



## **2017 Short Course YMCA National Championship Devotion Offered by Jess Spitzer**

Good evening, my name is Jess Spitzer and I swim for the Randolph YMCA in New Jersey. This is my fifth year attending YMCA Short Course Nationals and I am grateful for every opportunity to compete here in Greensboro. Nothing compares to the energy we feel when we gather at this special event and compete in the sport we love. Some swimmers are expected to advance to finals, place

on the podium, and break records. Others of us are not, however, that is not the only reason we are here. We make this journey to measure ourselves against our own potential, enjoy a week of camaraderie with our teammates, and participate in something greater than ourselves- **The National Community of YMCAs** .

Thanks to my coaches' belief in me and my teammates incredible talent, I had the privilege of participating in nationals for the first time at thirteen. In awe of the entire experience, I admired the older swimmers and continue to look to them as role models. It has been my goal to return to nationals every year since. The YMCA provides a family atmosphere enabling teammates to form strong bonds. I consider my teammates my brothers and sisters. Through the ups and downs, the smiles and tears, we push one another, as well as support one another. Not only do **WE** want to succeed, but we want **EACH OTHER** to succeed.

Many people would consider us crazy for the enormous amount of time and sacrifice we invest in the sport. Day after day, set after set, we continue to dive in, work hard, and strive to meet our goals. Nothing is better than the feeling of finally reaching them. Although we may not receive the same street credit at school or air-time on TV as other sports, swimming has taught me what it means to be a true athlete. We endure incredibly intense training to overcome both physical and mental obstacles. We must be dedicated, we must be focused, we must be disciplined, we must be wise, and most importantly, we must be humble.

In addition to strengthening our physical and mental capabilities, the YMCA uniquely focuses on creating compassionate athletes in and out of the pool. The YMCA embodies four core values: **respect, responsibility, honesty** and **caring** . These values provide a sense of service that is a gift the YMCA instills in us. Whether is it donating toys to the nearby children's hospital, swimming as many laps as possible to raise money for those less fortunate, or welcoming swimmers of all abilities and disabilities, together we make a difference in the community. This will continue to enrich our lives long after our swimming careers have come to a close. When I am swimming in college, I know I will cherish the countless skills, values, friendships, and memories the YMCA has provided me. Thank you to all of the YMCA members who have made it possible for us to "dive" into this incredible experience together.

## **Swimmers' Prayer**

Dear Lord,  
You created this day for gain not loss,  
Success not failure,  
Positive actions,  
Not negative thoughts.

INSPIRE us with a desire for greatness,  
To see wisely the gifts and talents,  
You have generously given to us.  
They are tools to be used,  
Not treasures to be stored.

Create in us...  
The RIGHT ATTITUDE ,  
To excel in the pool and in life,  
The attitude that says,  
"I can reach deeper inside myself."

The FIRM BELIEF ,  
In God,  
In ourselves,  
Our families, coaches and teammates,  
To have great expectations for our future.

The ENDURING COMMITMENT,  
To persevere,  
To never quit, no matter what results we see on the board,  
And to never give up, no matter what odds are stacked against us.

Grant us the STRENGTH,  
To soar high,  
Persistent in Your power,  
Confident in Your care,  
Triumphant in Your trust.

Thank you Lord,  
AMEN

