

DID YOU KNOW...?

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Why Do Team Travel...

By John Leonard, ASCA Executive Director

In an article for the ASCA Newsletter, Coach John Leonard says this about Team Travel:

One of the truisms of swimming that coaches intuitively understand, even when they can't verbalize it, is that Team Travel will break swimmers loose from their previous performance levels and allow them to move up when ten more meets in the home environment might not achieve that. How does this work?

Picture the ordinary swim meet. Child and parent arrive at the pool. Heat sheets are procured. The child finds her name in the 100 Free and says, "Gee, who's here? Sally, Susie, Mary, Kate (I never beat her), Colleen...so I'll be 6th." The child knows the swimmers of her area, and she knows her status in the pecking order.

So our child goes out and swims the 100 Free. Lo and behold, she gets a great start, swims a wonderful first 50 and, amazement of amazement, finds herself ahead. Wow! How can this be? So on the 3rd 25, she starts looking for the others and sure enough, here they come. Two catch her by the wall. She's still 3rd and swimming very well. On the last 25, she finds creative ways to slow down, finish 6th and maybe get a marginal best time. "Why?" coach and parent ask the same question, "You were doing sooo well!"

Our young lady simply knew her place in the pecking order, and found her way there. Better than upsetting the apple cart and having to re-work all those competitive and social interactions that place her in the universe. Better to stay in her COMFORT ZONE.

So what happens when this young lady goes off to a travel meet to a place where she knows no one? She looks at the heat sheet, sees her entry time, sees a list of names that mean absolutely nothing to her, and just goes out and swims as fast as she can. And she drops 2 seconds in the 100 Free. Why? She had no frame of reference except SWIM FAST! A breakthrough happens.

Children hate to disrupt the status quo, and every swimmer knows the status quo in local meets. This is the MOST important reason for a travel meet – opportunity for athlete improvement. But there are others.

1. If the travel meet is a team trip, with swimmers traveling together, there is huge opportunity for team bonding and social interaction-also known in less formal terms as fun!
2. The travel trip allows for more frequent and possibly more meaningful interaction with the coaches. Mealtimes, downtime at the meet, etc., all lead to more conversation, more time in the coaches' presence.
3. The travel trip can allow the athlete to see swimming as a much bigger (and faster?) picture than the local meet scene. The sport seems more important, the athletes bigger, better, faster, more dedicated, etc., assuming the trip has been selected wisely by the coaching staff.

Inspiration provides a lot of speed that perspiration can't get to on its own.

There are lots of good reasons for having your athlete go on a Team Travel trip; these are just a few. Colorado Swimming is dedicated to serving all its athletes and supports a coaching philosophy of the right kind of training for our athletes. The Education Committee hopes you found this information from John Leonard, ASCA Executive Director, helpful in supporting your athlete in his/her endeavors.