

LAKE LYTAL LIGHTNING

SWIM TEAM HANDBOOK

“Feel the Heat”

www.lightning-swimming.org

MAY 2010

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OUR MISSION

Our mission at Lake Lytal Lightning swim team is to see those character traits deemed positive to be instilled in the swimmers who commit to our competitive swim program at Lake Lytal. We believe, along with our governing body, USA Swimming, that our program is designed to encourage maximum participation, provide an educational experience, enhance physical and mental conditioning, and develop a rich base of swimming talent.

We at Lytal Lightning strive to bring about the best in an individual through the use of competitive swimming. We will not deviate from challenging an individual to reach their full potential both in the water and in their character. ~~Internally motivated athletes are the coaching staffs ultimate goal. Intrinsic motivation is the driving force and the difference between leaders and those that merely follow or observe.~~ If an individual and their family do not wish to be challenged physically, emotionally, and in their character, they will not feel a part of the positive experience Lake Lytal Lightning has to offer. ~~Loyalty, commitment, and dedication to the team is key to our success regardless of one's speed in the water. This loyalty has seen Lytal Lightning establish itself as one of the top teams in South Florida, P.B. County, and the Greater West Palm Beach area.~~

~~Overall, the Lightning Program is characterized as a Coach Driven, Swimmer Centered, and Parent Supported competitive swim team.~~

LIGHTNING'S COACHING STAFF

Lightning's coaching staff gives of their time and energy to see young people in the Greater West Palm Beach area grow in character through competitive swimming. Despite being parents, husbands, and wives, our staff shares in the Lightning vision outside of their other roles in life.

Our head coach, Gordon Andrews has been associated with Lake Lytal Lightning since 1996, having seen the team grow and develop since its founding. Coach Andrews has been associated with competitive swimming since 1971 where he began as an age-group swimmer with Miami Springs Swim Club. After being offered 15 swimming scholarships in 1978, including national champion University of Tennessee, Coach Andrews swam for Cornell University and later graduated from the University of Florida in 1985 with a degree in Psychology. Coach Andrews is currently a high school teacher at John I. Leonard High School (Social Sciences) as well as the head swim coach at John I. Leonard High School. Coach Andrews has served on the Florida Gold Coast swimming Board of Directors, has been coach of the Florida Gold Coast All-Star team, FGC Zone team, and has been selected by the PB Post and Sun-Sentinel as high school coach of the year. As a Masters swimmer Andrews has established 23 national top ten times since 1993. Coach Andrews' passion for the sport is reflected in his coaching style of seeing athletes to their potential when they commit to his program. Coach Andrews has four children; all of whom are associated with competitive swimming, and thus empathizes with the key role swim team parents play in the proper and balanced psychological development of the young athlete.

Coach Andrews has direct responsibility of the 4 Senior groups. Lightning's program has produced the nation's fastest developmental swimmers through Sr. National qualifiers, high school state champions and All-Americans. **Lightning's Sr. group has a reputation amongst the USA's top college coaches as preparing its athletes for the collegiate swimming experience.**

Coach Mike Horgan is Lightning's key coach in the critical transition from Developmental swimmer to Sr. level swimmer. Coach Mike comes to us from Flying Fish and Stingray Swim Team's in the Miami area. Coach Mike was a competitive swimmer of 14 years with the Sheeler-Winton Swim Team having established himself as a AAAA swimmer and part of a nationally ranked age-group relay. Coach Mike's area of expertise is in the coaching of 12 & under swimmers in the correct bio-mechanical skills while keeping the sport upbeat and positive; Coach Mike has coached some of South Florida's top age group swimmers including nationally ranked top 16 age groupers. Mr. Horgan is a nationally certified high school science teacher at Dwyer High as well as having been recognized as Miami-Dade County Teacher of the Year in 2000-2001. In 2007 Mr. Horgan was recognized as PB County High School Science teacher of the year as well as being named the Science Department head at Dwyer High School. Coach Mike was named PB County teacher of the year in 2008. Coach Mike oversees the Silver Group. Coach Horgan went on to be named in 2008 as Palm Beach County's Top Teacher, an honor only bestowed on the best. Great coaches are great communicators and teachers; Coach Horgan fits this profile the best.

Coach Tyler Andrews is Lightning's coach for the 13 & Over swimmers in the Gold Group. These swimmers may have gotten a late start in the sport as well as may not have the commitment level as the upper level Sr. groups but still enjoy the sport. Coach Tyler was a 2 time Florida state high school finalist after beginning competitive swimming at the later swimming age of 13. Coach Tyler was also a District, Regional wrestling champion for John I. Leonard High School and captain of both their wrestling and swim teams.

Coach Melanie Andrews has successfully taught the fundamentals of competitive swimming for 4 years now at Lake Lytal. Coach Melanie's responsibility is for the Red developmental group. Coach Melanie's balanced approach of teaching, discipline, and making the sport fun at a young age has proven very successful in preparing athletes for the upper training groups. Outside of coaching, Melanie Andrews is a very successful 3rd grade teacher at Meadow Park Elementary school as well as the 3rd Grade Chairperson at her school.

Coach Wendy Brisco is the coach of Lightning's Bronze A and B groups. Coach Wendy is an ex collegiate All American swimmer who was a part of the Boynton YMCA program before coming to the Lightning. Coach Wendy's goals are to both teach more of the correct technique and to increase the athleticism of the swimmers in her 2 groups. Coach Wendy has 2 young swimmers Dylan and Dakota who are a part of Lightning's Silver Group.

All of Lightning's Coaches are certified with United States Swimming

FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS

Lytal Lightning has for a fact the lowest overall financial obligations in South Florida swimming. We have a magnificent facility to train our athletes and we take pride in the great relationship we have with Palm Beach County Parks & Rec. We receive no financial aid from the county for the reimbursement of our assistant coaches, coaches travel expenses, awards and uniforms for our elite athletes, purchasing of meet hospitality items, team social functions, etc.

The team relies on your financial diligence, responsibility, and generosity to make us a success. Swim meets are our chief means of raising funds, along with a yearly Swim-A-Thon and Family Assessment. Monthly swim dues pay for the use of our facility and to pay the coaching staff.

HERE IS WHO YOU MAKE YOUR CHECKS TO

MONTHLY TRAINING FEES: B.O.C.C. or Board of County Commissioners
MEET FEES: L.L.L. or Lake Lytal Lightning
EQUIPMENT FEES, YEARLY ASSESSMENTS, REGISTRATIONS: L.L.L. or Lake Lytal Lightning

- A. **Initial Obligations**-after a tryout period a LLL Registration form needs to be filled out. Checks payable to Lake Lytal Lightning
1. **U.S.A. Swimming registration**
 - a. Seasonal (May-August) \$70 (includes team T-Shirt and Racing Cap at their first swim meet as well as entry fees for 2 competitive swim meets before September 30)
 1. Those seasonal swimmers staying on beyond September can then register with a yearly membership of \$70 that extends into Dec. of the next year (15 months).
 - b. Yearly (Jan.-Dec.) \$100 Red, Bronze, Gold. (includes a LLL Racing Cap to swimmers who attend their first meet). \$125 Silver and Senior.
 - c. Outreach Membership \$7 (Must provide proof of free/reduced lunch acceptance)
 - d. \$80 per family-year around swimmers (those who join Jan.-May) \$45 (June-Oct.)
- B. **Monthly Obligations***—after 1 day tryout period—monthly obligations are due whether you swim 1 practice per month or 50 training sessions per month. Checks payable to B.O.C.C. (Board of County Commissioners). If one fails to pay after the 10th a late notice will be given. If one fails to pay 1 week after late notice they will be asked to leave the team and not be allowed back until obligations are met. These fees are used to pay for our facility and reimbursements of our 4 coaches.

1. Sr-\$85, ** 2. Silver & Gold-\$80** 3. Bronze-\$75** 4. Red-\$70**

* Every 3rd and 5th child receives a 100% discount. If you have more than 5 swimming on the team than the rest are free.

**These fees have been established by P. B. County Parks & Rec. who provides us with our facility and contracts with our head coach.

- C. **Swim Meet Fees**-every meet has a financial obligation for both each individual & relay events as well as a swimmer surcharge. We ask that you faithfully pay your meet fees ***as soon as fees are posted on the web & bulletin board.*** Any meet fees not paid by the next consecutive meet will render that swimmer ineligible for any further competitions until the fees are paid.
1. Meet fees vary depending on its quality. Fees range from 2.50 per event to 3.50 per event (double on relays divided by 4). Swimmer surcharges are \$1 per days of competition up to \$4
- D. **Team Suits**-available from TOTAL TEAM WARES. TTW attends each one of our home meets. Suits can be ordered overnight by calling 1-800-888-8843. www.Totalteamwares.com
- E. **Team Equipment**-can be purchased thru www.SwimOutlet.com
- F. **Swim-A-Thon.** Every summer this event takes place with great prizes for those swimmers who participate. Every family is given a minimum goal to reach. Prizes are awarded according the amount of money raised.

These are our financial obligations. **They are mandatory to be a part of our team.** No other team in the county has obligations this low yet no other team in the area serve the community as a whole, greater than Lake Lytal Lightning.

Tax-Deductable Donations- Lake Lytal Lightning Swim Team, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation. Any donations either privately, through a corporation, or through a trust can be deducted on your yearly income tax returns. Our swim team receives no fiscal aid from Palm Beach County for the reimbursement of our assistant coaches as well as the many facets of running a swim team. Our yearly budget must be raised entirely through donations, swim meets, the annual Swim-A-Thon, various fund-raisers, and our yearly family assessments.

LAKE LYTAL LIGHTNING'S DEVELOPMENTAL PHILOSOPHY AND PROGRAM

Competitive swimming is complex sport where coaches are juggling training, biomechanics, starts, turns, and sports psychology to see the character of the young athlete enhanced. Do not be deceived into believing that success happens overnight. I often say that there are no 'drive-thru' results in competitive swimming.

By committing to practice a young athlete will be challenging his or her body physically and mentally. The good news is we have been created to adapt and a **consistent training stress** on the body will produce great results; i.e. increased aerobic capacity, increase in muscle mass, burning of fat, emotional maturity, and that infamous green hair! The key is consistency however. Unless we have the support of the parents in regards to a commitment to practice and the endeavors that accompany it, you are deceiving yourself that you will gain character both physically and emotionally. We as a coaching staff are passionate about the good things that accompany competitive swimming and the commitment to a cause. We will communicate that often on deck by urging our athletes to push themselves beyond the point of mediocrity. Our world is full of mediocrity. We at Lake Lytal take pride in the fact that our athletes can become individuals different from what the world is already full of!!

We have established seven different groups at Lake Lytal all of which are geared to the individual's ability level as well as their commitment level. *Athletes are moved up in groups according to physical ability, maturity, and ability to meet goals established by the coaching staff. Parents are encouraged to speak to the particular coach (outside of coaching periods) if there are concerns on the rate in which their swimmer is advanced. Please see the entry requirements and goals of each group below.*

We strongly believe that a **commitment** to practice and the endeavors that accompany it will determine a young athlete's success. The internally motivated athlete will bring about their greatest potential in this sport.

Developmental Groups: Red, Bronze and Silver, Gold

- A. Red Group. Coach Melanie Andrews, Coach Sarah Andrews (Summer Swim League),**
1. **Prerequisites: Swim across a 25yd. Pool without stopping and a maintain a formidable breath control**
 2. **Goal: establish the swimmer in freestyle, with the correct breathing pattern, and backstroke both strokes swum legally. An introduction to the breaststroke and butterfly fundamentals**
- B. Bronze Group: Coach Melanie Andrews, Coach Sarah Andrews (Summer Swim League), Coach Tyler Andrews**
1. **Prerequisites: the ability to swim the 100 yd.freestyle and backstroke legally and the willingness to train at our most basic level (1,000 yards in :45 minutes) without the use of fins. A test set of 10 x 25 yd. Odd free/Even Back on a 45 sec. Interval is given during practice. The emotional maturity to focus and listen to the coach during practice sessions.**
 2. **Goals:**
 - a. **Develop further the 4 competitive swim strokes and to do them in a legal manner as governed by United States Swimming rules**
 - b. **Complete a legal 100yd. Individual Medley**
 - c. **Be able to train at a rate of 1,000 -1,200 yards per half hour as well as meet the entry requirements established for the Silver level**
 - d. **Gain the emotional maturity that accompanies exerting oneself physically**
- C. Silver Coach Mike Horgan**
1. **Entry Requirements**
 - a. **ability to complete a pre-established 3000 yd (Silver) in 1.5 hours**
 - b. **ability to perform each of the 4 competitive strokes adequately to compete at a U.S.A. meet**
 - c. **Ability to have the emotional maturity and focus to learn**
 - d. **Willingness to commit to **all** practices.**
 2. **Goals:**
 - a. **To see the swimmer's level of commitment to the team raise to all practices per week. If there are situations that prevent your child from 100% commitment please discuss those with Coach Horgan.**
 - b. **Further gains in the emotional maturity to train at a higher intensity level**
 - c. **An increased knowledge of the correct biomechanics that accompany competitive swimming as well as mastering the use of a pace clock and interval training.**

Advanced Groups: Senior Group (Coach Andrews)/ Gold Group (Coach Tyler Andrews)

A. Gold

1. Entry Requirements and Goals
 - a. 13 Years of age and older
 - b. A knowledge of the 4 strokes, starts and turns
 - c. Emotional maturity and willingness to train between 4500-5000 yards per 1 ½ hour per

B. Senior Groups AAAAA,AAA,AA,A.

Commitment to practice-our best and most promising swimmers are in these groups and we will forever 'harp' on the importance of attending practice. One will not improve without a consistency in their training. If one's goal is to simply swim when they 'feel like it', or competitive swimming is not their primary sport and they can handle the training load, and have no desire to improve to their potential, please let your coaches aware of this, and our admonitions will cease for that swimmer and you will be placed in a less challenging group; otherwise we stick to our mission of producing the best swimmer possible both emotionally and physically.

These our most challenging levels where during school months this group trains upwards of 7,000-10,000 yards per session (45,000-60,000 yards-meters/week) with Saturday practices. The non-school months sees our swimmers increasing their weekly totals to 60-70,000 yards/meters per week along with running, plyometrics, stretching and weightlifting (depending on age). There is no question of commitment in our Senior Group. By now our seniors realize that in order to become the best swimmer possible and achieve their maximum potential, swim practice should come as easily as attending a meal when hungry. Just a natural extension of who they are-athletes.

1. Entry Requirements:
 - a. The ability to train at a rate of 1500-2000 yards per ½ hour.
 - b. The knowledge of the 4 competitive strokes
 - c. 100% attendance and commitment to practice
 - d. Open communications and maturity with the coach and his staff
 - e. 'A' standards based on USA Swimming motivational times
2. Goals:
 - a. To see that swimmer reach there greatest potential in the sport of competitive swimming and in their character development.

FOR SENIOR LEVEL SWIMMERS, please communicate to the coach when practices will be missed. The level of commitment of the coach to the swimmer never changes.....it is always 100%. Commitment, like communcation, is a 2-way street. If a swimmer can not commit 100%, then the coach's level of commitment for the swimmer will mirror the swimmer's level of commitment. As athletes themselves, the coaching staff identifies completely with the needs of a swimmer and what it takes to reach one's potential in the sport. The coach will not dilute his mission of producing the best swimmer possible, only the swimmer can dilute him or herself.

Success is all relative. Depending on the many factors of internal drive, parental support, genetics, teachability, etc. the sport of competitive swimming has many levels of success. Please keep our goals of character building at the forefront and success will come at all levels. If one's level of commitment and ability is inconsistant, the Sr. A group is the group that swimmer will be relegated too or the Gold group may be recommended depending on one's ability and attitude. Enough said.

If this team, its coaching staff or its philosophy doesn't take to your liking we highly recommend another competitive swim team in the area: Wellington Swim Club, Jupiter Dragons Swim Team (N. County Aquatic Complex), North Palm Beach Swim Club, Aquacrest Swim Club (Delray Beach), Pine Crest Swim Team (Boca Raton), Heritage Aquatics (Delray Beach), Florida Atlantic Swim Team -FAST (Boca Raton) or the YMCA Swim Team of West Palm Beach or Boynton Beach. These teams all have varying philosophies that may suit your needs better than Lake Lytal Lightning.

Please read our requirements and goals and look within yourself to see if being a part of our team is what you desire. If it is we would strongly encourage you to step on board!!☺

Team Records

Throughout its founding in 1996, Lake Lytal Lightning has had some very fast team records set. Some of these records have carried through to becoming Florida Gold Coast Records as well as amongst the top 16, top 10, and even fastest age group performance times in the United States. Many of our age group team record holders have gone on to very satisfying collegiate swimming careers and some have come back to the sport and are now giving back to the sport of competitive swimming as coaches themselves!!

In order to honor those swimmers who have sacrificed their time and taken their talent to its maximum, any team records established with the Lake Lytal Lightning Swim Team must have the athlete established as "Attached" with LLL. In other words any swimmer transferring from another team must have fulfilled the 120 day commitment (approx. 4 months) with Lake Lytal before they are eligible to break any team records; thus being recognized as "attached" to the team according to USAS rules. This rule obviously can not apply to FGC Records and any other records that are established since these are outside of the team's records. This rule effective Oct. 1, 2009.

Swimming, Nutrition and Developing an Athlete's Mentality

Lake Lytal Lightning can not see athletic prowess developed in a youngster if what we say at practice is not reinforced at home. Nutrition plays a huge role in a youngster's moods, energy levels, and athletic accomplishments. We highly encourage our swimmers to avoid those foods with non-nutritive value. One of the greatest detriments to athletic performance is the over use of processed sugars and fats. *We highly discourage the use of carbonated soft drinks which lead to bloated bellies, false energy release, and a greater dependence on processed sugars and caffeine in order to feel normal.* Water (which makes up 65-70% of our body) is by far the best athletic drink available

Well rounded meals of proteins, carbohydrates, fruits, vegetables, and grains is our best advice. The stomach, which takes approximately 1.5-2 hours to empty, should not be full during competition. Plenty of water and fruit should be available throughout the competition. Our coaching staff will not tolerate carbonated sodas in our presence. It is up to you the parent to carry on these healthy eating habits at home. If you bring a youngster to our team in order for him or her to get physically fit and fail to compliment that with a healthy diet away from the our athletic environment, you are deceiving yourself into believing that their child is achieving better physical fitness.

PARENTS BOARD OF DIRECTORS & BOOSTER CLUB or

"Those who do all the things the coaching staff does not have time for"

Lake Lytal Lightning falls into the category of a coach driven program that is swimmer centered and parent supported. Thus the Head Coach makes all final decisions that are deemed in the best interests of the swimmer in both his or her athletic prowess but character as well. Lake Lytal Lightning is contracted by Palm Beach County Parks & Recreation with the head coach to provide a competitive swim program that meets the criteria as outlined in our mission statement.

In order to allow the coaches to coach and establish genuine lines of communication between coaches, swimmers, and parents our Parents Board of Directors was created. Our Board of Directors' main purpose is to establish repore between the coaches, swimmers, and our parents as well as do all those things outside the area of coaching that make for a successful swim club.

The B.O.D. has non-regular meetings attended by our officers (President, Treasurer, Hospitality, Fundraising, Secretary, etc.), head coach and any parents who are a part of our **Parents Booster Club**.

Meeting dates are posted on our website and bulletin board. To be a member of the **Parents Booster Club** your child must be on the team for at least one year, have a USA Swimming membership, and you should be current on all your financial obligations.

Our Board of Directors for the Parents Booster Club has the elected positions of President, Secretary, Hospitality, and Fundraising. Non-electable positions are Treasurer and Meet Directors

due to their high level of responsibility and knowledge. Parents eligible for the Booster Club and its Board of Directors must have been a part of the club for at least one year and in good financial standing. The President picks a Vice-President to help compliment that position.

Our Booster Club is instrumental in allowing the coaches to coach and at the same time helping to provide for all the other areas that surround a successful athletic organization. **ANY AREAS OF CONCERN REGARDING THE RUNNING TO THE TEAM (OUTSIDE OF COACHING) SHOULD BE BROUGHT UP TO THE PARENTS BOARD OF DIRECTORS.**

Swim Meet Hosting

Lightning has a tradition and reputation of hosting great swim meets. This great reputation comes from a sacrificing and giving attitude. We need 100% parental involvement. If your child swims you are obligated to help out during the meet. We understand parental responsibility towards babies and tots keeps parents from often times volunteering yet these situations can be worked out. Timers during meets are a very important item. Before we host a swim meet, a volunteer list will be posted. Do not sit on the sidelines and simply be a spectator. Get involved.

The Bulletin Board & Web Site/ E-Mail

We strongly encourage you to use our bulletin board & web site (www.lightning-swimming.org) for personal top times, meet results, meet entries, upcoming meets, meet directions, warm-up times, motivational time standards, meet fees, monthly practice schedules, etc. The world wide web has provided us with an outstanding medium of communication and posting of vital information. Coach Andrews is the webmaster and takes great pride in keeping this fantastic tool up to date.

Weekly announcements are posted on the team's bulletin board at the entranceway. *If you do not take the time to read the posted announcements, you can not always rely on your youngster to convey complete and detailed information.* Most of the questions you may have are posted in these areas

TEAM DISCIPLINE POLICY

Lytal Lightning Swim Team's mission statement, training group philosophies, and commitment by our swimmers has enabled our team to be amongst the state of Florida's elite developmental swim programs. Our developmental athletes now are becoming amongst the state's most competitive high school athletes and later move on to the collegiate swimming ranks. Along with our team's mission, parents have bonded with our philosophy. The success of our team's program can be analogous to a boat being rowed by 3 persons: the coach, the swimmer, and the parent. In order for this boat to reach its destination all 3 persons need to be rowing in unison and conforming to our proven program.

Our team's discipline philosophy revolves around this principle: *Coaches will not allow a swimmer(s) to hamper the implementation of our program on a per practice basis. Disruptive behavior that does not allow the coaches to effectively teach and train nor allow other team members to effectively learn and train will result in the following sanctions:*

- 1) A verbal correction to that swimmer concerning his disruptive behavior as well as a verbal warning that if the disruptive behavior is repeated the swimmer will be told to sit out on the bench adjacent to the pool for a period of no longer than 10 minutes.
- 2) If the disruptive behavior is repeated, then a "time out" period of up to 10 minutes time will be implemented. The disciplined swimmer will not be allowed to leave the bench adjacent to the area where the group is training.
- 3) If the disciplined swimmer leaves the area, the coach will notify the pool director/lifeguard in charge that the disciplined swimmer has not abided by his/her time-out and at that time a written incidence report will be made concerning that swimmer's situation. The swimmer's parent/guardian will be notified of the particular incident during the practice that caused that swimmer to be put in 'time-out' as well as that swimmer's refusal to abide by the 'time-out' policy.
- 4) If a swimmer is put into a time-out situation for over 3 times in a 1-week period the swimmer will be placed into a 1-week suspension period. This situation will also be both noted with the particulars of the situation accompanied by the dates of the time-out period and the reasons for the time-out period.
- 5) If a swimmer is placed into a 1-week suspension period and the disruptive behavior continues, that swimmer will be asked to leave the team.

- 6) SWIMMERS IN THE RED AND BRONZE GROUPS ARRIVING 10 MINUTES AFTER THE START OF THE PRACTICE MAY BE SUBJECT TO BEING BANNED FROM THAT PRACTICE SESSION. PLEASE RESPECT THE COACH'S AND OTHER SWIMMER'S COMMITMENT TO BEGINNING PRACTICE PROMPTLY. OBVIOUSLY TRAFFIC AND WEATHER SITUATIONS WILL BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION
- 7) Swimmers in the Senior group who do not adhere to the mission and requirements of the Senior group will be asked to join a team outside of Lake Lytal Lightning that is more suitable to their needs.

This team discipline policy has been reviewed and is supported by Lake Lytal's pool director as well as the Aquatics Supervisor of Palm Beach County Parks & Rec.

SWIM MEETS or Which meets am I suppose to go to?

Lake Lytal Lightning attends many swim meets per year while hosting meets ourselves. These meets are sanctioned and governed by USA Swimming, the presiding body over the best competitive swimmers in the nation Every meet we attend has entry parameters. Swimmers MUST compete in order for to reinforce those things we do in practice as coaches as well as experience the thrill of healthy and very objective competition. Swimmers should compete at least once per month in order maintain their competitive edge.

USA Swimming has established its list of yearly Motivational Time Standards. This list breaks down times in the major age groups of 10 & under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, and 17-18. This listing goes on to further break down the recognized events 50 free, 100 free, etc. and times for those events. These times are categorized from B, BB, A, AA, AAA, AAAA. After AAAA there is what is called National Age Group Reportable Times (NAG cuts) in the 11 & Over categories. These NAG cuts qualify a swimmer or relay to be considered as the Top 16 swimmers in the United States. Every year USA Swimming lists those 11 & Over swimmers who have achieved Top 16 status.

Swim meets are often categorized according to these Motivational Time Standards as well as the Jr. Olympic standards established by our LSC, the Florida Gold Coast and USA Swimming. These standards are posted on our website as well as the bulletin board at the pool.

Swim meet results are posted on the team's website as soon as possible by the head coach. Achieving at least a 'B' time is quite an accomplishment for a young swimmer, and that swimmer should take pride in the fact that you have acquired a level of swimming skill and conditioning beyond what the majority of youngsters in our world can do!!. Please remember LLL is a competitive swim team and competing throughout the training cycles is vitally important for the development of the complete athlete.

Sub JO County Meets: these meets are a developmental type meet where there are no qualifying times necessary to compete. If a swimmer has achieved a JUNIOR OLYMPIC qualifying time in a particular event, they can not compete in that event at these meets. The majority of USAS swimmers compete at these meets. These meets come in many age group varieties from 8 & Under, 10 & Under, 11 & Over, as well as meets that host all age groupings. Swimmers from strickly in and around Palm Beach and Martin County participate in these events and all these meets take place over the short course (25 yard) distance except for the summer Division II Sub JO Championship meet.

County A-C Meets/FGC OPEN Inv.: these meets are opened to all swimmers of all abilities in the Palm Beach County Area.

Fall Top 16 or "A" Meets: these meets are open to those swimmers who are at or near an "A" time or Junior Olympic cuts as established by USA swimming. These meets are attended by the whole Local Swim Committee, which is **FLORIDA GOLD COAST(FGC)**. FGC swimming consists of the counties of Palm Beach, Broward, Dade, Monroe, Martin, and that part of Hendry County east of Route 833. Often times these meets have competitors from other states and countries compete since this is a higher level of competition. The summer competition (May-August) is long course (50 meters) and the rest of the year is short course (25 yards).

Sr. Meets: These meets involve swimmers who meet Sr. Circuit Meet time standards. The events are in the OPEN category. Florida Gold Coast Sr. Meets see the top swimmers (irregardless of age) competing against one another.

Championship Meets.

The FGC Junior Olympics & Div. II Championship meets are often the pinnacles of our swim season. The Junior Olympics or Jos have qualifying times which usually are 'A' times yet can be faster in the freestyle (50-200) and 200 IM for females 13 and older. Boys 12 years old and younger have JO cuts between BB and A times.

The Div. II Championships are for those swimmers who have not yet achieved JO qualifying times. These meets are offered twice per year, spring & fall. One must achieve at least 1 'B' standard in order to compete at the Div. II Championships; this is a team policy.

ALL-STAR and ZONE CHAMPIONSHIPS:

The All-Star team is selected from the top swimmers at the Junior Olympics and competes against the rest of the State of Florida (Florida Swimming, LSC) in the spring. The age groups 10 & under, 11-12, and 13-14 are represented at this meet.

The Zone team is selected from both an application process, and a selection committee. The Zone Team competes once a year in the summer against all the other LSC in what is called the Southern Zone of USS which extends north to West Virginia and west to Texas. These swimmers are in the age groups 11-12, 13-14, 15-16 and 17-18. Swimmers achieving Sr. national qualifying times can not compete at zones.

Sectional Championships:

This is a Senior level meet where qualifying standards exist (Sectional Cuts) in order to compete and higher. This has the top swimmers in the state of Florida competing against one another and is held twice per year; Spring and Summer and is the introductory level to National competition.

U.S. Open (Short Course Nationals), Jr. & Senior National, and Olympic Trials.

These 3 meets are the apex of USA swimming. There are no age groups, these levels have only qualifying times. Once a swimmer reaches the National level of competition he or she is beginning to swim against the future top swimmers in the country and the world. The U.S. OPEN/Short Course Nationals takes place once a year in early December. Senior Nationals takes place twice per year Spring and Summer. Jr. & Senior national qualifiers open themselves up for becoming part of the United States national teams which competes internationally and who are financially reimbursed. The Olympic Trials takes place once every four years.

High School Season

The best athletes in the high school swimming scene train with their club team. High school dual meets should be deemphasized with a greater emphasis on the County Championships, and Florida State Championship Series (Districts, Regionals, States). Every high school season has All-American standards published, those high school swimmers achieving All-American status can virtually be guaranteed a college swimming scholarship of some type. Lake Lytal Lightning traditionally sees its most dedicated Sr. level swimmers obtain a college scholarship for their swimming prowess at some level and we have had a history of producing All-American swimmers since 2000.

We encourage our swimmers to not shy away from the thrill of competition!

SWIM MEET PARTICIPATION or How do I Enter a Meet?

Please remember our mission as a team is to bring about the best in young people. As parents and adults we all are aware of the challenges that our children will face. We take pride in the fact that our competitive swim team prepares our youngsters for the bigger pool of life. Swim meet competition, blue ribbon, gold medal or not, will help establish those traits that will endure in the real world.

A. Before the Meet

1. Approximately 1-2 weeks before a meet is to take place, meet information will be posted on our website & or the bulletin board regarding the details of an upcoming meet. We do not encourage swimmers to take place in meets who have swum less than 2 weeks; we do make exceptions however as deemed in the best interest of the swimmer. We expect all our swimmers to participate in swim competitions....we are a competitive swim team. **IF SWIMMERS ARE IN TOWN, SWIM MEET PARTICIPATION IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT WHAT YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN TRAINING FOR.....SWIM COMPETITION. *If you do not wish to participate in swim meets you must question why you are a part of this program!***
2. A preliminary entry list will be posted on our bulletin board approximately 1 week to 10 days prior to the meet start. Please communicate with the coach if you have a conflict with the swim meet before Final entries are submitted to the meet host.
3. **After the meet entries are sent to the host team and finalized entries are posted, the swimmer/parent is financially obligated to pay the meet entry fees. *Whether you attend the meet or not.*** Remember if you can not attend the meet you are responsible for crossing off your child's name on the posted eligibility list.
4. Please deposit the meet entry fees (checks payable to Lake Lytal Lightning) in the fees box located at the front of the pool. We do you the parent a service by paying the meet fees up front without requesting any initial monies from you. Please do us the service of paying your meet fees in a timely manner. Thank You
5. All meet information posted will have location, directions, meet start time, meet warm-up times, etc. **WE ADVISE THAT ALL SWIMMERS BE AT THE MEET 1/2 HOUR(8 & Unders) & 1 HOUR (9 & overs) PRIOR TO MEET START TIME IN ORDER TO HAVE ADEQUATE WARM-UP TIME.**

B. During the Meet.

1. **Please help us by getting to warm-up on time since we warm-up as a team, those coming late may not get adequate warm-up which will hamper optimum preformance.** young athlete to practice & meets on time. **Tardy athletes miss vital warm-up time and it takes away from the team** when the coaching staff has to sacrifice the whole because of the tardiness of the few.
2. Parents, Heat Sheets are for you to be guided through the meet and know when your son or daughter is swimming. ***The coaches will let everyone know where the starting blocks are but they will not walk your athlete to the blocks. It is the responsibility of the swimmer and or the parent to get their child to the right lane at the right time.*** Swimmers, please come to your coach after your event for some quick feedback on your swims, after swimming it is very necessary for the swimmer to warm-down, i.e. swimming slowly and easily until recovered for the next event. Most pools have an area designated for this purpose.
3. The host team is responsible for posting results as the meet goes on and distributing awards either immediately or up to 15 days after the meet.

C. After the Meet

1. The staff will post the meet results on our main bulletin board and the website as soon as possible with the swimmer's time along with any Motivational Time Standards that have been met, along with any improvement that has taken place.
2. An ongoing list of Personal Best Times is kept upto date on our bulletin board and web site

3. An ongoing list of team records is kept.
4. Any awards not received at the meet will be placed in the awards box located poolside or given to coaching staff. Please read the labels on the ribbons or medals in order to prevent accidentally taking awards that are not yours.

****Parents please remember swimmers do not necessarily improve every meet. Success in this sport can be very relative depending on congenital white twitch (speed) muscle fiber, anthropomorphic measurements (body shapes), individual buoyancy factors, and internal drive...all of these things have been often referred to "talent." Talent combined with hard work and unconditional parental and coach support produces champions. Yet those who work hard and are dedicated, regardless of talent level achieve as much satisfaction from this sport as the talented individual. Talent without hardwork will eventually produce an athlete who can do nothing more than sprint 50 yards of freestyle very quickly. Unfortunately that event is only 1 of 18 events for those who partake in this great sport. Please keep this in mind when praising your child for all the hard work they put into this sport.**

SWIM SUIT POLICY

Practice Suits: Bikini style practice suits are not allowed. Females 1 piece suits only. Males brief or jammer style suits. Drag suits are highly recommended to help in the development of swimming power.

Racing Suits: It is recommended that all 12 & Under swimmers wear the Lake Lytal Lightning team suit made available from Total Team Wares. Lightning Team caps are mandatory. These suits are a nylon/lycra blend with the LLL logo on it. **EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 1, 2008 ALL HIGH PROFILED RACING SUITS (FASTSKINS, ETC.) FOR REGULAR SEASON COMPETITION WILL NOT BE ALLOWED** as a part of the LLL program. Exception: Last meet before aging up.

PRACTICE EQUIPMENT

For those whose hair gets in their eyes while swimming, a **hair cut** or a **swim cap** is extremely important. **Goggles**, will keep the chlorine from irritating your eyes and allow swimmers to gain the proper body position by helping to comfortably get one's head in the water.

ALL GROUPS:

1. Swim caps are mandatory for ALL groups if your hair gets into your eyes while swimming, "scrunchies" in place of a cap is not allowed
2. Swim goggles for all groups are mandatory, have them properly fitted before you begin your practice; coaches **WILL NOT** take away from the entire group's time to adjust the goggles of one

BRONZE, SILVER, GOLD, SENIOR:

3. Swimmers must have **fins** as part of their equipment-these fins should be soft rubber so the staff can cut them to angle for increased ankle flexibility and leg strength. Senior Group: Z2 Zoomers are a part of your equipment as well.
4. Hand Paddles that are only slightly larger than the swimmer's hand. (Silver/Senior Only)
5. Net bags to hold your equipment. 5 bins are available to store your equipment bags are available.
6. Small style kickboard only & pull buoys (provided by the team)
7. A drag suit is highly recommended as apart of your training attire for both male and female swimmers. Surfer baggies may inhibit proper body technique however with the creation of too much weight & drag.
8. Water bottles to help hydrate during training sessions is a must for these upper levels of training.
9. Gym shorts and athletic shoes for dryland training
10. Bikini style practice suits are prohibited

All Swimmers are encouraged to save their team suits for competition only in order to keep them tight and prevent sagging.

MISCELLANEOUS

- **FOUL-WEATHER**-in the event of lightning all swimmers are pulled out of the water for a period of 20 minutes. If foul weather is in the area in a predominant manner, please call the pool, if the guards say we are out, then the team is not practicing at that particular moment. However if the inclement weather clears the team will resume practice. **LIGHTNING IS THE ONLY CAUSE FOR US NOT TO PRACTICE, WELL, HURRICANES AND TORNADOES TOO, WE WILL PRACTICE IF IT IS RAINING HOWEVER.** If at home use your weather channel, doppler radar, and common sense.
- **CHOSING RELAYS**-relays will be made up of the fastest swimmers before the meet begins available for a given meet. If it comes down to choosing between 2 relatively even swimmers, the determining factors will be attendance and attitude by the swimmer.
- **PARENT-COACH-SWIMMER conferences**
Communication is what makes the world go around. If at any time there are concerns you have as far as the progress of your child, decisions we make as coaches please make an appointment with the child's coach outside of the practice times. If a conference with the head coach is deemed necessary please call GORDON ANDREWS at 689-7120 (prior to 8:30pm) or leave a message on my voice mail or fax me at 689-9545 or speak with me between practice sessions. I encourage you to speak directly with the child's individual coach first. Gordon Coach Gordon Andrews & Coach Melanie's home e-mail address is gmand688@bellsouth.net

Coach Andrews (work): Andrewg@PalmBeachk12.fl.us.

Coach Melanie (work): andrewsme@palmbeach.k12.fl.us

Coach Mike Horgan: Horgan@bellsouth.net Coach Mike Horgan (work): horganm@palmbeach.k12.fl.us

- **DO NOT LET CONSIDERATION FOR TEAMMATES and STAFF:** We ask that parents make the best effort to get their young athlete to practice & meets **on time**. Tardy athletes miss vital warm-up time and it takes away from the team when the coaching staff has to sacrifice the whole because of the tardiness of the few.

• NO PARENT COACHING ALLOWED!

DO NOT LET RUMOR, HIDDEN INNUENDOS, FALSE IMPRESSIONS OF COACH TO SWIMMER AND SWIMMER TO SWIMMER INTERACTIONS DETERMINE YOUR COMMITMENT TO OUR PROGRAM. PLEASE KEEP THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN; WHAT YOU OBSERVE AS A PARENT FROM THE SIDELINES IS ONLY THE TIP OF THE ICEBURG IN OUR TEAM'S DYNAMICS.

ETIQUETTE FOR PARENTS

As coaches we are strong advocates of focusing in on the swimmers who are directly in front of us. If a parent is trying to converse with us during this time our effectiveness as a coaches becomes hampered.

PLEASE DO NOT CONVERSE WITH THE COACHES or YOUR CHILD DURING PRACTICE SESSIONS. PLEASE STAY AWAY FROM THE WEST SIDE OF THE POOL DECK (SHORT COURSE) OR NORTH SIDE OF DECK (LONG COURSE) IN ORDER FOR THE ATHLETES IN THE POOL NOT TO BE DISTRACTED.

Support and not undue pressure from parents is what a youngster needs in order to internalize motivating forces. Some youngsters have no problem motivating themselves others need our (coaches & parents) help to support those positive efforts that are made between the lane lines. At Lake Lytal we look towards the long-term character development of a youngster. Remember there are no "drive-thru" results in competitive swimming.

As parents we all live in a time where we hear of horror stories of overly competitive parents taking away from the thrill of competition a youngster can be apart of. The coaching staff encourages good sportsmanship within the team as well as with the competition. It is not uncommon for Lightning swimmers to congratulate the competition or cheer on their friends from other teams. Let us not stoop to the level of some other sports and hold a high standard in regards to sportsmanship, both on the team level as well as the sport as a whole.

Parents who second guess our program and coaching staff, or are out for the glory of their own child at the expense of the team concept and character building are encouraged to be a part of another swim program listed on the bottom of page 6 of this handbook.

Parents please visit our "Parents Page" on our website

10 Commandments for Swimming Parents

I. Thou shalt not impose thy ambitions on thy child. Remember that swimming is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Don't judge your child's progress based on the performance of other athletes and don't push them based on what you think they should be

doing. The nice thing about swimming is every person can strive to do their personal best and benefit from the process of competitive swimming.

II. Thou shalt be supportive no matter what. There is only one question to ask your child after a practice or a competition - "Did you have fun?" If meets and practices are not fun, your child should not be forced to participate.

III. Thou shalt not coach thy child. You are involved in one of the few youth sports programs that offer professional coaching, do not undermine the professional coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to provide love and support and a safe place to return at the end of the day. Love and hug your child no matter what. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. You should not offer advice on technique or race strategy or any other area that is not yours. And above all, never pay your child for a performance. This will only serve to confuse your child concerning the reasons to strive for excellence and weaken the swimmer/coach bond.

IV. Thou shalt only have positive things to say at a swimming meet. If you are going to show up at a swimming meet, you should be encouraging, but never criticize your child or the coach. Both of them know when mistakes have been made. And remember "yelling at" is not the same as "cheering for".

V. Thou shalt acknowledge thy child's fears. A first swimming meet, 500 free or 200 IM can be a stressful situation. It is totally appropriate for your child to be scared. Don't yell or belittle, just assure your child that the coach would not have suggested the event if your child was not ready to compete in it. Remember your job is to love and support your child through all of the swimming experience.

VI. Thou shalt not criticize the officials. If you do not care to devote the time or do not have the desire to volunteer as an official, don't criticize those who are doing the best they can.

VII. Honor thy child's coach. The bond between coach and swimmer is a special one, and one that contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize the coach in the presence of your child, it will only serve to hurt your child's swimming.

VIII. Thou shalt be loyal and supportive of thy team! It is not wise for parents to take their swimmers and to jump from team to team. The water isn't necessarily bluer in another team's pool. Every team has its own internal problems, even teams that build champions. Children who switch from team to team are often ostracized for a long, long time by the teammates they leave behind and are slowly received by new team mates. Often times swimmers who do switch teams never do better than they did before they sought the bluer water.

IX. Thy child shalt have goals besides winning. Most successful swimmers are those who have learned to focus on the process and not the outcome. Giving an honest effort regardless of what the outcome is, is much more important than winning. One Olympian said, "My goal was to set a world record. Well, I did that, but someone else did it too, just a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal and I lost. Does this make me a failure? No, in fact I am very proud of that swim." What a tremendous outlook to carry on through life.

X. Thou shalt not expect thy child to become an Olympian. There are 250,000 athletes in USA Swimming and we keep a record of the Top 100 all time swimming performance by age group. Only 2% of the swimmers listed in the all-time Top 100 10 & Under age group make it to the Top 100 in the 17-18 age group and of those only a small percentage will become elite level, world class athletes. There are only 52 spots available for the Olympic Team every four years. Your child's odds of becoming an Olympian is about .0002%.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS: OUR SWIM MEETS, FAMILY ASSESSMENT AND SPLASH-A-THON ARE OUR MAIN MEANS OF RAISING THE NECESSARY FUNDS TO SUPPORT OUR TEAM. LYTAL LIGHTNING HAS THE LOWEST MEMBER COSTS IN SOUTH FLORIDA. WE LOOK FOR PARENTS TO PLAY AN INTEGRAL PART IN HELPING TO RUN OUR SWIM MEETS. TIMERS, SET-UP & BREAK-DOWN PEOPLE, CONCESSION STANDS, AWARDS, AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL ALL CONTRIBUTE TO LYTAL LIGHTNING HOSTING SOME OF THE BEST MEETS IN FLORIDA. IT TAKES EVERYONE TO CONTRIBUTE AND BECOME

PARTICIPANTS WHEN IT COMES TO MAKING OUR TEAM A CONTINUED SUCCESS. IT IS EASY TO SIT ON THE SIDELINES, BECOME INVOLVED!

In closing our team's mission is three-fold. The building and revealing of character. The increasing of the knowledge, skill, and physical prowess that comes with competitive swimming. The increasing of a sense of teamwork and togetherness.

- **We as coaches will always challenge our athletes to better themselves emotionally, physically, and socially.**
- **We believe this is no easy task yet we take pride and have passion for the sport.**
- **We look to you the parent to support our goals and mission not only at practice but at home as well.**
- **We look to you the swimmer to weigh the cost, commit, and reap the rewards!**
- **We are a COACH DRIVEN-SWIMMER CENTERED-PARENT SUPPORTED competitive swim program.**

Experience has shown us that we are all in this sport for the good of the youngster. In order for this to work it takes the coach, swimmer, and parent all exhibiting unity in regards to our mission.

Thank you for your support & understanding.

Character building in young people today is no easy task. We take pride in the program we provide at Lake Lytal Lightning

**Coach Gordon Andrews/ Coach Mike Horgan/
Coach Tyler Andrews/ Coach Melanie Andrews/
Coach Sarah Andrews/ Coach Katherine Sharp**

A Few Suggestions on How to be a Better Swimming Parent

By Michael Brooks, Head Coach, North Baltimore Aquatic Club at Crispus Attucks

NOTA BENE

We all want what is best for the child. That is sometimes hard for coaches to understand. That is also sometimes hard for parents to understand. Much of the historical tension between coaches and parents can be avoided if we agree on two golden rules: first, let's cut each other some slack and not jump on and over-react to the first unsubstantiated third-hand rumor that comes down the pike. And second, let's communicate, often, and not just when we may have a problem.

TEACHING VALUES

YOU are key to your child's swimming. A parent's attitude toward swimming, the program, the coach, and his child's participation, is key towards the child's attitude and success. The young swimmer takes cues from his parent. If the parent shows by word, deed, facial expression, etc., that he does not value swimming, that he doesn't appreciate having to drive to practice or sit in the stands during meets, that "it's not going to matter" if the child skips practice, that morning practices are just "optional" and that the child would be better off with the extra sleep, then the chances are very good that the child will lack commitment, have little success, then lose interest in swimming. Support your child's interest in swimming by being positively interested.

ALLOW your swimmer to be resilient. Failure, and facing that failure, doesn't cause kids to melt. Failure isn't such an evil thing that parents should try to shield their kids from it. Allow them to fail, then teach

them to get up off the canvas and try harder to succeed the next time. If parents are continually sheltering their swimmers from the storm, cushioning every fall, making excuses for them, finding someone else to blame, the children never learn anything. Even worse, they never learn that they are responsible both for their failures and for their successes. Allow them to stand on their own, and you will be helping them immeasurably down the road.

MOLEHILLS really are molehills. At times I may appear unsympathetic or even harsh because I won't let kids stop for "emergencies": for leaking goggles, for kids passing them, for side-aches, for stretching, for repeated bathroom breaks, etc. Many kids think that the slightest obstacle is an overwhelming reason to stop and should be listened to and followed as the voice of God. I think not. I am trying to teach focus. When a swimmer is in the middle of a set, the only thing in life that matters or is worthy of attention is the set. Little "bothers" are to be overcome or ignored. And once a swimmer gets in the habit of overcoming these "little bothers," he finds that they aren't so overwhelmingly important after all. If we are continually stopping for "emergencies," we will never get anything done. If a study session is continually interrupted for sharpening pencils, then getting a better notepad, then getting a drink of water, then taking a little break when a favorite song comes on the radio, then answering the telephone, almost miraculously the math assignment doesn't get completed.

DON'T worry, be happy??? I don't want a swimmer doing cartwheels after an awful performance. It's okay for them to be upset about, disappointed with, even angry about having done poorly. Feeling lousy for a few minutes won't kill them, it won't forever damage their self-esteem, and if they are thinking correctly it will motivate them to try harder and do better the next time. I want to teach them standards of good and bad performance, so that when they really do well, they will feel appropriately pleased. If they are simply showered with praise willy nilly, they never know the difference.

TEACH them to dream big – a world of infinite possibilities. If you try to temper your child's dreams, if you teach her to settle for the ordinary, you may indeed save her from many a heartache and many a failure. But you also rob her of the opportunity of achieving great things, and the opportunity to plumb her depths and realize her potential. Winning big means failing many times along the way. Each failure hurts, but these temporary setbacks create the strength for the final push. Instead of having children avoid failure by never taking risks, teach them how to think correctly about failing: risk-taking and failure are necessary for improvement, development, motivation, feedback, and long-term success.

WHAT success is. Only one swimmer can win the race. Often in the younger age groups, the winner will be the one who has bloomed early, not necessarily the swimmer with the most talent or the most potential to succeed in senior swimming. It is expected that every parent wants his child to succeed, wants his child to have a good and learning and valuable experience with swimming. Every child can succeed – only make sure you define success correctly: being the very best you can be, striving for improvement in every aspect of swimming. That leads to lasting success. And lasting enjoyment.

DON'T reward success by bribery. "Bribing" your swimmer to perform well by promising presents, money, special meals, etc. for meeting various standards is highly discouraged. While bribery may work in the short run – the swimmer may indeed swim fast this afternoon – the long term consequences are never good. You have to keep upping the ante, and you must ask yourself: why does my swimmer want to swim fast? What is really motivating him? Is this good? What is a twelve year old going to do with a new car?

FUN, fun, fun. If "fun" means mindless entertainment and sensory bombardment, then wasting hours playing Nintendo is loads of fun, and swimming is by definition "not fun." If "fun" means working hard

and challenging yourself, taking pride in accomplishing difficult goals, and discovering talents you didn't know you had, then swimming is fun and Nintendo by definition is "not fun." The meaning of fun is very much an open question for children, and one where parents and coaches have much influence over their charges. Are we building a nation of energized achievers or lifeless couch potatoes?

WORK, work, work. Persistence and work ethic are the most important qualities leading to success in swimming and everything else. And if a work ethic is not created and cultivated when a swimmer is young, it very likely will never appear. It is so rare as not to be an option that a kid who is a slacker from ages seven to fourteen will suddenly change his spots and become a hard worker. Love for and pride in hard work **MUST** be inculcated early on, and again parents and coaches have much influence in creating this attitude.

NO little league parents. Kids sometimes make mistakes at meets. If your child is disqualified at a meet, don't complain, don't whine, don't make excuses. Your child's DQ is not a reflection of the quality of your parenting. The official is not blind, he does not have a vendetta against your child or your family or your team, and he is not incompetent. In fact, he has a much better vantage on your child's race than you do, and he is looking on dispassionately. You are sitting up in the stands where you can't see precisely, and you are paying attention to everything except the exact angle of your child's left foot as he kicks in breaststroke. If a DQ is questionable, as sometimes is the case, the coach – and not the parent – will take the proper steps. And even then, DQ's are almost never over-turned, so don't get your hopes up.

By the by, most DQ's aren't surprises to the coach. If a swimmer rehearses an illegal turn forty thousand times in training despite a coach's remonstrances, then that illegal habit will likely show up under the stress of a race. As Joe Paterno said, "Practice good to play good."

BURNOUT is over-rated. So many times parents and kids will say, "I don't want to commit to swimming because I don't want to get burned out." But for every one case of "burnout" caused by a swimmer's spending too much time in the water and working too hard, we will see a hundred cases of "pre-emptive burnout": in order not to be burned out, the swimmer only comes to practice when she feels like it, doesn't work out very hard, skips team meets with regularity, and generally makes no commitment to the program or to the sport. Not surprisingly, the swimmer swims slow, makes little to no improvement, and sees her formerly slower competitors whiz right by her. Then we wonder why she "just can't get jazzed about swimming."

Sitting on the fence and remaining lukewarm on principle has nothing to recommend it. Discipline and commitment are good things, not things we should downplay, hide, apologize for, or (worst of all) stop demanding because it may be unpopular. If you want to enjoy swimming even more, commit more of yourself and swim fast! You do not become excited about an activity you don't do well at.

HOME and pool must dovetail. Traits of discipline, respect, high expectations, and commitment at home directly relate to the child's characteristics at practices and meets. This is yet another area where family support is crucial to the success of the swimmer. Parents should review, carefully, the Credo and other formative memos about the values the team espouses. If the current at home is flowing in the opposite direction from the current at the pool, there will be big problems. If a family does not buy into the program, they will be very unhappy here.

A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES

THE patience of Job. Your swimmer's career in the program is a long haul, with many peaks and valleys. Usually, the new parent and swimmer come to the sport with little experience, so the first sign of a problem looks like the Grand Canyon, impossible to get across, and the first sign of success looks like Mount Everest – we're on top of the world. It's best not to get too worked up. You will see this again, over and over.

TAKING the long view. The training that will make an eight year old the area's fastest 25 freestyler is not the training that will benefit that swimmer most in the long run. Making decisions now that will benefit the swimmer over the long haul of a swimming career calls for prudence, and it means sacrificing some speed now for huge gains later. Now we make them beautiful in the water, now we make them fit, now we teach them to expect great things, and later we make them superfast. Our destination is not two weeks down the road, but several years.

McDONALDS v. Michelin Three-Star. The fast food mentality, the attitude that "I want it NOW!" (even if it tastes like cardboard) is anathema to what we are about. Think of the swimming program, and your swimmer's career in the program, as a fine meal in the very best French restaurant: more courses than you can count (phases and seasons), served in a very particular order (developmentally determined), each patiently savored (the cumulative effects of years' worth of daily training), completed by dessert and coffee (Nationals). We are not in search of a quick Big Mac. We want the best, and we are willing to wait.

HOW KIDS WORK

KIDS are inconsistent. There is nothing that any coach or parent can do to change that. A ten-year old swimmer who knows better will in the pressure of a meet do a flip-turn on breaststroke. Another young swimmer will take twenty seconds off her best time in a race this week, and next week add it all back, with interest. One week it will seem that the butterfly is mastered, and the next week that we've never even been introduced to the stroke. A senior swimmer will take ten seconds off her best time one race, then an hour later add ten seconds in her next race. It's enough to make your hair turn grey. Learn to expect it and even to enjoy it.

SO you thought she was a backstroker. Age groupers change favorite or "best" strokes approximately every other day. A stroke will "click" suddenly, and then later just as suddenly un-click. There is no explanation for this phenomenon. A stroke the child hated becomes her favorite by virtue of her having done well at yesterday's meet. These are good arguments for having kids swim all four strokes in practice and meets, and for not allowing early specialization.

NO cookie-cutter swimmers. Kids learn at different rates and in different ways. One swimmer picks up the breaststroke kick in a day; it takes another swimmer a year to master the same skill. If you pay close attention, you could probably write a treatise on motor learning after watching just one practice of novice swimmers. Be careful of comparing your swimmer to others, and especially be careful of comparing your swimmer to others in her hearing. Never never never measure the continuing success of your child by his performance against a particular competitor, who is likely to be on a completely different biological timetable from your child. Doing so makes you either despondent or arrogant.

WHY doesn't he look like Ian Thorpe? Little kids are not strong enough or coordinated enough for their strokes to look like the senior swimmers, no matter how many drills they do or how many repeats. And parents shouldn't stress about a little thing that a swimmer struggles with for a time, such as a proper breaststroke kick. Kids seem to get these things when they are ready, and not until. We are winning the game if they steadily improve their motor control, steadily improve their aerobic conditioning, and

steadily improve their attitudes. They will look like the Thorpedo soon enough.

HOW they do versus what they do. Especially at younger ages, how fast a child swims and how well he places in a meet have little significance for how that swimmer will do as a senior. Many national caliber athletes were not at all noteworthy as ten year olds. Competition times and places often tell you not about the amount of swimming talent a child has, but about how early a developer he is. What is truly important in determining future swimming success is what happens everyday in practice: Is he developing skills and technique? Is he internalizing the attitudes of a champion? Is he gradually building an aerobic base and building for the future? The work done is cumulative, with every practice adding a grain of sand to what will eventually become a mountain.

TIMES are the least of our worries. Many young swimmers spaz out when they swim, especially at meets when they race. But you learn technique and control best at slow speeds. Don't rush, take it slow, and get it perfect before you try to go fast. Even in meets, for the little ones I am much more interested in how they get down the pool than in how fast they do. Technique and tactics are more important than the numbers on the watch; if the technique and tactics are improving steadily, the time on the watch will improve steadily, too, and without our obsessing over it.

BUT he swam faster in practice!?!? Younger kids are routinely swimming as fast in practice as they do in meets. From one perspective, this makes no sense. Why should a swimmer do better on the last repeat of 10 x 400 on short rest, after having swum 3600 meters at descending pace, than she does when all she has to do is get up and race one rested 400? She swims faster when she's tired? Sometimes, yes. After all, in training she is well warmed up, her body has run through the spectrum and swum faster and faster, so her aerobic systems are working at full steam and her stroke rhythm is perfect and grooved, and she is energized from racing her teammates and shooting after concrete goals without the pressure she often feels in meets. Practice is much less threatening than meets.

NOT even Ted Williams batted a thousand. No one improves every time out. Don't expect best times every swim; if you do, you will frustrate yourself to death in less than a season, and you will put so much pressure on your swimmer that she will quit the sport early. You would think that if a swimmer goes to practice, works hard, and has good coaching and a good program, then constant improvement would be inevitable. Wrong. So much more goes into swimming than just swimming.

THE Rubber band effect. It would be easier for the swimmer, his parents, and his coach if improvements were made slowly and gradually, if all involved could count on hard work in practice producing corresponding improvements in competition every month. This "ideal", however, is so rare as to be nonexistent. Often improvements are made in leaps, not baby steps. Improvement happens by fits and starts, mostly because improvement results as much from psychology as from physiology. It is harder this way, because less predictable. Further, swimmers and their parents tend to become a bit discouraged during the short "plateaus" when the improvements that the child is making are not obvious; then, when the rubber band has snapped and the swimmer makes a long-awaited breakthrough, they expect the nearly vertical improvement curve to continue, which it will not do. Fortunately, because our program emphasizes aerobic training, the long plateaus common in sprint programs are rare here.

THERE is a lot more to swimming than just swimming. This will become especially apparent as the swimmer gets older, say around puberty. But even for the young kids, inconsistency is the rule. What's going on in a swimmer's head can either dovetail with the training or completely counteract the hours and hours in the pool. Again, if a swimmer has been staying up late, not allowing her body to recover from training, or if she's been forsaking her mother's nutritious meals for BigMacs, fries, and shakes, that

swimmer's "hidden training" will counteract what she's been doing in the water. Again, if a swimmer is in the dumps and can't see straight after breaking up with his girlfriend, the best coach and the best program in the world will not save today's race.

TERMINAL strokes and "coachability". Often young swimmers, especially "successful" younger swimmers who are very strong for their age, have terminal strokes – i.e., strokes that are inefficient dead-ends, strokes that will not allow for much if any improvement, strokes that consist of bulling through the water and not getting much for the huge outpouring of effort and energy. For kids with terminal strokes, it is time to throw away the stopwatch, slow down, and learn to swim all over again. Often this adjustment period is characterized by slower times, which is difficult for the swimmer and for the parents. Difficult, but necessary, because this one step backwards will allow for ten steps forward soon enough.

Note that for the stroke improvement to be made, the swimmer (and parent, supporting the coach's decision) must be coachable: they must trust that the coach is knowledgeable and thinking of the swimmer's best interests, and they must be willing to trust that the changes that feel awful at first (because the swimmer's body is used to doing things a certain way, that way feels comfortable, and any other way is going to be resisted) will help him be a better swimmer. This coachability, this trust, is unfortunately rare. Most kids choose not to change horses in the middle of the stream, and both the horse and rider drown. Terminal strokers are soon caught by swimmers who are smaller but more efficient.

BIGGER is better?? The subject of early and late bloomers is a sensitive one, but nonetheless very important for parents to understand. Early and late bloomers each have "virtues" and "challenges."

To begin with early developers. They get bigger and stronger earlier than the other kids, which means they are more likely to win their races. That early success is the virtue. However, because they can often win without having to work on their technique or train very hard, often they do not develop a solid work ethic, and often their technique is poor as they bull through the water. Note that from the child's immediate perspective, NOT working hard and NOT working on technique is a rational choice. After all, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it": what he has done has obviously been working, since he has been highly successful, so why should he listen to the coach tell him that he needs to work harder or change his stroke? He beats all the other kids who listen to the coach, work harder, and change their strokes!

So our pragmatist reaches the ages of thirteen to fifteen and suddenly the other kids whom he used to destroy in meets are catching up to him and even passing him. The size and strength advantage that he had relied on has deserted him, and he has no technique or work ethic to fall back on. He is not long for the sport: many early bloomers quit when their easy successes dry up. We avoid this future problem by not allowing the early bloomers to bask in the temporary limelight, but training them for their long run benefit, and educating them about how they should judge their own performances both in meets and in practices.

On to the late bloomers. They are smaller and weaker than the others, so they get crushed in swimming meets. If the coach, swimmer, and parent emphasize places and winning, then there is little chance that this late bloomer will stay in the sport. This, too, is rational: "Why should I keep swimming? I'm obviously lousy, even though I'm working my guts out and doing everything the coach asks. I'm still getting killed! Coach is a bozo and I'm just not meant to be a swimmer."

That is the obvious downside. However, if the coach and parents can help the swimmer find enough

rewards from swimming, for instance improvement, meeting personal challenges, friendships, etc., to stick it out through the lean years, and if she relies on technique and hard work to overcome the temporary physical deficit, then she is in the driver's seat in a few years. It is usually the case that the late bloomers end up bigger and stronger than the others – it just takes them longer to get there. And the qualities in the water and in their heads serve them well in senior swimming.

Note well: it is almost impossible to tell how talented your swimmer is, or how much potential your swimmer has for swimming, by looking at 10 & Under meet results. Races will often just tell you who is bigger and stronger, and that probably won't last.

PUBERTY complicates everything. You would think that because they are getting bigger and presumably stronger, your swimmers would be getting faster. Yes, and no. Whether fair or not, in the end puberty is highly beneficial to almost all boys, but with girls can be more ambiguous. Boys lose fat and gain muscle, getting bigger and stronger; girls, too, gain in height and strength, but they also add fat deposits. With proper nutrition (that does not mean starvation diets or eating disorders) and proper training (lots and lots of aerobic work, consistently), these questionable changes can be kept to a minimum, with no long-term harmful effects.

In the short run, during puberty kids are growing, but they are growing unevenly. Arms and legs and torsos don't have the same proportions as they did last week, either of strength or length, so coordination can go haywire. Strokes may fall apart, or come and go. Also, various psychological changes are affecting swimming and everything else. Interests change and priorities are re-ordered. All these changes can cause the child's athletic performances to stagnate. It can be a highly frustrating time for all involved. Fortunately, it doesn't last long, and the swimmer emerges from a chrysalis a beautiful (and fast and strong) butterfly.

THE perils of getting older. Aging up is sometimes traumatic. Formerly very good ten year olds become mediocre 11 & 12's overnight. And often, the better they were in the younger age group, and the higher their expectations of success, the more traumatic the change is for them, because the more their "perceived competence" has suddenly nose-dived as they now race against bigger and stronger and faster competition. They are bonsais racing sequoia trees, and the standards of judgement have ratcheted up dramatically. The fastest kids are much faster than they are, to the point that they think they cannot compete, so they figure, "Why try? Working hard isn't going to get me far, anyway. I may as well wait until my 'good year.'" Often we see a tremendous jump upwards in practice intensity as swimmers approach their last meet in an age group (they want to go out with a bang), then a tremendous plummeting in that intensity as they become just one of the pack. This is in despite of the coach's discussing the matter with the swimmer.

A Special Note about Swimmers New to the NBAC Program. When they first join our program, no kids are hard workers. This sounds harsh, but it is true nonetheless. Compared with all other local swimming programs, we swim longer and harder and have much higher expectations. Swimmers have never really had to work very hard before, relatively, so they don't know what it's like. What used to be strenuous is now defined as easy swimming. Swimmers have never really had high goals before, relatively, so they don't know how to make them or how to bring them about. What used to be fast isn't any longer, and their new teammates are talking about strange things called "NRT's" and "Quad A's". It takes several months for a swimmer's body and mind to adapt to the new demands and new expectations. Often the initial shock to the system is difficult, but it is made superable by extra support and encouragement from parent and coach. And then they bloom. Many parents have remarked to me on the changes that the program has wrought in their children: we have a new child who is ready to take

on the world, who is confident in his abilities, and who has new and much higher expectations of himself.

SUPPORT, NOT PRESSURE

THE Rock of Gibraltar. As they succeed then fail then succeed again, kids will ride emotional roller-coasters. One of your most important functions as a swimming parent is to provide emotional support during the tough times, of which there will be many. Let them know that they are still loved, no matter how poorly they think they swam. And don't let them get cocky when they win.

DON'T coach your kids. If the swimmer is hearing one story from his coach and another from his parent, we have one confused swimmer. A swimmer must have trust in his coach and in the program, and he will not if his parents are implicitly telling him that they know best. If you have concerns about the coaching or the coaching advice, talk to the coach directly. If in the end you feel that you cannot support the coach or the program, your best course is to find a team whose coach you trust. Your swimmer has a coach; she needs you to be a parent.

THE next Ian Thorpe?? No matter how good your swimmer seems to be as a ten year old, don't get your hopes too high. Don't expect an Olympian (you are allowed to hope for an Olympian), and don't judge his every move (or swim) by Olympian standards. In order to make it to the Olympics so many things over such a comparatively long time have to go right, so many decisions have to be made "correctly" (and can only be seen to be correct with hindsight), and so much plain good luck is required, that the odds are heavy against it. Further, many kids are physically talented, but few have the mental talent: the poise, drive, and persistence to develop the gifts they are given. How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice. As psychologist Howard Gruber, who has made a life-work out of studying great achievers, has argued, the difference between the very good and the truly great isn't talent but much harder and consistent work.

IN praise of famous kids? Don't puff up a 10-year old, or we will end up with a monster on our hands. Don't get too impressed, don't praise too highly – leave room for when they get a lot better. No matter how fast a child swims, it is still a child swimming, and the level of accomplishment is very low compared to how high she will reach five or ten years from now. Don't treat him like a superstar, because the more you treat him like a superstar, the less likely he will become one. Pampered kids aren't tough.

Similarly, be careful not to brag about your swimmer to other parents. No one likes to hear continuous talk about someone else's kid, and if your swimmer is really good, it will be apparent to everyone without your having to tell them. Dale Carnegie said, "Talk about them, not about me." Translate this into: "Talk about their swimmer, not about mine."

EVERY Soviet victory a victory for Soviet socialist ideology? How your child swam in the 50 fly ten minutes ago is no reflection of your value as a person or as a parent. A first place ribbon does not validate your parenting techniques, or the quality of your genes. Alternately, a slow swim should not bring into question a family's commitment, financial and otherwise, to a child's swimming. Swimming is hard enough for a child without having to carry around her parents' self-esteem on her shoulders when she races. Also remember that what goes around comes around. The better you allow yourself to feel about a victory now, the worse a loss will feel next meet, or the next event.

JEKYLL and Hyde. Coaches often undergo miraculous transformations. It is always interesting to watch parents' changing attitudes and behavior towards the coach when their children are "succeeding" or "failing." When the child swims well, the coach is a good chap and everyone's happy. When the child bombs, the coach is an Untouchable who should not be looked in the eye. Sometimes this change

occurs in the space of half an hour. Precious few parents treat me the same no matter how their children perform.

PROBLEMS, POTENTIAL AND KINETIC

UNEQUAL Justice for all? Sometimes parents ask, “Why don’t you treat the kids equally, with one standard for all?” For the same reason that most parents don’t treat their own children exactly the same: because kids have different capabilities, personalities, and motivations, and what works for one child doesn’t work for all. Second, because with talent comes responsibility. When a very fast swimmer, whom the others look up to and follow, messes around in practice, he drags the whole group down with him. This will not be tolerated. Higher expectations accompanying talent should be taken as a compliment.

THE wisdom of Solomon. Coaches make many decisions. You won’t agree with them all. For instance, relays. As a general rule, every parent thinks his child should be on the “A” relay. But only four swimmers can be on the relay team. The coaches will choose the four kids whom they think will do the best job today. That is not always the four with the top four “best times.” Sometimes it includes a swimmer who has been very impressive in practices, or someone who is on fire at this meet, or someone who hasn’t swum the event in a meet in a while and so hasn’t officially made a fast time but who has let the coaches know by practice performance and otherwise that he deserves to be in the relay. Trust the coaches to act in what they consider the best interests of the team as a whole, and understand that this sometimes conflicts with what you see as the best interests of your child at this moment.

MEDDLING isn’t coaching. A lot of coaches, especially younger ones, will “overcoach” as a rule, especially at meets. “Overcoaches” are in the kids’ faces all the time, giving them twenty thousand instructions before they race, timing them incessantly during the warm-ups of a championship meet, controlling every little thing. Many parents are impressed by this show of active coaching. However, overcoaching is destructive, at practice and at meets. At practice, swimmers need instruction -- that is agreed. But they also need to be allowed to try things, to find out what works and what doesn’t, to watch other swimmers, with perhaps a few leading questions from the coach. You don’t teach an infant how to walk; he watches you, he tries it, he falls, he falls again and again, and in no time he is charging around the house making mischief.

And when you get to a meet, the general rule should be, the less said the better. In a stressful environment, the more information you try to force into a kid’s head at the last minute, the more likely you are to jam his circuits entirely (similar to “cramming” for an exam in school). He will head to the blocks not knowing which way is up. If a coach has been doing the job in practice, the swimmer will know how to swim his race before he gets to the meet. A couple of cues or reminders, and only a couple, and the swimmer can hop on the blocks without his mind cluttered by overcoaching.

TALK to the coach. Communicate your concerns about the program or your child’s progress within it with the coach, not with your child. Never complain about a coach to a child. The last thing a ten year-old needs is to be caught in the middle between two adult authority figures. Further, when you have a problem or concern, please do not head to other parents to complain, head to the coach to discuss. There is nothing guaranteed to destroy a program faster, and to send good (even great) coaches running for the door quicker, than a group of parents sitting together every day in the stands comparing notes about the things they don’t like.

SEMPER fidelis. Don’t criticize the team to outsiders, don’t criticize the coach to outsiders, don’t criticize other parents to outsiders, don’t criticize your own swimmers to outsiders, don’t criticize others’

swimmers to outsiders. If you can't find anything good to say, don't say anything at all.

LEAVE this campsite cleaner than you found it. Before you complain about any component of the program, ask yourself: what am I doing, positively and actively, to help the team function better?

DON'T try to be a swimming expert. With the internet rage, the amount of really bad information available at the click of a mouse is overwhelming. And not being a coach, not being immersed in the sport twenty-four hours a day, not having much historical perspective on technique and training, and generally not knowing where the website you just stumbled onto fits in the jigsaw puzzle of the sport, you are in no position to judge what you find critically.

THERE are no "age group parents" and "senior parents." There are only swimming parents. Once a portion of the team's parents begins to think of itself as having a different interest from that of the group as a whole, the team has begun to rip itself apart. The rose bud is not distinct from the rose in full flowering; they are the same things at different stages of development, with identical interests.

KEEP me in the loop. It happens quite frequently that I cannot understand why a swimmer is responding to the training as he is. It seems to make no sense, if we assume that the only variables are the ones that I am in control of in training. Why is he so tired? Why is he so inconsistent? It is easy to forget that everything happening in the swimmer's life during the twenty-one hours a day when he is away from the pool affects his swimming as much or more than the three hours of training when I am ostensibly in charge. Let me know if there are problems at home or at school that will affect your swimmer's training and racing performance. You don't need to give me all the details, but in order to coach your swimmer individually, I have to know what is happening individually.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

SWIMMING is a mystery. Most of the time only God really knows why a swimmer did so well or so poorly. Coaches can point to the easy answers, superficial indices (stroke count, stroke rate, splits, etc.), which are probably more often effects than they are causes. Who can explain why a swimmer whose workouts have been horrid and who hasn't gotten much sleep, will come alive at a meet and set the water on fire? Why a swimmer whose workouts have been wonderful and who has been doing everything right, will come to a meet and look like death warmed over? Or why a swimmer who has been a rock for years will come mentally unglued at the big meet? Sometimes hard work isn't rewarded with good performances. Sometimes lazing around and skipping practices is. This is hard for coaches, swimmers, and parents to accept. Not everything in life makes sense, and not everything in life is fair. It doesn't take a reflective coach very long to figure out that he isn't in total control here. Ponder the Greek tragedies.

A work in progress. These recommendations/suggestions may sound set in stone. But my thinking on most of these subjects is evolving, since these subjects are complicated and since kids are, too. These are topics that we should all consider as open to discussion. Being a good coach is just as difficult as being a good parent, and it involves thinking through and judging correctly about the same issues. Most parents are confused at least part of the time about whether or not they are doing the right things with their kids. And most coaches are equally uncertain about whether the methods that worked for one swimmer will work with another.

Michael Brooks

