

## **HOW WAS PRACTICE TODAY, JOHNNY?"**

We all want our children to be successful in the things they are involved in. Swimming is no different. One of the great things about our sport is that there are so many ways that any swimmer, regardless of ability, can achieve a feeling of success. The trick is for the swimmer to focus in on the goals that are challenging, yet reachable, for them and to also begin setting some long-term goals that will continue their interest in the sport.

There are many goals and challenges out there that will motivate your child to achieve spectacular things. The highly self-motivated children will “key in” on these goals by themselves and will become standout swimmers much sooner. But for the vast majority of swimmers, it’s like trying to find your direction in a fog. So the coaches and parents must help direct them rather than hope they stumble on something by themselves.

Once they have set some challenging (yet reachable) goals that they really want, then they’ll really look forward to going to practice and once there, will have a sense of purpose and direction. For example, a child with a specific goal to break 30 seconds in the 50 yard freestyle will listen and learn much quicker when a coach says, “Pull underwater with your elbow higher during every stroke in practice and you’ll knock 2 seconds off your time at the next meet.” A child who has no goal, and hence no motivation, will swim a couple lengths with their elbow high and then forget it.

The coaches will help our swimmers key in on some specific goals during the individual goal setting conferences. But 10 minutes of time is going to be quickly forgotten unless the swimmers post their goals at home and are reminded of them by their coaches at practices and encouraged by their parents. It’s important that both these authority figures are stressing the same goals. Coaches only see the kids between 3 and 5 hours a week, but you parents see them the majority of the times so your role is critical.

Listed below are some of the achievements that a swimmer is likely to dream about. Sit down with your child sometime and

discuss these with him\her. Find out what really makes them tick. (Please make sure they are the swimmers goals and not your own.) If their goals seem too high or low, we will discuss it at the goal setting meeting.

What would YOU like to do ???

- Move up to the next group. (Jr1, Jr2, Jr3, Senior, etc.)
- Make the top SENIOR group someday (one of the highest honors that can be obtained on the team).
- Make a U.S.S. "B" time (or and "A" or "AA").
- Make 3 U.S.S. "A" times to be eligible to go to the "XXXX" meet and stay overnight.
- Place in the top half of the state in one event (in all events).
- Place in the top 8 at the state meet and get a medal.
- Qualify for New England Championships
- Score at New England Championships
- Set a team record ... set a state record ... set a New England record.
- Learn a fast flip turn.
- Swim a legal Breaststroke, Butterfly, I.M. or all of them.
- Make the "A" relay in your age group.
- Qualify for a National Championship meet.
- Qualify for the Olympics.
- Beat your best friend on the team who is faster than you. (Not a good goal.....Keep your goals time oriented and not person oriented).

- Be a better swimmer (Not a good goal.... be specific and not vague).

The above goals should get you started. If the swimmer says, “I want to win the Olympics.”....you never say “*That’s impossible*”. Instead say, “*First you should try to get under 40 seconds in the 50 yard event, and when you get that we will take it step by step from there.*” A series of short range goals leading to a long range one will allow the swimmer to taste victory after accomplishing each of the short range ones and will fuel the fire to attain the long range one.

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