

THE PURPOSE OF SWIM MEETS

Each season the coaches look at our training outline and try to fit swim meets into that outline. The meets tell us where we are in our training and, therefore, our training cycle determines when we go to most meets. The meets work hand in hand with our training as they tell us what remains to be done in specific training areas. We take the results from the swim meets, and by this I do NOT mean times, but rather splits and efforts and patterns to determine what areas of our training need more work, which areas are coming along nicely and how much fine tuning and rest we will need for the championship meets.

Our early meets are equivalent to pre-season football. It tells us a lot about the players and what shape they are getting in to, but does not necessarily tell us what the season itself will actually hold. Swimmers who attend all the meets on their schedule are providing their coach with the most feedback and helping the coach to make the best possible decisions in regard to their future training. Meets with a timed final format often enable each swimmer to swim the most possible events and get feedback in all strokes. Championship meets are held in a prelim/finals format and are usually the meets that we rest for. These championship meets are like the great rivalries of Southern Cal vs. Notre Dame, Florida vs. Tennessee (can anyone tell me how this game turned out?), or South Carolina vs. Clemson. They can tell us who the better team is and who looks great, but they are not THE Championship Game, although they do sometimes determine WHO gets to go to the championship meet by showing who is getting ready the best possible way. Championship meets are akin to a playoff game, but not the final. The "TAPER" meet is THE CHAMPIONSHIP, THE FINAL!

Early season and mid-season meets help us determine the appropriate training changes that we need to make. The greater the number of statistics, the more accurate the picture. Remember that the clues that we as coaches are getting are much more than the times that the swimmer swims. If you are comparing your swimmer's times with those of previous meets, remember to look at meets swum the previous year at the same time, NOT the last meet they swam. Compare October 2000 swims to October 1999 swims. Look for yearly improvement and do not compare an early season swim with one swum at a "rested" or "tapered" meet. Expecting best times every swim is unrealistic and highly unfair to your swimmer. There are so many factors to swimming a best time that it is impossible to do so every time out. Many of the things we are doing in practice during this time of year will actually prevent best times at this point in the year. Whether it is changing stroke mechanics, new technique, a change in kicking pattern, swimming slow and perfecting technique, or hard vigorous training that leaves your swimmer tired, now is not the time to look for speed. In fact, looking for, expecting and asking your swimmer to swim to win now can hurt them later or can hurt their chances of making necessary stroke changes effective. Often at this time of year, the swimmer that swims fast is the one that is NOT working on the things that the coaches are asking them to work on in practice. This is not always the case, but often it is.

The best help that a parent can provide for their swimmer with regards to swim meets is NOT to judge your child based on their performance. Leave the coaching to the coaches. Ask your swimmer if they are having fun, enjoying themselves, enjoying the meet. Tell them that you love

them, that you are proud of their effort, tell them that their suit looks great! Good luck to everyone as we look forward to a successful season of meets!