News For

SWIM PARENTS

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What the Coach Looks For In a Swim Performance

There are many things a coach is looking for in a swim performance. In general, a coach is looking for these four things: 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 and "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.

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 try to do better next time." Sometimes a performance is less than what the athlete was hoping for and the emotional response can be a factor that inhibits looking at the swim objectively and analytically. I such cases the coach may ask the swimmer to warm down for an extended time or to simply take some quiet time before looking at the race. When this happens we look for the athlete resolve to make appropriate changes that will lead to a better performance 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. Intermediate through more advanced swimmers above the age of 11 should strive to know their best times.

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 or even for seventh. Coaches look for swimmers to be in a race, whether it is for 1st or 7th, and to try their best to "win."

The coach expects to speak with each swimmer before and after each swim. Parents, 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. The coach should be the last person to talk to the swimmer before the event and the first to talk to the swimmer after the event.

Before the swim the coach will talk to swimmers about technique, pacing, race strategy, and best times. Younger aged swimmers and less experienced swimmers will need direct reminders from the coach but as they age and grow in experience the coach will expect more information coming from the swimmer. Ideally, the coach would like to have the swimmer tell the coach what they plan on doing in their event as a quiz to see how well prepared the swimmer is. 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.

In this process 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. When the swimmer returns from their post race discussion with the coach it’s appropriate to ask them how they thought their swim was as well as to ask what the coach thought of the swim. Please leave the race strategies, breathing patterns, stroke, start and turn reminders, time analysis and race analysis to the coach. Any questions or comments parents have for the coach should be addressed directly with the coach at an appropriate time when the coach is not watching other swims.