

INDIVIDUAL SWIMMER RESPONSIBILITY

Often swimmers, and sometimes their parents, become confused about who is responsible for "creating" elite, successful swimmers. Or more correctly, swimmers and their parents become confused about who is preventing them from becoming elite successful swimmers. For the record, the ultimate responsibility for success and failure in swimming resides with each swimmer. Yes, parents certainly have an impact on swimming success. They can be supportive or not. They can allow their swimmer to learn important lessons to help them improve or they can make excuses for their swimmer's failures. These excuses inhibit learning. Parents can encourage and express their love for their swimmers whether they are swimming well or not, OR they can only praise them when they swim well, maybe even berate them when they swim poorly, and thus undermine their swimmer's confidence. Yes, coaches can provide the appropriate training or not. They can be supportive or not. They can allow their swimmers to learn important lessons to help them improve or they can make excuses, or TAKE excuses, for their swimmer's failures. They can give positive feedback when it is merited or they can merely berate the swimmers for every mistake they make. Parents and coaches are both important factors in the success of every swimmer.

Very few swimmers get to go to the Olympics. Very few swimmers even go to Olympic Trials - less than 1 in 1,000 year round swimmers. Few swimmers reach the National Championships. Not all swimmers have the inherent talent necessary to achieve the most elite levels of swimming. There is success to be found, however, at all levels of swimming. The traits of successful swimming at the state level are the same as the traits of successful swimming at college are the same as the traits of successful swimming at the Olympics. Successful swimmers work hard at training hard, at fixing their mechanics, at setting both short and long term goals and taking the necessary steps to achieve them. They eat right and they get the necessary rest in order to maintain a high level of work. They keep up with their commitments outside the water - schoolwork, family chores, etc. They budget their time, keeping ahead on homework, keeping up to date on studying, not leaving things until the last minute. They study before practice and at meets to keep their schoolwork from interfering with their training and meet schedules.

Successful swimmers share the trait of self-discipline. In fact, successful people in ALL walks of life share the trait of self-discipline. Just as successful students prepare for tests through studying and taking the appropriate quizzes, successful swimmers prepare for meets through training and attending the appropriate progression of meets. Paying attention to all the details is a part of the preparation. Maintaining intensity and focus at practice, whether in the water or doing dryland is important to achieving success. Successful people are open to learning and are eager to accept new challenges and find new ways to make themselves better.

If you are the parent of a younger swimmer, please be supportive of your child's efforts. Do not worry whether your swimmer is fast or not. Allow them to learn about swimming and themselves. Allow them to make mistakes which will help them learn and grow as a swimmer and a person. At the same time, do not accept their excuses for not doing what is necessary and expected of them - at school, at the pool, wherever they might be. Do not allow them to blame someone else for keeping them from success. Swimmers need to develop into self reliant individuals, willing to take the responsibility for reporting to the blocks on time, having dry

towels, drinking enough fluid during meets and practices, taking responsibility for their effort in the water every day at practice. If they are not allowed this, then no matter the level of their talent, when they become older they will always blame others for their failures and never be able to accept responsibility - responsibility for their successes as well as responsibility for their failures.