Reno Aquatic Club in Reno, Nevada.

"Age group swimming is much more than just swimming back and forth, day in and day out - the occasional swim meet and winning ribbon. Of course the swimmer gains from the physical activity of swimming, by becoming more fit...and there is involvement in an after-school activity at a time when working parents can't be with their kids. But age group swimming is an investment in the health, fitness, and overall growth and development of the youngster.

From the physical standpoint, swimming helps improve cardiovascular fitness, strength, flexibility, and neuromuscular coordination. In addition, swimming is a lifelong fitness activity that is relatively easy to pursue, low in injury risk, and helps reduce stress. It can be enjoyed recreationally long after it has ceased competitively.

Beyond the physical benefits, swimming in both practice and meets contributes greatly to the psychological and emotional development of the young athlete. As an activity, swimming requires the development of specific and complex motor patterns. Swimming well requires not only hard physical work, but also intelligent application of learned skills and the ability to THINK while performing. From concentration on performing stroke skills correctly to executing race strategies, the athlete learns early to concentrate and perform under pressure. In addition nutrition education is an ongoing and essential part of the athlete's overall development and success.

Age group swimming also requires consistent dedication, discipline and long-term commitment to goals, learning the habit of persistent application of lifestyle adaptations for goal achievement. Young swimmers also learn to accept success and failure with equal grace. In life as in swimming, one often fails several times on the way to a success, and it is an essential and difficult life-lesson to learn. The ups and downs of competition and training expose the young athlete to the realities of success and failure and force them to deal with the living experience.

Age group swimming, both directly and indirectly, teaches the athlete to develop: goal-setting strategies, time management skills, relaxation and imagery techniques, positive attitudes, and generally enhances the athletes overall self-image. Competitive swimming is both social and fun, and by virtue of the athletic nature of the activity, reinforces positive social values and beliefs. Athletes are taught to value their hard work in training and steer clear of drug and alcohol abuses.

To be an athlete is a very special and wonderful thing. To be a competitive swimmer is special, wonderful, and difficult; but the benefits of the persistent dedication and application of efforts, along with the benefits of facing and dealing with the emotional and psychological experiences associated with the demands of training and competing for success, are well worth whatever personal and/or financial investments are required. Age group swimming is much more than it first appears.

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Success In Athletics

Many parents wonder what differentiates the great athlete from the average one, and whether their kids have what it takes to be great athletes. We'll let Dr. Jack Daniels, an exercise physiologist at State University of New York at Cortland, and an influential figure in developing the U.S. Swimming Sports Medicine Program, enlighten us.

"There are really only four ingredients for success in athletics. One is genetic ability. Some genetic differences are easy to see (7-foot-plus Kareem Abdul Jabbar's basketball endowments), while others are physiological and internal differences that can't be seen. In America we have a hard time accepting those differences and we think that everyone who trains hard enough can be a champion.

The second thing besides genetic ability is intrinsic motivation. If you have a seven-footer and the coach wants him to play baseball, but he wants to be an artist, you won't get too much basketball out of him.

The third ingredient is opportunity - providing our athletes with good facilities, good weather, and competition against good athletes.

The final ingredient is direction. Direction means a good coach and a good program to follow.

Direction is the area where parents and coaches really have an opportunity to help the athlete. With the fragmented nature of our national swimming community, we have to put aside our personal concerns and desires and focus our efforts on helping our athletes attain their potential. Here is the part age group coaches can play:

* Teaching outstanding biomechanics to build the

base for all future swimming successes and fulfillment. Stroke education in both learn-to-swim, novice, and advanced age group programs must be primary.

* Teaching values that reflect the best of our sport. Swimmers must be educated in their own careers, positive image building of themselves as athletes and people, and on their part in the national swimming effort. Values and attitudes again shape the future for our sport.

* Provide the aerobic training base from which science tells us great athletes develop.

* Educate parents, our athletes' primary support system, to the needs of their athletes. Swimming careers are lifelong pursuits, and parents of young athletes need a vision of the rewards attainable by their youngster.

The high school coach can also contribute by recognizing the needs of both the elite and developing athlete in their programs, and by instilling in their athletes the knowledge that good swimming demands near year-round participation in YMCA, USS, or community programs. The high school coach also needs to cooperate with the club coach to ensure a coherent individual training and competition schedule for each athlete."

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A New Generation of Second Best Swimmers?

Are we going too far with the popular idea that competitiveness and winning for all age group swimmers should be de-emphasized while fun and maximum participation should be emphasized?

In any conversation about age group swimming it's nice to say that the two most important things about age group swimming are 1): the opportunity for children to participate in a healthy activity and, 2): the chance for children to try to do their best. We tell children, "Winning means doing your best. If you achieve a first place, that's a bonus!"

There was a time when adults paid lip service to the above notion while at the same time seeking out and encouraging first place swimmers of all ages. However, in the past couple of years we have seen more than just lip service being paid to the ideals of age group swimming. There are serious and highly supported moves to de-emphasize age group swimming. Eliminating competition for 8 and unders and eliminating national rankings for 9 & 10's are two of the current thoughts. Participation and fun are the popular key words while winning and aggressiveness are words spoken less frequently.

If we're not careful we will be chagrined to find that we have produced a generation of swimmers who are second best and feel it

is completely ok to be second best -- so long as they tried.

One US swimmer, a world record holder who had just lost the gold medal at the Olympics (or should I say "won a silver medal"?), said he was happy with his performance. He pointed out that a year ago nobody, including himself, would have expected him to make the Olympic team, let alone win a silver medal. Many people applauded his modest and grateful attitude. However, there was another message being broadcast to thousands of young athletes -- that it is ok to be second best.

Those who harbor a second best attitude will invariably be second best. For those with the ability, interest, desire, and aggressiveness to be the best we should promote, not discourage, a first best attitude. It is important for coaches to look for that sparkle in a young swimmer's eye that says "I want to be the best" and then promote and encourage that attitude.

Certainly we should not promote competitive aggressiveness and winning with all children but then we should not hold back those who have the drive and the ability to be the best. There needs to be room for all kinds of children in our swimming programs. Let's not make second best clones of everyone.

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On Ageing Up and Expectations

We interviewed a 20 year old woman who had a national age group record and age 10. When she turned 11 she joined a group of excellent nationally ranked 11 - 12 year old girls. She continued to improve but struggled emotionally and was not happy. Just before turning 13 her family moved out of state to a city with a nationally prominent swim team for the specific benefit of the swimmer. Unfortunately, she didn't enjoy her new surroundings and moved back and joined a different team.

She told us in the interview that the reason why she had a difficult time as an 11 and 12 year old was that "everyone" expected her to continue being great. We asked her who was included in "everyone" and the answer was...everyone, coaches and parents and friends. .

When swimmers age up, B swimmers and national record holders alike, it is time for communication between the coach, swimmer, and parents. Don't assume that the swimmer knows and understands that the coach and parents aren't expecting a ribbon in the next meet. Give swimmers special support and encouragement when they age up.

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Kids And Sport

By Ira Klein, ASCA Level 5
Sarasota Y, Florida

Recently I read an article from Sports Psychology magazine, written by Dr. David A. Feigley. He works with the Rutgers University Youth Sport Research Council. The article was entitled "Why Kids Quit" and contained interesting and useful information which I wish to share with all of you.

First, why do kids play sports?

There are three basic types of participants. Ability oriented children enjoy competition and "want to be the best". Task oriented children enjoy the activity itself and often focus on self-improvement. Social approval oriented children work to please others such as coaches, parents, and teammates. To my surprise, the author says that the evidence suggests that those who work for social approval persist the longest.

Children aged six years and younger cannot distinguish between ability and effort. They believe that when they try hard they are automatically good at what they are doing. Praise tends to be accepted positively by very young children regardless of whether the task was successfully completed or not. Children aged seven through eleven develop the ability to differentiate between having talent and trying hard. They compare themselves with others, and if they feel they cannot succeed, they would rather not try. They find it easier to attribute failure to a deliberate lack of

effort, than to admit that they lack ability.

Children from age twelve become skilled at making social comparisons and realize that expending effort is no longer a guarantee that they will succeed.

What can we do to help reduce the pressures that children feel?

1. Encourage enjoyment of the activity and self-improvement.
2. Encourage children to interpret comparisons with others solely as a tool for improving. Comparisons should be constructive and never as simple as "they are better" or "you are not as good".
3. Praise must be an earned reward. As children mature, they begin to value praise for successful outcomes much more than praise for trying hard. Look for specific successes.
4. Continually remind your children that ability often changes dramatically as they mature.

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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. 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 miniature adults.

- Jim Lutz
ASCA Level 5

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When a Child Starts on The Swim Team as a Teenager

“My 13 Year Old Son Has Just Started Swimming Competitively. What Are His Chances Of Succeeding Having Begun At Relatively Late Age For A Swimmer?”

Answered by: George Block, Aquatic Director of the Northside Independent School District, San Antonio, Texas.

The word “chance” reflects the disparity between possibility and probability. There is a long history of late beginning male swimmers doing very well, from George Breen to Rowdy Gaines, but the “possibility” doesn’t matter. We’re talking about your son.

First of all, he has to have a certain a basic physical abilities. Can he float with his lungs inflated? Can he streamline and glide when he pushed off the wall? Does he have normal strength and flexibility? Is he in good health?

You also have to find if he has some basic psychological abilities. Is he attentive? Is he a good listener? Does he follow instructions well? Will he persevere?

A little higher up the ladder, I would consider his athletic background, his extracurricular activities and his academic performance.

After this evaluation, the parent needs to work very closely with the child’s coach. The coach can tell you if your son has “talent”. Does he have the “feel” of the water? Does he learn quickly?

Finally, you must look at the team and the environment. Are swimmers performing well on the local level? The state level? Are

they doing well at the Junior Nationals? Senior Nationals?

None of those things can explain the short, uncoordinated kids who try out as freshmen in high school and go on to become superstars in college. That is explained by perseverance. Coaches see perseverance beat talent everyday. Perseverance in its most tangible form is “being there” is what changes the odds from possible to probable.

In swimmers who take up the sport “late”, the effects of training are always more “acute” (short term) than “chronic” (long term). Since your son won’t have the chronic training history of some of his teammates, he will need to train more effectively, have better attendance, and learn more from each competition than they do.

This may seem like a full order, but actually it’s great opportunity. In the long haul, the “process” is more important than “the product”. If your son decides to commit himself to excellence in competitive swimming, he will have taken a major step out of the crowd that seeks only mediocrity. He will be one of the few “committed” in an age of “dilettantes”. He will have to site, plan, organize and work for long term goals. He will have to arrange for the cooperation of those around him; parents, siblings, coaches, teammates, teachers, and friends. He will also have to measure his own success. Yes, your son can be successful, and, yes it will be difficult...but that is what makes it worth doing.

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Two A Day Swim Practices When Should the Athlete Start?

By Paul Blair, ASCA Level 5
Little Rock Racquet Club

When looking at the possibility of beginning two a day workouts for an athlete it is important to consider three things:

1. Age
2. What events the athlete is training for
3. The goals of the athlete

Over the years some of the top sprinters in the world have not begun swimming until their mid-teens. With this in mind, two a day practices with some sprint athletes must be handled with great planning and understanding. Young sprinters can be overwhelmed with the workload of two a day practices and may be chased out of our sport.

On the other hand, distance swimmers who are interested in competing as distance swimmers must start two a day practices as soon as the individual athlete is ready. The age of 12 for males and maybe younger for some females is our guideline. Distance swimmers must develop a base level of aerobic conditioning which requires years of training. Distance swimming and training is an art just like sprinting.

The goals of the athlete are also important in determining the age to start two a day

practices. Normally, swimmers who have the ability to swim fast want to begin two a day training sessions early on in their career.

Over the years, I have tried different combinations of two a day training. During the school year I have found the following schedule to be successful:

- Monday, Wednesday, Friday, from 5:00 am to 7:00 am.
- Saturday from 9 - 11 am.
- Afternoon workouts on Monday through Friday from 4 - 6 pm.

This schedule allows us to train at our maximum four days a week and rest the other three days a week.

The best two a day practice schedule is the one that enhances the development of the athlete.

The athlete needs to have fun and needs to want to achieve success.

News For

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The Fallacy Of Age Group Rankings

This title is not really what you think it means. Those of you who are licking your chops saying, "Ah hah! ASCA thinks age group rankings are counterproductive!", are going to be disappointed.

The common and popular argument these days is that a fast swimmer at age ten is almost a contra-indicator of later success. It is true that individually, this has some basis in statistical fact. A lot of early fast swimmers do so because they are physically mature and muscularly far in advance of their age peers. As their peers catch up, the early developers may become discouraged and drop out of the sport, or "not realize their early promise." This is a result of simple difference in the developmental rates of human beings, not the effects of early success in the sport.

Many coaches and some lay-persons interpret this individual scenario to project a swimming wide trend. They then proceed to state in effect, "if early success is bad, let's not worry about how fast our age group swimmers swim....let's not be concerned with producing fast age group swimmers."

Now there are two ways to interpret that approach. The first is the assumption that we will produce fast swimming by piling on a great deal of early physical work to the young child. This will certainly make them successful in relation to their more lightly

trained peers. The second approach is to seek fast swimming through aerobic base training, and careful attention to detailed and thorough stroke instruction.

Far too often of late, we see whole LSC's or regions of the USA, where coaches are adopting the "don't worry about fast age group swimming" attitude....and then doing "lazy coaching"....not working either physically, or on technical excellence. Naturally, those areas don't produce fast age group swimming. The LSC coaches and lay persons then pat themselves on the back about how progressive they are.

Wait a second.

The same areas producing slow age group swimming, are also producing slow, (or no) Senior Swimming. And a few of these include areas of the USA which have previously been very productive in other decades. What was the point of de-emphasizing age group swimming? I hear a small voice out there saying "Retention". You think so? Take a look at USA Swimming's retention statistics. There is no statistically significant difference between "fast" and "slow" swimming areas in terms of retention in the sport. (at least in USS swimming) We have poor retention in all parts of the USA.

Now, lets get back to the main point of all

this. Areas with fast senior swimming also have fast age group swimming. There are sociological reasons for this, of course, but there also are swimming dynamic reasons.

The primary reason among these is also the simplest. Area "B" has two young swimmers. John Jones is a super-developed 10 year old, ranked in 6 events in the National Top 16, and a super stud in the ASCA Age Group Motivational Times rankings. Billy Bullwinkle is the original 46 pound weakling at age 10. Billy never beats John, but he sees him win all the time, and swim fast. He aspires to be like John.

At age 12, Billy is starting to catch John both physically, and in the water. Since Billy couldn't win (ever) at age ten, or get ranked anywhere, he concentrated on learning good strokes from a caring coach, who knew that later Billy would grow. Now Billy is growing, and getting faster, and still chasing John.

By age 15, John is swimming marginally well in the 50 free, and Billy is maturing into a lean, mean, lanky 400 meter freestyler and IM'er. By age 17, Bill is swimming well at Senior Nationals, in the NAG Top 16, and John might be on his high school team, or out of the sport.

Now, did John help the sport of swimming in his area? You bet he did! He provided the incentive and the measuring stick of excellence that Bill chased in his years as a developing swimmer. If there were no fast early developers, exactly where would the stimulus come from for the later developers to get better? How would they measure excellence?

Let's stop taking individual cases, and acting as if they compose the collective development of an area. We all develop to exactly the degree that others around us stimulate us to reach. Great Age Group

Swimming (done the proper way, with great mechanics and aerobic base) later provides great senior swimming, even if it is not in the same individuals. Observe our nation, and the relative strengths of age group and senior swimming. Fast swimming begets more fast swimming. It's been that way since the beginning of age group swimming, and it is still that way today, and will be tomorrow. Let's work for fast, appropriate age group swimming at all ages, and stop using the bugaboo of age group rankings to explain our failures.

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Moving Up to a New Workout Group

by Cindy Anderson, Head age group coach of the Reno Aquatic Club, Reno, Nevada.

“Our daughter will be swimming in a new practice group with a different coach in a few weeks. As parents, we are a little confused by this move because she has been swimming very well with her current group and coach. Is it necessary for our daughter to change her practice environment?”

Group placement and advancement are major concerns of the swimming family. Usually these concerns arise from a combine motive of: (1) wanting what’s best for the child and (2) logistical conveniences such as practice time and location. From a coach’s perspective, the placement and advancement of swimmers is also of great importance, but for somewhat a different reason.

The goal of a coach and the swim program is to provide the swimmer with the best possible opportunity to develop his or her fullest swimming potential. Also, given the diverse age and ability levels on most teams, athletes must be grouped to facilitate maximum benefit from the practice environment.

During the past three years, the Reno Aquatic Club has grown from 90 to more

than 260 swimmers. The number of groups has increased from four to eleven. Because of this rapid growth, we have had to change the structure of our group with increasing frequency, as well as update and develop specific guidelines, criteria and procedures.

As stated, the goal of any grouping of swimmers is to provide the best possible practice environment. To achieve this goal, our coaching staff tries to arrange a homogeneous practice group. Every swimmer and group is evaluated four times a year. During the evaluation period, we review each swimmer’s progress and consider the swimmer’s advancement. Swimmer advancement is based on the following:

- 1- Ability, technique, and performance of a swimmer. (We are fortunate to have all of our swimmers ranking based on best times for each age group via a computer rankings program. The coach and swimmers can review rankings in relation to the swimmer’s peers.)
- 2- Age and maturity of a swimmer. (Physical and emotional maturity are subjectively considered by the coaching staff.)
- 3- Size of the group and the coach/swimmer ratio
- 4- Coach’s discretion.

Following this procedure, the head age group coach will send a letter to the swimmer and parents notifying them of a “group move up.” This letter contains information relating to the swimmer’s new group assignment, coach, practice time, location, and the exact date the change is to be effective. The letters are mailed out approximately two weeks in advance of the proposed move up date. This allow the swimmers and parents sufficient time to adjust schedules and carpools to the new practice.

The move up letters are scheduled to arrive at the swimmer’s home to coincide with swim meets or clinics, when the coaches are out of town and unavailable. This may seem a bit odd; however, it serves a very good purpose. It is a basic human trait that, when faced with a change (or in some cases the lack of changes) we tend to react first emotionally and second logically. As a head age group coach responsible for a staff of five, I try to spare my staff and myself from the initial emotional onslaught of a swim parent’s reaction. Those parents who are truly interested in pursuing the matter will have the opportunity to discuss the issue with a coach. By then, usually a parent will interact with the coach in a logical and rational manner.

This lengthy and involved process is detailed here to impress the swim parent with the importance of team grouping from the perspective of the swim coach. The group structure of a team and the swimmers who make up these groups are very important to the overall success of the program, and are of obvious importance to the individual swimmers and their families. Your home club may or may not follow a similar procedure for structuring swim groups, but regardless of the “dressing” the message to the swim parents is the same:

- 1- The success of any swim program relies on the individual successes of its athletes.
- 2- The ability to provide a quality practice environment is essential for team and individual success.
- 3- The decision to assign swimmers to specific practice groups is far from arbitrary. Although the coach tries to be sensitive to the logistical concerns of the swim family, these concerns must be secondary to the overriding goal of providing a quality practice environment for swimmers of all ages and abilities.
- 4- The coach truly does guard the best interest of your child, as a swimmer and an individual.
- 5- Ultimately, coach, swimmer, and parents are working together toward the same goal.

News For

SWIM PARENTS

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Why is Swimming a Year Around Sport?

First, at the competitive level a swimming athlete must train year around just to stay competitive with all the other athletes. Swimming is both conditioning intensive and skill intensive. Strength and endurance conditioning for swimming are not readily transferable from other sports or activities so they must be developed in the pool and in swimming specific dryland exercises. Swimming skills are constantly being developed and refined throughout the swimmer's career.

Not all swimmers are at competitive levels so what is the point in training year around for them? The simple answer is that a good swimming program provides far more than swimming skill development and improvements in strength and endurance — it provides active development of life skills. By “active development” we mean planned — not by accident and not by coincidence. I regularly stop practice to take advantage of a teaching moments to demonstrate or discuss a life skill and we plan short 10 minute discussions on a variety of topics. Life skills that are actively promoted by this team include responsibility, self-discipline, work ethic, coping with peer pressure to use drugs, time management, team commitment and loyalty, lifetime fitness, nutrition, setting and meeting goals, learning to extend themselves, challenges, cooperation, and goal setting.

We know through research that sport in and of itself does not build character or life skills. These skills are developed by the influence of role models, the environment, and through a systematic, planned process. We do this at KJ SwimAmerica all year around and it is the most compelling reason to keep your child in the water all year around.

Now, having said that, is there room for other sports and other activities? As long as children aren't being over scheduled we think YES! We encourage the children to be in other sports and other activities. My own 8 year old daughter swims two or three times a week all year around but she also plays in a basketball league and she plays with neighborhood friends after school.

The bottom line is that this swimming program is a healthy and wholesome activity available all year around for your children and we encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity.

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Practice and Competition for 10 and Unders

“As Swimming Parents New To The Sport, What Is Best In Terms Of Practice and Competition For Our 10 And Under?”

Answered by Ira Klein, Level 5 Coach,
President of ASCA

A wide variety of Age Group Swimming programs throughout the country. Each program functions with different goals and purposes and each operates under different conditions. Therefore, it is important that a young swimmer participate in a program that is compatible with his or her goals and desires. Above all, each Age Group program should be enjoyable and satisfying!

Programs for 10 & Under Swimmers should always stress satisfaction and enjoyment, never records and awards. Swimmers who are pressured to break records (whether it is a team, local or national record) will not get full pleasure and enjoyment from his or her achievement. Instead, he or she will feel the mental stress of being pressured. This is an easy way for a swimmer to lose interest at an early age.

For younger swimmers, emphasis should be placed on proper stroke mechanics. It is much easier to learn how to swim correctly at a young age that it is to correct bad habits years later. For actual training, four-six hours per week is sufficient. All four strokes should be taught and practiced and the drills need to be repeated often. Intervals should generally be kept short so that a swimmer can concentrate

on proper stroke techniques and demanding at to early age or too repetitive, the swimmer most likely will end up leaving the sport.

Using kickboards and fins for drills is beneficial but they should be used moderately. This is also a good age to introduce flexibility and conditioning exercises – but not strength or weight training. Swimmers will naturally gain strength, coordination and agility with games and activities such as relays, Sharks and Minnows and other fun activities. Especially at this age, the swimmers should be encouraged to participate in other activities (i.e. soccer, gymnastics, music or scout programs).

Competition should not be pressured and self-improvement should be stressed. Meets should be held to a one and at most two-day affair lasting no longer than four hours. Parents need to be very supportive of their child and the coach. Try not to second guess the coach, but work on maintaining an open dialogue between you and the coach to learn more about what your child is doing and how you can help.

Finally, always remember that they are a child first, last and foremost. Every child should leave the practice and each meet with a smile on their face wanting to come back to the next practice and next meet for more enjoyment.

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Should Age Group Swimmers do Weight Training?

“My daughter is 10 years old and not very strong, should she be involved with a weight training program at this age?”

Power is critical to swimming performance. But more important, stroke technique must first be developed before power can be effectively applied in the water. Just as with a good training program, improving power should be done progressively. For this reason, a swimmer should not begin a weight training program until he/she reaches the age of twelve or older.

To be sure, however, there are more serious reasons to delay the incorporation of a weight training program. The most important is the fact that the musculature is not fully developed until a youngster reaches at least 12 years of age. Muscle fiber size is significantly smaller in the young swimmer, so the amount of force generated is much less to begin with. This would suggest that the supporting structure (i.e. muscle and bone) needed for weight training is not available in the preadolescent. Potentially, strength/power training could lead to injury and an imbalance in musculature development.

The young swimmer (age 12 and under) can achieve strength/power gains if involved in a training program. However, note that strength/power gains also result from swimming alone. Swimming can be considered an isokinetic type of training, which is sufficient for the age grouper. In swimming alone, power will naturally improve, stroke technique can be emphasized and adaptations in the energy system will occur. Strength/power training programs at this age should be limited to use of the dry land surgical tubing or use of a swim bench. These are essentially isokinetic and the potential of injury is minimized.

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Where Should Fast Age Group Swimmers Train?

” My Ten Years Old Son Is The Fastest Swimmer In His Group And He Can Also Beat Several Of The Senior Swimmers... Shouldn't He Be Training In The Senior Swimming Group?”

Answered by: Rick Klatt, ASCA Level 5 Coach

There are three goals I have for age group swimmers on my team who will eventually make the transition to senior swimming. They are that:

1. They love swimming and look forward to practice sessions.
2. They have a sound foundation of correct stroke mechanics.
3. They know how to generate speed over short distances.

I think an age group coach needs to be very flexible and very innovative in designing a training program that keeps their interest and is considered fun. I encourage my age group coaches to include lots of dry land games to build coordination and aerobic fitness. I also encourage the coaches to provide challenging training sessions that are short and to the point. Every training session must include fundamental stroke work and some emphasis on fast swimming over short distances.

There are dangers associated with having younger swimmers training in the senior group. Although training with the older group may produce rapid improvements, it could harm your child's swimming career in the long run. Training longer and harder produces stress and at his age, he could lose interest in the sport. This sometimes is hard to do when he is with swimmers that are mentally and physically more mature. Socially, he may become outcast because of his youth and the training may be more than his body is accustomed to. It is very easy for a swimmer to lose interest in the sport when he is not enjoying himself. His self-image can deteriorate easily if not given the proper amount of attention.

It is also important to let a swimmer gradually learn and improve. If he starts swimming in the senior group at 10 years old, the program can become very stale for him by the time he reaches high school.

In our program, a swimmer will normally move into the senior group when he/she is 13 or 14 years old. I feel I can be more successful at helping the swimmers if:

1. The swimmer has a positive attitude and has the desire to come practice.
2. The swimmer has a good technical background on stroke techniques so that

short reminder to him of his already formulated good habits

3. The swimmer knows how to generate speed over a short distance. At this point we can begin the training that will be required to maintain that speed for a longer distance.

Age group swimmers should be allowed to develop slowly and have fun. By training with swimmers his age, he will be able to interact with friends and develop close bonds with his peers. He can contribute to the team by being a role model will create a strong self-image as well as a good leader for his group.

Finally, I would like to say that I have seen cases of young swimmers (10 and 11 years old) being moved into a senior program, thriving for a sport in their early or middle teen years. If the swimmer continues his swimming into college, he will have the greatest opportunity to develop to his full potential. If a youngster loses interest and quits the sport at an early age, we will never know how far he/she might have gone.

There is a correlation between early success of an age group swimmer and an eventual champion.

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Ageing Up

“My Eight Year Old Was The Fastest Swimmer In The Zone Until He Turned Nine. Now He Is Continually Being Beaten Since He Is The Youngest In His Age Group. How Can I, As A Parent, Keep Him Getting Discouraged?”

Answered by: Bill Thompson, Head Coach of the San Jose Aquatics, California.

Every age group swimmer goes through the trials and tribulations of “aging up”. It is difficult for a swimmer, who was the top of his age group, to readjust to swimming against older and faster swimmers. Often times, a child will have difficulties swimming in this new age bracket.

It is important to communicate with your child’s coach when a situation like this occurs. When you feel that your child is becoming discouraged, you should inform your child’s coach of your concern. Chances are the coach has sensed the discouragement also. It is a common response to “aging up”. Remember how you felt as a freshman in high school, worshipping the upper-classmen from afar? After you have informed the coach of the problem, you and your child need to evaluate why he is participating in swimming. Your child probably became a swimmer because it was an activity where he was better than the average swimmer, he found it to be fun, and he could please

you, the parent. He did not become a swimmer to win.

When your child is making the transition to an older age group, look for positive aspects, other than winning, such as improving his times, techniques and developing new skills. Changing age groups can mean the discovery of new talents, racing in different distances, new events and tougher competition.

Most importantly, no one in swimming has ever won all of his races. Only one swimmer can finish first in a race and sometimes we place too much importance on winning. A youngster is a winner when he can face a challenge, compete and try his best. Swimmers win when they set a goal for themselves and make a commitment to work towards realizing that goal. A well-balanced individual needs to accept defeat and disappointment as graciously as victory. How can one savor the “thrill of victory” without the occasional “agony of defeat”?

Encourage your swimmer to have faith in himself and his coach and he will adjust with time. I think it can be very good for him to believe he can win again...someday. If winning is important to him in the months or years to come, he will work for it.

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On Moving Up to a New Coach

“Our Daughter Will Be Swimming In A New Practice Group With A Different Coach In A Few Weeks. As Parents, We Are A Little Confused By This Move Because She Has Been Swimming Very Well With Her Current Group And Coach. Is It Necessary For Our Daughter To Change Her Practice Environment?”

Answered by: Cindy Anderson, Age Group Coach

Group placement and advancement are major concerns of the swimming family. Usually these concerns arise from a combined motive of: (1) wanting what's best for the child and (2) logistical conveniences such as practice time and location. From a coach's perspective, the placement and advancement of swimmers is also of great importance, but for somewhat different reasons...

The Goal of the coach and the swim program is to provide the swimmer with the best possible opportunity to develop his or her fullest swimming potential. Also, given the diverse age and ability levels on most teams, athletes must be grouped to facilitate maximum benefit from the practice environment.

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than 260 swimmers. The number of groups has increased from four to eleven. Because of this rapid growth, we have had to change the structure of our groups with increasing frequency, as well as update and develop specific guidelines, criteria and procedures.

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practice environment is essential for team and individual success.

The decision to assign swimmers to specific practice groups is far from arbitrary. Although the coach tries to be sensitive to the logistical concerns of the swim family, these concerns must be secondary to the overriding goal of providing a quality practice environment for swimmers of all ages and abilities.

The coach truly does guard the best interest of YOUR child, as a swimmer and individual.

Ultimately, coach, swimmer and parents are working together toward the same goal.

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Weight Training for Age Group Swimmers

Jack Wilmore, Ph.D., Physical Education professor at the University of Texas and Austin.

Generally, youngsters adapt well to the same type of training routine used by the mature athlete. One area of concern, though, is the use of weight training to develop muscular strength and muscular endurance. For many years, young boys and girls were discouraged from using weights for fear that they might injure themselves and prematurely stop their growth processes.

Results of animal studies suggest that heavy resistance exercise leads to stronger, broader, and more compact bone. However, since it is nearly impossible to load these animals to the same extent as youngsters, it has not been practical to design an experiment that accurately defines the risks associated; therefore the potential for injury and structural damage from heavy resistance appears to be extremely low. Still, since the future of the youngsters is at stake, it is appropriated to take a conservative approach until additional studies can be conducted.

Thus, to strength-train a young athlete, a program using low weights and high repetitions would be preferred to one using high weights and low repetitions. One of the safest techniques for strength training in youngsters would be to use the isokinetic concept of matching resistance to the force applied, so that the youngster does not have to contend with actual weights, such as barbells and dumbbells. Cybex, Orthoton, Mini-Gym, and Hydra-Gym are examples of isokinetic equipment.

It has been suggested that since young prepubescent boys have relatively low circulating androgen levels, there is no reason to expect them to benefit from strength training prior to

adolescence. Several recent studies have demonstrated that prepubescent boys can only participate in this form of activity but also can gain substantial increases in strength.

In a study conducted by Sewall and Micheli, prepubescent boys and girls who took part in a nine-week progressive resistance strength training program, 25-30 minutes a day, three days a week (J Pediatr Orthop 1986;6:1234-6). They experienced a mean strength increase of 42.9%, compared with a 9.5% increase in a non-training control group.

Weltman and his colleagues followed 16 prepubescent boys (mean age 8.2 years) through a 14-week strength program using isokinetic techniques with hydraulic resistance (Med Sci Sports Exerc 1986;18:S55). Isokinetic strength increased 18-37% in these young boys. Only one injury was recorded causing the boy to miss three training sessions. In the control group of 10 boys six injuries were recorded as the result of activities of daily living. None of the boys had any evidence of damage to bone, or the muscle structure as a result of strength training. From the results of these studies, one can conclude that young, prepubescent boys and girls can increase strength from using resistance exercise, and that few risks of injury are associated with such exercise. However, it should be noted that in both of these studies, free weights were not used. The resistance was provided by pneumatic (CAM-II), hydraulic (e.g., Hydra-Fitness and Orthotron), or fixed stacked weights (e.g., Universal Gym or Nautilus). The use of free weights provides a much greater potential for serious injury.

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When The Coach Goes To Nationals

Concern: The coach leaves the team for a whole week just to take one swimmer to nationals. It is not fair to the team and a poor use of money.

Response: It is an important milestone in the development of the swimmer, of the coach, and of the team when the first junior national qualifier is developed. This swimmer represents the current "peak" of the program. All parts of a program are important but the peak is of special importance because it is a point that all younger developing athletes can look forward to and work towards. It provides direction in the program.

It is difficult for newer swim parents, especially parents of young age group swimmers, to understand the importance of sending the coach away to nationals at great expense and while all the other swimmers on the team stay at home without their head coach. The situation is sometimes made worse by the fact that local junior Olympic meets are held at about the same time as nationals.

What are the choices and what are the consequences?

1. Swimmer attends nationals without coach. This is not fair to the athlete or to the coach. The athlete has worked for and deserves the attention and professional

guidance of the coach. The coach also deserves the reward of developing such a fine athlete by being involved in the national experience. Attending nationals is also a very important educational experience for the coach. By not sending the coach to nationals with the swimmer the club is also sending a message to the athletes that the club is not interested in elite athletes.

2. Swimmer and coach stay home. This cuts the peak of the program and removes incentives for athletes and coach to become the best they can be. It is the mark of a team that does not include growth as part of its long range goals, or perhaps does not have any goals at all. It is a program that will always have young and relatively inexperienced coaches because few coaches will be satisfied working in a situation where they cannot grow.

3. Swimmer and coach attend nationals with the support and good will of the entire club. This is the mark of a program that looks to the future, believes in growth, and believes in rewarding the good work by both the athlete and the coach.

When the coach and athlete attend nationals it is a celebration of team success.

The athlete can return home as the hero

and "tell the story" of nationals that will inspire the rest of the team.

Short sighted and self serving age group parents work for the best interest of their children today. Unfortunately they fail to realize that someday it is their child that will qualify for nationals. Parents must look at the larger picture. When the coach goes to nationals it is not just for one swimmer, it is for the whole team. The coach also returns home as the hero and can teach the whole team about the experience.

What then of the younger swimmers who have workouts and possibly a meet to attend while the coach is at nationals? It is the responsibility of the Board of Directors and coach to 1) educate the families as to the needs of the whole program, and 2) prepare assistant coaches and swimmers for the opportunity to be their best during this time. These things should not be thought of two weeks before nationals, but should be part of each seasonal plan.

Parents also should remember that a good coach who is developing junior national swimmers this season will soon be developing senior national swimmers as well. The club will need to be prepared to send the coach to two national meets each season.

Concern: The coach is taking swimmers that haven't been part of the team to senior nationals while our younger year- round swimmers are left at home with assistant coaches.

Response: Are these athletes high school or college swimmers who have participated on the team, perhaps even developed on the team, but have simply been away to participate on their school teams? It is an HONOR to have them return home to represent their home team! It shows that they have loyalty for the club and respect for your good coach. It shows that your club appreciates and welcomes home it's

athletes.

If these are athletes that have not at any time been part of the team and now wish to represent the team at nationals it is a tribute to your excellent program and outstanding coach that they should want to represent your team. Upon returning home from nationals these athletes should also contribute to the team's education about the national experience by sharing the story with the younger athletes.

There are financial considerations that the coach and Board of Directors need to address concerning travel costs and reimbursements. A coaches costs should be part of the club's regular travel budget and not linked to the number of swimmers, or the type of swimmers (college or high school) attending nationals. Partial reimbursements to athletes is a separate matter for discussion.

THE LARGER PICTURE

The preceding article has a greater significance than deciding who goes to nationals. It asks the parent to look at the larger picture of club, athlete, and coach development. One of the most important tasks of the age group parent is to ask "what can I do to ensure the continued development of my child AND the program?"

1. Invest in an ASCA certified professional swim coach. Invest means to provide the security, compensation, and authority a coach needs to develop your club to it's greatest potential.
2. Promote and participate in a values/mission statement/central theme process with the coach and Board of Directors that results in LONG RANGE PLANNING.

News For

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How Can You Help Your Swim Team

The first question really should be, "Why should I help the Swim Team?" I'm going to work on that one first, because in the five years since I wrote the first edition of "Parent, Coach, and Athlete", I have come to realize that the answer for many people is not clear, as I thought it was at that time. In learning this, I have also come to be much more appreciative of the clubs that I have coached with, because the question never came up at either of them!

The simplest reason is also the most powerful. You should help because your child benefits greatly from the program. The second reason is that most clubs cannot function without substantial volunteer help. The economics are not there for a full professional staff to do all the things that need doing.

Look at the finances of swimming for a moment. Nobody likes to pay bills. Now count up the hours that are available for your child to participate in your swimming program. Divide your monthly fee by those hours, and you will come out with substantially less than you pay your baby sitter. And the baby sitter doesn't provide much in the way of a learning situation, values education, physical exercise and development, or role model. (Or at least, not many baby sitters do!)

Now imagine if you had to pay for all you get from swim team. Teams can't do it without your help. Add to that the fact that less than 15% of the clubs in the USA have full time swimming coaches, and less than 5% have more than one full time coach, and you can

begin to recognize the need for parental involvement. Those clubs that do enjoy full time coaches are usually those of sufficient size that just coaching duties alone take up the whole day.

The club needs your help. Now let's get along to how you can provide that help. People have strange attitudes toward working with organizations. In most, a very few people do a tremendous amount of work that benefits everyone. This is especially true in swimming, which perhaps speaks to the quality of person that swimming attracts. There are parents who develop workaholic behavior towards swim teams. This is a bad deal for everyone. That person sooner or later burns out, leaving a big hole to fill. Meanwhile, that individual holds a great deal of power in the club, according to the rule that says, "he that does, decides." (That unwritten rule operates in all volunteer organizations, doesn't it?)

The club needs a little bit of time from everyone, a little more from some, and on occasion, a great deal from a few. Note that when you find your lawn uncut, the dishes three days deep in the sink, your cat starving on the porch, and you have just driven home from swim team leaving half the car pool at the swimming pool, you are over committed. This may also result in your child thinking that your club job is more important than they are.

The simple goal of most swimming organizations is to devise a system where the coach is left free to do what they do best....to

coach. This means that parents take responsibility for fund raising, administration, club communication, and similar items. Over the past five years there has been a trend to look at coaches more as a CEO (Chief Executive Officer) model, where they are involved in those things to the extent of making sure they are successful, but essentially the tasks are accomplished by parents. Having Coach involvement in those tasks is great, if they have time. If they don't, the idea is to use the volunteer talent available, in the areas where it can be most effectively deployed.

Most clubs have a Board of Directors that help operate the club. The best Boards are long range planning Boards, that leave the daily work to committees. New swimming parents are often asked to work on one of these committees. If you are not asked, volunteer. Many times people simply forget to ask...they are not slighting you, they are just so busy, they don't notice. This is also where you will begin to make new friends in swimming.

What kinds of jobs are available?

■ Fund raising...bring in the dollars to make up the difference between operating budget and club fees. There has never been an organization with enough operating funds, and swimming is no exception. Most of us are experts at spending and less expert at "raising" money, so if you have any ability here, you'll be extremely popular at the club. (Of course, if you have that ability, you are already extremely popular...)

■ Publicity...letting people know about the club, its goals, aims, results, and personal stories. A journalism background is helpful, but even more important is a willingness to organize results, type, and run them around town to local papers, TV and radio stations. It takes persistence, and the results are not automatically on display immediately.

■ Membership...allied to publicity, helping the club attract and retain members. This can be really rewarding for new parents, as they learn much more quickly about the good things in swimming while working on this type of group. Learn to swim programs provide the bulk of new swimmers to teams, and you'll be a source

of information to prospective swimming families.

■ Administration...a general subheading for a vast array of jobs that include things like newsletters, meet entries, operating phone trees (to get news out quickly...usually about swimming, but sometimes gossip...that's a joke!) The amount of work required to operate a swim team is amazing, and most clubs like to have a system where one person performs a task while another learns it as an apprentice...and then takes it over later on. So, many jobs are "doubles".

■ Swim meets. There are those who run meets as part of the fund raising efforts, and there are clubs who run meets strictly as opportunities for swimmers to compete, and there are some who do both. Even with electronic timing and computers, it takes 30 - 45 people a day to run a good swim meet. You'll be called on plenty, and your help is vital. This is one time that money will not substitute for your physical presence.

Lastly, remember that a parent organization in its best role, is a watchdog of philosophy...that same philosophy that you joined the team for. Stability is what builds the organization, and your support for that stability is the key thing you can contribute. I like the thought of "bloom where you are planted." As your child progresses in swimming, stay with your club, and help it progress, Involve yourself in helping to set goals and objectives and make it great! And remember, it is all for FUN, and all for your youngster.

News For

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Stay With Developing Clubs

Concern: Our club is a young club, only three years old. My child, who is now 12, started with the program three years ago and is now one of the best swimmers on the team. (There are only a few older swimmers.) I think my child has out grown the team and we need to start looking for another club where my child will be challenged by better swimmers.

Response: Consider these questions:

1. Has your present club been making steady growth progress in the past and does it appear to be growing into the future?
2. Has the same coach been with the program for the past three years and has this coach continued his/her coaching education through American Swimming Coaches Membership, Clinics and the Certification program? Is the coach growing?
3. How did your child make such good progress to this point?
4. How does one balance the value of loyalty with the desire to move on?

Answers: If the coach and program are making good progress toward the future we believe you should stay with the club for three basic reasons:

First, a young team needs leadership beyond what the coach offers. As a parent you can provide important leadership to your Board of Directors and to other parents. Your swimmer represents the current peak of the program and is an important leader to all other younger swimmers. When leaders leave, the peak of the program is disrupted and the program loses direction.

Secondly, your child became a good swimmer with the present coach. There is every reason to believe that your child will continue to improve. Good coaches find ways to provide workout and competitive situations for their top swimmers so that they are continually challenged.

Consider this: many of America's top swimmers have come from programs where they are far and away the fastest person in the pool. Who do they compete with on a daily basis? They compete against the clock and they are motivated from within and by the coach. They are also motivated by their position of leadership to the rest of the team. The coach also arranges the best competitive situations in swim meets. There is always going to be a "best swimmer" in a workout -- let it be your child!

Third, in today's world, people are too quick to jump ship when things don't go perfectly. Loyalty and perseverance are important qualities to pass on to children. Be an exception. Stay with the club. Be a leader. Help it grow.

If the program and coach are not growing AND your child is not happy, then it is time to either effect changes in the program and/or coach, or look for another program. The important factor here is your child's happiness. Your child's swimming ambitions and needs may be very different than what you perceive them to be. Do not let your ego make a decision to switch clubs thus removing your child from friends, coach, and environment he is happy with.

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When The Coach Is Away With A Few Swimmers

by: Jim Lutz, ASCA Level 5 Coach

“Why does the head coach always go away for a week or two to meets with only a couple of swimmers, while the rest of the team is swimming in a designated “team meet”?”

When the coach is away with a few swimmers, they are most likely attending an elite, national or international swim meet. Only five percent of all registered swimmers ever reach the national level. Instead of looking at this situation in a negative way, the team should support and encourage these top-caliber swimmers because they are representing the team at an elite meet.

As a head coach I encourage our swimmers to achieve the highest level of competition possible. They are not only the fastest swimmers on the team, but they are also the role models for the younger swimmers. Every age grouper’s dream is to compete on national level and follow in the senior swimmer’s footsteps.

The majority of head coaches throughout the country are responsible for the senior swimmers. Naturally, the head coach is more familiar with the senior swimmer’s needs having worked with them throughout the entire season. During this time, the swimmer and coach develop a trusting “one-to-one” relationship. The swimmer becomes more confident with the coach’s decisions. If someone else (such as an assistant, parent or administrator) were substituted for the head coach at a championship meet. The swimmer needs to have the primary coach as his support system when competing on the national level.

A head coach needs to attend these national meets regardless of the number of swimmers attending. Whether the team has one swimmer or ten at a competition, the coach with the most interactions with the swimmer should direct and be responsible for these athletes. The swimmers should be rewarded for having made the difficult time standard for this prestigious meet by having the primary coach attend. The coach has many responsibilities and duties while the national meet, acting as a guardian, counselor, friend, confidant and a coach.. A swimmer relies on the coach’s experience and knowledge to help swim the best race possible. The coach also handles of the administrative duties and might even attend special meetings for coaches.

Seniors swimmers received a lot of attention and recognition that me regarded as preferential treatment. However, these swimmers have spent countless hours training to reach their fullest potential. The recognition they receive is not only beneficial to the individual but it is a credit to the entire swim program. It is the national representation by these few athletes that brings status and credibility to your program.

So if a member of your team goes to a national level meet, show that athlete how much you appreciate his/her skill and provide you full support. The athlete is representing YOU swim team.

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Are Swim Camps Worth the Money?

“We have a twelve year old son who is interested in going to a swim camp this summer. Camps are a considerable expense. Are they worth the money spent?”

This question is essentially about value. What value can be placed on the swim camp experience? The first question is why does the child want to attend a camp, and the second is will the camp experience match the needs of the child, both real and perceived.

Children sometimes wish to attend a swim camp for a variety of reasons. (Sometimes also parents want the child to attend a camp, with particular expectations of what will happen there) One reason may be that the child’s friends are all going to a particular camp, and attending may be the “in” things to do. Another may be that the child is on a bit of a plateau, and thinks that the different environment of the camp may help initiate that next performance to jump. Some children simply like the status of going to one of the prestigious camps. One of the very first things to do, as a parent, is to discuss the situation with the child’s regular swim coach. Some coaches do not like their athletes to attend a camp, and others find it perfectly acceptable.

In the case of the coach who would prefer the athlete not to attend, the usual discussion is that the child will receive

different stroke instruction that may be disruptive to the overall progress of the child. The differing view would hold that exposing the child to differing ideas on technique is an excellent way of stimulating intellectual interest in the sport, and will help the athlete grow. Another consideration is the time and type of camp that is being considered. Some camps are training-oriented, and the athlete will come back in wonderful condition. Others are technique-oriented, and the athlete may lose some conditioning during the time of the stay.

The parent should carefully consider the type of the camp that the child is interested in, and takes the good look at the progress and happiness of the child. There are those children for whom a camp is not necessarily a productive experience and there an equal number who come back from the camp excited, enthused and more knowledgeable than they left.

The second issue is in deciding on the camp that will best suit the needs of the athlete. The parents should to look at a number of the factors based on why the athlete is going to attend camp:

1)- Is it training or teaching camp, or a combination?

2)- Who will work directly with your child? Many famous name camps do not always have the “names” on deck working with the child. Others do.

3)- Where will the children live, and how will they supervised?

4)- What does the camp experience offer besides swimming? If it is purely a swimming camp, what is the daily schedule like?

5)- How long does the staff at the camp recommend that the campers stay? What length of stay will accomplish the goals set in attending the camps?

Also consider the intangibles. Try to meet, or at least talk with the people who will be running the camp. How do they “fit” with the image of which you want your child to spend time with? Try to get independent references on each camp you consider from people who been there in previous seasons. A summer with exceptional people can be rewarding in itself.

Swim camps come in every size, shape and description. If your child wants to attend one, and you and your coach think it is a good idea, you can find one that will give you a good value for you dollar spent. It will be necessary for you to do your homework and acquire objective information on which to base your decision. American Swimming has strength in diversity, and the swim camp opportunity is a perfect reflection of the multitude of chances available.

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Watching Your Child at Swim Lessons or Swim Practice

For over four years I watched my daughter swim under the direction of other coaches. I have also watched her at basketball practice and games, and dance, and figure skating. I know the joy of watching her in these activities. I also know and understand the overwhelming desire to direct, correct, encourage, and sometimes scold my child at practice. But those are not proper parental behaviors once I have released her into the care of a coach or teacher. As a parent, am not to interfere with the practice or attempt to talk to my child during the practice session.

In our swim program, we want the child's attention focused on the coach and the tasks at hand. Occasionally children miss an instruction, or have a goggle problem, or are involved in some other distraction, or are simply playing and having fun – which is all normal behavior for young children. We view these little difficulties as part of the learning process and we allow the children an opportunity to develop the self discipline and self reliance needed to overcome these difficulties without the help of moms or dads.

We know it is common in many other youth sports for parents to stand at the sidelines and shout instructions or encouragements and sometimes admonishments to their children. However, in our swim program we ask you not to signal them to swim faster, or to tell them to try a certain technique, or to offer to fix a goggle problem, or to move away for some other "menacing" swimmer, or even to remind them to listen to the coach. In fact, just as you would never interrupt a school classroom to talk your child, you should not interrupt a swim practice by attempting to communicate directly with your child.

What's wrong with encouraging your child during practice? There are two issues. First we want your child to focus on the coach and to learn the skill for their personal satisfaction rather than learning it to please their parents. Secondly, parental encouragement often gets translated into a command to swim faster and swimming faster may be the exact opposite of what the coach is trying to accomplish. In most stroke skill development we first slow the swimmers down so that they can think through the stroke motions. Save encouragements and praise for after the practice session! This is the time

when you have your child's full attention to tell them how proud you are of them.

What's wrong with shouting or signaling instructions to your children? When I watch my 9 year old daughter play in a basketball league I understand the overwhelming desire of parents to shout instructions to their children because that is what I want to do. But those instructions might be different from the coach's instructions and then you have a confused child. Sometimes you might think the child did not hear the coach's instruction and you want to help. Most of us do not want to see our own kids make a mistake. The fact is that children miss instructions all the time. Part of the learning process is learning how to listen to instructions. When children learn to rely on a backup they will have more difficulty learning how to listen better the first time.

As parents, many of us want our children protected from discomfort and adversity and we will attempt to create or place them in an environment free from distress. So, what's wrong with helping your child fix their goggles during practice time? Quite simply, we want to encourage the children to become self-reliant and learn to take care of and be responsible for themselves and their own equipment. Swimming practice is a terrific place to learn these life skills. Yes, even beginning at age 6 or 7.

If you need to speak to your child regarding a family issue or a transportation issue or to take your child from practice early you are certainly welcome to do so but please approach the coach directly with your request and we will immediately get your child out of the water. If you need to speak to the coach for other reasons please wait until the end of practice or call the phone number listed above.

I have been coaching young children for over 30 years. I appreciate the opportunity to enjoy their enthusiasm and energy and wonderful personalities. I coach each of them with care for their safety and concern for their social, physical, learning skills, and life skills development. Thanks for bringing your children here as we both teach and direct them to become more responsible and confident young people.

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Practice Objectives And Routine - What To Expect

Practices are planned in advance based upon short term and long term goals. Short term goals are usually eight weeks to 26 weeks in time and revolve around increasing the quantity of work, improving the quality (times) achieved in practice, skill development, and progressing towards "A" time standards or above. Long term goals can be summarized by simply saying we are preparing the children for higher levels of practice ability and higher levels of competition.

There is another aspect of practices beyond the improvement of physical abilities. We strive to teach and provide opportunities for young people to learn responsibility, self reliance, team support, ability to face challenges, and satisfaction from meeting and exceeding challenges.

In general, on three days a week we develop aerobic ability. Practices range from 3000 yards to 6000 yards in 90 minutes depending on ability. The practice is divided in "sets" of swims lasting 10 minutes to 30 minutes. Within the set we will do a series of distances ranging from 25 yards to 1000 yards non stop, for example, 12 times 100 yard freestyle leaving every 2 minutes. We work on all strokes during the course of a workout. We teach the swimmers to read a pace clock, to calculate their times, and to swim with control. Most sets are designed so that swimmers will descend (go faster) with each swim. Learning to use the pace clock and report their times to the coach helps the swimmers become accountable and to have focus on their efforts. Coaches also make stroke corrections between swims.

In general, on two days a week, we do extended dryland work, then warm up swimming, then stroke drills, and then race pace or sprint work. These days are shorter in yardage, typically 2000 to 3000 yards, but very intense on quality of times. Swimmers are challenged to achieve fast times.

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“Practice is Too Hard!”

Yes, sometimes some of the things we do are “hard.” I prefer the word “challenge.” Part of what we do in practice is to challenge swimmers to extend themselves beyond what they thought they are capable of doing. We do this with care and in a systematic and progressive manor. We do not attempt to drive weaker age group swimmers from the sport. Nor do we attempt to make each swimmer an Olympic swimmer. I have long term patience for each swimmer’s development.

How much “challenge” is enough? The answer depends on the age and level of swimmer. In our age group program less than 15% of the available time (on a weekly basis) is set aside for “challenge sets.” (Three 15 minute blocks of time per week.) We record and track times on these test sets and coach the children to higher levels of performance each week. For some swimmers with the desire and ability, challenge sets will eventually make up 30 to 40 percent of the available workout time. It may take some swimmers two or three years to get to that point.

All the facts and figures do not matter to a swimmer who says “It’s too hard.” This is where helpful support from parents can be of great assistance. Parents can remind children that some exercises push children into zones of uncomfortableness with good reason. We do not adapt without some workout overload or stress. It is a basic principle of training applicable to all ages. It is also a basic principle of life that sometimes things get uncomfortable and we work a little harder to bring about a change.

With the change in coaching and in coaching styles the practices are indeed very different. We do far more stroke work now and we also challenge a bit more. With patience and support I am hopeful that

all the children will adapt and eventually enjoy the practice session. In my 27 years of coaching I have rarely lost children from the program because they did not have fun or felt it was too hard. Indeed, in the past the most common complaint about my age group programs has been that I did not give enough work and that I was holding swimmers back. (I was guilty of preparing swimmers for the future rather than my own and the parent’s own immediate gratification.)

At the age group developmental level our primary goals are to teach swimming skills, learn good practice habits, expose the children to life skills, set the aerobic conditioning foundation for senior level swimming, introduce competition opportunities, and to have fun.

“Fun” is an interesting word. One day at age group swim practice I asked 12 very exhausted swimmers aged 10 through 12, “How many of you had fun today?” This I asked after they had completed their first ever 3000 yard workout in a 75 minute period. Of course I was expecting none of them to say they had fun. What I was hoping to do was create a teaching moment where we could talk about the difference between fun and satisfaction. To my surprise every child wearily raised their hands and said that they had had fun. When I asked them to explain, they all said they felt that way because they had never done 3000 yards before. Eventually, three years later, 4 of the 12 swimmer completed 6000 yard in a 90 minute period and the other 8 completed between 4000 and 5000. All those swimmers are still swimming and still loving the sport because the challenge is the fun and the fun is the challenge.

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Training Aids: Legitimate Tools Or Frivolous Fads?

If you talk to parents of swimmers from other teams, if you read swim publications, if you watch swimmers during warm ups at swim meets, you will notice a variety of training aids that swimmers lug around. Let's see, there are kick boards in every size and shape imaginable; there are tire tubes; there are paddles -- boy are there paddles!, round ones, rectangular ones, contoured ones, ones with holes, incredibly large ones, ones that cover the forearms, ones that inflate around the whole lower arm, etc, etc.; there are webbed gloves made out of lycra or latex rubber; there are fins - standard department store types, expensive scuba shop types, short stubby ones, monofins, and fins cut in a variety of shapes; there are ankle weights, wrist weights, and even head weights; there are fiberglass rods velcroed to the legs; there are suits with pockets in them; there are plain old sneakers used on kick sets; there are plain old t-shirts; there are plain old, really old, swim suits - two or three or four worn at the same time; there is tubing; there are stretch cords; there are short pull buoys, long pull buoys, and pull buoys that can be filled with water; and on and on and on.

When you notice upstate swimmer Sally Sliepmeister, age 10, lugging around a training bag with surgical tubing exploding from the torn end of the bag, and you think "Could this be the reason Sally always wins?", do you want to go out and buy surgical tubing for your young swimmer?

Or, between long course and short course season you are contemplating your child's swimming successes and short comings of the past season while you read an ad about a "revolutionary new" buoyancy device. Do you want to equip your child with it in time for the start of the season?

Who invents these things? What things really work and what things are commercial contrivances of questionable value? Can some of these devices do more harm than good? Should your child use some of these devices?

Who invents these things? Most training aids are invented by coaches. There are hundreds, maybe thousands of training aids invented by coaches but only a few make it to commercial production. Most coaches are not inspired to invent a training aid for the profit potential, they are invented for the sake of improving an individual's or team's strength, speed, endurance, and/or technique.

Many coaches would add that training aids can do more than improve strength, endurance, and/or technique, they also add variety to a workout and help motivate swimmers.

What things really work? There are very few published independent studies done on

specific training aids to test their effectiveness in speed, strength, endurance, or technique enhancing qualities. (Actually, I could not find any published independent studies -- but there might be some out there.)

But good coaches do not need studies to know that some things really do work. Most coaches use kickboards. Most coaches use pull buoys. Many coaches, but I'm not sure most coaches, use paddles. Same for fins. Fewer coaches use surgical tubing. Almost all coaches try nearly every training aid at least once but almost no one uses all the training aids all the time.

So what things really work? Answer is: most

training aids, whether commercially produced or coach/home made, are effective to some degree when the coach and swimmer properly use them with respect to the developmental age of the swimmer, the psychological needs of the swimmer, the appropriate time during workout, and the appropriate time during the season. Answer also is: no training aid will work if not used properly.

Can some of these devices do more harm than good? The answer is a definite yes. No training aid is safe when improperly used. Most training aids are designed to increase resistance or to increase training speed. Excessive workloads with training aids can lead to overuse syndromes and injuries especially in younger children not physically mature.

Should your child use some of these devices? Who decides IF they should use training aids and if so, which aids to use? Questions like these are the reasons you and your Board of Directors hire a qualified professional coach. The coach makes these decisions based upon his experience and coaching education. If your coach is having your child use a training aid and you are concerned that use of that training aid may cause an injury, then speak directly to the coach about the extent and intensity of use for that training aid. If your coach is not using various training aids that you've seen or heard about and you would like to ask him about, then once again speak with the coach.

When speaking with the coach keep these things in mind:

1. Approach the coach after practice or during office hours quietly and sincerely with an attitude of "Could you help me understand...". Many of the communication problems between coach and parent arise from abrupt challenges to coaches judgment calls.
2. Coaches have selected favorite training aids and don't like to be told they should be using additional or different methods. There is more than one way to accomplish a desired training effect and it is the coaches area of responsibility and authority to select that method.
3. There is a limited amount of workout time in the water and a coach must make decisions about the type of training aids to use and the amount of work using training aids. These things must fit in with an overall daily, weekly, and seasonal workout plan.
4. Smart coaches are not quick to jump on the bandwagon when a revolutionary new training device comes along. They want to speak with other

coaches, observe its use, perhaps try it themselves, begin using it on a limited trial basis, and evaluate it's effectiveness before using it on a regular basis with the whole team.

5. One of the great strengths of American Swimming is in the diversity of approaches coaches use to develop young swimmers. From this diversity comes great new ideas. Your coach may be a future Olympic coach and her use, limited use, or lack of use of a training device is her special approach to training your young swimmer.

6. Many training aids are not designed for young age group use. Coaches like to introduce various training aids in a progression following the swimmer's developmental age and ability to handle greater work loads.

7. Some training aids have a dual purpose, they can be used at low resistance for stroke development, and they can be used at high intensity for speed, strength, and endurance development. A coach may use this type of training aid primarily for skill development with younger ages and gradually use it for more intense work as the swimmer grows.

8. Motivation is a large factor in the use of training aids. If a swimmer gets to use all the "toys" at an early age they will become bored in years to come as they keep using the same "toys". Smart coaches use this as a reason for the gradual introduction of training aids.

These are not easy issues for coaches, athletes, and parents. Questions about "how much", "how hard", and "what type" are part of the sport. Coaches will make decisions based on first hand experience, information from other coaches, and published reports. Whatever the decisions are, one thing stands out, there are no quick answers and no short cuts. A new superduper revolutionary training aid will not transform your age group swimmer into a superstar. And even if there was such a thing, what would it mean? In age group swimming we want steady growth, a sound aerobic base, excellent stroke development, and an appreciation for the relationship between day to day effort and the realization of goals.

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What's Going On In Practice

You are always welcome to observe practice and if you do you might see two or three different ability levels doing different things depending on the objectives for that day for each group. Above all else, their safety and well being is my primary concern.

In general, there are eight different things we do in practice, usually not all in the same day. We work on skills including freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and starts and turns for each stroke. We do drills which emphasize various aspects of each of the strokes. We race! — we give the swimmers a chance to swim fast which helps develop coordination, strength, and racing strategies. We work on basic cardiovascular conditioning doing longer swims of 200 to 1000 yards at a time depending on ability or by doing “sets” of shorter swims with limited rest, for example swimming ten times 50 yards with 15 seconds rest between each swim. We have fun — we play a game once or twice a week or we do relays. Fun can mean more than playing a game, it can also mean learning something new or swimming farther or faster. We provide opportunities for fun every day. I present life skills sometimes during a pre-planned 10 minute discussion and sometime during an appropriate teaching moment. Topics range from learning how to listen to instructions; to positive self talk, to personal responsibility. We also offer dryland training which helps increase coordination and strength. All of our dryland is done without weight equipment and the greatest care is taken to use proper technique and to be safe.

The final ingredient, and my favorite, is to challenge the young people to do something difficult, something they might not have thought they can do. My role is to set the appropriate challenge before them, to prepare them to meet the challenge, to cheer them on, and finally to praise them for a job well done. Stroke Work, Stroke Drills, Racing and Speed Work, Cardiovascular Conditioning, Fun and Games, Dryland Training, Life skills, and Challenge: these make up our day to day practice routine.

Practice starts on time. That means we begin the first exercise right at the beginning of our practice time. If children are late, we welcome them and get them going right away. If the work being done at the time they arrive requires a warm-up we will accommodate that need in order to avoid any risk of injury or strain. Practice finishes on time. If your child needs to leave earlier simply approach the coach directly and we will get the child out of the water immediately. You may also send a note with your child if they need to get out earlier.

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Why Do Coaches Gear Practices To The Ability Level Of The Best Swimmers?

Coach Mark Schubert: "If you want to raise the level of your team, you have to center your workout around the best swimmers on the team. You don't ignore the other swimmers, but you tailor the workouts to challenge the best swimmers, so the others tag along and raise their level. You can set tough intervals, and adjust the way the sets are done for slower swimmers, but you certainly don't motivate the better swimmers by having them go a lesser workout centered around the majority of the team. "I also feel that by giving extra attention to the better swimmers, you motivate the lesser swimmers to strive to be better, so they get that attention. As you gradually raise the team level, you will have people breaking through and challenging the good swimmers."

Coach Ira Klein of the Sarasota Y Sharks seconded that idea by saying that it's natural that kids who lead lanes get more time between repeats for valuable feedback from the coach, and that the prospect of earning such attention motivates more kids to take a leadership position in practice, rather than habitually swimming in the back of the loop.

Some coaches, such as Chris Martin of the Peddie School, start loops concurrently at both ends of the pool in order to create twice as many "leaders."

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When Swimmers Return From Camp

Concern: My daughter was able to do a 50 meter freestyle in 32 seconds from a push off in practice while at camp, which is her best time. Now that she is back home, she can't even do a 32 in a swim meet.

Response: A coach we know took two nationally ranked age group swimmers to a USS elite training camp several years ago. He told us how amazed he was to observe and time with his own watch these young swimmers perform sets in times they had never done at home.

Was it better coaching? The swimmers told him that it was a matter of competition and a matter of pride. They worked so hard in six workouts over three days that it took them over a week to recover once back home.

Too often swimmers fall into a niche at home where they EXPECT to out-perform some swimmers and EXPECT to be out-performed by other swimmers. Going to swim camps gives swimmers a chance to be a star away from home. Many swimmers will do exceptional things that can take them several weeks or in some cases, a whole season to duplicate at home. This is not a problem with coaching, it is a problem with what swimmers expect of themselves in a given environment.

If the swimmer can return home and break

out of the EXPECTED, they have learned a great lesson.

In addition to the above explanation, coaches are concerned that some camps give swimmers times that are not altogether accurate. Swim camps are businesses and they thrive by bringing swimmers back year after year for positive experiences and by having swimmers spread the good news of their positive experience. One of the most positive experiences a swimmer can have is going a life time best time. Parents and coaches should be wary of best times reported during practice swims or "time trials". Accept only times done in sanctioned swim meets.

Concern: My child learned stroke techniques she never learned at home and trained differently than she does at home. Why doesn't the coach teach this way?

Response: Keep in mind several things:

1. Communicate with the coach. Ask about the "new" techniques and training the swimmer learned at camp. Often times "new" techniques or training are not new at all, but are simply taught with different words.

2. Swimming performance is not produced by a direct cause and effect relationship. There are many ways to teach a given

technique and there are many techniques that can produce a given result.

Techniques used at camp may simply be a different, though not better, attempt to produce the same result which can be produced at home.

3. Children are very impressionable by their temporary new coaches at camps. As an example, imagine how you, a parent, feels when your child returns home from home practice one day and announces that he is now going to drink three glasses of milk each day because the coach said it is a good idea, even though you have been trying to get your child to do this for years! Swimmers go to camp and hear the same things the coach at home has been trying to teach but because it is being said by a new camp coach, it is now important and the child will enthusiastically accept this advice as the best way.

4. Just because it is done at camp a certain way, does not mean it is the only way or the best way. Staff members at camps are often times less experienced and less knowledgeable than your home coach.

5. Be open and cooperative with your home coach. Many coaches do not like swimmers going away to swimming camps because swimmers return home tired, out of synch with the season training plan, and full of "new" ideas that may not be very new. When selecting a camp for your child, ask the coach to help you select a good camp. There are many very good camps.

6. If you have a young and relatively inexperienced coach make sure that you turn your child's experience at camp into a POSITIVE one for the coach and team and not a NEGATIVE one for the coach. Share thoughts with the coach rather than demand changes based on something experienced at a camp that is perceived as being the right and only way. Help your coach grow, send your coach to camp! You

can make sure your coach has every opportunity to be up on the latest in technique, training, administration, and sports psychology by sending your coach to the ASCA World Clinic in the fall and the USS Coaches College in late spring.

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Who Should The Head Coach Work With?

Concern: Our full time head coach rarely works with the age group swimmers or attends age group meets. The club pays him a good salary to be our "HEAD" coach, he should work with all the swimmers.

Response: This is an important concern and one that must be resolved with the Board of Directors and the coach as soon as possible. It is not a matter that should be circulated among and speculated upon by the whole membership because it too often leads to misunderstandings based on lack of knowledge and things can be said or actions taken that hurt the whole program. The Board of Directors should consider the following points:

1. In the first place, the head coach is ultimately responsible for coaching all the age group swimmers. The head coach makes long range plans that include your age group swimmer, supervises and trains assistant coaches, and cares very much for the welfare and progress of every age group swimmer. So in a very real sense, the head coach IS coaching your child.

2. A child's swimming development must include a steady flow of NEW experiences and skills to learn. We do not believe an age group swimmer should have "everything". When we give them everything we have, we take away the opportunity for them to discover new things

along the way. When we give them everything today, including the head coach, tomorrow becomes boring.

Age group swimmers love the occasional attention given by the head coach and they cherish every word of good humor and advice the head coach gives. They "can't wait" for the day when they join the senior team. This is a very great and positive motivation for young swimmers that helps them stay with a program and look forward to the future.

3. Think about practices. Coaching senior swimmers and coaching age group swimmers requires a completely different approach and therefore completely different planning. It requires an attitude change to move from coaching senior swimmers to age group swimmers. One coach described it as "needing a different brain" to coach each group. It is important, therefore, in moderate to large clubs where resources allow the hiring of age group coaches, to place them in charge of age group groups.

Qualified age group coaches who target their efforts toward the coaching of age group swimmers can do a better job than the head coach can in situations when the head coach is required to do both.

In order to assure confidence in age group

coaches by the membership it is important that age group coaches are thoroughly trained by the head coach, that they are members of ASCA and certified, and that the Board of Directors financially supports coaching educational expenses.

4. Think about swim meets. We know a coach who, when first starting out with a club and had not yet fully developed a good assistant coach, went to age group "A", age group "B", age group "C" and/or senior meets on 13 weekends in a row -- both sessions, both days. Place yourself in the shoes of the coach. You have a family and you have a life outside of the natatorium. So does the coach and a coach needs time away from work. Age group coaches can handle the age group team at meets while the head coach receives well deserved time off.

5. One might think that a coach in a small club would need to work with all the swimmers but the coach of a larger club, where there are assistants available, could concentrate on the senior and national swimmers. In reality, we know of small clubs where the head coach only works with a select few of the top senior and national swimmers, and we know of one very large, nationally prominent club with a large staff, where the head coach was let go because he did not work with the age group swimmers.

The point is, there is no single and simple answer for this problem that all programs will accept. Each program establishes its own philosophy based upon its resources and upon the needs and desires of the membership.

6. Needs and desires are different. in a small club with limited resources and staff the head coach NEEDS to work with as many of the athletes as is reasonable. Most good coaches want to do this anyway, as they recognize it is the best way to build the club.

In a large club, the need for the head coach to work with all the swimmers is not so great but the DESIRE of the membership to have the coach work with all the swimmers may be. It is important to understand that this DESIRE is not a reasonable request upon the coach, especially where resources provide for the hiring of an assistant coach.

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Learning Good Starts

Concern: My child always gets beat on the start. Why doesn't the coach correct it?

Response: Differences in starting ability from one swimmer to the next is easy for parents to observe. Unfortunately, it is one part of the race that is not always mastered equally well by all swimmers. There are two contributing factors to the success of the start: learned skill and natural ability.

The simple fact is that not all swimmers are built the same. Some will always be better starters for two reasons:

1. People are born with a given percentage of different muscle fiber types. Some people have a higher percent of "fast twitch" fibers making them more explosive and capable of getting off a starting block faster. Other swimmers may have a larger percentage of "slow twitch" fibers and simply cannot generate the explosive quickness other swimmers can. It is an hereditary factor and cannot be significantly changed through training.

2. A study done several years ago examined the relative importance of the initial quickness off the block versus the swimmer's ability to enter the water and streamline properly. According to the study, entry and streamlining are of far greater importance. Entry is a skill. However, streamlining is only partially

dependent upon skill. It is more dependent on body type which is a factor a swimmer cannot control. The fact is, that because of body type and buoyancy, some swimmers streamline better than other swimmers and will surface in front of other less able swimmers.

As for the skill aspect of the start, the coach can help the swimmer make significant improvements -- over time. Wouldn't it be wonderful if a swimmer learned a skill the first time it was taught? It is important to remember that swimmers learn at different paces. Despite the best efforts of coaches, some swimmers will take longer to learn a good start than others.

Do not judge your child's performance largely upon his starting ability as there are many other aspects of the race which add up to the performance. Even when your child masters the start to the best of his ability, he might still be "the last one off the blocks."

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Summer's End Break

By David Johnson
Ann Arbor Swim Club

QUESTION: "Will my child get out of shape if he takes four weeks off at the end of the summer season?"

Dave's reply: To answer this question, one must consider both the physiological and psychological aspects of children and sport.

Physiologically, your child will lose a certain amount of the conditioning he gained during the summer season. The amount lost will be directly related to the amount of training that he put into their summer season. For the most part, it is safe to say, that those athletes that put in the time and committed themselves to excellence will lose less than their teammates that did the reverse. Although, one must allow for individual differences. The more athletically endowed the individual, the longer they will maintain their conditioning.

Psychologically, the time off will probably help your child. A change of pace, a change of scenery, and associating with their non-swimming friends will be good for their attitude.

The four week absence from the pool, the coach, the kickboard, etc., will, in most cases, make them "hungry" for their sport.

We currently give our age group swimmers six weeks off at the completion of the summer championships. Our senior swimmers get two to three weeks off from training. Consistently, both these groups of athletes come back with great attitudes and are excited to be back at the pool, to see their coach, their swim friends, and even the kickboards.

Further, the four weeks off is a great time for the swimmers to participate in other activities such as bicycling, tennis, basketball, golf, and so on. If your child is performing other physical activities such as these, they are not going to get too out of shape. Now, if they are eating potato chips, drinking soda, and watching television they are putting themselves in quite a precarious situation when practice begins in the fall.

The best person to listen to is your child's coach. They know how much work your child has done and how much time they need off. Their expertise will determine what is best for your swimmer.

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What is Taper?

"When A Championship Meet Approaches, My Child's Workouts Get Easier And Shorter. Shouldn't He Be Working Harder Right Before A Meet? What Is Taper?"

Answered by: Marc Williams, Head Coach of the City of Richardson Swim Team, Richardson, Texas.

It shouldn't be surprising to see a team reducing the amount of work leading up to an important competition. Swimming is extremely demanding physically, and in order to produce top performances, the body needs rest.

Before an important meet, a swimmer will go through a training phase known as a taper. This means a reduction of work and an increase in the amount of rest. The length of a taper will vary. A short taper will consist of one to three days of reduced work and a full taper can last up to six weeks. In general, a young body can recuperate rapidly and does not require as much rest as a senior swimmer. In fact, sometimes the younger swimmer does not respond well to more than a few days rest. The age group swimmer is less developed physically and has undergone less intense training than the senior swimmers. Usually, the age group swimmer will need to reduce the workout load a few days before the meet or maybe take a day or two off.

During the course of the taper, all types of stress should be gradually reduced. As the taper progresses, the amount of high stress work is decreased and the quality of performance is gradually improved.

For optimum performance, it is suggested that the swimmers curtail their outside activities as much as possible. Most swim coaches realize it is not always

possible to skip a little league baseball, softball or soccer game during a taper. However, the neighborhood football game and overnight slumber parties should be saved for another time. Ideally, you would like the swimmers to store up as much energy as possible for the swimming meet.

When the workload is reduced. There is a noticeable increase in the swimmer's energy level. Resting is an important part of the taper, and expending the energy will only defeat the purpose of the taper.

There are many factors a coach must consider when planning a taper: age, gender, body type, and the swimmer's primary event.

Age: Older swimmers require more rest than younger swimmers.

Sex: Men usually require more rest than women.

Body Type: Muscular swimmers need more rest.

Primary event: Peak performance in shorter events requires more rest than peak performances in longer events.

During the season, a coach will be very selective in deciding which meets to taper for. Normally, a coach will not rest or taper a swimmer more than two or three times during the short course season. Often times, a swimmer will only taper for the season-ending championship meet.

An effective taper varies greatly from swimmer to swimmer. Consequently, it is essential that there is close communication between the swimmer and coach.

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The Coach Seems Harsh

“My child feels the coach is being excessively harsh on him. What can I, as a parent, do to help?”

Answered by: Coach Maureen Sheehan and Coach Mike Lawrence of the Lake Forest Swim Club, Lake Forest, Illinois.

Three very important relationships influence the success of any young swimmer’s career: The coach-athlete relationship, athlete-parent relationship. In any problem situation, it is crucial to maintain the integrity of all aspects of the parent-coach-athlete relationship. Often it is a breakdown in communication that leads to a problem. Striving to reestablish clear lines of communication is the key to maintaining good relationships and providing opportunities for successful swimming careers.

Parents are the most important role models in a child’s life. The way that a parent handles a difficult situation will serve as a role model for the child. Problems provide opportunities for parents to teach children how to work through difficulties. It is important for a parent not to over react to a situation. If the child sees a lack of respect or support for the coach from his/her most important role model, the child will probably act in a similar fashion. Non-support of a coach as an initial reaction may irreparably damage the coach-athlete relationship.

How do parents show support for both the coach and their child at the same time? Take the role of a listener; the child needs to clearly the situation. This description is how the child feels he/she is being treated but is not necessarily a reflection of the coach’s intent.

Ask your child questions to help him/her think clearly about what actually is the problem. It is important for you to help the child achieve an objective view of the situation. Ask the child why the conflict is a problem and how it can be solved. Give suggestions and guidance but try to let the child solve the problem or conflict without interference.

Parents cannot solve their children’s problems, but they do need to make a limited assessment of the situation that assures the child that mom/dad cares about them. Some very important but difficult learning experience takes place in youth athletic activities. Teaching a child about the relationship with the coach can go a long way towards easing problems in the future. Is the coach trying to encourage or motivate the child rather than pick on him/her? Is there something the child can do differently to encourage the coach to treat him/her in a specific way? What kind of treatment would be viewed as support?

Children need to learn to communicate with their coach at an early age. Encourage the child to ask questions and seek answers. This allows a child to learn about building strong relationships, in this case between the swimmer and the coach. A special meeting between the coach and the swimmer to discuss goals is an excellent step for the swimmer to initiate with the coach. This gives the coach an opportunity to let the athlete know what is expected of him/her and allows him/her to ask the coach for specific forms of support and encouragement. It is a chance for the coach and the athlete to determine a path they are going to take together.

If necessary a parents-coach meeting may be in order. These are best approached as discussions of how the child feels, which helps avoid possible conflicts over what was or was not said or done. Such discussions allow the parents and the coach to work together on a mutual goal!

Some dos and don'ts:

Do's:

- Listen; pay attention to your child's feelings
- Ask questions
- Make a limited assessment
- Try to help your child to work through this problem
- Work to see this problem solved in a positive manner for all involved
- Encourage your child to find his/her own answers
- Relate this to another area in life to help it be a growing experience
- Try to help build a positive image of the coach in the child's mind
- Support the coach
- Support the child
- Follow-up with your child

Don't's:

- Overreact
- Make this a family crisis or team issue
- Create a situation that undermines your child's respect for the coach.
- Deal in comparisons with other swimmers
- Limit the coach-athlete relationship for the future

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Swimming Tired

Herb Huddleston, Long time coach, Orlando, FL.

One aspect of competitive swimming that many swimmers (and parents) have a difficult time understanding and/or accepting is what coaches call “swimming tired.” This mostly applies to senior level swimmers, but can also affect younger swimmers.

To understand fatigue, and its effect on meet performances, it is important to understand the “training effect.” Improvement in swimming (or any aerobic sport) is largely a result of the body’s adaptation to the stress of regular training. Of course, technique and skills are very important for peak performance, but for our purposes in understanding this element of swimming, we will address only physical training.

The body adapts in many different ways—the muscles become stronger, the heart pumps blood more effectively, and the cardiovascular system becomes more efficient in transporting oxygen to the muscles. These all contribute to faster swimming. Progress at the beginner or novice level comes quickly and is dramatically evident in large decreases in swimming times. As a swimmer becomes more accomplished, decreases in swimming times come in smaller increments, even though the amount of training may increase. When training is increased, fatigue may affect performances at competitions. However, swimmers may still be able to swim best times, in spite of being tired. Improved stroke technique, better starts and

turns, more effective race strategies, and increased conditioning and strength can offset the fatigue that they have accumulated.

Coaches always encourage swimmers to swim at 100% effort and use their skills to overcome the tiredness.

So, why not reduce the large training load just before each meet, and allow the swimmers to be a little rested to ensure better meet performances? To optimize the benefits of training, it is best not to “interrupt” the continuous stress of training at certain times of the season for the purpose of swimming faster, for example at an early-season meet compared with the championship meets at the end of the season. These meets early in the season can be considered “practice meets,” where the swimmer gains valuable race experience and tests improvements in strokes and skills. A successful swim performance is not always just a fast time. Not resting for early-season meets will result in better end-of-the-season times.

This strategy can be difficult for the swimmer and parent to accept and can be frustrating. Often, other swimmers who do not train consistently will swim faster at early season meets, because they are not as tired. It is important that under these circumstances, the swimmers keep their ultimate goal in perspective, and that the parents empathize and support their children. The hard training of the early and middle part of the season will pay off at the end of the season at the meets that really count!

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Adjusting To Different Stroke Techniques

“My daughter’s Coach has been changing her strokes and now all of her times are slower. Does the coach know what he is talking about?”

Answered by: Mitch Ivy, a member of the 1984 Olympic Coaching Staff.

It is not unusual to experience slower swimming while adjusting to different stroke techniques. Often, times stroke techniques feel awkward and uncomfortable to the swimmer. It is important for the parents to encourage and support their young swimmer when he or she is going through this period.

Often times the swimmer will become frustrated with his slower times and he will become discouraged. The parents need to reinforce the benefits and the positive effects that the stroke changes will bring. Once he adapts to the changes, he will be much better off in the long run. The coach’s job is to make the transition as smooth as possible, “educating” the swim family along the way.

The importance of proper stroke technique cannot be stressed enough. Given two well-trained and physically comparable athletes, the race will ultimately be determined by technique and efficiency such as strokes, starts and turns. Fundamental stroke work should be the

base for all 10 and under swimmers. We (concord Pleasant hill swim team) introduce training formats to swimmers 11 years and older and do not apply full double workouts and/or strength training until roughly high school age, although this is dependent upon individual maturity, physically and mentally.

Stroke work is not a seasonal or a special day even! Instead, it is an everyday part of our program. A stroke error left unattended will eventually prohibit proper racing form, and can even lead to injury. I consider each workout a “stroke workout” and constant care and attention are demanded from swimmer and coach alike.

You might not see results right away, but the coach is trying to lay the groundwork for your swimmer to reach his/her fullest future potential in our great sport.

Also, be aware that as the age grouper matures, his strokes will change. As the swimmer develops physically and mentally, he becomes technically more polished. Expect changes. It is very rare for a swimmer to go through age group swimming and senior swimming with the “best” stroke. Trust the coach. Don’t be afraid to ask questions of the coach so that you may have better understanding of his teaching methods.

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Age Group Swimmers And Taper

From the American Swimming Coaches Association Level 3 Physiology School, Page 112.

In Age Group swimmers (prepubescent), a true physical taper is usually unnecessary. The muscle mass is not large enough in most cases, to require a great deal of rest, and it is characteristic of these young people that they have abundant energy.

The concept of taper can be introduced for 12 year old females and 13-14 year old males, as they get older and experience the growth spurts of adolescence. This is assuming that a normal level of Age Group work is being done with regularity by athletes of this age. It is important to discuss with them the nature of taper, what is getting physically improved and what to expect. One critical factor here is to explain to them that they will experience for the swim meet, and not burn it off by increasing their non-swimming activity. This advice is good for all ages, of course. An emphasis on getting quality sleep and nutrition is certainly appropriate as well.

From the Technical Director of the ASCA

A "taper" presupposes there has been a program of strenuous overload of mature bodied individuals. In the case of age 12 and under age group swimmers a true taper is not productive because the day to

day training of age groupers is rarely as intensive as with their senior counterparts. Total time in the water is generally only 50% or less of that of a senior swimmer who attends morning as well as evening workouts. The density of training (yards per hour) might only be 25% to 50% of senior training because of the greater emphasis on stroke work, drills, and fun time in an age group workout. Age group swimmers should maintain aerobic work until a day or two before a big meet and then reduce the amount of work by only 25% to 50%. For "A" level 9-10 year olds the typical level of aerobic work may be 2,000 to 3,000 per day (higher in some programs) and for "A" and "A+" 11-12's typical aerobic yardage may be 3000 to 4,500 per day (higher in some programs.) Intense anaerobic swims of 50 yards and longer should not be increased in the immediate days before an important competition since it has the greatest potential for tiring young swimmers out. Instead, coaches often include a few "broken swims" of race distance and race pace more for the teaching of strategy and pace than for the physical training effect. A moderate amount of true alactic sprints of 25 yards and less with complete recovery times can be done at almost any time without effecting energy levels of young swimmers.

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Officials And Their Duties

By Fred Cruciger, Longtime Florida USS Official and Swim Parent

When you as a parent go to a swimming meet you may not be totally familiar with the officials and their duties. In order to gain a better understanding of the functions of the officials, it might be a good idea to discuss the duties of each position and then to explain just how a person becomes an official.

The referee is the key official and is in complete charge of the competition. The referee makes decisions based upon the technical rules of swimming and assigns and supervises the other officials working the meet. The referee is the person who stands at the starting end of the pool and signals the starter when the race is ready to begin. No disqualification is final until the referee has signed the disqualification slip. The referee is the final authority.

The starter is responsible for ensuring a fair start to each race. He or she gives commands that are designed to inform the swimmer of the stroke and distance, to bring the swimmers to the proper starting position, and once all swimmers are motionless, he or she signals the race to begin with either the beeper or gun start.

There will also be stroke and turn judges stationed around the pool. They are charged with the specific responsibility of ensuring that the swimmers conform to the established rules of competition for that specific event. Each stroke has specific rules and it is up to these officials to enforce them.

Officials are well trained. The first level is that of a stroke and turn official. They can then progress to starter and finally to referee. Each level requires a clinic which is conducted by a certified clinic instructor. After the clinic there is a test and also a requirement for an apprenticeship period. During this time the apprentice works with a certified official to learn under actual competitive conditions. Once all of these phases are completed, the official is certified.

Once certified, each official must be recertified every two years. This is to ensure that each and every official is fully current on the rules. Rules change, and it is absolutely necessary for each official to be up to date.

Rules can vary from very basic to highly complex. The key to the rules is contained in the first paragraph of the United States Swimming Rules and Regulations. It states "...so that no swimmer shall obtain unfair advantage over another." That is the

reason for rules. Also, officials are instructed to make sure that every benefit goes to the swimmer. In other words, if an official is unsure about a possible rule infraction, the benefit goes to the swimmer.

Officials signal a disqualification by raising a hand for about 20 seconds, or until the referee sees it. The purpose of the raised hand is not to signal any specific swimmer, but to call attention to the fact that a disqualification has taken place. The official calling the infraction will then write it up on paper, sign it and forward it to the referee for signature. Once signed by the referee the disqualification is official.

The referee is the only official who can be approached by a coach. The referee must know all of the details so that if approached by the coach, all of the necessary information will be at hand.

Officials and coaches must work together. The coach wants his swimmer to be disqualified if there is an infraction. This becomes a teaching aid for the coach. If you, as a parent, have a question about a disqualification, contact your coach. Do not go to the referee. If the coach needs more information to answer your question, the coach will go to the referee.

Officials have a large responsibility. In virtually every case they are volunteers. They are not paid. They do this for the benefit of the sport. The chances are that they will have their own children in that meet.

All of the officials do their best to be as fair and reasonable as possible. However, if they observe a rule violation, they will call a disqualification. That is why they are there.

Every meet must have a full staff of officials and this may be something that you might wish to try. One thing for certain, it sure makes the meet go more quickly! Contact any of the officials at the next meet you attend and ask them the procedure to become a certified official. It is a good way to learn some of the rules of the sport, contribute to the meet, and to show your children that you are supporting them.

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When Your Child Is Disqualified

Concern: I've noticed that when some of our team's swimmers are disqualified the coach does not approach the official to question the call while at other times she confronts the official immediately. There appears to be favoritism.

Response: If this is a case of favoritism we certainly do not condone this type of coach behavior. We recommend a direct, but polite discussion with the coach at a time when everyone has had some time and distance from the situation.

If not favoritism, then the following may explain your coaches behavior:

The coach observed the infraction, was not surprised by the infraction, noted it, and talked with the swimmer about it. Coaches work with their swimmers every day and know each individual's difficulties with technique and tendency for mistakes. Coaches continually work with their athletes helping them to improve technique and correct mistakes but the results are rarely instantaneous. Swimmers take time to improve technique and eliminate mistakes. Coaches will enter a swimmer in an event even though the swimmer is only marginally capable of performing legal strokes and turns so that the swimmer gains experience. If the swimmer is disqualified, the coach uses it as a learning situation for the athlete.

In some sports it is expected that there be a confrontation between coach and official with every call but that has not been our way in swimming.

When there is a confrontation it is generally over a judgment call made by the official for an infraction that the athlete does not have a history of making, and, in the eyes of the coach, was not a good call. In this case the coach will usually ask the official for a clarification of the call and the specific rule broken. The coach will also ask the official if he was in a proper position to make such a call.

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All-Weekend Swim Meets

One of the big issues is how precious the family weekend has become and whether the traditional all-weekend swim meet extracts too high a price. So this month our editorial contains ideas on rethinking our approach to competition from Coaches Amy Ayres and Phil Baker of the Seacoast Swimming Association in Dover, New Hampshire.

"There are more organized activities offered to children today than ever before. Our sport is but one choice among many for today's children and their parents. One aspect of swimming that particularly discourages many families is the long drawn out swimming meet. When discussing a little league baseball season with a 10-year old swimmer, he informed us that he had no practices, only games. Obviously this is not a solution for our sport, but when a child and his parents look at both activities, most will choose the least expensive in terms of money and time.

In order to keep our sport viable, we need to be willing to examine our popular meet formats and make adjustments. Split session formats that have been so prevalent, are adequate, so long as they are run efficiently, and kept to a four hour limit. However meets that are run at inadequate facilities can make any meet (split-session, dual, championship) a "nightmare" for swimmers, parents, and coaches.

Inadequate deck and spectator space definitely adds to general frustration with meets. One answer is to restrict small facilities to hosting meets involving a limited number of swimmers (i.e. 100 or fewer per session). For example, run a meet just for 10 and unders.

Concerning the topic of "who needs to compete," we should encourage only those young swimmers whose confidence level is high to enter outside competition. The decision on competition readiness can be reached in discussion between coach and parents. While a developing swimmer should get the experience of swimming all strokes and distances while young, it's counter productive to put them in events for which they haven't yet developed "legal" skills. Practice is the place for perfecting strokes.

One of the best ways to introduce competition to

new developing swimmers and their families is the "intra-squad" meet, in which swimmers compete against their training mates in a simulated meet atmosphere. Allowing the young swimmer to reach a good level of stroke competence and competitive confidence will ease their introduction to dual meets with other teams.

Dual meets, where the interest and excitement level can remain high throughout the meet, and the time commitment and expense is limited, along with the potential for stimulating and different formats, are one of the most obvious solutions. Dual meets can be disadvantageous if their formats are too restrictive and if coaches and parents are overly concerned with the team's won-loss record, but with creativity and an enlightened attitude about using the dual meet as a developmental opportunity, they can be a win-win situation for all involved.

Dual meets can be set up within and outside the immediate geographic area to swim new teams and expose the swimmers to new people and places. Event flexibility with different formats, such as pentathlons, sprint meets, distance meets, relay meets, unusual events such as 300 I.M. (75 each stroke or drop a stroke) or I.M. with the strokes swum in any order of the swimmer's choice, etc. can all be great fun. The excitement in a dual meet will be created by the attitude of coaches and parents and the swimmers will catch on.

The recommended frequency of competition for young swimmers is once per month - never more than twice a month. At a young age the emphasis should be on practicing skills, not on competition. Not only swimmers but also their families can "burn out" on the sport if forced to compete every weekend. It's time for all of us in the sport to start saying "No" to the long drawn out "revenue meet" and promote more mini-meets, dual meets, and intra-squad simulated meets."

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Why Doesn't The Coach Continue To Work On Technical Points At Championship Meets?

Coach Alex Braunfeld: Dynamo Swim Club: "I believe most coaches do realize that the technical aspects of stroke, turns, and starts are extremely important, no matter what time of the season. It's important to stress fundamentals throughout the season, including the championship season. Technique should be a day-in, day-out consideration but with a bit more concentration at the beginning and end of the season when more time is available.

"However, most coaches try to avoid over-coaching at the championship meet. Swimmers perform best when they are intuitively doing things they have rehearsed thoroughly for a long time. Trying to make technique adjustments at a championship meet can be distracting to the swimmer, forcing them to think too much when they should be performing skills almost automatically and subconsciously.

"One final point, while parents can always find fault with starts and turns and they are always the first thing to be identified as needing work, if adjustments are to be made, it should be the coach who makes them. Athletes get easily confused when they hear different advice from parents and coach. Let the coaches do the coaching."

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Support Team Travel

The benefits of team travel for age group swimmers are often talked about in terms of such matters as building responsibility, developing self discipline, and gaining independence from home -- in other words, life skills. However, let's not forget that our sport is competitive swimming. Age group swimmers who swim continually within the state or Local Swim Committee area begin to fit into the same type expectations mentioned in the article on camps -- they EXPECT to beat some swimmers while EXPECTING to be beat by others. Even parents are often overheard stating that they expect their child to lose to a specific swimmer. More experienced age group swimmers need to travel outside their immediate area and compete with new faces. They need to learn how to break out of the EXPECTED.

News For

SWIM PARENTS

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Which Events Should Your Child Swim?

Concern: My child will be aging up before the end of the season and she needs every opportunity to make AAA times in each event before then. The coach, however, does not want her to attend all the offered meets and does not allow the swimmers to swim all the events offered at each meet. I do not like the way the coach selects my child's meet and event schedule.

Response: Rule number one for any concern regarding decisions made by the coach is to communicate directly with the coach at your earliest opportunity. The coach may mention one or more of the following considerations:

1. Age group swimmers should have an opportunity to experience all the official events for their age group. In fact, many coaches would make a case for having intermediate to advanced age group swimmers also swim 200's of back, breast, and fly, as well as the 400 IM and distance freestyles. (Some countries offer these events in meets and tabulate national rankings!) BUT, there needs to be a balance found between the time and expense of driving to too many meets versus the long range goals of a good age group program - steady, well planned, unrushed, and enjoyable progress. Progressive coaches make opportunities in practices, time trials, and short at-home mini-meets for age group swimmers to

experience all events.

2. A major push at end of an age group implies that a let down can occur when the child ages up. This discourages the steady and consistent progress that most coaches encourage in age group swimming.

3. Achievement must be viewed as career long and not dependent on the vagaries of an end of age group meet schedule. Coaches plan careers around seasonal planning, not around age group planning. The primary focus should be on end of season meet.

4. A combined and unified team effort for end of the season meets is more important than allowing individual swimmers to "peak" for mid-season meets in order to achieve time standards or rankings.

5. For all the above reasons, the coach is the person who should select each swimmer's meet and event schedule early in the season and review it with each swimmer and parent.

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What Do Coaches Say To Age Group Swimmers After Their Event?

When you know what your coach is telling your swimmer you are better able to lend emotional support to your child and you are better able to support the coach.

After an event I first asked my swimmers, "How did you like your swim?" After listening to them, accepting their feelings, and in most cases, empathizing with their feelings, I proceeded to analyze the swim. In some situations, when a swimmers displayed excessive anger or crying after a swim I asked them to warm down first, or to sit quietly in private for a few moments before talking about the swim.

I always told age group swimmers that there are three things they can do in a race. They can do a best time. They can swim the race technically correct with proper pace and good start, turn, and stroke mechanics. And they can win the race. "Win the race" refers to beating whoever they are close to in the heat. Sometimes it means winning the heat, sometimes it means winning the event, sometimes it means out touching the swimmer in the next lane for seventh place. If a swimmer is successful at one of the three objectives I told them they did a good job. If they were successful at two of the three, that's was an excellent job. If they were successful at all three, then they were the best they could be at that point.

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What To Expect At Swim Meets

By Lea Anne Randell
Swim Parent

Here are some informational items that may be of help to parents as the summer long course competition season approaches. As a parent, I know it is good to review these things at the start of the season.

First of all, your child is participating in a wonderful but demanding activity. Their bodies will become tanner and leaner, their appetites will be healthy, their hair lighter (and maybe tackier or even fluorescent), and they will feel good about themselves.

They will want their parents to be there to glory in their achievements with them and have a comforting hug ready when that, too, is needed. Your swimmer wants and needs your support. The swim season can become a real family activity.

Hopefully, all children will have an opportunity to compete in either a dual meet or an invitational meet. Dual meets are held with one other team either at the home pool or at the opponent's pool. It is important to check the team bulletin boards and newsletter or speak with the coach well in advance of the event to find out travel arrangements and line ups. If your child is unable to attend the meet it is important to notify the coach as soon as possible, at least a week in advance.

At home meets parent's assistance is needed to help make the meet efficient and well run. Parents can time, work concessions, work at the awards table, and score the meet. Kids love to see their parents doing their share. It's a wonderful way to meet other team parents, and it helps make a meet go faster.

What to bring to dual meets:

Summer dual meets in our area are usually outdoors and usually during the evening. The weather can change in a few hours from very warm to cool and rainy. Be prepared for all kinds of

weather.

Parents will probably want to bring lawn chairs. It is worth investing in lightweight portable chairs. In some areas you will also be grateful for bug spray.

At most dual meets, concessions are limited. Pop, coffee, candy and other snacks are typically offered. If you feel you or your swimmer will require special sustenance you will need to bring it yourself.

Don't forget to cheer for the whole team in addition to cheering for your own child -- dual meets are a team effort.

The other kind of meet is an invitational USS meet. These are large meets with many teams and hundreds of participants. USS meets require early registration. Decisions regarding signing up for these meets have to be made well in advance of the meets themselves -- usually at least two weeks.

Entry procedures vary from team to team. In some programs the coach oversees the entire entry process. In other programs, parents are responsible. In either case, once entries are sent in to the host team it is generally not possible to receive a refund on your entry fee.

In our program the coaches advise the swimmers on which meets they should attend. Once the swimmers decide on the meets and days they can attend, the coaches decide the events the swimmer should participate in. Sometimes a swimmer will be entered in an event that he doesn't feel is his strongest, but the coach still wants him to have the experience of trying. Parents should try to support the coaches and encourage their swimmer to do his best. Parents make great parents, but they make terrible coaches!

The ten year old breaststroker with an illegal fly could very well become a state champion flyer years later. Early experience in all strokes and events is an important part of the swimmer's total development -- both in terms of skills, and in terms of

developing positive attitudes towards difficult tasks.

In most programs the coaches make up relay line-ups. Usually relays are put together to make the fastest combination of swimmers available. Exceptions could occur if a swimmer is late to warm-ups, hasn't made practice that week, etc. Again, parents need to support these coaching decisions. Of course, it's not easy to look at your "baby" with tears in his eyes and support that "mean old coach". It's hard, but try to encourage team spirit, help him cheer for his friends, and let him know that with hard work he too can earn a relay spot. If your child has a problem with swimming, encourage him to take the responsibility of talking to his coach. This can be a positive learning experience and a real step toward growing up for a young person. This is one of the rewards of being involved in a swimming program.

Planning for the meet: You should receive directions to the pool either through the bulletin board, the newsletter, or a special notice sent home with swimmers. In addition you should know the warm-up time and plan on being to the pool at least 30 minutes before warm-up so your swimmer can calmly change into his suit, speak with friends, greet the coach, and participate in team stretching before the actual in-water warm-up time begins.

When packing for the meet, be sure your swimmer includes team swimsuit, extra suit for warmups or emergencies, 2 team caps, 2 pair of goggles, waterproof sun screen, towels, dry cloths for after the meet, and a water bottle. Other items include books, games, cards, radio/headset, blanket or sleeping bag, shampoo, and soap. Healthy snacks of fruit and grains will help maintain energy levels throughout the session.

If your swimmer is swimming in the morning session, have him pack his bags the night before.

Parents, too, need to plan ahead. Some things you will appreciate having include money, map, cooler, book, pen/pencil, lawn chairs, sun glasses, and sun block. On very hot days, dress appropriately and perhaps bring a swim suit. Some meets allow parents to cool off in the diving well, kiddie pool or shallow end. If they don't, you can always jump in a cool shower - in either case, you will be grateful for a swim suit.

Most USS meets have concessions that serve anything from doughnuts and coffee to nacho chips, pizza, hot dogs, sandwiches and salads. You won't go hungry, although at the end of a 3 day meet you might be a bit poorer.

Expect to pay an admission fee of anywhere from a dollar to two dollars per adult (swimmers and younger children are free). Heat sheets (program) will also be available at an additional cost. Some sheets will cover all weekend, every session, some will be mornings or afternoons for the whole weekend, and others may be for just one session. The price will vary depending upon how much is included. It is a good idea to buy one so you can see what events your swimmer is in, where he is

seated in his event, and help you to keep track of what's happening.

For those parents who live to SHOP there will probably be concessionaires from swim shops with many items to purchase such as goggles (when the emergency ones from home are lost or broken), swim suits (sale and expensive), t-shirts, bags, and an assortment of swimming paraphernalia. Some shops take bank cards, some only checks and cash. Come prepared. Setting some spending guidelines at home before the meet might help avoid clashes with your swimmer at the meet.

What to expect during the meet: During the warmup you can study the heat sheet and find your swimmer's events. You will note that there could be 50 or more other swimmers in the same event. Since everyone can not possibly swim at the same time, the event will be swum in heats of 6 - 8 swimmers depending on the number of lanes in the pool. Heats are swum from slowest seed time to fastest in timed final meets. Hopefully your swimmer will be in a heat with other swimmers who swim approximately as fast as he does. In a timed finals meet swimmers swim only once in each event. The final result of the event is based on the times for everyone who swam the event. It is possible for a swimmer to win his heat (a neat accomplishment) but not place in the top 6 or 8. Final results for the event will be posted somewhere (ask) so your swimmer can check his official time and place.

In a trials and finals meet the fastest 6, 8, 12, 18, or 24 swimmers from the preliminary heats in each event return for the finals usually in the evening. In the finals there will often be two heats, the final heat consisting of the fastest 6 or 8 swimmers, and a consolation heat with the next 6 to 8 fastest swimmers. In some senior meets a third final heat called the bonus final is also offered. Swimmer's cannot move up in place beyond their heat regardless of time. A swimmer who wins the consolation final with a time faster than the last place finisher in the final heat cannot move ahead of the finals swimmer. Confused? Ask the coach!

And finally, the best advice of all: as parents, try to stress your swimmer's personal accomplishments - best times, first time, and so on. Don't make too big a deal about awards one way or another.

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What is Long Course, What is Short Course?

"One of our pools is 25 yards wide by 50 meters long. Why isn't the pool 25 meters by 50 meters or 25 yards by 50 yards?"

For years the "American Standard Short Course" pool has been a 25 yard pool. Almost all high school pools and most college pools are 25 yards and all high school and college meets are run as short course meets. Club teams generally swim short course meets from September through March.

The international standard is meters. The Olympics, Pan-American Games, and World Championships are held in 50 meter pools. In this country, most 50 meter pools are outdoors due to the cost of building an indoor 50 meter pool. For that reason our long course season is generally from March through August. As more and more indoor 50 meter pools are being built and as the United States focuses more on international swimming the distinction between the "short course season" and the "long course season" becomes less distinct and more and more meets are going to the long course standard throughout the year -- with the exception of high school and college swimming which will remain short course yards.

At this time we are swimming short course. Eventually we will swim meets that are long course. This will cause some confusion about times. The times will be

slower because a 50 meter swim is approximately 5 yards longer than a 50 yard swim. Another factor are turns. There are less turns in long course swimming. Generally, turns are faster than swimming - - we can push off the wall faster than we can swim. (Although for some of our swimmers who have not yet mastered a turn, the turning process is slower than swimming!)

Some people attempt to "convert" a short course time to a long course time or visa versa. The conversions factors are not precise due to differences in turns, strokes, and individual's ability to swim the extra distance at speed. Conversions can lead to unrealistic expectations and disappointments, or to a false sense of achievement. For those reasons we do not convert times. We simply say that each swimmer has two sets of best times, one for long course and one for short course.

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Swim Meets

We participate in a variety of swim meets ranging from the most basic novice level dual meet to statewide and regional championship meets. Many meets are low key and designed to be learning experiences. Winning means improving start, stroke, turns, pace, and time. Racing, the ability to race, and the strategies in racing are a close second priority. Beating someone else is a bonus but not overly emphasized except for higher levels of competition. We try to attend invitational meets about every 4 to six weeks. We may hold novice level meets more frequently, sometimes weekly, at our home pool.

Coaches will ask parents for permission to enter their children in swim meets. Usually there is about a two to a four week advanced notice of meets. Once approval is made the coaches will enter the swimmers in appropriate events and times. In general, we swim all strokes in meets and aim toward the more challenging events.

Swim meets are preceded by a warm up period of 60 to ninety minutes. The coaches will tell parents what time swimmers are expected to be at the meet. Once at the meet, the coach will manage all the warmup swimming, speak with swimmers before each swim, and review the swim with the swimmer immediately after. Parents should find a comfortable place to view the meet away from the immediate side of the pool. (Most of our swim parents sit together.) Parents are not to engage in coaching their children at the meets. However, parents are welcome to speak with coaches at appropriate times during the meet.

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Mini-Meet!

There are several objectives we strive to accomplish in our Mini-Meets. The primary focus is on teaching young swimmers what to do, where to be, and what to think about at a swimming meet. It is also a good opportunity for new swim parents to find out what a swim meet is all about.

What a thrill to watch your child swim! We ask that you sit in the bleachers and stay clear of the sides of the pool. (Unless, you would like to be a timer – no experience required and the best seats in the house!) Your child will be under the care of the coaching staff during the whole time. All the swimmers will be in the same general area waiting for their next event. It is very important that children speak with their coach before their event and immediately afterwards in order to provide reminders and then to provide feedback. After children speak to the coach about their event they may visit with their parents but will need to return to the team fairly shortly if they have another event to prepare for. When you visit with your children tell them how much you love them and how proud you are of them. Please refrain from providing critical comments on your child's performance as this is the role of the coaching staff.

What's going on?

Children should first find their coach who will conduct a warm-up prior to the start of the meet. The purpose of the warm-up is to

loosed up muscles and tendons, get the capillaries opened up for improved blood flow, and to review skills. The amount of warm-up varies depending on training background. After warm-up the children will gather in an area with the coaching staff. A good role for parents at this point is to be sure their children have a warm towel. The general order of events is younger swimmers first, and girls before boys. Age groups are 8 & under, 9-10, 11-12, and 13 and over. There may be several "heats" of one event. For example, there may be fifteen 9-10 girls so we would run several heats of 5 or 6 girls at a time. In each heat there may be swimmers much faster or much slower than your child.

It is natural for parents to want their child to win the heat. There are three things coaches look for and at this level winning the race is the LEAST important. The first thing we look at is technique -- starts, stroke, turns, pace, and finish. The second thing we look at is their time. Is it a best time? Finally we look at "racing." Racing means being competitive WITH other swimmers. Perhaps the race is for 5th place or perhaps it is for 1st place. In any case we like the swimmers to have fun racing. Losing is not a big deal – effort is.

We hope you have a good meet experience along with your children. Please visit with the coach if you have any questions.

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The Purpose of Travel Meets for Swim Teams

Many parents do not understand why coaches want athletes to travel to “away” meets, sometimes including overnight meets. There are several reasons, but one very large performance reason. Let me explain.

The key is to watch what your child does when they attend a local swim meet. The first thing they do, is go and get a... heat sheet... right? And then they scour the heat sheet for their own names and their position relative to their competitors. Because... they know who their competitors are... they see them meet after meet, after meet. And what goes on in our swimmer’s head (let’s call her Betsy) when she does the heat sheet scour...???

“Well, lets see. Suzie’s here, Mary is here, oh my gosh, Sarah is here, I can’t stand that girl... and she always beats me... and here’s Kelly, seeded below me, why would she put in that slow time? She usually beats me, so let’s see, I’ll be... fifth.”

Now, an hour or two later, and our heroine dives in the pool in the 100 free. With brilliant coaching and an even more impressive gene selection from Mom and Dad, she executes a perfect racing dive and streaks to the 25 turn wall, where she turns first, then sneaks a quick peek... “wow! I’m ahead.” Then pushes on towards the fifty wall... amazingly, our Betsy is still

on the lead. Now, off the 50 wall, she is so amazed by her own performance she takes a slightly longer look at her no-longer-so-commanding lead, so she can reassure herself that she is still “out there.” By the 75 wall, her lead has shrunk to inches, as the other swimmers realize that the established pecking order is being disrupted and swim harder. Betsy, now wondering exactly what she will say to all these acquaintances of hers once she has beaten them, and “will they still like me anyway?,” begins to lose focus and slide back into her accustomed place in the pack. By the end of the race, she has creatively found a way to slide all the way back to 5th. She gets out happy to have led for awhile; she has that to talk about, but is happier that the natural order of finish in the kingdom of pre-adolescent girls has not been disrupted. In other words, she is comfortable once again.

Mom and Dad say, dang, if only she was getting a little better coaching, she’d be beating all those girls. Coach says, doggone, with all those sprint genes from mom and dad, it’s hard to get her to finish a race big.

And Betsy says “that wasn’t so bad, sort of fun, really. Now, where is Suzie, I really ought to go congratulate her.”

Now, after some of this, the smart coach

will say to the parent group, “parent group, it is time to go to an out-of-town meet.”

“A what?”

“A meet out-of-town. You know, we get a bus, the kids all travel together, and we go as a team to another area and swim in a meet.”

“Isn’t that expensive?”

“Well, it will be about \$20 a child for the bus, another \$25 a child for Saturday night in a hotel, and maybe \$50 for food, so all in all, just about a hundred dollars.”

“A hundred dollars! Heck, Betsy can’t beat the other girls here in our local area, what does she need to go to a meet like that for?”

Now the coach needs to know the answer... and here it is...

When Betsy swims against people she knows, she has pre-ordained expectations. And she finds ways to make those expectations come true. What she needs, is a chance for a breakthrough performance, to let her believe some new things about herself. So how does a travel meet do that?

Betsy reads the heat sheet... “yup, here I am, Betsy Worangle, 100 free, at 57.89, just a little slower than my best time... yep, I’m in here.” And then what?

She doesn’t know another name in the program. She has no idea where she fits in. So she does what? She just goes out and swims as fast as she can... no pre-conceived notions to live up to... just swim fast. Lo and behold, 56.44, 2nd place.

56.44 would have won at home. But Betsy could not get that out of herself when she had social and athletic expectations to live down to in the meet at home. On the road, she can just “go for it.” And she does. The tremendous advantages of swimming where you don’t know anyone.

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Competition and Children

Here are some thoughts on competition and Children from Rainer Martens, founder of modern sports psychology. Martens, Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois, founded the American Coaching Effectiveness Program, and is one of the leading authorities on children in sports.

The Early Years

According to Martens: “Competitive sports evolve out of the process of social evaluation.” Children begin competing with each other from a very young age, but focus mainly on their own efforts. Each can happily claim to have “won”, simply meaning they have done something well and are satisfied. These games are very healthy growth experiences because there are no “losers.” At 5 and 6 years of age they begin to compare their efforts with others: in other words, they learn to keep score. Martens says this process of competing and comparing is part of what helps kids “find out what they can and should be.”

Problems emerge when winner/loser comparisons overshadow the importance of competing with oneself to do things better than they have been done before. At this point, competition stops building character and confidence and begins to tear it down.

Can Competitiveness Be Taught?

All coaches are familiar with the idea that some youngsters thrive on competition, while others shrink from it, but Martens thinks that in the right environment, children can learn competitiveness by being taught to concentrate on mastering specific techniques. This not only improves the mechanical aspects of performance, but is also the best way to reduce competitive stress. “If people focus on mastering specific acts they can control,” And the thing over which a young swimmer has the least control – how fast competitors swim – is the greatest source of anxiety in competition.

Martens advice to coaches and parents of young athletes is to concentrate on how to improve performance rather than on what happens if the child wins or loses. “Focusing on smaller, more solvable technical challenges increases physical efficiency, and reduces anxiety and stress,” Martens says. “This increased the number of potential winners because skill instead of the final score has become the immediate objective.”

Every Child’s A Winner

In this scenario, an age group swimmer’s final instructions before a race would focus on successfully doing something he or she previously had difficulty with – keeping the hips up on the last half of a butterfly race,

turning on the weak hand in backstroke, or pressing through to the hips in the freestyle stroke, rather than on “beating that kid in lane 5.” After the race, the child could then be congratulated on his or her technique improvement, no matter where he or she placed. In this way, a race with 30 contestants could potentially yield 30 winners rather than 1 winner and 29 “losers.” This gives life to the credo “It’s not whether you win or lose, it’s how you play the game that counts.”

Martens thinks the competitive climate for youth athletics is steadily improving as more youth coaches learn to teach mastery of sports skills, and understand why it is advantageous to do so. “At the recreational level there is more and better, more useful and pleasant competition going on than ever before.”

Pumping...Rubber?

There’s little disagreement that stronger swimmers are faster swimmers. But strength experts never seem to agree on which method of strength training will translate into better swimming performance, other than to say that something is always better than nothing. Fortunately, there’s more agreement on the subject of appropriate strength training methods for age-group swimmers. The most important point of agreement is that weight lifting prior to puberty is neither necessary nor advisable. Dr. Robert Willix, director of the Willix Health Institute, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, says: “Using heavy weight training before the growth plates (the area of bones where new growth occurs) have developed, could stunt the growth process and actually be harmful.

ASCA polled a number of age group coaches on their strength training methods and found broad agreement on what’s appropriate for swimmers ages 12 years and young. If your child is interested in getting stronger, but strength training is not

a part of his/her club’s program, here are some suggestions for at-home activity:

1. Use proper stretching techniques to maintain and enhance natural youthful flexibility. Stretches should be slow and steady “static” movements, not bouncy “kinetic” ones.
2. Use surgical tubing for stroke-specific strength building and to strengthen the rotator cuff to alleviate shoulder problems, which are common during late adolescent growth spurts.
3. Do calisthenics such as push-ups, chin-ups (or flexed-arm hang), bull-ups, and dips for increasing upper body strength.
4. Perform various abdominal exercises (Note: Keep legs elevated so abdominal muscles and not the hip flexors do the work, and to protect the lower back from injury).
5. Play backyard or playground soccer, volleyball, basketball, or ride a bike to strengthen the whole body.

Strength experts stress the importance of proper supervision to ensure safety and proper technique.

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What the Coach Looks For at a Swim Meet

The coach will stand on the side of the pool and expect to speak with each swimmer before and after each swim. Please be sure to direct your child to the coach before the event.

When you see your child after the event ask them if they have spoken with the coach about their race and if not, direct them to the coach as soon as possible.

Before the swim the coach will ask swimmers about technique and give them reminders. After the event the coach will ask them how they viewed their swim, listen to their responses, and then review the swim as the coach saw it.

It is important that parents play the role of emotional support -- give warm towels, and hugs, a "good luck, darling" to your swimmer and ask them to check in with the coach before and after their swim.

Leave the race strategies, breathing patterns, stroke, start and turn reminders, time analysis and race analysis to the coach.

There four things the coach will look for in each performance: proper attitude, a best time, proper technique, and winning. Few swimmers achieve all four aspects in a single race. When they do, that is a job well done -- but it is not a "great job" or an "unbelievable job" or a "fantastic job." To use those terms can make a performance greater than it really was and therefore make it more difficult to repeat. We use "mild praise" because we know, and we want everyone else to think and

to feel, that there is always room for more improvement. Doing three of the aspects, or two, or even one is cause for some level of praise.

When a swimmer achieves none of the above there has been a failure in the coach-swimmer relationship and the coach will make every attempt to correct the difficulties.

Proper attitude: Coaches look for the "I want to be coached" attitude. Coaches look for swimmers ready to express themselves about their swim in analytical fashion and then be eager to listen to advice. Coaches look for athletes to say "I'll do it next time."

A Best Time: A best time usually represents an improvement in endurance, strength, and technique. It measures the swimmer first against themselves and second against the rest of the world.

Proper Technique: How was the start, the strokes, the turns, the pace, the race strategy?

Winning: Winning means racing with someone and finishing ahead. In some cases that means winning the event. However, in every heat there are several races -- there is a race for 1st, there may be a race for 3rd, there may be a race for 5th. Coaches look for swimmers to be in a race, whether it is for 1st or 5th, and to try their best to "win."

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The Career Club Coach

I met with an old friend who was in town on business the other day. He's a parent of three memorable children I used to coach on a USS club team in the Midwest. It's a nice feeling to be the friend of a swimming parent.

I told him I enjoy working in my current position with ASCA but I nevertheless am looking forward to returning to coaching some day. He asked me what college division I was interested in. He was surprised to hear me say that I have no intention, either short term or long term, of coaching in college. He explained that he had assumed all coaches aspire to someday coaching in the college ranks.

I wonder how many parents assume their club coach is aiming at a college coaching career when in fact he or she wants to be a career club coach? The pinnacle of coaching is not necessarily college coaching. For many coaches, club coaching IS their chosen career and they want to stay right where they are at now.

Boards and parents groups might have a better working relationship with the coach if they realized that the coach is not necessarily using the program as a stepping stone.

The coaches of the 90's seek stability. Read that, "stay-ability". They want to be part of a community, they want a home for their family, and they want to lead the program to success at all levels. They do not want to move to a new program and new town every two years or so.

Where does "stay-ability" come from? At ASCA we believe it comes from two areas. First, it comes from the improved ability of the head coach to LEAD the program.

The coach of the 90's must be able to administrate as well as coach. To administrate the program means working with people, knowing how to get the best efforts from staff and volunteers, managing budgets and fund raising, personal organization, delegating effectively, long range planning, communication, and reporting. In short, the coach of the 90's must be the Chief Executive Officer of the club. There is no such thing as stability for the coach who wants to "just coach".

"Stay-ability" also comes from a recognition by the Board and parent groups of the coach's experience, education, achievement, ability, and dedication. This recognition prompts the club to treat the coach as the club's greatest asset deserving of respect, responsibility, authority, and compensation.

Why hire a coach to lead young people in one of the most meaningful experiences of their lives, but pay him less than the going rate for a baby sitter and give him little authority to make decisions about children's swimming development and the overall program development?

When a club matches a coach of this quality with its own enlightened willingness to allow the coach to lead the program, it will truly have a program of stability and continued growth with a coach that is making his career right in that community. This is the most important challenge facing clubs and coaches today.

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What Motivates The Coach?

It's obvious that it's the coaches job to motivate the swimmers, but the question has come up as to who or what motivates the coach on a daily basis? We asked Coach Steve Bultman, ASCA Level 5, what motivates him. His answer:

"One of our problems has been that lots of good coaches have left the sport for various reasons and loss of motivation is a big part of that. I've found motivation in various places. First, I think the swimmers, above all, motivate the coach. One of the neatest things about our job is working with outstanding young individuals to help them reach their goals. When you have that kind of relationship, it's highly rewarding.

"The performance of the team also motivates the coach. There are days where you just have a great practice and everything goes well, and it's a great feeling.

"Other things also help keep a coach happy and involved with swimming. Parents who really believe in what you're doing and pitch in a help out where they're needed definitely make the job go better. I've also found that going to the ASCA Clinic gets your batteries charged and fills you with energy and ideas.

Another way to motive your coach is to give him or her a chance to be an "explorer"; a chance to maintain or improve their creative ability. Roger Von Oech, author of [A Whack on the Side of the Head](#) and [A Kick in the Seat of the Pants](#) spoke at the ASCA World Clinic in

1987. He said:

"I believe that in order to create anything, whether its an idea for a new swimming project, or a new business, or a new recipe for chicken, or a new fund raising idea, you have to have the materials in which to create. That means having facts, information, concepts, knowledge, experiences. Now, I find that a lot of people tend to look for information only in their own area. I do alot of work with computer companies and I find computer people spending most of their time talking to other computer people. I work with bankers and they spend most of their time talking with other financial people.

"I would imagine there is some of the same thing in the swimming community. That's fine initially. Talk to your colleagues and peers, that is what this clinic is all about. Early on, I also encourage you to do this: put on the hat of the explorer and get outside your box. Venture off the beaten path and look for ideas in other fields, other sports, and other industries. Again and again, I've seen prople poke around in outside areas, find something and bring it back to their own sport, give it a twist, and come up with something highly innovative.

Too often we expect coaches to be coaches 24 hours a day. Not only should we allow them time to be explorers, we should actively encourage them to seek activities, hobbies, and professional seminars to help them be better coaches. (Why not send your coach to a sales seminar?)

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Working WITH the Coach

One of the major difficulties has to do with the working relationship between coach, parents, and Board of Directors. The ability of the coach to work with parents in a respectful and cooperative manner is often times an issue. This is especially true when parents, primarily age group parents, challenge the coaches' authority and ability to make judgments. Two other issues are the ability of the coach to educate parents as to the swimming needs of their children, and the administrative abilities of a coach to effectively delegate and lead a parent's group.

From our vantage point of "hearing it from all sides" we have developed this advice for parents.

■ Be educated. Read all you can about swimming but remember, that there are usually many different ways to teach a skill, or plan a season, or set a race strategy, etc.. Your coach may use tactics you have not read about and are not familiar with but are never-the-less absolutely sound. Some very gifted coaches may use techniques that aren't well documented but may be a superior method. Your coach may be a pioneer! We don't think that all coaches should coach using the same methods and are anxious to hear from coaches having success with new found methods.

Where do you find information? Subscribe to [Swimming World](#) or [Swimming Technique](#) Magazines, ask us for a International Swimming Hall of Fame Book List, and/or join ASCA as a non-coach member and receive the [ASCA Magazine](#), [ASCA Newsletter](#), and the [Journal of Swimming Research](#).

■ Think before you ask. When you are concerned about a decision made by the coach it's fair to ask for an explanation but keep in mind two things. First, Ask for an explanation at the proper time. During swim practice or while the coach is on the deck during a swim meet are

not good times to ask for explanations. It is better to wait for a quieter time and it is better to think through your questions before approaching the coach.

Secondly, it is reasonable for a coach to give an explanation by simply saying, "I had a feeling it would work best this way." It's called intuition, and it is one of the most important ways a coach makes a judgment call. Let's not take this away from coaches.

Situation: Relays. Who should be on the relay and what should the order be? You may think it should be the fastest four swimmers and since your daughter is the second fastest, she should go third.

However, there are so many factors that go into setting a relay line up that the guiding philosophy of the coach might simply be that he "enters the relay in the best interest of the team". There should never be a specific relay policy that will prevent your coach from using his judgment.

For example, the "fastest four" may not be the fastest four on THAT day; the order may depend on the suspected order of a rival team's relay; the coach may have an intuitive feeling that a given individual may perform faster than the "fastest four"; or the coach might feel that an individual needs the psychological boost of being on the "A" relay and in the long term, this is more beneficial for the team; etc..etc..

The point is, it is a coaches' call. He may make a judgment based on an intuitive feeling he has or other reasoning that you do not agree with or understand but it is within his area of authority to make the call and he needs the freedom to do it without undue critical challenges.

■ View the larger picture. There are three pictures,

actually. One is the larger picture of the swimmer's swimming career. Early success (i.e. medals, ribbons, high point trophies, and national age group rankings) is not a requirement to career success. In fact, many times those successful early in their careers drop out before they have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Coaches are usually very patient with a swimmer's progress because they are able to see the larger picture. Try not to mistake a coaches' calm patience with non-caring.

Larger picture number two: Did you ever see the pin that says "There's more to life than swimming"? We're hopeful that all coaches and parents remember that the most important experiences gained in an individual's swimming career have nothing to do with flip turns or butterfly stroke. Making friends, being part of a team, learning self-discipline, learning responsibility, setting goals, and working toward goals are far greater experiences than medals, ribbons, high point awards, and national rankings. (Just ask a retired swimmer!)

Larger Picture number three: The team! Remember that you and your child are part of the team and have an opportunity to contribute to team strength, team growth, and team unity.

■ Educate the coach. Does your club have a "coaching education" item in its budget? We think you should and it might be used for any or all of the following:

1) People Skills Seminars. In our office we regularly receive bulletins announcing various "people skills" or "management skills" seminars in the area. On your team there are surely people who receive the same kind of bulletins at work. Ask your Board to send the coach to a seminar.

2) Coaches' clinics. There are many throughout the year and throughout the country. ASCA World Coaches Clinic is the largest with over 1000 coaches in attendance.

3) Senior Nationals. If the team does not have senior national qualifiers, give the coach the option of attending the senior nationals in place of a clinic. It's a great place to receive an education.

4) Purchase books, magazines, and memberships for the coach. All of these things are an investment in your team's greatest asset, the coach.

■ Recognize the coaches' experience and education. This is understandably a very difficult task for many parents. Your children are precious and turning them over to a coach, who often times is a young coach, is unsettling. Coaches, however, have hours upon hours of experience working with young swimmers just like your

child and will try to make their best judgments in the best interest of your child's long term swimming development.

In addition, we're hopeful that your coach has attended clinics, frequently exchanges information with other coaches, and has taken ASCA's home study courses.

■ Try not to take it personally. All parents want to see their children be successful, however, some parents get too emotionally involved in their children's successes and setbacks. They love to win through their children, and they hate to lose. What needs to be remembered is that some children physically develop later than others, some children are more talented at playing piano than swimming, and some children simply do not like to swim.

Whatever the reasons, your child may not be winning ribbons, or qualifying for zones, or beating all the other swimmers in his practice group. When this happens, remind yourself of the greater values of swim team participation such as fitness, friendships, fun, goal setting, and self-discipline.

■ Be aware of the overzealous, know-it-all, win at all costs, swim parent. There are usually a couple of parents in every club like this who continually challenge the judgment of the coach and the Board of Directors. Their opinions are based upon emotion, self serving interests, limited experience, and limited knowledge. Their motives are rarely in the interest of the team. They oftentimes try to gather support to change decisions and can wreck serious havoc in a program. What you can do is support the coach and Board of Directors, and try to educate the parent. One of the greatest untapped resources for parent education are parents of former age group swimmers (now older senior swimmers or college swimmers.)

■ Remember all the different people a coach must work with. A coach must work with dozens of parents. Be sensitive to the fact that a coach is under tremendous pressure to please as many people as possible while making decisions he knows not everyone will be happy about. A little support from a friendly parent can make a coaches job far more pleasant than if he feels he is always alone.

The lesson for coaches and parents, simply stated, is that both groups need to try to communicate with each other with greater respect and understanding for each other's position. To strengthen the relationships between parents, coaches, and programs and to improve the chances for maintaining a long term relationship both coaches and parents need to work on this.

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Common Purpose – Board and Staff

Perhaps the single most important aspect in establishing and maintaining a long term relationship between coach and program is the development of a common purpose shared by the Board, members, and staff.

There are two parts to this common purpose. One is called the VISION of the club. The other is call a club's CENTRAL THEME.

A central theme is a short expression which sums up the essence of the program. For example, Chevrolet uses "Heartbeat of America". Ford Motor Company uses "Quality is Job 1". Campbell's uses "Soup is good food." And General Electric uses "We bring good things to life". (Remember when it used to be "Progress is our most important product"?) We know these central themes because we hear them on tv and radio, and read them in magazines and on the packaging of the products.

Can you think of your club's central theme? Chances are, your club does not have an explicit central theme. If there is one, you would see it on swim caps, on bulletin boards, in your meet programs, in the newsletter, on team stationary, etc.

In the absence of an explicit central theme there may be an unwritten central theme. It may be something that is a feeling shared by many of the members, Board members,

and staff although it is not explicitly stated. Oftentimes an unwritten central theme is of a negative nature.

It is important to control the central theme by making it explicit and positive. Let it serve as a rallying point for all members of the club and let it tell the world what your club stands for.

A VISION is a statement of what the club expects to be in the long term, say, 5 to 10 years. A vision is stated in the present tense, for example, "The Hometown Swim Club is the finest youth organization in the county", or "The Grandview Swim Club is the top senior team in the Region", or "The Metropolitan Swim Team develops the finest age group swimmers in the state."

A vision statement is important because it gives a sense of direction for all of the team's operations.

The vision statement cannot stand alone, it must be part of a larger plan which includes 1) a mission statement of how the club expects to achieve its vision, 2) two year objectives, 3) six month strategies, and 4) monthly tactics.

Identification of, completion of, and reporting of objectives, strategies, and tactics are the responsibility of the CEO type coach and Board of Directors. Like the central theme, the vision statement

must be promoted to all members of the club and community.

Coaches who are interested in their long term future with a program must be a leader in the planning process along with the Board of Directors. Good coaches will stay with a program that engages in progressive long range planning that matches their career objectives and coaching philosophy.

During the planning process the desires and philosophy of both coach and parents are expressed in such a way that there is an understanding and agreement on the direction for the program. This is a big step in ensuring the tenure of your good coach.

What does all this have to do with your young swimmer?

Two things. First, stability. It's tough on young swimmers to go through coaching changes. Sometimes it cannot be avoided and it can be used as a growing experience for the child. However, young athletes experiencing fewer coaching changes usually have a happier and more productive young swimming life. Secondly, an explicit vision and central theme tell you the direction the program is taking your child.

What can you do?

If you do not know what the central theme and vision of the club are talk to the coach and talk to board members. Encourage the leaders of the program to initiate a process for identifying and promoting these important hallmarks of a healthy club.

If your club needs help in these areas ASCA has extensive experience facilitating a long range planning process with the club. For information contact John Leonard or Guy Edson at 1-800-356-2722.

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The Nature of a Judgment Call

For nearly every decision regarding age group swimming development there is little or no scientific evidence for making a decision one way or another. How then can a decision be made and who is best suited to make that decision? In most cases, the coach is best suited to make decisions about age group swimming development.

That is why a club hires a coach -- to coach and make decisions. Additionally, most clubs, through the Board of Directors, give the coach the authority to make decisions.

This authority is usually expressed in a contract or in a written job description. Unfortunately, it is sometimes given only verbally and as Boards of Directors change unwritten authorities also change placing the coach in a difficult situation. It also needs to be pointed out that a coach needs the freedom to make an error in judgment on an occasion without fear that he will lose his job. People learn from making errors. John Kennedy said, "An error doesn't become a mistake unless you fail to correct it." Judgment errors rarely result in a long term effect of preventing an athlete from reaching their ultimate athletic goals.

Situation: A parent of a 10 year old wants their child to swim with the 12 year olds (who are doing 2000 - 3000 meters a day more than the 10 year olds). The parent points out that their 10 year old is faster than some of the 12 year olds? The coach disagrees. Although there is no evidence he is aware of that says it is bad for a 10 year old to do 5000 meters a day he still does not want a 10 year old doing 5000 meters a day. Why? Based upon his experience of coaching of age group swimmers, he feels that young swimmers need new challenges from season to season in order to stay motivated and need a steady progression of increased work load. He has seen young swimmers who do too much too soon drop out of the sport before they have a chance to reach their full potential. He has even seen it happen to swimmers in his programs early in his career when he gave up trying to educate a parent and allowed a swimmer into a group they should not have been in. He says it doesn't matter that they are capable of doing more work, what matters is they are given tomorrow at the expense of losing today and they lose the chance to be the leader of 10 year olds and all the fun of being with children their own age.

Why would a parent disagree? Each of you may have your own reasons but the reasons I hear most often are "My child wants to be with the older swimmers to do more work...my child wants to be a state champion...my child is bored in the 10 and under group." Two comments: I am always suspect of whether or not the child truly wants it or if they are just reflecting what Mom and Dad really want. Young swimmer's try so hard to please their parents. The second comment is, there is a difference between want and need.

How does a parent decide when a 9 year old should go to bed? Is there conclusive scientific evidence that says a 9 year old should go to bed at a specific time or sleep for a specific number of hours? There are probably guidelines written down somewhere but no definitive answers. The child WANTS to stay up until 10:00 but you, as the adult, make your judgment based upon what you feel are the child's NEEDS and your experience. Quite simply, this is a judgment call and the parent is best suited to make this decision.

Dr. Ken Low, director of Action Studies Institute, a think tank focused on adaptive intelligence, says that one of the most disturbing trends of the 80's was the stripping away of peoples freedom within institutions to make judgments. People are given rules and not allowed to use their own powers of reasoning to make exceptions when exceptions are due. We need coaches in this country to have the freedom and the Board-given authority to make judgment calls on age group development issues. This is how new ideas are formed. This is how programs progress into the future.

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Why Some Programs Fail To Keep A Good Coach

In our position at ASCA we spend considerable time listening to Board members express substantial complaints (from their point of view) about their head coach. And we spend a great deal of time listening to coaches air their substantial complaints (again, from their point of view) about the parent's group. Usually, by the time we get such a call, a decision has already been made to fire the coach. This is all very distressing because, more than anything else in American swimming, we want to see coaches and employers capable of forming and maintaining long term relationships.

Too many good coaches lose their jobs. And programs go through a succession of short term coaches losing continuity in both the long range training of the athletes and the long range development of program goals. Why does this happen?

In some cases a coach commits a serious act which is in direct violation of his job description, contract, or the law and is quickly released.

However, in most cases we are familiar with, a coach is fired for issues that develop over time. There are two areas of "difficulties" which eventually lead to major problems in a program. One of these concerns the ability of the coach to work with parents in a respectful and cooperative

manner. This is especially true when parents, primarily age group parents, challenge the coaches' authority and ability to make judgments. Additionally, the ability of the coach to educate parents as to the swimming needs of their children, and the administrative abilities of a coach to effectively delegate and lead are concerns.

The Second area of "difficulty" has to do with the absence of a team philosophy and long range planning that everyone buys in to. The coaching staff may have one philosophy and plan (or several among the different staff members), the Board may have others, and individual parents may have others.

The typical growth of difficulties usually goes something like this: The coach makes a judgment based upon his experience and philosophy which is challenged by a parent or two. This judgment usually concerns the amount of practice time an individual receives, or the group an individual practices with, or the events/meets an individual should participate in, or possibly whether or not the head coach should work directly with the swimmer. The coach oftentimes becomes defensive at being questioned in these matters and frequently is guilty of reacting harshly with parents. Over time, several more confrontations occur, each time the coach becoming more defensive,

even becoming defensive with nearly every little question from any parent. Even though the coach is developing a reputation for being hard to approach he still has general support. However, he assumes his support is stronger than it really is.

Meanwhile, a small group of parents (in most cases, a very small minority) who have been denied their wishes repeatedly by the coach and have been treated poorly by the coach, raise an issue or issues that, when taken out of context may not seem to be major, but when pushed by this very vocal group capture the attention of the Board of Directors. (Or perhaps this group IS the Board of Directors.) The relationship between the Board and the coach becomes very strained and the coach often becomes alienated from them.

The coach may decide to fight for his job but finds, to his surprise, that he does not have the support he assumed he had. Typically, there will be three groups of parents: a small group of strong supporters of the coach; a large group of members who don't completely know what's going on and though they don't have any major complaints about the coach, are willing to go along with the Board of Directors they elected; and the small vocal group who wants the coach to leave.

The relationship may further disintegrate and the coach is eventually asked to leave. Very frequently the OFFICIAL reason why a coach is fired has little to do with the REAL reasons.

OFFICIAL reasons are usually issues that should have been taken care of as part of regularly scheduled, formal, and ongoing evaluation meetings between the coach and the Board. It is an unfortunate fact that too few clubs have a formal procedure for evaluating the coach and even fewer clubs have a formal procedure for the coach to evaluate the Board.

The REAL reason, or unofficial reason, a coach is fired, however, is related to his and the parent's reactions to all the disputed judgment calls he has made. It boils down to three problems: 1) coaches' judgment calls versus the desires of challenging parents, 2) the ability of the coach to handle challenges professionally and effectively, and 3) the ability of parents to recognize and appreciate a coach's experience and education and further, giving the coach the freedom to make decisions.

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That's Not It

Last week, we had a Mom come to us and “inform us” that her 13-year-old daughter would be gone for two weeks vacation in late June, maybe another week after that.

Her daughter was not much of an age group swimmer, but she has some endurance capacity and comes regularly to workout at 5:30 am and again at 5:30 pm daily. She works hard, demonstrates little talent, but lots of determination.

Her mother is not athletic and clearly does not value athletics. We expressed our dismay that she'd be missing for 2-3 weeks in the middle of the most important training of the summer. Her mother's response?

“Who cares, she'll never be an Olympic swimmer, so what does it matter really?”

This is a dagger in the heart to any swimming coach, and it is to me.

If we only cared about and worked hard with, those 52 people who will eventually, once every four years, go off to the Olympic Games, it would be a small, empty and meaningless sport.

My response was “That's really not it.”

What is it?

It is the fact that young people need to

learn to dedicate themselves to something that is difficult, something that requires perseverance, guts and the daily determination to get your butt out of bed and go out and push your body till it can't go anymore.

Why do they need to learn this?

Because their lives are too easy, too soft, too catered-for. Too many people carry them, make excuses for them, never allowing them to try to be “heroic.” Is it “heroic” to get your butt out of bed and go swim at 5 am? It is if you haven't done it before. Is it heroic to “make” 10x200 fly on 4:00? It is if you haven't ever done it before. Is it heroic to finish your swim and turn around and cheer for the teammate who is even further behind than you are, and is struggling to make the set? Need I say it? It is if you've never done it before.

And that is what “It” is about. About doing what you haven't done before. And learning that sometimes you succeed. Sometimes you fail. If you fail, you go again until you learn to succeed.

It's not about being an Olympian. It's about being Olympian. Learning to be a hero.

And what it takes to learn that.

Or, you can Be Comfortable and teach your child that its more important to be Comfortable.

So, if that's your choice, I only have one question?

What will happen to your child on the day when they are made "uncomfortable" by life?

Reply from George Block, Alamo Area Aquatics Assoc., Level 5 Senior

Your article really struck home as it reminded me of Robert Reyes – arguably the worst swimmer to ever go through our program – rescuing four of his buddies from choppy, night seas... a hero. Robert Reyes swam on our high school team and he was always the slowest guy in the race, but he would swim ANY race and go all out, all the way.

He was the same way in water polo. We have seven high schools sharing the same pool, so we don't have any weekday games. Every Saturday they play 3 or 4 games, 3 or 4 hours of wrestling up and down the pool. Robert Reyes was always the slowest guy, but he would never quit. Even then, the real reason he was swimming was to help him when he went in to the Navy. He had his goal way back then and was preparing back "in Taft High School" for when his moment came. I told our kids that the famous Olympians actually have it easy. They know exactly when their moment is going to come. They can prepare precisely for that moment and they have a lot of help getting them there. For the rest of us it's a lot different.

Your phrase to the mother, "being Olympian" hit it perfectly. All of us will have our "Olympics," when the very best we can bring is called from us. We don't get to know when that moment is going to be. We have to constantly prepare. We may have

no one to help us. No one may ever know.

It may come like it did for Robert, as a physical test on a dark night, in choppy seas, with the flaming wreckage of a helicopter still floating in the water. It more often than not won't be a physical test, but a moral one -- that integrity thing. I tried to explain to my team that the reason they have to prepare every day is because they have to be prepared every day. "Being Olympian." That is it.

Man Rescues Navy Pals
By Amy Dorsett - Express-News Staff Writer

A San Antonio sailor saves four crewmembers after a helicopter crashes into the Mediterranean Sea.

A San Antonio Navy man came to the aid of four comrades in the choppy waters of the Mediterranean Sea last month, rescuing them after their helicopter crashed into the sea. Petty Officer 2nd class Robert Reyes, assigned to a helicopter combat support squadron aboard the USS Kearsarge, made the rescue June 22 when a helicopter flying a routine search-and-rescue mission crashed into the water. Reyes, 21, whose boyhood love of helicopters propelled him to enlist in the Navy three years ago, quickly suited up for what was to be his first rescue mission. Already feeling the rush of adrenaline, Reyes' emotions were running even higher because the crewmembers were like family. "Just the day before we flew together," Reyes said. "While I was dressing out, I was trying to calm myself down."

Within minutes, Reyes' helicopter was hovering in the nighttime sky above the downed chopper. Reyes, a trained rescue swimmer, jumped from his helicopter. "I started swimming up to them, seeing if they were alert," Reyes said. One by one, Reyes helped each crewmember swim to the pickup point, where they were hoisted into the waiting helicopter. Navy officials say the four who were rescued are quick to call Reyes a hero, a title he brushes off. "When they say that, I just think I'm happy they're there," Reyes said, adding some of his water skills were acquired while on Taft High School swimming team.

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Kids and Two-Career Parents

The prototypical swimming mother, renowned for devoting herself wholly to her children's swimming careers is nearly an extinct species. With both parents working in 70% of households, the old swimming mom is now a career mom, with all the stresses and complications that brings. And that means everybody in the world of age group swimming must adjust - from coaches who will have to be more reasonable in enforcing rules on practice attendance and punctuality...to parents who must plan more thoroughly to arrange kids transportation from school or home to an afternoon practice session...to the demands the sport makes on families who must give up now-precious weekends to attend meets.

Making time for kids, jobs, and the personal needs of every family member is the greatest challenge in the two-career family.

A child who feels neglected by busy parents will feel resentful. Here are some hints adapted from PARENTS magazine on how to prevent kids from feeling neglected.

It's important for kids to feel they're not competing for attention with their parents' careers. Dr. James Comer, professor of child psychology at Yale University suggests putting your child's practices, competitions, and special events on your work calendar and trying to plan work requirements around them. If one parent

has a more flexible schedule than the other at particular times, that parent would take on greater responsibility for involvement in swimming activities. Whenever schedules permit, both parents should attend the kids' activities. When neither parent is available, make arrangements for the children to call on neighbors or nearby relatives.

Dr. Comer also suggests parents should be willing to receive a call at work from their children at any time. If an ethos of cooperation and teamwork evolves through honest and open communication of the reasons for both parents working, children will be unlikely to abuse the privilege. This can also be an opportunity to give children added responsibilities and a meaningful role to play in achieving family goals. Parents who actively plan for and show a clear interest in their children's activities will find that the kids, in return, respect the needs of their parents.

Above all, Dr. Comer stresses the importance of listening to the children's concerns and being willing to acknowledge the shortcomings of the situation to address the kinds of plans and cooperation needed for all family members to have their needs met.

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Key To Goal Setting: Parent Support

The goal of goal setting with young swimmers is to learn how to set goals. With 10 and unders it is important that they are successful at achieving the goals that the coach and parents help them set.

However, part of learning how to set goals, and also a part of growing up, is an occasional failure at achieving a goal. Failing to meet a goal can have disastrous effects, or, can be part of a healthy growing experience, depending on the support of parents and coach. While it is probably not a good idea to allow 10 and unders to set goals that they probably cannot reach, with 11 and 12 year olds, one approach is to give them more freedom in selecting goals thus allowing them an occasional "opportunity to fail".

When properly guided, a young person who fails to achieve a goal can learn that success is often built upon failure. What would be the parent, coach, swimmer relationship for goal setting for 11 - 12's? For parents this can be a very challenging time. These young people are beginning to experiment with independence. You may find that your influence does not have the immediate impact that you are accustomed. When suggesting goals to your young swimmer, regardless of how appropriate the goals are, you are likely to find some resistance. However, the emotional support a young swimmer needs at this age from you is as great as ever. While the swimmer may not want to hear your suggestions for what to do in the pool, they sure need your support for what they are

attempting to do, and sometimes fail to do.

Here are some questions you might ask your goal setting young swimmer.

- Have you and Coach Andersen talked about your goals for the season?
- What are the goals you have decided on?
- Did you write them down?
- What did Coach Andersen say you needed to work on in order to reach your goals?
- Did you get any closer to your goals today?

The coach begins to take on a more influential role in the swimming development of the young swimmer at this time. Swimmers sometimes think, eat, breath, sleep, and swim according to the direction of the coach and they may respond better to suggestions made by the coach than those made by you. For example, you may be trying to improve the nutritional aspects of your young swimmer's breakfast only to find a typical bit of standard 11 and 12 resistance. However, when the coach suggest the exact same advice to your swimmer he is ready to change his breakfast routine the next day. For this reason, plus the fact that the coach best knows the swimming abilities of your child, the primary influence in goal setting for 11 - 12's is the coach.

The coach acts as a guide, asking your swimmer appropriate questions to help him

decide on goals. When your child has a goal in mind and is convinced he can achieve that goal, coaches (and parents) should accept it as a goal even if it seems too ambitious.

What happens when he fails to meet the goal? From you, he needs unconditional support and careful guidance.

Let's consider a situation where 12 year old Bobby has a best time of 1:07.5 in the 100 free, a "B" time. He has several "B" times in other strokes but no "A" times. His coach feels that a good goal for Bobby would be to make an "A" time in the 100 free, 1:03.19. However, Bobby has set his own goal of breaking a minute in the 100 free in the final "B" meet of the season. He knows if he breaks a minute he will qualify for the Junior Olympics and gain a spot on the relay. Contributing to Bobby's desire to qualify for Junior Olympics this season is the fact that he turns 13 shortly after the meet and he knows it will take a 55.3 to qualify for the next Junior Olympics as a 13 - 14 year old. Bobby also set three other goals which fall within the coaches expectations so the coach allows Bobby this "opportunity to fail".

During the season, Bobby makes steady progress as he drops his time in the 100 free to 1:04.0 and he is still hoping to break a minute. At the final "B" meet he goes a 1:03.0, a new "A" time, and wins the event. The coach and Bobby's parents are very pleased with his performance. Bobby, however, is dejected because he did not make his goal of breaking a minute.

Bobby's parents, sitting in the bleachers, observe him speaking with his coach. His mood does not noticeably change despite his coaches' congratulatory gestures, smiling face, and reassuring words. Now Bobby is on his way up into the bleachers to visit his parents. What's important to say to Bobby?

- First, attend first to Bobby's physical needs, "Are you warm enough? Please put on your warm ups. Do you need something to drink?"

- Then, do not deny him the opportunity to express his disappointment and do not minimize his feelings. You know it was a best

time, and you know it was a good race, but you will not be able to MAKE him feel better by contradicting his feelings. Listen to him.

- Empathize with Bobby. Say, "I know how disappointed you must be."

- Allow Bobby to find the solution to his disappointment. "Why do you think you didn't make your goal?" Bobby can respond to this question in one of several different ways and your follow up will be based on that response. It is hard to generalize a conversation here, but what is important to remember is that through your questions and his responses, you want Bobby to realize that while his goal for breaking a minute is a good goal, his timetable for breaking a minute was too short and there are more things he needs to work on.

- Support Coach Anderson. Ask Bobby, "What did Coach Anderson say?" "That sounds like a good idea, do you think you can do that?"

The desired net result of the parent and athlete relationship in this type of goal setting situation is that the athlete receives support for his feelings and he comes to realize how to adjust his goal setting in order to be more successful next time. With this result, you'll find your young swimmer better equipped to establish his next set of goals with the knowledge that he has your unconditional support.

News For

SWIM PARENTS

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Helping Billy Set Goals

Goal setting for young swimmers is an important process that requires interaction of the parent, coach, and athlete. It is important to remember that for young swimmers the goal of goal setting is to learn how to set goals. The progression for learning how to set goals is based upon the age and competitive experience of the swimmer. In this issue we will look at one approach for introducing goals to 8 through 10 year olds.

There are many approaches to goal setting for younger swimmers. The following approach is presented because it is a little different from the "normal" routine of coach-swimmer interaction and one that I personally find more rewarding for the parent-coach-athlete relationship.

With younger, inexperienced swimmers, generally ages 8 - 10, goal setting needs to be carefully guided by adults. The purpose of goal setting with this age is for the young swimmer to learn what a goal is, that to achieve that goal a series of steps toward the goal must be taken, and that some amount of preparation and work is required to meet the goal. These are very powerful life long skills.

I think it is very important that children are successful in achieving goals at this stage. For this reason, the coach, who best knows the ability of the swimmer, should suggest goals to the parents who, in turn, guide their young swimmer to set goals well within the possibilities described by the coach. Goals should be objective and based upon time standards or performance standards. In addition, goals need to be short term goals aiming at completion in 4 to 6 weeks. A long term goal is a difficult concept for 8 - 10 year olds.

Billy is a 9 year old who has been on the swim team for 18 months. He has all "B" times except for the

100 IM which he has an unofficial "C" time. He has been disqualified in his three 100 IM races because he has an illegal breaststroke kick. His best friend, neighbor, and swimming rival, John, began swimming at the same time as Billy but has achieved "A" times in the breaststroke and freestyle, several "B" times, and was recently moved to a more advanced group. Billy's goal is to beat John. Billy's dad and John's dad are friends and weekend golf rivals. Coincidentally, John's dad regularly beats Billy's dad. Billy's dad's goal is to see Billy beat John.

What should Billy's goals be and who should set them? Billy's goals must not be based upon John. At this point in time John is a more accomplished swimmer. Perhaps he will always be more accomplished for a variety of reasons which will frustrate Billy if Billy's goal is always to beat John. On the other hand, maybe John is temporarily bigger and stronger than Billy. As the boys reach and pass puberty Billy may become the bigger and stronger and more skilled of the two and beating John may not present an adequate challenge.

The coach should suggest several goals for Billy to Billy's parents. These goals are based upon the coaches' assessment of Billy's ability to improve in the next two months. One suggested goal might be for Billy to make an "A" time in the 50 free. Currently, Billy is only 4 tenths of a second from an "A" time. A second goal might be to swim a legal 100 yard IM. The coach has been working on Billy's breaststroke kick several times each week and is confident that Billy will have a legal kick in time for the next swim meet.

Why suggest these goals to the parents? Two reasons: 1) It is a good way for the parents and coach to communicate on the progress and future

expectations for the young swimmer, and 2) the most important and most influential people in the young swimmer's life are Mom and Dad. What better source is there in guiding the young swimmer towards setting goals?

How should parents discuss goals with young swimmers? I think the best way is to ask the young swimmer a series of questions designed to bring him to the goals suggested by the coach. A conversation may go something like this:

Parent: "Billy, our team is hosting a meet in six weeks. Do you have any goals for our meet?"

Billy: "What's a goal?"

Parent: "A goal is something you want to do that you have never done before."

Billy: [without hesitation] "I want to beat John!"

Parent: "Someday I think you might beat John. He has an "A" time in the 50 free, doesn't he?"

Billy: "I don't know"

Parent: "Do you know what your best time is?"

Billy: "No"

Parent: "Coach says you have 32.2 and that's only 4 tenths of a second from an "A" time which is a 31.8. Would you like to make an "A" time?"

Billy: "YEA!"

Parent: "Do you know how short 4 tenths of a second is?" [Demonstrates with stop watch.] "Coach says you can knock off those 4 tenths of a second just by streamlining better off the start and turn and by finishing with a long arm and strong kick. What are you going to work on in practice to help you make your goal?"

Billy: "I'm going to work on streamlining and finishing with a long arm and strong kick."

Parent: "Great! I KNOW you're going to make your goal! There is a dual meet with Fairport in three weeks. What do you think you would like to do in the 50 free in that meet?"

Billy: "An "A" time?"

Parent: "You might make an "A" time, but your goal is to make an "A" time in our meet in February and you might need more time to practice your

streamlining and finishes."

Parent: [writing on a piece of paper and showing Billy] "Here is your best time, 32.2, and here is your goal time, 31.8. What would be a good in-between time to make in the dual meet?"

Billy: "A 32.0?"

Parent: "Right! Now let's write down your goal."

The next step is for Billy to write down his goal(s) on two pieces of paper. He should write his current best time, his goal, goal date, progression toward goal, and things to work on.

Billy Humpleby

My Goal: 31.8 "A" time in the 50 free

When: February 17 home meet

Best Time: 32.2

Next meet: Dual Meet January 26

Time for next meet: 32.0

Everyday in practice: streamlining and good finishes

Billy should keep one at home in his room where he can look at it every day. Mom and Dad should ask Billy once every week or so how he is doing on his goal. The second copy he takes to swim practice to review with the coach. Then he can keep it in his locker or swim bag and look at it every day before practice.

Of course, it's a wonderful thing if a young swimmer is aware enough of times, both his own and qualifying times, to set his own valid goals in addition to those suggested by the coach. If a swimmer sets a reachable goal it should be accepted by coach and parents. Most young swimmers however need the expert guidance of coach and parents to set obtainable goals. Remember, at this age it is vitally important that swimmers are able to accomplish their goals.

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Supporting Your Children in Swimming

Parents can help their kids feel that they can reach goals they've set for themselves with effort, perseverance, and just a little patience. From PARENTS magazine, here are 7 ways to help your youngster do their best.

1. Support their efforts. Listen to your child's dreams, goals, and ideas and help him to work out the steps of those that seem attainable by organizing them into do-able parts.

2. Encourage follow-through. Praise task completion and encourage them to carry on when the initial excitement fades. Relate your struggles to complete tasks and your satisfaction at having achieved a goal.

3. Offer reinforcement or reward. Give incentive for better efforts, not just accomplishments. Keep a chart with stars tracking progress and reward the task's completion, not its grade. Younger children need quicker rewards and briefer tasks.

4. Recognize his success level. When a child reaches a point of frustration, learning specialists advocate you help him return to a level where he feels successful. Then his enthusiasm will return.

5. Involve others. Tell teachers and coaches that it's more important to you that your child feel successful than to come out

on top. Making your values clear to them can make them more effective in helping your child.

6. Point out effort in others. Make your child aware of how others work hard at their daily activities, so they know they're not alone in trying, overcoming discouragement, meeting challenges, and succeeding.

7. Praise him for trying. Point out how much you appreciate your child's doing something that may be difficult for him.

Applied to schoolwork, swimming, or other pursuits, these devices can help kids develop a "can-do" attitude.

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Swim Parents And Masters Swimming Interview with a Masters Swimmers and Swim Parent

Leslie Osborne is a 35-year old swimmer and mother of three age group swimmers. Leslie, a member of the Michigan Masters, shattered the 35-39 age group national record in the 100-yard breaststroke with a 1:07.58 (7 seconds faster than her best time as a teenager!) in only her second year of Master's swimming after an 18-year layoff. Leslie's three children Josh 11, Leslie 9, and Brian 6 have swum with the Michigan Stingrays for 2 1/2 years.

Q: Leslie, has your perspective on being a "swimming mother" changed as a result of competing yourself?

Leslie: I never considered myself to be a high pressure swim parent, but I find I'm more patient and relaxed about my kids' swimming now because I'm not living vicariously through them. I'm able to go after my own goals rather than pushing them to accomplish things because of some unfulfilled wish of my own.

I also have a renewed understanding of the difficulties and frustrations they experience. I see quite a few parents who expect their kids to drop time at every meet they enter, and Master's swimming teaches you that you can't always drop time, even if you'd like to.

Q: What advice would you like to share with other swim parents?

Leslie: I hate to see when parents act negatively with their kids after a race. Sometimes I see parents, who are so fat and out of shape they couldn't even swim a 25, scolding their kids about losing a race, and I want to ask them how they'd like

to try it. It's hard for the average parent to relate to a swimming race experience without having gone through it themselves. They should realize all the feelings of anxiety and putting pressure on yourself that swimming races can impose. They should know it's not such a great feeling when things don't work out. I swam a 200 breaststroke in a local meet this year, where I lost my goggles on the start and everything went wrong. Here I was an adult and I could understand it was just one of those things. Putting a kid in the same situation and having someone yell at them after the race is the last thing they would need. You learn a lot from those experiences.

The other side, when things go well, is the great satisfaction that you have of knowing that you've done your best, that your work and conditioning have paid off, that your training was successful regardless of whether you win or lose.

Q: What do your kids think of having a swimming mom, who really swims?

Leslie: My kids are really proud of me and they think my swimming is great. They made posters and signs for me before I went to nationals. They also enjoy my swimming friends a lot. They're like adopted uncles and aunts and they make such good role models, I'm always happy to have them come over and be part of my kids' lives.

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What Can You Do To Help Your Child at Swim Practice?

The best thing you can do is to encourage your children to “have fun, be safe, and swim smart” before practice and be sure they have a warm towel for after practice. After practice ask them if they had fun and learned anything new or did anything they had never done before and offer your praise. Sometimes children will express feelings to their parents that may help the coach provide a more suitable environment for the individual. You are encouraged to talk to the coach about your child’s responses to the practice sessions.

If you decide to watch practice the most important thing you can do is allow your child to focus on the coach and on the tasks at hand. We know it is common in many other youth sports for parents to stand at the sidelines and shout instructions or encouragements and sometimes admonishments to their children. We ask you not to signal them to swim faster, or to try a certain technique, or to offer to fix a goggle problem, or even to remind them to listen to the coach. In fact, just as you would never interrupt a school classroom to talk your child, you should not interrupt a swim practice by attempting to communicate directly with your child.

What’s wrong with encouraging your child during practice? There are two issues. First we want the child to focus on the coach and to learn the skill for their personal satisfaction rather than learning it to please their parents. Secondly, parental encouragement often gets translated into a command to swim faster and swimming faster may be the exact opposite of

what the coach is trying to accomplish. In most stroke skill development we first slow the swimmers down so that they can think through the stroke motions. Save encouragements and praise for after the practice session.

What’s wrong with shouting or signaling instructions to your children? When I watch my 8 year old daughter play in a basketball league I understand the overwhelming desire to shout instructions to your child because that is what I want to do. But those instructions might be different from the coach’s instructions and then you have a confused child. Sometimes you might think the child did not hear the coach’s instruction and you want to help. The fact is that children miss instructions all the time. Part of the learning process is learning how to listen to instructions. When children learn to rely on a backup they will have more difficulty learning how to listen better the first time.

What’s wrong with helping your child fix their goggles? Quite simply, we want to encourage the children to become self-reliant and learn to take care of their own equipment.

If you need to speak to your child regarding a family issue or a transportation issue or to take your child from practice early you are certainly welcome to do so but please approach the coach directly with your request and we will immediately get your child out of the water. If you need to speak to the coach for other reasons please wait until the end of practice or call the phone number listed above.

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How Parents can be Positive

From a parent who has a lot of wisdom on how parents can be positive, constructive forces in their children's swim teams.

My Fellow Parents:

My title of this open letter seemed appropriate at first, then I realized I wasn't sure what an ignoramus was. After consulting Webster's, I confirmed that I was one. You see an ignoramus is a person who simply doesn't know.

My wife and girls have been involved with the Piranhas for almost two years. With all their coming and going, I occasionally found myself timing a race, helping out at the snack bar for a few hours, but not much else. It wasn't until our last home meet when I offered to help cook at the concession stand and do some prep work Friday night before the meet, that I realized how much of an ignoramus I really was.

I was amazed at how much work went into simply setting up the concession stand, and the shade areas for timers and judges. That night I got home at 10:30 p.m. After the meet on Sunday, all the stuff that got set up had to come down. I spent at least 3 more hours helping there as well as all day cooking and selling at the concessions.

That weekend left me stunned, shamed, and thankful all at once. Stunned because

of the tremendous amount of man hours required to put on an event like that. Shamed, because where was I in the past when a dedicated few could have used some help to shoulder the load? I was also thankful for these people who were fun to work with and who had quietly and diligently served my children those past two years.

Well those of you who were like me, you can't be an ignoramus anymore because I just blew your cover. Maybe you'd like to come along next home meet and pitch in? There'll be plenty to do and there's a chance we could have some fun doing it.

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When Sally Swims Poorly... How Mom and Dad Might Talk To Their Child at a Swim Meet

Swim Meet conversation between parent and athlete can be either highly productive, or highly counter-productive. Your goal as a parent, should be to contribute to a positive swim meet experience for your child. This is the same goal as shared by the coach and the athlete. It is important that all three sides of the triangle be working together on meet days, as well as the rest of the swim year.

As I travel the country talking to parents, and observing swim meets and the effects of individual athletes, a few things stand out for comment. The inter-relationship of athlete, coach and parent on the days of swim meets is one of the most important. To discuss this adequately, it is necessary to define the role of each person.

The athlete attends the meet to attempt to gain, or affirm some progress that has been made in their development. This may take the form of a personal best time, or holding a stroke technique together for an entire race, or executing accurately a particular strategy for "splitting" the race, or any of a multitude of other possibilities and combinations. The role of the athlete is the active one. It is up to them to perform, and the meet day is a selected time to perform the experiment.

The role of the coach on meet day needs to be thoroughly understood. It is dependent upon how the coach has presented themselves in the athlete's swimming career. Primarily, for most coaches, they are the technical resource that a swimmer depends upon to help them improve. They also serve as a role model, and to a greater or lesser extent, as a motivator, friend, and co-author of the strategy or experiment being performed on that day.

The parent is the racing "support crew". The parent

makes sure they have all their human needs attended to, and continues their parental function of supervising personal development. Their love, attention, and caring are key ingredients in creating a successful experience on race day.

Athlete, technical support, and human support. That's all it takes.

Now, back to the question of meet conversation. Lots of talk goes on at a meet, and coming and going around the meet. Let's focus on the conversations that go on around a particular swim, and see what can be learned from that item.

Sally Smith is eleven years old, and she is about to swim the 100 yard freestyle. Sally is a pretty good little swimmer, and has a best time of 1:01.3. She'd like to go a personal best time in this event at the Oskosh By Gosh Meet, and she and her coach, Rita Bobeeta, have been talking all week about how Sally has to concentrate on keeping her stroke long and strong during the last 25 yards of her race.

Now, the race has been seeded in the bullpen (interesting name, huh?) and the swimmers have been released until they swim. Sally knows she is supposed to stop and talk to Rita before she swims. She goes over to see her.

"Hey Kiddo, ready for the big swim?"

"Rita, I got it all under control, and I'm ready to go fast."

"What do you need to remember on this swim?"

"To keep my stroke long on the last twenty-five."

"Not just long, but...."

"long and Strong!"

"Right! Have a real good swim now. Go get it!"

Sally blasts off, and gets out in front immediately. Mom and Dad cheer like crazy. Sally turns for home, and.....

(Now, at this point let's consider two endings. We will take a look at each one.)

Sally turns for home and..... shortens her stroke bit by bit as she gets more and more tired, and struggles to the wall, with a time of 1:01.5.

Sally is disappointed, and she goes back to Rita choking back tears, and stands there, waiting for Rita to speak.

"Well, not quite what we wanted. How did it feel?"

"It felt awful! I was terrible! I couldn't do anything!"

"From here, it looked like you were only pushing through to your waist, and towards the end of the race maybe not even that far. Where should your hand finish?"

"At my suitline."

"And what did your arms really feel like?"

"I got all hot and my arms were burning at the end of the race."

"Do you know why that is? I think you haven't had enough good fast pace work yet. Next month, we'll work on that, and by the Billibong Open, you'll be much better!"

Sally leaves Rita happy and feeling much less like the Ugly Duckling. Now, she heads to see Mom and Dad.

Most parents I talk to, think that this is a tough time to deal with their children. It isn't! (The tough one is next.) All Mom and Dad have to do in this case, is two simple things:

First, deal with human things.

"Are you warm enough, honey?"

"Put on your warmups, and your towel"

"Do you need something to drink?"

Then, if all is well, STOP. Do not get into the race

unless the child wants to. That is not your role. You are there to support.

But lets say that Sally comes back and says....

"I Stunk!"

Mom and Dad say, "Stunk? Stunk means you smelled badly. All that chlorine is kind of nasty, but I wouldn't say you stunk. What do you really mean?"

After Sally has a chance to get rid of her emotional response, you should ask, "What did Coach Bobeeta say?"

Now is a good time to explore this. What you are trying to do, as a parent, is duplicate the same mind-set the coach is trying to re-instill. Analyze what went wrong with the experiment. You don't have the technical expertise to offer the answers that Coach Rita does, but by asking questions that require a technical response, you shift Sally out of the emotional context. This is nothing more than an experiment that did not turn out the way you wanted it to. This is perfect swim parenting. You reinforce the message that the coach is sending.

If you will simply take care of the human needs, and shift the emotional disappointment to an analytical response, all will be well in Sally's world.

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When Sally Swims Great... How Mom and Dad Might Talk To Their Child at a Swim Meet

In a previous article we explored the parental conversation when Sally had experienced what she thought was a "bad" swim. She was unhappy with the result of that experiment, and we listened in as her Coach, Rita Bobeeta, and her parents, appropriately brought her back to a better perspective by putting her into an evaluative mind-set that analyzed why her race (her experiment!) did not end as she wanted it to. This response defused a situation that parents sometimes feel is one of the more difficult ones that they have to cope with in swimming.

I also said that there was another situation that was potentially much more damaging, that parents (and coaches) frequently do not recognize.

That situation is an "embarrassment of riches", or what happens when sudden, overwhelming success is the result. Lets go back and see the situation with Sally.

In this version of her 100 freestyle swim, Sally comes home with a very strong and fast last 25, and goes a new personal best time. In fact, it is a wonderful swim, a 58.9, dropping her previous best time by 2.7 seconds!

Now what happens?

Sally hops out of the water without further ado, and immediately looks for her Coach, Rita Bobeeta. Rita is easy to find, as she too is ecstatic, jumping around on the pool deck,

cheering and happy.

"Sally, that was Fantastic! I can't believe you dropped almost three seconds! I've never had another swimmer do that! Wonderful! You can be so happy, and so proud of yourself!"

Sally beams with pleasure, and missing the rest of Rita's comments, begins to look for Mom and Dad. Finding them in the stands, jumping around and waving to her, they are clearly very excited for her! She runs up to see them.

"Sally that was Amazing! Mrs. Jones said she never saw anyone drop that much in the 100 before! I can't believe it! You are incredible!"

Well, you say, that sounds fine. Mom is excited, and happy for Sally, and Sally must feel good to hear all this good stuff from her coach and Sally.

Not so.

The key is in watching what happens to Sally next. She finally walks away from Mom and Dad, thinking the following:

"Wow, that was some hot swim! Rita and Mom and even Dad said it was awesome, unbelievable, fantastic, amazing! That was special. I don't even remember much of it. But it was amazing. I'm amazed. I can't believe I did it, myself. Wow, I wonder what I'll do next time! Gee, I hope I can do at least that well

again, because that was a pretty unbelievable swim. Rita said it was fantastic. Like a dream. Unreal. It seems kind of unreal. How did I do that?"

Well folks, the next time Sally swims the 100 free, you can bet dollars against donuts that she'll revert to a time in her 1:00-1:01 range, if not worse. Why? Because the three people who she most respects in swimming have told her that the 58.9 was "unbelievable", "fantastic", "amazing", and "incredible". They must be right.

So Sally doesn't believe it. It was a fantasy. She is amazed how she, an ordinary person could actually have done such a thing. She finds it unworthy of credibility also. And so she goes back to what she CAN see as credible, a 1:00-1:01 time.

Often times swimmers become trapped on a plateau after one really excellent (and precocious) swim for months or even years. We have to be careful of the language we use, because frequently those who put their faith in us, believe everything we say.

What should Coach Rita and Mom and Dad have done in this situation? If you said "stick with the analysis approach", you are correct.

Remember, a swim in a meet is an experiment. If it turns out the way you want it to, you are entitled to a short emotionally satisfying "celebration". Then swimmer, parent, and coach need to analyze WHY it went well.

"What did you do right? How did it feel to do it right? Remember."

Coach Rita and Mom and Dad need to:

- offer congratulations,
- ask questions that bring out the technical analysis by the athlete,
- assure the athlete that they are just touching the surface of what they are capable of.

Coach Rita might say,

"Sally, Nice Swim! That looked like the Sally Smith I know! Very strong last twenty five. Why was that?"

"I remembered to push through to my suitline, and keep my strokes long and strong!"

"Superb. That was technically excellent. Now next time, we'll work on getting the first twenty five out a little bit faster, and you can improve some more. Nice swim. Now get ready for your next swim. 50 back I think. What do you need to remember there?"

And when Sally sees Mom and Dad,

"Sally, I'll bet you are really happy with that! You looked really good. What did Rita say? And where is your towel?"

The "what did Rita say?" is a subtle reversion to the technical side that is excellent.

This way, Sally gets to be happy, is aware of what made her perform better, and goes away confident that more improvement is to come.

Conversations between athletes and parents, and athletes and coaches can be wonderfully effective at swim meets. Work hard on hearing things clearly, and responding with appropriate comments, and you'll really contribute to your child's happiness in swimming. Good luck.

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A Family That Plays Together

By Karen Coe
Sacramento Bee Columnist

Parents should try not to push children too soon.

When the Garritsons show up at a cross country meet, they leave with most of the medals.

For the last several years, the Southern California family has dominated, and often swept, all the youth age group divisions at the National Cross Country Championships. With seven out of nine Garritson children competing, the first-place hardware is a heavy haul.

The Garritsons are a speedy lot. James, the oldest at 14, ran 32:59 for 10 kilometers at age 11. Carrie, 13, clocked a 2:49:18 at the Los Angeles Marathon two years ago. It was her debut marathon, and it qualified her for the Olympic Trials. Race organizers wouldn't let her compete in the trials marathon because of her age.

James and Carrie started running at ages 7 and 6 with their father, Mike. The others took their first fast steps with their dad at age 4. Jeremy, 3, runs 20 minutes three days a week. When Robert, 1, and the Garritson baby expected in a few weeks are ready for it, they'll run, too.

Although their running prowess has earned medals, national acclaim and even an interview on the Donohue show, some experts warn that

the Garritsons have accomplished too much, too fast.

"We're against competition for kids," says Dr. Lyle Michaeli, director of the division of sports medicine at Children's Hospital in Boston. "The joints and growth plates (growth centers near the ends of bones) are susceptible to injury."

Besides the injuries related to overtraining, Michaeli also sees children who come to his clinic complaining of sleeplessness, lethargy and sometimes, depression.

"Some kids are actually stressed too much," Michaeli says. "It's a psychological stress. They can be depressed, overfatigued, show a change in the level of their schoolwork and get injured or sick."

Kids can run into performance anxiety in other sports besides running. And the angst young athletes feel when they put a personal performance on the line at a footrace is often benign compared to what children feel when they're part of a team that stresses winning instead of the joys of movement and learning new skills. Some coaches say children under 12 aren't psychologically ready to compete.

"Ask most coaches and the response you'll get is that the child should not get into competition before 11 or 12," says John Leonard, executive director of the American Swimming Coaches Association. "The problem isn't so much with the kids' adjustment, it's the parents'

adjustment."

Leonard cites parents who hang around swim practices like groupies at a rock concert, timing laps and offering advice at every turn.

"There are over-involved parents in Little League, soccer, and hockey, too," says Leonard, who teaches people how to coach. "When you get adults involved, they say this is the start line and this the end. There is some standard to measure up to -- or not. Some parent might blow out of proportion that their 7 year old is blowing the other 7 year olds out of the water. Instead of learning better stroke technique, that kid relies on his superior strength. The problem comes in when he's 15 or 16 and all the kids have caught up to him in size and strength."

Dr. Gabe Mirkin, who in the late '60's, launched one of the first national age group running programs, coached his son, Jean, to 13 age group world records. At 11, Jean told his father that he'd never run another step. And Jean, 28, hasn't. Mirkin admits he pushed his son too hard.

"In my opinion it's a mistake for kids to be highly competitive unless it's their own idea," says Mirkin, who writes a syndicated column on sports medicine and hosts a regular radio talk show on the subject. "It's too much, too soon. Kids want to be kids."

But Mirkin sees nothing wrong with hard workouts.

"I don't agree with Michaeli that you can injure bone plates," he says. "It's the competition I disagree with. I pushed Jean hard. He had tremendous success and acclaim. When father is the coach, it's a dangerous situation. Parents should be supportive and encourage the kids, take them to practice, but should stay in the stands until the kid is done working out. The kids need to be motivated from within, not by their parents."

Mike Garritson isn't one to sit in the stands at workouts. He coaches his children and often runs workouts with them. And he has taken a lot of flak for that hands-on approach to his children's training.

"I think he's an extremist," says Dr. Ron Axtell, a general practitioner and chairman of the Southern California Association of Youth Athletics for The Athletics Congress. "I don't know whether he wants his kids to succeed for themselves or whether he wants them to succeed for him."

In defense, Garritson cites his kids' healthy appetite for competition, their undeniable success in running and their scholastic accomplishments.

"Their grades all went up when they started running," he says. "We do our workouts on trails and the kids love that and the wildlife they see. They like going to meets. It was Carrie's idea to run the L.A. Marathon. I didn't want her to. I wanted her to stop after 10K, but she kept going."

Here are some tips from national experts on the subject of children and competition:

■ Dr. Lyle Michaeli: "Organized sports is probably going to be the only way kids get exercise in the future," he says. "So, I'm all for that. I'd advise keeping the competition out of it until they're 14 or so."

■ James Ross, vice president of Macro Systems in Silver Springs, Md., and director of child and adolescent health programs: "There's no indication that participation in high school or college sports carries over into adulthood," he says. "We should be teaching kids skills and introducing them to activities they'll do all their lives."

■ John Leonard, executive director of the American Swimming Coaches Association: "For kids, I recommend lots of activities, not just swimming," he says. "Help them get a sense of physicality through sports like soccer, baseball, or basketball."

■ Dr. Gabe Mirkin: "Let them be kids," he says. "They can work out three days a week, but let them play and be kids the other four days."

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The Ten Commandments For Parents Of Athletic Children

Reprinted from The Young Athlete by Bill Burgess

- 1- Make sure your child knows that win or lose, scared or heroic, you love him, appreciate his efforts, and are not disappointed in him. This will allow him to do his best without a fear of failure. Be the person in his life he can look to for constant positive enforcement.
- 2- Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic ability, his competitive attitude, his sportsmanship, and his actual skill level.
- 3- Be helpful but don't coach him on the way to the pool or on the way to the pool or on the way back or at breakfast, and so on. It's tough not to, but it's a lot tougher for the child to be inundated with advice, pep talks and often critical instruction.
- 4- teach him to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be "out there trying", to be working to improve his swimming skills and attitudes. Help him to develop the feel for competing, for trying hard, for having fun.
- 5- Try not to re-live your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure; you lost as well as won. You were frightened, you blacked off at times, you were not always heroic. Don't pressure your child because of your pride. Athletic children need their parents so you must not withdraw. Just remember there is a thinking, feeling, sensitive free spirit out there in that uniform who needs a lot of understanding, especially when his word turns bad. If he is comfortable with you win or lose; he's on his way to maximum achievement and enjoyment.
- 6- Don't compete with the coach. If the coach becomes an authority figure, it will run from enchantment to disenchantment...with your athlete.
- 7- Don't compare the skill, courage, or attitudes of your child with other members of the team, at least within his hearing.
- 8- Get to know the coach so that you can be assured that his philosophy, attitudes, ethics and knowledge are such that you are happy to have your child under his leadership.
- 9- Always remember that children tend to exaggerate both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before over-reacting.
- 10- Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. Some of us can climb mountains, and are afraid to fight, but turn to jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain areas. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear, but a means of doing something in spite of fear of discomfort.
The job of the parent of an athletic child is a tough one, and it takes a lot of effort to do it well. It is worth all the effort when you hear your child say, "My parents really helped and I was lucky in this respect"

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The Parent And The Coach

Reprinted from Hannula's Hints, Written by Dick Hannula.

A very common topic in any swim coaches' chat session is parent involvement. Most coaches agree that the parents do present a definite factor in the success or failure of their swimmers. More than one coach has changed jobs because of parent involvement and usually it has been a negative experience for the coach who has made this change. I have heard coaches compliment a great swimmer with the remark that the swimmer has "great parents". I am quite certain that you have also heard coaches describe a swimmer as having "lousy parents?" Is there something that coaches can do to encourage parents to become "good swimming parents"?

Some parents give coaches ulcers, a lack of job security, a lack of confidence, and a general case of jitters. This is true, and many coaches have tuned in a deaf ear to parents over the years. Are there general characteristics that describe "good parents"? The American Swimming Coaches Association asked some of the most successful coaches about the "ideal swimming parents".

"The ideal swimming parent is one who supports and encourages his child without pressure." -- Richard Quick, United States National Team Head Coach and Stanford University Women's Coach.

"The ideal parents are the parents who follow and don't lead". -- Peter Daland, Former USC Head Coach and two-time United States Olympic Coach.

"The ideal swimming parent supports, backs, and listens. This parent understands long range goals. This parent sees beyond today." -- Dick Jochums, Head Coach, Santa Clara Swim Club. Dick has coached several Olympic swimmers.

"The ideal parent is usually someone who has dealt

with children other than his own, such as a school teacher or a coach. The parents are not as emotionally involved as intelligently involved. The parents also realize that there is much more to learn than just swimming fast." -- Jack Nelson, Fort Lauderdale Swim Team Head Coach, and former US Olympic Coach.

"The ideal swimming parent is one who supports their child as a person, not as a swimmer." -- Jonty Skinner, former World Record Holder.

The kids who perform the best are the ones with supportive parents who let the coach have control of the child's swimming career." -- John Collins, Badger Swim Club Head Coach. 1983 ASCA Coach of the year.

"It is important for the parents to be physically, mentally, and financially supportive of their youngster. The parents should support the interest and well being of their children." -- Don Gambriel, Past University of Alabama Head Coach and 1984 Head Olympic Coach.

"The ideal swim parent needs to have a sense of humor and is primarily interested in the development of his child as a person, not a swimmer." -- John Leonard, ASCA Director and former Lake Forest Swim Team Head Coach

"Some kids may perform better for a while with harassment and pressure from parents, but in the long run. It is best if the swimmer develops his/her own goals and discipline". -- Rob Orr, Princeton University Head Coach.

"An ideal swimming parent is someone who realizes his child's limitations as well as his achievements. The parent is supportive but not demanding and loves the child whether he wins, loses or draws." -- Penny Taylor, Past Parkway Swim Club Head Coach and Former ASCA Board Member.

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Guidelines for Parents Who Want to Coach

What are the right reasons for a parent wanting to coach? Love of children; genuine concern for and willingness to work hard to help them improve as athletes and as young people soon to become big people; unselfish desire to help team grow.

What are the wrong reasons for a parent wanting to coach? First, the opportunity to complete their personal agenda for their child. This agenda may not match up with the coach's long term objectives for the same child. Second, An opportunity to prove the coach is wrong will inevitably create a battle.

What does it take to become a parent coach?

1. Number 1 and most important: A parent-coach must be an employee of the club and be directly supervised by the head coach. Employees have standards. They must be at work by a certain time and perform certain duties as required by the employer. While the Board of Directors may technically be the employer, the head coach must be the immediate supervisor. A perspective parent coach must be interviewed by the head coach and the parent coach reports to the head coach. Any other arrangement, i.e. the parent coach answers only to the BOD, will ultimately lead to serious problems. The coach must have the authority to fire the

parent coach if necessary.

2. With authority comes responsibility. The head coach is responsible for providing training to the parent coach. This training should be specific to the club's policies, specific to the head coach's philosophy, and in general, the larger body of coaching knowledge, for example mechanics, physiology, training, teaching skills, working with parents, and motivation. The head coach can do this through a combinations of in staff training, home study assignments, or sending parent coaches to clinics.

There is nothing overly complex in coaching knowledge but at the same time there are many ways to get the same thing done. There is no one perfect freestyle. Do not look at Popov as the model for freestyle, do not think you understand that style and then forge ahead trying to make every 8 year old swim like Popov. What if you have an 8 year old Janet Evans? It is important to understand the many ways and apply what works best with each athlete. This is all done under the philosophy of the Head Coach.

3. The parent must buy into the head coach's philosophies and acknowledge their experience and expertise. If not, you are inviting disaster.

4. The parent coach must not coach their own child – at least not until the parent coach has earned the trust and respect of the head coach, the athletes, and the BOD for their genuine commitment to the program without a personal agenda for their own children. Even after that point it is questionable whether the parent and child interact in a way that allows for coach to take place. In coaching there are times for critically evaluating a stroke, a set, a race, a workout, or a behavior in a coach-athlete manner. When children have the habit of ignoring Mom or Dad, which tends to happen more frequently beginning at about age 11 and 12, the coach-athlete interaction breaks down. In some cases parents can coach their children, but rarely. In most cases the natural growth and growing independence of children makes it difficult for parent to critically coach them. Tread very carefully in this area.

5. The parent coach is subject to the very same evaluation as all other staff.

6. On the matter of judgment: Much of what a head coach decides is based on intuition and judgment which are based in a large part on past experience. There are two things in a healthy relationship between parent and coach or between assistant coach and coach or between parent coach and coach: first there should not be an aggressive challenge to a judgment call, and second, the head coach should be able to process a question put forth by a parent, parent coach, or other staff without becoming defensive.

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Goals and Values

We develop the swimmers progressively with great patience. Winning is not an issue with our younger age groups. We want swimmers to be their best in their later teen age and college age years. Technique, endurance, and speed are the primary physical attributes we strive to develop in our young swimmers. We spend the majority of time with our youngest swimmers developing technique, some time developing endurance, and very little time developing speed. As swimmers become older and more skilled we increase the amount of endurance work, continue to develop technique, and introduce speed. At higher levels the emphasis is on speed and endurance while teaching higher levels of technique.

On the mental side we want the swimmers to learn to take responsibility for their own performance and to learn the importance, and the thrill, of meeting challenges straight forward. We also teach swimmers to; learn to read a pace clock and understand time relationships; learn about setting goals and the relationship between work and achieving goals; learn that everyone on the team contributes to each other's performance; learn a sense of control in pacing swims, sets, and practices that is applicable to other areas of life.

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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."

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!

Positive comment, correction, positive

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On Making Choices

Robert Reasoner, Superintendent of Moreland School District in San Jose, California has prepared a teacher's guide to building self-esteem. The process of building self-esteem is a five step process guided by specific adult roles or tasks that produce a desired outcome in children. The desired outcomes in children are:

1. A sense of security,
2. A sense of identity or self-concept,
3. A sense of belonging,
4. A sense of purpose,
5. A sense of personal competence.

One of the most important adult tasks in achieving the 5th outcome, a sense of personal competence, is to aid the child in making choices and decisions.

Reasoner says, "Children need direction and help in identifying the choices they can make. Adults are often inclined to tell them what to do. This approach only makes children more dependent. Children must be taught how to see their options or how to identify the available resources."

Adults - parents and coaches - can provide many options. Reasoner suggests these choices:

1. A choice of activities during free time,
2. A choice of rewards or privileges,
3. A choice of how work objectives are to be achieved,
4. A choice of the topic to be studied within a given outline, or
5. A choice of developing one's own work schedule.

When children are very young parents and other adults in the child's life must necessarily make most, if not all choices for the child. As the child grows there must be a gradual giving of freedom to make choices, at first with great direction and help, then later with continued support but less resolute direction. We cannot make all the

decisions for children into and through their adolescent years then suddenly turn all the decision making over to them. The idea is, of course, to develop young adults with high self-esteem who have learned to make their own choices through the direction of their parents, coaches, and teachers.

Lawrence Galton, author of Your Child in Sports suggests that parents who are concerned with the welfare and healthy physical and emotional growth and development of their children should discuss with their children the real values of sports. "Make it a two way conversation, hearing and responding to the child's viewpoint. It should be a joint discussion, not a lecture."

Don Swartz, coach of world class swimmers, motivational speaker, and expert on goal setting and visualization, places great importance on creating situations where everyone wins.

"In my dealings I always give choices. I let them know that if it doesn't work out this time that it can work another. People always respond better when we give them situations that have choices. They work harder that way, because they know that even though I have the ultimate say in things, we all work with each other. Everybody wins.

"Ultimatums, also known as "or else", trap you and leave you powerless. They take away your greatest power in life - your power to make choices. They put the power of your choice in the hands of the other person while at the same time making that person feel trapped.

"When working with people and relying on their actions to make any project a success, they must feel in control of themselves. If you use ultimatums...'Do it or else'...they feel out of control, resentful, and are liable to live with the 'or else' just to spite you. Everybody loses.

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When A Swimmer "Plateau's" -- Rachel's Story

A father of a 14 year old girl recently called the ASCA office in search of a new team because his daughter, Rachel, has stopped improving with her present team.

Rachel had started swimming at age 12 in a program that has a history of excellence at age group, national, and international swimming. She was part of a crowd of novice swimmers that received good stroke work, excellent aerobic conditioning work, and constant encouragement, but never special attention. Her parents were novice swimming parents and quietly enjoyed their daughter's enthusiasm and appreciated the great physical benefits she was receiving. She rapidly improved but as she turned thirteen she was not yet ready for the senior team and was informed by the age group coach that she would need to remain with the age group team (mostly 12 and unders) until ready for the senior team. The girl was happy with this arrangement but the father thought his daughter should be with the older swimmers.

The father pulled his girl from the program and took her to a neighboring team that had an excellent age group team but only had a few seniors. The girl received much more attention than she had with the previous program and was one of the team's senior stars. In the new program, her training was also very different. She was only doing about half of the yardage she had with the

previous age group team and much of her new yardage was sprint oriented. She made an immediate and substantial improvement much to the delight of her father. According to the father, her best chance at making the 1992 Olympics would be in the 50 free.

However, the improvement was short lived and she soon "plateaued". The father decided to pull her from the team and called our office for advice.

Here are our thoughts about this situation.

1. A swimmer is said to "plateau" when his or her times no longer continue to improve. Younger age group swimmers (12 and unders) rarely plateau simply because they are growing rapidly and their increased strength generally results in faster times. If a boy plateaus it generally happens in the late teens when most of his growth and strength gains have been made.

If there is a typical "plateaued" swimmer it is a girl between the ages of 13 and 15. Girls grow and improve fast as 12 and unders. Oftentimes girls are faster than boys in the same age group. But as girls physically mature, gain weight on their hips and breasts, and sometimes become more interested in activities other than competitive swimming their rate of improvement slows and may stop

altogether.

2. It is important for swimmers to have a variety of events to work on when one or more events aren't improving. Very often, changing the focus takes pressure off the swimmer to improve in their "best event" and after a time of redirected interest a swimmer can often come back and improve. It is a mistake for developing swimmers of any age to concentrate on one or two events.

3. Being the center of attention might seem to be an ideal arrangement for a swimmer to improve but often times it has the opposite effect. When a swimmer receives extraordinary attention they are under subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) attention to perform well. When they cannot perform well, which will happen from time to time with every swimmer, they fall under even greater pressure. It is ok for a swimmer to fade into the workout group for a while and just be part of the crowd.

4. Avoid the "grass is greener" syndrome. It is common to hear of swimmers who make dramatic improvements over several years, then appear to stall, and jump to another club. When a swimmer plateaus, communicate with the coach and take a careful look at the program before deciding to move to another club. Often times there are factors beyond the immediate control of the coach and program that are contributing to stalled performance and might be resolved with good communication.

In addition ask yourself "How did the child improve to this point in the first place?" Perhaps this is the best program for the swimmer to be in. The act itself of moving to a new club means, "Now that you're with this new team it is expected that you will again improve", thus adding additional pressure.

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Burnout Or Choice

Coach Garry Nelson of the Plantation Swim Team, in Plantation FL advocates a broader perspective on one of the most common self-criticisms of age group swimming.

The term "burnout" is widely used in the sport of swimming. Many swimmers quit swimming every year. Many coaches and parents believe it is caused by burnout. The Physician and Sportsmedicine in a recent article, described burnout as "loss of energy and enthusiasm for the sport but that it is not caused by anxiety and stress. Sure, all of us have known that certain parent or coach who puts excessive pressure on a child to win or set records. Most of those swimmers quit because they no longer can handle the pressure and they need to quit because no longer can handle the pressure and need to get out and away from its cause. That is burnout.

At the Plantation Swim Team (Florida), we have approximately 30% to 35% turnover in our membership each year. I would think that our club is very close to the national average (Editor's note: U.S. Swimming Domestic Technical Director Bob Steele cites an average annual turnover of 33% of registered swimmers). People associated with swimming, group all of these swimmers as burnout. In fact, very few of these swimmers are really burnout cases.

There are hundreds of reasons why young people quit swimming. I believe that most swimmers who are no longer swimming quit because they are no longer improving as fast

as they used to, and the results are no longer worth the time and commitment. Throughout my coaching experience, I know that I have had my fair share of swimmers leave the sport.

Looking back, I can remember very few that I would consider in the burnout category. For example, if a swimmer is very successful as a young swimmer and has achieved success with limited commitment and a modest workload, when the swimmer begins to get older must increase his or her commitment to remain successful. The athlete may not want to put the required time into the sport. At that point they face a choice of working harder, scaling back their goals, or doing something else with their time. But that's not burnout, it is rather a choice.

Not every young person who has left swimming is a burn-out case. Most young people who have left our sport, have simply exercised their freedom of choice.

In conclusion, let's limit our use of the term burnout, which is giving swimming a bad name.

Coaches should strive to make their programs more creative and appealing to minimize loss of interest. Parents and coaches should know when to make kids work and when to let them play and not be afraid to have some fun. The next time you use the term burnout to describe a swimmer who has quit the sport, think again.

Maybe they didn't burn out, maybe they just chose to stop swimming.

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On Praising Your Children

How often do you think about the amount of and type of praise you offer your child? The wrong kind of praise, or praise used too frequently or infrequently can cause difficulties. Sometimes we think that it is not possible to over praise a child because constant praise will build a child's self esteem. However, there is a real world for the child outside of the home and a child's peers may not always be as praise giving as his or her parents. Other children are usually quite truthful and blunt about the feats of their peers. A child constantly praised at home may feel themselves placed on a pedestal only to be knocked off outside the home.

In a recent article in "Parents Magazine", educational consultant Fredelle Maynard listed the dos and don'ts of praise. First the don'ts:

- Don't praise by comparison ("You're the best swimmer on the team"). It may encourage unnecessary competition or fear of failing next time.
- Don't praise constantly. If everything a child does is terrific, wonderful, the best, you will run out of superlatives and the child will become blase about applause.
- Don't praise indiscriminately. Children who are veteran meet swimmers know when a swim is good or bad. Parental ecstasies over mediocre performance can either make children cynical or cause them to feel like frauds.
- Don't praise so extravagantly that children feel pressure to go on shining. Over enthusiastic applause destroys a good motive for activity (to please oneself) and substitutes a poor one (to please parents).
- Don't use sarcastic or "backhanded" praise. "Well,

you did all flip turns for a change." "You touched with two hands! I can't believe it."

The best praise to use is encouragement. Encouragement helps build a child's confidence and autonomy while praise can be more manipulative, emphasizing what the adult wants. Encouragement allows kid to "own" their accomplishments and to find within themselves the strength and desire to do their best. The following are Maynard's dos:

- Do be specific. Instead of using words that evaluate ("What a great swim"), describe in concrete terms what you see: "You kept your elbows nice and high during that swim."
- Do describe the behavior and its consequences. For example, "Thanks for getting dressed and out of the locker room so quickly. Now we have more time to go shopping for the new goggles you need."
- Do focus on the child's effort, not the product. "You practiced hard for this swim meet and it really paid off."
- Do point out how your child has progressed. "A 200 IM! You couldn't have done that last year!"
- Do give control back to the child. Let the child do the evaluating. Rather than say, "I'm so proud of you," say, "You must feel so proud that you did all backstroke turns." Instead of "I like the way you helped that relay," try, "You were able to help that relay."

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The Positive Attitude

Written by Forbes Carlile, Head Coach of the Carlile School of Swimming and Head Coach of numerous Australian Olympic Teams. His book, "Forbes Carlile on Swimming" was the first modern book on competitive swimming.

Just as it is of utmost importance that coaches must be continually positive and optimistic, so too must parents. It has been said that 95% of us are predominantly negative in our approach to life—so most of us have a problem!

These notes are equally applicable to parents, and if not understood and acted upon by the whole swimming family, swimmers will be greatly handicapped, and not reach full potential. Being critical, no matter how much it may seem justified to the parents ("who have spent so much money and time") is clearly a negative approach with a strongly undermining effect. When constructive criticism is needed to form the foundations of a revised plan for improvement, parents should express their ideas to the coaches. The secure coach will be able to handle such help. Most coaching organizations welcome constructive criticism, presented in the right way at the appropriate time.

Parents should continually protect the swimmers from the damaging input of negative thoughts. If they can make a habit of always being positive and only foreseeing success, swimmers will be given the greatest opportunity to transcend existing performance levels. Clearly, the training must be as good as well, but where, in addition, an atmosphere is of positive self-expectancy continually promoted by coaches and family, even when progress seems to be slow and the going difficult, swimmers will have the right mental approach. While doing their best to carry out all aspects of preparation well, swimmers will learn to regard themselves as

winners, and eventually succeed in reaching realistic goals. The chances of this diminish greatly when parents, often because personal shortcomings (in having a pessimistic, negative nature) continually remind a child of the lack of improvement or failure to come up to expectations. Swimmers should continually be programming their subconscious by positive self-talk and visual imagery of success. This task should be made easy by reinforcing positive vibrations around them.

It is important for the swimmers to know that they are loved no matter what their swimming performance. The negative fear of failure is much less likely to develop when parents emphasize their love and compassion.

When setbacks occur, the attitude of parents and coaches must express the idea..."Well, you did not do as well as you are capable of this time, but next time it will be better"...positive self-expectancy and optimism. This helps the programming of the subconscious mind that we should be striving for. The coach and swimmer should analyze and determine what can be improved and positive action taken. Parents, about all, should be the least critical and never suggest that what has happened is more than a temporary setback. If such principles are applied to all our thinking we might well improve our lives too. It is not only the swimming development of the child that parents can help by the right psychological approach. We can all benefit greatly.

The parents eventual reward for their sacrifices of time and money will be when the grown-up, mature swimmers realize that their parents have played an important part in their success as a swimmer, and as an individual, by giving them the opportunity to train without attempting to intrude, or basking in reflected glory.

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Setting Goals: The Parent, Coach, Athlete Relationship

Setting goals and working toward those goals is one of the most important life skills our young swimmers learn. What are the benefits of goal setting, what is the goal setting process and what are the respective roles of parents and coaches?

In the American Swimming Coaches Association and USA Swimming's Foundations of Coaching Course* these benefits of goal setting are listed:

1. goals challenge swimmers, giving them something to work toward
2. goals direct swimmers to develop their skills
3. goals provide a means of evaluating a swimmer's progress and offer opportunities for success for the athlete.

Simply put, goals give direction and meaning to the day to day workout routine.

The goal setting process begins with a review of current achievements. What are the swimmer's best times? Next, what significant and attainable goals can be worked for over a reasonable time frame. Goals can be related to a time standard or to a competitive achievement. In general, younger swimmers should have a shorter time frame and the goals should be time based. Older swimmers may have the patience to set longer range goals that may be two, three, or four years away and often those goals are based more on a

competitive result rather than a pure time. Too often swimmer's concentrate only on the "outcome goal" and not enough on "performance goals." An outcome goal might be "to qualify for senior nationals in the 400 IM in the summer of 2001." Related performance goals might include: "Increase practice attendance to 9 times per week," "improve my 200 breaststroke best time by three seconds," "lose 5 pounds by May 1st by eliminating empty carbohydrate snacks," and "increase my freestyle stroke rate from 1.3 seconds per stroke to 1.1 in the 400 IM." Some people refer to performance goals as "objectives."

Both outcome goals and performance goals should be specific and time framed. Specific means quantifiable – it can be measured. Time framed means there should be a target date for achieving the goal or objective. Goals should be flexible because stuff happens that we cannot predict and the course may need to be altered.

The positive role of parents is vital. The three elements of good parenting in the goal setting process are:

1. Parents encourage their children to set goals.
2. Parents ask their children what their children's goals are.
3. Parents provide emotional support for their children as they pursue their goals.
4. Parents work with and support the

coach for the interest of their children.

Coaches are the primary goal facilitators. They:

1. Guide the swimmer to set realistic but challenging goals.
2. Establish a timetable, or progression for reaching the goal.
3. Discuss split times or other technical strategies for achieving the goal.
4. Remind the swimmer of the relationship between workout performance and goal times at daily practices.
5. Evaluate progress toward goals with the swimmer.
6. Create team support for individual goals.

Case Study: What can go right and what can go wrong in the parent, coach, athlete relationship?

Jennifer had just started swimming on a year around program at age 11. Previously she was a summer league swimmers and swam only 25's and 50's. Here supper league coach was a student and never talked to Jennifer about goals. She was a big girl and quite a bit overweight. She had some natural speed in the freestyle but very poor endurance. On the new team she improved rapidly in the 50 free from a 32.0 to a 30.8 from September to February. An "A" time and the qualifying standard for the local JO's is a 29.89. The coach began talking to her about trying to make that time. The next week at a B meet Jennifer went a best time of 30.3 and the coach noticed Jennifer's dad looking at his stop watch and shaking his head in disappointment.

After the swim Jennifer went directly to her dad to talk to him. Later the coach approached Jennifer's dad and said, "I noticed you were disappointed in her swim. What were you hoping she would do?" Jennifer's dad said he thought she should go a 28.5. That was a goal he and her had set. The coach pointed out that her 30.3 was a best time and that 28.5 was not a reasonable short term goal.

Jennifer's dad became upset and said that he didn't need any help setting goals with his daughter. The coach became upset and said that goal setting was exclusively the role of the coach.

Mistakes by the coach: From the very start there should have been better parent education: an initial conference with the parents with one of the topics being goal setting and time standards. Some teams have a parent handbook that explains these issues. Later, the coach should have had a conference with Jennifer and clearly identified 29.89 as a goal. He should have also talked to her about performance goals she would need to make in order to achieve her outcome goal. Some coaches work with the swimmer to fill out a goal sheet listing both performance goals and outcome goals. A copy of this sheet along with a copy of the JO qualifying times and National Time Standards can then be sent home with Jennifer for her parents. Later, in a moment after a practice or before a swimming meet the coach can have a brief chat with the parents about Jennifer's goals.

Mistakes by the parent: Jennifer's dad should not have helped Jennifer set such a difficult goal. His effort to have Jennifer be goal oriented was correct but his knowledge of the sport, of rates of improvement, and of Jennifer's abilities as a swimmer were not very good and this lead him to make a poor judgment. It would have been better to approach the coach and ask the coach what reasonable short term and long term goals are for his daughter.

Goal setting is one of the most profound skills we can help our children acquire. Parents who encourage their children to set goals, and who listen to the expert advice of the coach, and then cheer their children on can look forward to years of smiles.

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SWIM PARENTS

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Playing Favorites

One day a few years ago, a club board member accused me of “having favorites” on our club team. Several other parent board members nodded their heads in agreement. The implication was that this was a terrible sin. When I was a younger coach, I thought it was terrible also. And he was right. I did have favorites. My favorites were those athletes who most fervently did what I asked of them. Those that did, I gave more attention to. I talked to them more. I spent more time teaching them. I also expected more of them.

The implication that he was making was that my favorites got better than the others because they were my favorites, and that was somehow unfair. He mistook cause for effect.

The fact is, that the athletes who came to me ready to learn, ready to listen, ready to act on what they learned and try it my way, even if it was more challenging, more difficult than they imagined, were ready to get more out of our program. And they were my favorites.

As a coach, I have only one thing to offer to an athlete. That is, my attention. Which means that I attend to their needs. The reward for good behavior should be attention . . . attending to their needs. The consequence of inattention, lack of effort, unwillingness or unreadiness to learn or just plain offensive or disruptive behavior is my inattention to that athlete.

How could it be other than this? If you have three children, and you spend all of your time and energy work working with the one that is badly behaved, what does that tell your other two children? It tells them that to capture your attention, they should behave badly. What we reward, is what we get.

As a coach, I want athletes who are eager to learn eager to experiment to improve, eager to work hard. I want athletes who come to me to help develop their skills both mental and physical, and are willing to accept what I have to offer. Otherwise, why have they come to me. And I am going to reward that athlete with my attention. In so doing, I encourage others to become like the athlete above. If I spent my time with the unwilling, the slothful, the disruptive, I would only be encouraging that behavior.

The link I want to forge is between attention and excellence. Excellence in the sense of achieving all that is possible, and desired. My way of forging that, is to provide my attention to those who “attend” to me. This does of course result in increased performance for those that do so. I am a professional coach, and when I pay attention to a person, that person is going to improve. Over time, this makes it appear that my “favorites” are the better swimmers. Not so at all. The better swimmers are those that pay attention, and thus become my favorites.

What Dad didn't realize is that you must have favorites if anyone is to develop in a positive fashion. The coach's job is to reward those who exhibit positive developmental behaviors. Those are my “favorites,” and they should be.

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Turning Obstacles Into Opportunities Coping With Adversity is the Key

Dr. Scoresby, Ph.D

Nothing in the world will take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan, "Press on" has evolved and always will solve the problems of the human race. -Calvin Coolidge

Some parents think they can make sure their child has good self-esteem if they can shelter or protect her from trials, frustration, uncertainties and setbacks. The opposite is true. Their continual attempts to make their child happy and to protect her from every potential unpleasantness will most likely undermine her self-esteem. Allowing your child room to grow, make mistakes, deal with defeat and overcome problems is essential in the development of healthy self-esteem. You cannot bestow self-esteem, but you can help your child develop it by:

- Helping your child set goals
- Encouraging your child to challenge himself and improve his talents
- Giving your child chores and responsibilities appropriate to his age and ability
- Teaching your child that he is responsible for his own happiness and accomplishments
- Providing academic and psychological support

By allowing your child a controlled amount of frustration, you're showing confidence in her. Of course, this doesn't mean you should leave her to deal with a hopeless situation alone. There are

certainly times she will need your assistance. You can continue to be concerned and involved while encouraging independence.

Strategies to Promote Self-Confidence and Self-Esteem

In School

If you believe your child lacks self-esteem and/or self-confidence because of problems he is having at school, talk to his teacher. If he is having difficulty academically, perhaps the teacher can suggest ways to give him opportunities to improve his self-confidence. For example, he could be encouraged to work on projects that will utilize his talents. School achievement is very important in the development of self-confidence.

At Home

1. Create an environment in your home that encourages the development of self-esteem. According to Greene, the ingredients of such a home are:

- Express love
- Encourage goal-setting
- Communicate honestly
- Encourage independence
- Define your family's values
- Create security and stability
- Establish reasonable standards
- Be consistent in your discipline
- Create opportunities for success
- Express faith in your child's abilities
- Praise your child's accomplishments
- Require age-appropriate responsibility
- Provide emotional and academic support

If these ingredients are present in your home, your

child will feel more secure, will like and respect herself, and will consider herself to be worthwhile and competent.

2. If your child's poor self-esteem is chronic, she is probably suffering from emotional problems. The reasons for these problems need to be examined in counseling or psychotherapy. According to Greene, "Serious self-esteem deficits will not disappear of their own accord. The child who dislikes herself and feels "bad" will most likely continue to feel this way throughout her life unless she receives help from a mental health professional." Academic success will not provide her much enjoyment or satisfaction. If you get help for her before her bad feelings become permanent you will give her a brighter future.

Dr. Scoresby holds a Ph.D from the University of Minnesota in Counseling Psychology and is the author of many books, including Teaching Moral Development, Focus on the Children and Something Greater than Ourselves: The Exercise of Extraordinary Leadership. He is the director of Knowledge Gain Accelerated Learning Center and president of A. Lynn Scoresby & Associates, a leadership development firm.

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Balancing Breakfast Needs with Morning Workouts

By Keith B. Wheeler, Ph.D.
And Angeline M. Cameron

Q. What do you suggest for a swimmer who cannot eat breakfast before a workout and immediately goes to school after the workout?

A. First, the swimmer needs to realize how important it is to get some nutrients (primarily carbohydrate and water) both before and after a morning workout. Research has conclusively shown that fasting will reduce both endurance and performance in a wide variety of activities.

If a swimmer gets up at 5:30 AM to workout without any nutrition support except when he or she ate the previous night (10 hours earlier), endurance and performance will likely be compromised. If the same swimmer then skips nutrition support after the workout, the day's subsequent activities could be quite stressful and cognitive abilities would be reduced.

Swimmers should try and consume at least 12 ounces of water or fluid and at least 100 grams of carbohydrate before a morning workout. A 12 ounce glass of orange juice or apple juice in addition to 3 bananas or 4 apples would supply this amount. If the athlete cannot tolerate solid foods during this period, complete liquid supplements (eg, Exceed\ Sports Nutrition Supplement) are excellent alternatives. One or two cans before and after a morning workout will help supply needed nutrients and water.

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"Quick Energy"

By Keith B. Wheeler, Ph.D.
And Angeline M. Cameron

QUESTION: Many young swimmers eat powdered Jello at swim meets. Will this give an athlete "quick energy" for the meet and improve performance? Are there any true sources of quick energy that can be taken just before a meet?

ANSWER: No, ingesting powdered sugar (ie Jello) immediately before a swim meet will not supply the body with a quick source of energy and will not improve performance. In fact, it may reduce performance. The best way for swimmers to nutritionally prepare for a meet, is to eat a meal or snack that is high in complex carbohydrate, 4 hours before the competition begins. This meal will help ensure that energy stores in the body, especially those in the liver and circulating blood, are adequate. Consuming too much simple sugar 15 to 30 minutes before a swim competition may cause blood sugar levels to be reduced, thus reducing performance.

There is no such thing as a quick energy source that can be taken immediately before a swim competition. Athletes and parents should be careful about using food sources or products that make this claim.

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Gain Weight To Gain Strength

By Keith B. Wheeler, Ph.D.
And Angeline M. Cameron

Should young (9 to 11 years old) male swimmers try to gain weight to gain strength? If so, what is the best way?

No, young male swimmers in this age range should not be too concerned with increasing their muscle mass to increase strength. Until they reach puberty, usually between 12 and 15 years of age, young men cannot increase their muscle mass rapidly because of the lack of the male hormone testosterone. However, studies have shown that with the appropriate weight-training program prepubescent boys can significantly increase their strength, despite the lack of muscle growth. The primary reason for this is that strength is regulated by factors other than muscle size -- namely, various neurological controls that are influenced by weight training.

For more detailed information on this subject, write to the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA), Box 81418, Lincoln, NE, 68501, and ask for the position paper titled "Prepubescent Strength Training." This paper discusses benefits and risks of strength training and gives guidelines for a good program.

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Glycogen Depletion

By Keith B. Wheeler, Ph.D.
And Angeline M. Cameron

Q. Can age-group children (9-12 years old) become glycogen depleted? How can a parent detect glycogen depletion and what should be done to correct it?

A. Yes, just like their older counterparts, age-group swimmers can deplete, or significantly lower, the glycogen (carbohydrate) stores in their muscles. If the body's need for energy to support growth and training consistently exceeds the supply, the athlete will become chronically fatigued.

This fatigue is due, in part, to an inadequate supply of glycogen in the active muscles. Until the physical demand is reduced (training is cut back) or the supply of dietary fuel (mainly carbohydrate) is increased, the athlete will continue to be fatigued.

Detection of glycogen depletion is not easy because the symptoms are similar to those elicited by other physiological problems. However, chronic tiredness and/or early fatigue in a swimmer's normal training or exercise routine are the most obvious signs of glycogen depletion.

If the young athlete wants to regain his or her normal endurance and cannot realistically reduce daily activity, an increase in daily calories, especially carbohydrate calories is a must. Meals and snacks containing high-carbohydrate foods, such as bagels, potatoes, pasta, and fresh fruit, should be consumed. Concentrated liquid carbohydrate supplements, such as EXCEED\ High Carbohydrate Source, are also very useful in this situation. Liquid supplements provide needed carbohydrate calories without providing the bulk that would be in an equivalent amount of solid food. Additional bulk may not be well tolerated during an aggressive training program.

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Carbohydrate Loading

By Keith B. Wheeler, Ph.D.
And Angeline M. Cameron

Question: What exactly is carbohydrate loading? Is it appropriate for age group swimmers?

Answer: Carbohydrate loading refers to the process by which the carbohydrate (glycogen) stores in an athlete's active muscles are increased significantly above normal levels. This loading of carbohydrate in the muscles is accomplished through a combination of training and diet manipulation.

Specific techniques for carbohydrate loading have changed since the method was developed in Sweden. The original program consisted of 7 days of dietary management, beginning with exhaustive exercise bouts on the 1st day, followed by 3 days of extremely low carbohydrate consumption. The next 3 days consisted of an extremely high carbohydrate intake that caused the muscles to super increase their carbohydrate stores. In some people, this regimen produced nausea, fatigue, and diarrhea. Therefore, less drastic carbohydrate loading regimens were developed and are currently recommended.

Although, when done properly, it does increase muscle-glycogen stores above normal levels, carbohydrate loading is most useful for athletes who are preparing for endurance events such as triathons, marathons, cycling races, or open water long distance swimming. It should be done only a few times in a year. A nutritional concern that is more important to an age-group swimmer than carbohydrate loading is consuming enough carbohydrate on a daily basis. Age-group swimmers should get at least 60% of their daily calories from carbohydrate, which will maintain their muscle glycogen at levels that will support their training.

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Are Ideal Weight Charts Meaningful?

By Keith B. Wheeler, Ph.D.
And Angeline M. Cameron

Question: A 10 year-old child who swims for times a week for 90 minutes weighs more than the published "ideal weight" for his age and height, but the child does not appear to be overweight. Are ideal weight charts meaningful? Should the child be placed on a diet?

Answer: Ideal weight charts are only applicable for people who are 18 years of age and older. Growth charts are used for people younger than 18 years. Growth charts express a percentile rank of height, weight, or height-to-weight ratio. Using growth charts, doctors can compare a child's development growth pattern with population normals. Just because a child is in the 95th percentile for weight does not necessarily indicate that the child is overweight. It is possible for a child 10 to 12 years of age to drop from the 95th percentile of weight to the 50th percentile during 1 year of rapid growth. A child who is in the upper percentiles of weight should not automatically be placed on a diet. A restrictive diet could be more harmful than helpful for a child who is preparing for puberty. If they feel that their child is overweight, the parents should discuss the issue with their child's doctor; but, if the child does not appear to be overweight, chances are that he or she is not.

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The Importance Of Fluid Replacement During Training For Age Group Swimmers

By Dr. Keith B. Wheeler, Ph.D.
and Angeline M. Cameron

Question: Can age group swimmers dehydrate during a 1 1/2-hour swimming workout? Does the temperature of the water alter the situation? How often, how much, how much, and what should a swimmer drink to prevent dehydration?

Answer: Yes, dehydration, or a lowering of body-water levels significantly below normal, can occur in swim workouts of 45 minutes or longer. The body continues to lose water through sweat even when submerged in water. Also, a lot of additional water is lost through increased breathing.

The temperature of the water can affect the amount of water loss, with higher water temperatures causing greater body-water losses. Although research hasn't been done specifically with varying water temperatures, similar changes in body-water loss occur when air temperatures, similar changes in body-water loss occur when air temperature varies. Water loss in sweat increases approximately 13% for each degree centigrade (7% per degree Fahrenheit) increase above ambient air temperature. Thus, if a swimmer normally loses 2 pounds of weight (body water) during a 1 1/2-hour workout at a given temperature, a 5 degree F increase in water temperature would increase the body-water losses to 3 pounds. In the warmer water, the swimmer would need to drink an additional 16 ounces of fluid to maintain the same hydration level as in the cooler water.

Swimmers should plan to drink 16 ounces of fluid for each pound of weight lost during a workout. Fluid should be drunk over an entire workout, that is, 8 ounces of fluid should be drunk every 15 minutes. Water is a good source of fluid; however, glucose-polymer-electrolyte solutions such as EXCEED (R) Fluid Replacement & Energy Drink have been proven superior to plain water in maintaining body-water balance during many forms of exercise. Drinks containing simple sugar such as colas, thirst quenchers, and fruit juices, should not be drunk during a workout.

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Nutrition Between Prelims And Finals

By Dr. Keith Wheeler, Ph.D.
and Angeline M. Cameron

Question: In a preliminary/finals meet, an age-group swimmer might finish the last preliminary event at 4 PM and return to the pool at 5 PM to warm up for the finals, which are at 6 PM. What would be the best nutrition for this swimmer?

Answer: The best nutrition for this swimmer depends on what the swimmer eats the morning of the competition. If he or she eats a large breakfast that contains at least 200 to 300 grams of carbohydrate, the swimmer will need mainly water and a small amount of carbohydrate, which can be provided by a fluid replacement and energy drink or fruit juice.

If he or she didn't eat a high-carbohydrate breakfast, the swimmer will need to eat carbohydrate after the 4 PM event to provide energy for the warm up and finals. The swimmer should eat an amount of carbohydrate, in grams, equal to 75% of his or her body weight within 15 minutes of the completion of the preliminary event and again 1 hour later. For example, a 100 pound swimmer should eat 75 grams (0.75×100 pounds) of carbohydrate by 4:15 PM and another 75 grams of carbohydrate at approximately 5 PM.

Liquid or solid forms of carbohydrate can be eaten: however, liquids are usually better tolerated and are more quickly digested. The amount of carbohydrate needed in the example above, 75 grams, is provided by 4 apples, 3 bananas, 3 bagels, 24 ounces of apple juice, or 12 ounces of EXCEED (R) High Carbohydrate Source.

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Guidelines For Going On The Road

By Coach Jamie Thomas

Swim team families look forward to February and March as the championship season. Travel comes with the territory. So, whether you're going to a qualifier or to nationals, you need a plan for going "on the road". The length, usually three or more days, of these championship level meets can lead to a loss of that "great feeling" and cause performances to suffer.

The keys to a good road trip are:

1. Eat the proper foods,
2. Get plenty of rest, and
3. Make the days as normal as possible.

The swimmer's diet should consist of low fat high carbohydrate foods. Appropriate breakfast foods are pancakes, bagels, French toast, cereal, and fruits. Pancakes and toast should be served without butter or margarine. Syrup and jams are OK. Drink low fat milk.

At lunch, avoid fried foods at fast food places. Try a salad with a minimum of dressing or a potato with a minimum of butter. Sandwiches with lean meat or skinless poultry are good. Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches are good and easy, but watch the peanut butter because it is high in fat. Soup and crackers are also fine, but avoid cream-based soups. Stay away from soft drinks and drink low fat milk or juices.

For dinner, choose restaurants that offer high carbohydrate items such as pasta, salads, rice,

vegetables and fruits. If you must have pizza, get one with a thicker crust and get low fat toppings like green peppers, onions, Canadian bacon or mushrooms. Avoid fatty meats and extra cheese.

Be nutrition conscious at all meals. Remember: don't sacrifice great performances by eating conveniently while on the road.

Understand that swim meets can be extra exhausting. While away from the pool, swimmers need to rest and relax. Napping between trials and finals is a good idea. When swimming in an afternoon session, swimmers may sleep a little later than usual. Do not allow swimmers to stay up late or run around socializing while at the hotel. This wastes important rest time as well as disturbing others.

During "free time" on the road, swimmers and parents should avoid excessive talking about the meet, particularly anything negative. Instead, think very positive thoughts for short periods of time.

Diet, rest, and attitude are keys to maintaining a "fresh feeling" through a tough, long meet. Remember these guidelines when you are on the road and minimize the effect of road trips on performance.

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Breakfast On The Run

By Carol Bozarth, R.D., L.D., Nutritionist

"I don't have time to eat before I leave for school."

"I'm not hungry in the morning."

"I'm dieting, I'll skip a meal and save those calories."

Do your children (or you) use these excuses to avoid eating breakfast? Do they routinely "grab" a doughnut, danish, or candy bar to carry them through till lunch? Change this behavior NOW!

Breakfast is an important meal! The human body needs fuel to run on. That's what food provides. Studies continue to support the fact that individuals learn, think and perform better when their body has been nourished in the morning. A morning meal doesn't mean you need to eat as soon as you awake. For parents, it may be more convenient for you to eat once you are at your day's destination, provided you make time for it.

What would a morning meal contain?

Protein: low fat milk, cheese or yogurt, lean ham, turkey, peanut butter (use natural), egg, (the cholesterol and fat is in the yolk - the white is pure protein).

Grains: breakfast cereals (hot or cold - provided it is not sugar coated), bread, rolls, crackers, bagel, english muffins, rice, pasta.

Fruit/Vegetable: fruit or vegetable juice, fresh frozen or dried fruit.

The following are examples of quick-to-prepare, easy-to-eat morning meals:

- low fat cheese and tomato sandwich (can be stuffed into a pocket pita)
- peanut butter and sliced apple or banana sandwich
- sliced egg (or egg white sandwich)
- lean ham or turkey sandwich with sliced tomatoes
- yogurt with fruit and dry cereal as a topping
- reheated pizza

Additional tips: Use disposable plates, cups, flatware. Plan for breakfast before going to bed.

Wake up 10 minutes earlier...it may create less stress and make the morning meal so much easier to swallow.

The key to eating breakfast is convenience. It must be easy to prepare, you must have the ingredients in stock, and the clean up must be minimal. Most important, everyone must like what they are going to eat.

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Fast Food How To Lift The Guise On Healthier Choices

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By changing menus and methods of cooking, fast-food restaurants are making it easier for you to eat more healthfully. But don't be fooled by products that sound healthy. Here are our suggestions for how you truly can trim calories and fat:

■ Be salad savvy -- Avoid the mistake of thinking "salad" is synonymous with "diet food." Salads can be sneaky about fat and calories. The taco salads offered at Wend's and Jack In The Box each deliver 500-plus calories, more than half of which come from fat. The meat and cheese in chef salads invariably overpower the vegetables to increase fat. Chicken and seafood salads usually are lower in fat and calories, averaging less than 200 calories.

It's the dressings that provide the crowning touch. They can add as much as 400 calories to any salad. Watch out for packaged dressings that contain more than one serving.

The calories and other nutrients are given for a one-half ounce serving, yet some packages hold up to 2.5 ounces. Ask for reduced or low-calorie salad dressing.

■ Choose chicken carefully -- Chicken may be naturally lower in fat than hamburger, but when

breaded and fried, it loses its nutritional edge. At 688 calories and 40 grams of fat, Burger King's Chicken Specialty has 100 more calories and 20 percent more fat than McDonald's Big Mac. Chicken chunks, strips and "stix" have fewer calories than chicken sandwiches, but still carry a heavy load of fat.

The leanest chicken sandwich we found is Jack In The Box Chicken Fajita Pita for 292 calories and 8 grams of fat -- if you skip the guacamole.

■ Be suspicious of specialty sandwiches -- Even non-fried sandwiches made with lean turkey or ham can be deceiving. Hardee's Turkey Club packs more calories and as much fat as McDonald's Quarter Pounder. General clues to keep in mind when deciding about this type of sandwich are its size and the amount of cheese, mayonnaise or special sauces.

■ Order burgers plain and non-imposing -- You know you're headed for calories and fat if you order a burger billed "jumbo," "ultimate," "double" or "deluxe." You may have to search the menu board a bit, but all major franchises offer a plain hamburger for under 300 calories. At Hardee's and Roy Rogers, the roast beef sandwich is one of the leanest items you can order.

■ Don't read too much into the hype about healthier fat -- Switching from animal to vegetable fats is one step to lowered dietary cholesterol and saturated fat. But it doesn't

transform fried foods into healthy options. Large orders of McDonald's french fries (cooked in an animal/vegetable blend) and Hardee's french fries (cooked in vegetable oil) have about 20 grams of total fat. Hardee's fries have no cholesterol and a bit less saturated fat. But the key to your heart health is trimming total fat, and all fried fast foods still fail to do that.

■ You make the call -- Fast food has come a long way since the days of only burgers, fries and shakes. More food options can make it easier for you to elude excess fat and calories for speed and convenience. Nevertheless, it all comes down to what you say when the person at the counter asks, "May I take your order?"

Here are the leanest and fattest fast foods you can eat

We* reviewed products offered at six popular fast-food franchises. In terms of fat and calories, here are the best and worst choices you can make:

<u>Best Picks</u>	<u>Calories</u>	<u>Fat(grams)</u>
Burger King Chicken Tenders (6 pieces)	204	10
Hardee's Chicken Stix (6 pieces)	234	10
Jack In The Box Chicken Fajita Pita	292	8
McDonald's Hamburger	257	10
Roy Rogers Roast Beef Sandwich	317	10
Wendy's Plain Single	350	16
<u>Worst Picks</u>	<u>Calories</u>	<u>Fat(grams)</u>
Burger King Whopper with Cheese	711	43
Hardee's Bacon Cheeseburger	556	33
Jack In The Box Ultimate Cheeseburger	942	69
McDonald's McD.L.T.	674	42
Roy Rogers Bar Burger	611	39
Wendy's Bacon Swiss Burger	710	44

Note: Calories and fat are based on the most recent printed information provided to us by each company.

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Fast Food Breakfast Choices

Warm-ups for the morning session start at 7:00 am, your two children need a breakfast, you're in a strange town, and the only place you can find for breakfast is one of the fast food places. What to do?

The most important thing to do is avoid fats for two reasons: 1) As part of developing lifetime habits for long term health, people of all ages should keep their daily fat intake to less than 30 percent of the total calories consumed. 2) Fats have an immediate and dramatic effect on the ability of the circulatory system to carry nutrients to muscle cells. For young people about to participate in a swimming meet this is a definite handicap.

The Mayo Clinic Nutrition Letter offers these tips:*

You don't always have to nix nutrition for speed and convenience. Fast foods may not make ideal meals, but some do offer healthful carbohydrate and only moderate amounts of fat. You also can down play fat excesses by sorting out subtle differences among items. Consider these points the next time you're grabbing breakfast on the run:

Keep it simple -- The fewer ingredients you order in breakfast sandwiches, the lower the fat, sodium and calories. Hold the sausage and bacon.

Order it "drier than a biscuit" -- The English muffin is the lowest-fat breakfast food on most quick-service menus. Order it dry and

substitute jelly for the butter; this virtually eliminates fat. When other ingredients are equal, a sandwich made on an English muffin is lower in fat than one on a biscuit. Croissant sandwiches are highest in fat. "Croissant" may sound light and airy, but it contains twice the fat of a biscuit and six times the fat of an English muffin.

Choose "cakes" instead of eggs --Pancakes, even with a little butter, offer more energizing carbohydrate and less fat and cholesterol than egg dishes.

Three of the lowest-fat breakfast options found by the Mayo Clinic Nutrition Letter: These meals supply 20 to 30 percent of daily protein for the average adult, about 25 percent of daily calories for the average women, complex carbohydrate, vitamin C, and, in one example, calcium.

1. McDonald's Hotcakes with butter and syrup, orange juice, coffee: 493 calories, 16% of calories from fat.
2. McDonald's English muffin with butter, orange juice, low-fat milk: 384 calories, 23 % of calories from fat.
3. Jack in the Box Breakfast Jack (egg, ham and cheese on a hamburger bun), orange juice, coffee: 387 calories, 30 percent of calories from fat.

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News For

SWIM PARENTS

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Use Favorite Foods To Trim Excess Fat From Your Child's Diet

Offering your child fruit and vegetables as snacks instead of potato chips and cookies will trim dietary fat if your child eats them. But many children won't.

In January of this year, the Kellogg Company completed a national survey of 5,000 young people and found that children in grades 6 through 12 choose cupcakes, cookies, candy and frozen treats more often than apples, bananas, grapes or raisins. The children also reported eating pretzels, potato chips and crackers nearly as many times per week as vegetables or bread.

If your child won't eat the food that you give him or her, try offering lower-fat versions of foods that your child will eat. Preteens eat about 37 percent of their calories as fat. For 1 to 5 year olds, almost three-quarters of the fat comes from milk and other foods containing milk. The Kellogg Children's Nutrition Survey revealed that 68 percent of children 6 to 12 years old "like very much" to eat ice cream, cheese, yogurt and pudding.

If you want to lower the amount of fat your preschooler or preteen eats, try these four sure-to-please steps:

- Switch from whole milk to 2- or 1-percent low-fat milk.
- Make sandwiches or snacks from low-fat cheeses. Strips of low-fat American cheese or bit-size chunks of Laughing Cow brand Cheezbits and Wedges make popular snacks.
- Substitute low- and non-fat frozen yogurt, "light" ice cream or ice milk for regular and premium ice cream.
- Choose snack-size pudding made from skim milk.

Q. I started eating a muffin for breakfast instead of a doughnut because I thought it was more healthful. Now my friend says that muffins have a lot of fat. Do They?

A. They can. It depends on what kind of muffin you eat and how big it is.

A standard-size muffin made from scratch or a package mix contains 120 to 130 calories and four or five grams of fat. Doughnuts and sweet rolls average the same number of calories but a little more fat -- about seven grams.

The trouble is, many people buy muffins from bakeshops, restaurants and grocery stores. These muffins are usually bigger, and higher in fat and sugar than basic muffins.

We reviewed the nutrition information for 16 different varieties of muffins sold commercially. We found that a muffin that's comparable to the size you get when you bake in a standard muffin pan at home averages 196 calories and 11 grams of fat. That's 70 more calories and more than twice the fat of a home-baked muffin. What's more, the most popular muffin sold commercially is about double the size of a standard muffin. This size muffin averages almost 300 calories and 14 grams of fat -- almost twice the number of calories and more fat than in a fried egg and two strips of bacon.

"Gourmet" muffins are triple the size of a standard muffin. They average more than 400 calories and 18 grams of fat -- similar to the calories and fat in two eclairs with chocolate icing and custard filling.

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SALADS...They May Not Be As Slimming As You Think

Carol Bozarth
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Perhaps your family has made the decision to lose weight. You have decided that sandwich days are over. It's salads from now on. But "weight"! Salads can be misleading!

Any salad (tuna, chicken, egg) is made with mayonnaise. Mayonnaise is 100% fat (1 Tb. = 100 calories). Lite mayonnaise is still 100% fat with added water that reduces its calories to 50 per tablespoon. Restaurants do not use low fat mayonnaise. Is the tuna packed in water? Who knows? A "scoop" of salad on a bed of lettuce and tomato can easily be 300 calories, not counting the dressing you may add. And, how many crackers are you going to eat with it?

Raw vegetable salads are low in calories because there is virtually no fat in vegetables, that is, until you begin adding salad dressing. One tablespoon of salad dressing contains 60 - 80 calories. Low calorie variety can contain as much as 40 calories per tablespoon. For the sake of comparison: an entire head of lettuce only contains 50 - 60 calories!

A vegetable salad, as a meal is inadequate. To count as a meal it must have some protein (low fat cheese, turkey, tuna, beans), a grain (bread or low fat crackers) and fruit. This leads us to salad bars. Salad bars are GREAT, but only if you are aware of what you are adding to the salad.

High-fat salad bar add ons:

	Tot. Cal.	Fat Cal.
1/4 cup bean salad	50	25
1/4 cup pasta salad	80	40
1/4 cheese (grated)	200	150
1/4 cup croutons	70	35
2 Tb. sunflower seeds	94	85
1 Tb. Olives	50	50
1/4 cup ranch dressing	320	280

Adding the above to lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, etc. at your favorite salad bar will add 864 calories, 665 from fat.

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Coffee and Caffeine

By Keith B. Wheeler, Ph.D.
And Angeline M. Cameron

Q: Will a cup of caffeinated coffee enhance athletic performance? Does caffeine have any undesirable side effects? Why do so many people drink coffee?

A: No, consuming one cup of caffeinated coffee will not enhance athletic performance. Some studies have suggested that caffeine will enhance performance under certain circumstances (ie, short-term high-intensity or long-term moderate-intensity exercise). However, most studies have demonstrated no effect of caffeine on endurance and performance. In the studies that suggest an effect, the caffeine consumption usually exceeded 400 mg before exercise. To get this level of caffeine, you would have to consume approximately 4 cups (5 oz) of caffeinated coffee, 12 cups (5 oz) of tea, or 3 quarts of cola.

Consuming caffeine can have some undesirable side effects, including increased heart rate, digestive secretions, breathing rate, and urine output. Caffeine also affects the central nervous system by increasing restlessness. Other side effects include headaches, irritability, insomnia, diarrhea, hyperactivity, and depression. Keep in mind also that caffeine is recognized as a stimulant by the International Olympic Committee, and is on the list of banned substances.

Most people drink coffee because they like the taste, and it is a socially acceptable ritual.

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Snacks

Reprinted from the [Mayo Clinic Nutrition Letter](#) *

It's 5 o'clock and dinner won't be ready for another hour. But you're hungry now. A bag of chips sits on the counter. There's nothing in the refrigerator but a few wilted carrot sticks and limp stalks of celery. Temptation strikes.

The real problem with snacking is not when you snack or even if you snack -- but what you choose to eat. Whether you buy your snacks ready-made or make them at home, the trick is to steer clear of excess fats and sugar. To do that, surround yourself with plenty of good-tasting foods rich in complex carbohydrates and fiber. Create an illusion of fat and calories by combining creamy and crunchy or chewy textures. And use a little imagination.

How to turn a potential liability into an asset

The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that 75 percent of women snack. Yet even routine snacking is not all bad. In fact, frequent mini-meals can be good for you. Here's how:

- Binge control -- If eating a bagel at 3 o'clock in the afternoon keeps you from eating second or third helpings at dinner, you may actually save calories. A 160-calorie bagel hardly compares to the 500 or

so extra calories you may be tempted to devour because you're so hungry.

- Satisfaction for small appetites -- Young children's tiny stomachs can hold only small portions of food at one time.

Older adults who are less active and who burn fewer calories may also feel more comfortable eating smaller, more frequent meals.

- Extra energy and nutrients -- Traditional meals often lose out to busy schedules. A grab-and-go meal is often the difference between some nourishment and none at all.

Snacks rich in complex carbohydrates and fiber will give you immediate energy that has some staying power. A small amount of low-fat protein adds more sustained energy.

Snacks to pick and fix:

Good-for-you snacks start with a proper pantry. Stock your refrigerator and shelves with foods that are fast -- not fussy. These ideas for healthful snacks keep fat and calories at bay by maximizing whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables. Best of all, you can make them all in 10 minutes or less.

- Toast one-half whole-wheat English

muffin. Top with Canadian bacon, tomato slice, low-fat American cheese. Microwave until cheese melts.

■ Mash one-half banana into peanut butter and spread on a whole-grain bagel.

■ Mix cold leftover chicken (or convenience-type chunk chicken), seedless green grapes, sunflower seeds, plain yogurt and a dash of curry powder. Stuff into a hollowed-out green pepper or whole-wheat pita pocket.

■ Spread one-half cinnamon-raisin bagel with part-skim ricotta cheese. Top with apple slices.

■ Layer soft mini corn or flour tortillas with shredded low-fat cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese. Microwave until cheese melts. Slice into bite-size pie shapes.

■ Spread a brown rice cake with farmer cheese (similar to cottage cheese, but drier and firmer) and fresh strawberries or low-sugar spreadable fruit.

■ Top a baked potato with plain yogurt and Cajun seasoning.

■ Spread raisin toast with apple butter.

■ Spread a slice of whole-grain crisp bread (wafer-thin cracker) with fruit-flavored low-fat yogurt.

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Workouts and the Common Cold

When swimmers show signs of a common cold should they continue to practice? Sometimes over ambitious swimmers, coaches, and parents choose to treat a cold as a simple inconvenience and push on toward that all important qualifier meet in February.

Using common sense with the common cold is the best policy. Some "colds" may be far more serious infections waiting to become more intense as stress increases and resistance weakens.

Anthony Verde, PhD, exercise physiologist at the Sports Medicine Center in Wayne, Pennsylvania, stated in the June 1990 issue of *The Physician and Sportsmedicine*, "You have a good chance of turning a cold into something more severe by exercising with any intensity during the incubation stage."

However, in the same article, Harvey Simon, MD, assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School provides the following advice to physicians, "Try to reassure your patients that colds and exercise do not interact in major ways. If anything, anecdotal evidence says that some athletes feel better exercising with colds. This would make sense because exercise can increase mucus flow, which might provide relief for upper respiratory tract symptoms."

Edward Eichner, MD, professor of medicine at the University of Oklahoma and an editorial board member of *The Physician and Sportsmedicine* has found that physicians who regularly treat athletes with colds use the following guidelines: (Also from the June 1990 issue of *The Physician and Sportsmedicine*.)

"If the symptoms are located above the neck (runny nose, sneezing, scratchy throat), then exercise is safe...[however] athletes should not exercise with below-the-neck symptoms such as fever, muscle aches, loss of appetite, and hacking cough with sputum production."

Some parents wonder if it is permissible for swimmers to participate in dryland activities and avoid the water during colds. In fact, breathing the super humid air at the water surface may help relieve cold symptoms. So long as athletes do not have a fever, history of serious virus infections of which the cold may just be the beginning of, or feel weak and lethargic, a light to moderate swimming workout may be beneficial. The *Swim Parents Newsletter* editorial staff recommends the conservative policy of always checking with your family physician and encourages swimmers, coaches, and parents to remember that an upcoming qualifying meet is not as important as a child's opportunity to recover from a cold.

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"What Is Swimmer's Ear?"

Answered by: Robert T. Scott, M.D.

Most competitive swimmers have been bothered at one time or another by what is known as "swimmer's ear". There seems to be many ways of curing the tiresome disease but it often requires a swimmer to stop swimming for a week or two. Swimmer's ear can reoccur weeks, months or years later for no apparent reason. For some individuals, it becomes a chronic painful inflammation of the skin inside the outer ear canal. There are multiple symptoms of varying intensity. Itching and pain are mild to intense, depending on the degree of inflammation and swelling of the skin. The amount of the discharge (pus), which causes blockage of the air column leading to the eardrum, determines the severity of the interference with hearing. A dull fullness may exist for weeks to months with mild skin inflammation. However, a canal with maximally thickened skin will exert pressure on bone and cartilage, resulting in extreme pain and complete clogging of the air passage. This leads to clogging of the air passages and will result in temporary hearing loss and is a common sign of swimmer's ear.

To help prevent swimmer's ear, the ear canal should be kept as dry as possible. This will help maintain the natural protective action of the earwax. A thin mantle of wax prevents maceration (softening) of the skin surface and its acid pH inhibits the growth of bacteria and fungus. Some individuals have very little wax, and just the water that enters the canal from normal bathing or showering becomes trapped and prepares the skin for infection ensuing inflammation. A snug-fitting bathing cap will help prevent the headaches associated with cold water swimming and will also help keep water from washing in and out, taking ear wax with it.

Using comfortable earplugs while swimming will help keep ears dry. A good fit will keep water from washing back and forth through the canal. The constant traffic of water in and out of the canal will remove the protective layer of the ear wax and the more one swims, the more wax is washed out. After a workout most swimmers can clear moisture from their ears by tilting the head and shaking it to the side. Warm hair dryers are also very useful in drying the ears after a swimming session. A warm blast of air will effectively dry out the canal in five to ten minutes and enable the ear wax to reform and do its protective job.

If a swimmer loses his earwax easily, then a couple of drops of acidifying eardrops can help prevent the growth of bacteria. Eardrops can be used without a prescription or two drops of household vinegar will also work for most swimmers.

Each case of swimmer's ear is individual and a physician should supervise treatment. Most swimmers will be required to stop swimming for a few weeks but then again; it depends on the individual. If you can wear a well-fitting earplug that will keep water out and also keep in the drainage from your ears so that it will not infect other swimmers, then I believe it is safe to continue your training. However, if the ear plug itself is causing an irritation by touching irritated skin, then the ear plug is not the answer and some time out of the water may be necessary. A sport minded doctor will usually give you a reasonable answer.

Ben Franklin once commented, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." For swimmers everywhere who hope to avoid swimmer's ear, his words are quite literally sound advice.

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What Should My Child Be Eating Before And During His Competition”

Answered by: Keith B. Wheeler, Ph.D.

The pre-competition meal is really a “mini nutrition period” that occurs in the 4 or 5 hours before the start of the meet. Unfortunately, many swimmers don’t understand the exact role of the pre-competition meal. It has little effect on increasing muscle glycogen levels. It is foods eaten 3 to 4 days before a meet that help establish glycogen levels in the muscles. By Meet days, glycogen levels are mostly “set” and there is little that one can do to increase them in the hours before competition.

The pre-event meal is important for maintaining the blood glucose and liver glycogen stores, key energy sources used in the early stages of competition. By maintaining blood glucose levels at the start of the meet, the dependency on muscle glycogen will be delayed, and that helps prolong endurance. To avoid stomach upset, nausea or that “stuffed” feeling, consume the meal 3 to 4 hours before the start of the meet. Avoid spicy, fatty, and high fiber foods, too. These are difficult to digest and may cause intestinal distress or nausea later during the meet. Your child will swim more comfortably when he’s eaten easy-to-digest foods, and his stomach is relatively empty.

Nutrition conscious athletes now avoid traditional food such as the steak dinner, as well as other high fat, high protein foods like hamburgers, french fries, chips and mayonnaise. These foods remain in the stomach too long and slow down the digestion process. Foods that are rich in complex carbohydrates are generally easier to digest and empty from the stomach faster than high-fat, high protein foods. That’s important, because not only do you want to swim on a relatively empty stomach, you also want the foods you eat to be efficiently converted to energy. Cereals, pasta, baked potatoes and muffins are good carbohydrate sources that are easily digested and converted into glucose.

Vegetables and fruit juices are also good pre-vent meal items, as well as some dairy items like lowfat yogurt, ice milk and lowfat milk.

Swimmers, who prefer a light, non-filling pre-competition

meal often, substitute a sport nutrition beverage. EXCEED nutritional beverage is an ideal choice for your pre-competition meal: it’s nutritionally complete and well balanced, so you won’t sacrifice essential nutrients if you use it in place of solid food.

Once your child’s competition is under way, his body still needs fluids and nutrients to sustain physical effort and fight fatigue. Although many coaches and swimmers don’t realize it, dehydration can be a problem in swimming, especially if the air and water temperatures are warm. Remember, sweating is the body’s main mechanism for cooling itself; even though his practice and competition takes place in the water, he can still lose a great deal of body water in the form of sweat.

Additionally, water is also needed to aid digestion and energy production. Dehydration robs his body of the primary means to cool itself and generate energy. Your swimmer should observe good nutritional and hydration habits in the time before he competes. If there are several hours before your child’s event, then he can enjoy a light snack or refreshment if he wishes. But if he’s going to swim right away or his event is an hour or less away, he should be very cautious about what he eats and drinks. In the hour preceding competition, he should drink, fruit juices, and beverages or snacks that contain sugar in any form aren’t appropriate this close to competition. They can trigger a sudden drop in blood glucose (hypoglycemia) with the onset of intense activity. Additionally; drinks that contain high concentrations of sucrose (table sugar) tend to empty from the stomach more slowly than water. You don’t want to start swimming with a stomach full of anything, including liquids.

Once his event is underway, his fluid requirements change. His body loses water in the form of sweat, particularly in the distance events, and it should be replaced. Good nutrition is something that you apply everyday throughout the season...not just the day before the meet.

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Eating on the Road

What should swimmers eat when swim meet or vacation takes them on the road? Should the foods for best performance be sacrificed for popular, convenient, fatty foods or is there something else they can eat?

By Linda Houtkooper, Ph.D., R.D., Food Nutrition Specialist at the Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arizona. She is the author of a question/answer column in Swimming World magazine and she recently gave a presentation on nutrition at the ASCA World Clinic.

Swimming success depends on ability, top-notch training, coaching, and good nutrition. Proper nutrition for swimmers includes foods that provide all essential nutrients in the proper amounts for good health and performance.

Nutrition-conscious swimmers know that they need high carbohydrates, low fat foods to perform their best. The best diet for training and performance is the VIM diet.

V= Variety of wholesome foods that provide the proper amount of nutrients to maintain desirable levels of body water, lean body mass, and fat. These foods will also maintain good health.

I= Eat foods that are individualized. Foods should reflect personal like. They should

also make it possible to follow religious food preferences. Avoid foods that are just like, one, that cause allergic reactions, and those the body can't tolerate. Use nutritional supplements recommended by your dietician.

M= Eat moderate amounts of foods that are high in fat, sugar, or sodium.

Use the suggestions below to maintain your top-notch VIM diet "on the road."

Breakfast

Order pancakes, French toast, muffins, toast, or cereal, and fruit or fruit juices. These foods are all higher in carbohydrate and lower in fat than the traditional egg and bacon breakfasts.

Request that toast, pancakes, etc be served without butter or margarine. Use syrup or jam to keep carbohydrate high and fat to a low.

Choose low fat dairy products, milk, hot chocolate, etc.

Fresh fruit may be expensive or difficult to find. Carry fresh and/or dried fruits with you.

Cold cereal can be a good breakfast or snack; carry boxes in the car or on the bus.

Keep milk in a cooler or purchase it at convenience stores.

Lunch

Remember that most of the fat in

sandwiches is found in the spread. Prepare or order your sandwiches without the “mayo,” “special sauce,” or butter. Use ketchup or mustard instead.

Peanut butter and jelly is a favorite and easy to make, but remember that peanut butter is high in fat. Use whole grain bread and spread more jelly, while using a small amount of peanut butter. Avoid all fried foods at fast food places. Salad bars can be lifesavers, but watch the dressings, olives, fried croutons, nuts, and seeds; or you could end up with more fat than any super burger could hope to hold!

Use low fat luncheon meats such as skinless poultry and lean meats. Low fat bologna can be found in the stores, but read labels carefully.

Baked potatoes should be ordered with butter and sauces “on the side.” Add just enough to moisten the carbohydrate-rich potato.

Soups and crackers can be good low fat meals; avoid cream soups.

Fruit juices and low fat milk are more nutritious choices than soda pop.

Dinner

Go to restaurants that offer high-carbohydrate foods such as pasta, baked potatoes, rice, breads, vegetables, salad bars, and fruits. If you find these places are few and far between, make a deal an owner or cook to prepare those foods for your team on certain days; it could be his or her way to contribute to the success of local athletes.

Eat thick crust pizzas with low fat toppings such as green peppers, mushrooms, Canadian bacon, and onions. Avoid fatty meats, extra cheese, and olives.

Eat breads without butter or margarine ... use jelly instead. Ask for salads with dressing “on the side” so you can add minimal amounts yourself.

Snacks

Eat whole grain bread, muffins, fruit, fruit breads, low fat crackers, pretzels, unbuttered popcorn, oatmeal raisin

cookies, fig bars, animal crackers, fruit juice, breakfast cereal, canned meal replacements, and dried and fresh fruits.