



## **Where Character is Revealed & Built Thru Competitive Swimming**

[www.lightningswimming.org](http://www.lightningswimming.org)

**January 2020**

# Table of Contents

OUR MISSION .....	3
LIGHTNING'S COACHING STAFF .....	4 - 5
FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS .....	6
Who do I make my checks out too? .....	6
Initial Obligations .....	6
Monthly Training Fees .....	6
Meet Fees .....	6-7
Team Suit & Equipment Purchases .....	7
Tax-Deductible Donations .....	7
LIGHTNING'S DEVELOPMENTAL PHILOSOPHY & TRAINING GROUPS.....	8
Red Group .....	9
Bronze Group .....	10
Dev. Sr. Group .....	11
Advanced Senior Groups .....	12
TEAM RECORDS .....	14
SWIMMING, NUTRITION AND ATHLETE'S MENTALITY .....	14
PARENT'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS & BOOSTER CLUB .....	15
SWIM MEET HOSTING .....	16
THE BULLETIN BOARD & WEB SITE/E-MAIL .....	16
TEAM DISCIPLINE POLICY .....	17
SWIM MEETS OR WHICH MEETS SHOULD I ATTEND? .....	18
• Sub JO Meets .....	18
• FGC Open Meets .....	18
• Championship Meets: Area Dev. Champs, Jr. Olympics, All-Star & Zones .....	19
• Sectionals, Futures, Jr. Nationals, Olympic Trials, Olympics High School Season .....	19
SWIM MEET PARTICIPATION .....	20
• Before the Meet .....	20
• During the Meet .....	21
• After the Meet .....	21
SWIM SUIT POLICY .....	22
PRACTICE EQUIPMENT .....	22
MISCELLANEOUS .....	23
• Foul Weather .....	23
• Choosing Relays .....	23
• Parent-Coach-Swimmer Conferences .....	23
ETIQUETTE FOR PARENTS .....	24
10 COMMANDMENTS FOR SWIMMING PARENTS .....	25
PARENT VOLUNTEERS .....	25
<b>ADDENDUM</b> .....	27-33
<b>HOW TO BE A BETTER SWIMMING PARENT</b> - <i>by Michael Brooks NBAC</i>	

## 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 staff's 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 are 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 Florida, P.B. County, and the Greater West Palm Beach area.

The acronym of **SUCCESS** indicative of **S**uccess **U**ltimately **C**alls on the **C**ommitted **E**nduring **S**uperior **S**acrifice very much characterizes our team.

Overall, the Lightning Program is characterized as a **Coach Driven, Swimmer Centered, and Parent Supported** sports organization.

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.

## **HEAD COACH, GORDON ANDREWS**

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 Park Vista High School (Social Sciences) as well as the head swim coach at Park Vista High School.

Coach Andrews currently serves 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 on several occasions. 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 and four grandchildren.

Outside of teaching & coaching Coach Andrews' has a passion for the sport of surfing, Bikram yoga. Open Water swim competitions, road races, and an occasional triathlon.

Coach Andrews' four children all swam competitively and thus empathizes with the key role swim team parents play in the proper and balanced psychological & physical development of the young athlete.

## **COACH SARAH ANDREWS**

Coach 'Sarah' Andrews comes to the Lightning Coaching staff after establishing herself as one of the most diversified swimmers ever to compete in PB County. Few swimmers have ever been decorated in so many events as a high school All-American in the 200Fr, 200IM, 100Fr, 100Fly, and 500Fr. Sarah was twice named the area's top female athlete in both by the Sun Sentinel and PB Post. Sarah went on to take her swimming prowess to the Univ. of Louisville; currently an NCAA top 10 program. A USA Swimming National Qualifier as well as numerous Big East individual titles at Louisville Sarah went on to major in Education, Health Sciences and criminal justice and is currently employed at John I. Leonard HS Physical Education teacher, Health Teacher, Head Swim Coach and the head of Lightning's **Performance Enhancement** program. Sarah has worked with some of the most cutting-edge coaches in the country and brings her knowledge to the Lightning pool deck. Outside of swimming Sarah has a very giving attitude towards seeing individuals excel in their character and athleticism. Sarah is also an accomplished open water athlete, triathlete, and surfer. Sarah works 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> jobs as private swim instructor and is employed by the Town of Palm Beach as part of their Ocean Rescue Lifeguards.

## **COACH KEITH COGLAN**

Coach Keith comes from Club Wolverine in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he helped coach one of the most successful programs in the state. He was also an assistant coach at West Florida Lightning Aquatics, where he was involved with the state ranked age group and senior level swimmers.

Coach Keith began his collegiate swimming career at Florida Atlantic University, where he earned MVP and Most Improved honors as a freshman, Coach Keith transferred to Eastern Michigan University for his final three years. While competing for EMU, he earned two team Mid-American Conference championships and one individual title.

Coghlan graduated from Eastern Michigan University with a degree in social science. Coghlan resides in West Palm Beach, Florida with his wife Megan.

Coach Keith has responsibility of our Adv. Sr. Group. Coach Keith Coghlan is also part of the coaching staff at Keiser University having overseen great success with 2 NAIA Men's National Championship squads and 2 Top 5 National finishes for the Keiser Women's squad. Coach Keith's wife, Megan, also works at Keiser University.

## **COACH PETER NINIVIGGI**

Coach Peter Ninivaggi is the latest addition to the Lightning coaching staff. Coach Pete comes to us as the former head coach of the Boynton Beach YMCA where he spent building a very successful program in 4 short years. Previous to the Boynton Y, Coach Pete also was the head coach of the Lynbrook Swim Team in New York. Coach Pete was a high school state championship swimming competitor and collegiate track athlete, a Masters Degree in Physical Education, a certified CrossFit Instructor who works side by side with Coach Sarah in seeing our DevSr. & Adv.Sr. swimmers enhance their athleticism out of the water. Coach Pete is also a Health & Physical Education teacher at Cardinal Newman HS, along with being CN's head swim coach.

Coach Pete has responsibilities for our Dev. Sr. Group and Dev. Bronze Group.

## **COACH JACKIE SCHAUB**

Before coming to coach at Lake Lytal, Coach Jackie coached the swim team at the Boynton Beach YMCA. Coach Jackie coached in Westhampton Beach, NY before the YMCA. Jackie loves to work with swimmers to help them develop their skills both in the pool and in their lives through hard work, patience, and perseverance. Jackie is a middle school science teacher in the Palm Beach County School District and works with our Developmental Red group. Jackie is currently the fiancé of Coach Pete Ninivaggi!

## **COACH MELANIE ANDREWS**

Coach Melanie Andrews has successfully taught the fundamentals of competitive swimming for 15 years now at Lake Lytal. Coach Melanie's balanced approach of teaching, discipline, and making the sport fun at a young age has proven very successful in preparing the RED and BRONZE group athletes for the upper training groups. Outside of coaching, Melanie Andrews is a very successful elementary teacher and Grade Chairman at Meadow Park Elementary as well as serving as the Lightning team's administrator and treasurer.

## **COACH MICHAEL RAHRIG**

Coach Michael, and his family, are long time members of the Lake Lytal Swim Team. Michael came up thru all the different groups we now have and went on to take his swimming prowess to Florida Atlantic Univ where he is finishing his Masters degree in accounting. Coach Michael had a tremendous club, high school, and collegiate swimming career and brings his intimate knowledge of our mission and philosophy to all our training groups that he assists with.

***WE ARE EXTREMELY FORTUNATE TO HAVE SUCH AN EXCELLENT LINE UP OF COACHES. CHARACTER BUILDING IS NOT AN EASY TASK IN THIS DAY AND AGE OF SO MANY SHALLOW DISTRACTIONS. OUR STAFF TAKES PRIDE IN CHALLENGING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ON EVERY LEVEL OF THEIR BEING TO SEE THEM GAIN AN EDGE IN AN UPCOMING CHALLENGING LIFE. AS A 'COACH-DRIVEN' TEAM, WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF OUR STAFF. ALL OF LIGHTNING'S COACHES ARE CERTIFIED WITH USA 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. **The County accepts 3 forms of payment-Monthly Payments for training are due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month and no later than the 10<sup>th</sup>.**

1. **Personal Check or Money Orders payable to BOCC - Memo Section: First & Last name swimmer(s). Driver's license # on the check** (Mandated by PBC Parks & Rec in order to be accepted). Checks may be dropped in the "Silver Box" which is located outside of our office or mailed to:

**Lake Lytal Aquatic Park**

**3645 Gun Club Road**

**West Palm Beach FL 33406**

2. **Credit card payment & AutoPay at the pool cashier** – specify first & last name of the swimmer(s) on your receipt, place receipt in the "Silver Box". Cashier is available Tuesday-Thursday until 5:30

3. **Set up payments through your bank.**

For bank payments you will need to give them the pool address listed above.

**You have to specify – payment to BOCC, first and last name of the swimmer(s) .and include your Dr. License number.**

Lake Lytal Lightning **Fee Schedule\*\*:**

**Red Group \$ 80/month**

**Bronze Group \$ 85/month**

**Developmental senior \$100/month**

**Advanced Senior Group (Competitive & Rec Groups) \$105/month**

**Dryland Training DSr & ASr (competitive group only) : NO COST**

\*\*Monthly membership fees are subject to change as advised by Palm Beach County Parks & Rec. If you have more than 2 swimmers in our program pls. ask about a potential discount depending on group (s).

- B. **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 4.00 per event (double on relays divided by 4). Swimmer surcharges are \$ 2.50 to \$10 depending on the meet.
2. ***Away Meet Assessment: A per swimmer surcharge includes the hosts surcharge plus our team's meet surcharge to help reimburse the coaching staff for travel and hotel expenses. These fees are 1 day \$3, 2 days \$5 per swimmer. 3 Day Championship meets \$10. Where coaches will be residing in a hotel \$20. These fees will be included in fees invoiced.***

C. Team Suits-available thru Coach Melanie Andrews. MANDATORY FOR COMPETITIONS.

D. Team Equipment-can be purchased thru [SwimOutlet.com](http://SwimOutlet.com) 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-DEDUCTIBLE 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.***

## LIGHTNING'S TRAINING PHILOSOPHY & GROUP BREAKDOWNS

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 4 main groups at Lake Lytal with our Dev. Sr. & Adv. Sr. groups containing 'sub groups' all of which are geared to the individual's aerobic & speed 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. 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.



## **LIGHTNING TRAINING GROUP: RED**

**Coach: Melanie Andrews & Jackie Schaub Monthly Fees: \$80**

### **Requirements:**

1. Swim across a 25yd.pool without stopping
2. Formidable breath control
3. Comfort in the water (no 'screamers' and 'panic')
4. Ability to touch the bottom of the pool with one's hand at a 3 foot depth.

### **Goals:**

1. Establish the swimmer in the crawl stroke with a correct lateral breathing pattern
2. Establish the swimmer in the backstroke.
3. Introduction to the fundamentals of butterfly and breaststroke
4. Introduction to the fundamentals of the competitive racing start
5. Introduction to the freestyle flip turns.
6. Introduction to the thrills of competitive swimming
7. Ability to complete a set of 10 x 50yds. Freestyle on a 1:30 interval
8. The ability to swim the 50 yd. freestyle and backstroke legally.

# **LIGHTNING TRAINING GROUP: BRONZE**

**Coaches: Peter Ninivaggi, Gordon Andrews Monthly Fees: \$85**

## **Requirements:**

1. Ability to complete a set of 10 x 50 yds. Freestyle on a 1:30" interval with a somersault at the wall
2. The ability to swim the 50 yd. freestyle and backstroke legally.
3. The emotional maturity to focus and listen to the coach during practice

## **Goals:**

1. Introduction to bi-lateral freestyle breathing
2. The establishment of the butterfly stroke
3. The establishment of the breaststroke
4. The establishment of the 100yd. Individual Medley event
5. The introductions of competitions beyond 25yds (50,100 & 200 Fr., 50bk, 50 breast, 50 fly)
6. The performance goal of achieving 'B' & 'BB' times as established by

USA Swimming: <https://www.lightningswimming.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/2020MotivationalTimes-Top16.pdf>

7. The introduction to body weight out of the water on deck
8. Training load goal of a 2500yds/hour prescribed workout that includes a 10 x 100 yds. of freestyle on a 2:10 minute interval
9. Have a consistency in practice attendance. The more one attends practice and focuses at the task at hand the greater one's athletic prowess will be attained.

# LIGHTNING TRAINING GROUP: DEVELOPMENTAL SENIOR

**Coaches: Gordon Andrews, Peter Ninivaggi, Sarah Andrews**

**Monthly Fees: \$100**

## Requirements:

1. Ability to compete in the 50-200 yd. freestyles with legal flip turns and bilateral breathing
2. Legal non-free strokes of 50yd butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke
3. Completion of a legal 100 yd. individual medley
4. Emotional maturity to focus and listen to the coach
5. Enthusiasm for the sport of competitive swimming (the beginnings of internal motivation and not attending practice because mom/dad 'forces' them).
6. The introduction to body weight out of the water on deck
7. Enhancement of training load at our most basic level (1,000 yards in: 45 minutes)
8. The emotional maturity to focus and listen to the coach during practice
9. Gain the emotional maturity that accompanies exerting oneself physically
10. Have a record of consistency in practice attendance in the Bronze Group.
11. Completion of a 3500 yd. prescribed workout that includes the following **test sets**: 9 x 100 yds of freestyle on a 2:10 minute interval (C Group) or 12 x 100 on 1:50 (B Group) or 12 x 100 on 1:40 (A Group)

## Goals:

1. Ability to compete in the 50,100,200,500, 1650 freestyle events
2. Ability to compete legally in the 50,100, 200 (11+ years) in the non-free strokes: butterfly, backstroke, and breaststroke
3. Ability to compete in the 200 & 400 IM
4. Athlete's in this group are expected to attend 100% of the practices scheduled (80% > a 'Red Flag' of commitment). **Lack of commitment to this group will have the athlete relegated to the 'Bronze' group thru the age of 14. After 14 we encourage the swimmer to consider another sport or perhaps swim "seasonal" during the summer high school development group and the 12-14 weeks of fall high school season with their prospective high schools if still interested in competitive swimming.**
5. Meticulous attendance recorded
6. Enhance one's physical prowess with the ability to train at a rate of 4-5K yards in a 1.5 hour period.
7. Enhance one's physical prowess with the ability to compete 15 x 100 on 1:30 (A Group) interval embedded in their overall workout
8. Gain in internal motivation, maturity, communications, goal setting, respect for authority, intensive dryland completion and self-confidence.
9. Attainment of 'BB' and Jr. Olympic Qualifying times.
10. **Meticulous ATTENDANCE records will be kept. Any athlete that falls below an 80% attendance rate will be relegated to a demotion. Those that complete the above attendance goals and are high school age will be promoted to the next level. 13 Year Old Swimmers will be promoted to the Adv. Sr. in the summer months and revert back to Dev. Sr. during the school months.**

# LIGHTNING TRAINING GROUP: ADVANCED SENIOR

**Coaches: Keith Coghlan, Sarah Andrews, Gordon Andrews**  
**Monthly Fees: \$105**

**-As of Jan. 2020 this group will have a 'Competitive Group' and a 'Recreation Group'**

## Requirements:

1. The ability to train at a rate of 1500-2000 yards per ½ hour w/ Training loads to 4-5K yards per 1.5h of training
2. The knowledge of the 4 competitive strokes, legal starts, turns, mental toughness.
3. 100% attendance and commitment to practice
4. Open communications and maturity with the coach and his staff
5. B-BB+ time standards based on USA Swimming motivational times
6. 13 years old (summer) High School age (entire year)
7. Emotional maturity, goal setting ability, communications with the coach(es) of that group

## Goals:

1. To see the individual athlete obtain their potential in their character and athleticism
2. Prepare an athlete to compete at the collegiate level if they so desire
3. Prepare an athlete for the bigger 'pool of life' where character separates one's greatest self-achievement from mediocrity.

### Attendance Requirement Competitive Group:

- 100% Practice Attendance expected to take your character & swimming to its full potential
- When attendance falls below an 80% level of TRAINING LOAD (TL=Cumulative total yards-meters in practice) a meeting with the AdvSr Coach will take place to address the movement to Rec Group or another swim program that meets your needs
- Exception: Extended illness/injury obviously
- Taking part in other sports is considered missing practice.
- **Rec Group:** No Attendance requirement, No Dryland Training is allowed, Competitions WILL NOT be entered unless requested by the swimmer

### "Red Flags":

Continued "patterns" of missing & lack of efforts & solid attitudes

Lack of Solid Efforts of Exertion ("Trying" {perceived exhaustions & repeat times monitored by coach}, patterns of getting out during 'Main Sets' for repetitive excuses is NOT a SOLID EFFORT)

### Situations & Sanctions:

- Lack of consistency in practices, communications, and efforts
  - Relegation to the Rec Group squad of the AdvSr group
- **80% Training Load of Attendance Not Reached (TL= % Yards Completed/Total Yards of Practice)**
  - Removal from Adv.Sr.Competitive Group and moved to Recreation Group w/suggestion of Summer Swim League Dev.High School group & swimming with their prospective high school practices during the fall
  - Discussion with swimmer leaving Lake Lytal Lightning and moving to a team that will meet that new team's attendance requirements which may be more to that swimmer's liking and less stringent standards

**Benefits of 100% Attendance:**

- Reaching one's full potential as a swimmer
- Both the revealing and building of one's individual positive character traits.....those traits that will be used throughout your lifetime!

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 6,000-8,000 yards/meters per session with Saturday practices. In the summer swimmers increasing their weekly totals to 60-70,000 yards/meters per week along We incorporate year around running, plyometric, stretching and functional 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.

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%, however a coach WILL mimic the level of commitment and positive attitude that the swimmer gives to the program.

Commitment, like communication, is a 2-way street. If a swimmer cannot 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, genetic predisposition of strength flexibility and anthropomorphic measurements, teach ability, 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.

Lightning's program has produced the nation's fastest developmental swimmers through Sr. National qualifiers, Jr . National qualifiers, high school state champions and All-Americans. Commitment to high school swimming regardless of high school attended was recognized when our high school Adv.Sr. program/coach was selected Palm Beach Post's 2010 High School Coach of the Year based on his commitment to high school swimming regardless of high school affiliation. **Lightning's Sr. group has a reputation amongst the USA's top college coaches as preparing its athletes for collegiate swimming and national levels of competition based on talent, commitment, and loyalty. Many of Lightning's high school athletes obtain swimming scholarships as a result of their commitment to competitive swimming as well as reach the top 1% of USA Swimming in attaining national competition standards. Our goal is to have a college ready athlete regardless if the swimmer wishes to extend their swimming beyond high school.**

## 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 top16, 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 cannot 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 cannot 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 nonnutritive 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. We encourage our AdvSr athletes to use supplements like Endurox R4 & Accelerade that promote proper glycogen, electrolyte, and pertinent nutrient replacements with their enhanced athleticism.

Well rounded meals of proteins, carbohydrates, fruits, vegetables, and grains are 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 ARE OUR BOOSTER CLUB**

**“Those who do all the things the coaching staff do 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 and the staff makes all final decisions that are deemed in the best interests of the swimmers in both his or her athletic prowess and 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, we encourage our parents to help in all the functions of running a successful swim team program, communicate with an individual child’s coach if there are questions, and be a source of unconditional love & support for their swimmer.

Our Parents Booster Club has several parents who are akin to our mission, home swim meets, and have answers that may pop up that you feel are not addressed in this handbook. Feel free to ask the staff who those parents are. Our most valuable parents are those that trust our long standing program, our staff, and our mission. Our most valuable parents unconditionally give at our home swim meets in the areas of timing, hospitality, security, officiating, etc. etc.

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.

## 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, please consider the great benefits of being an excellent and giving role model; you are being the best example for your child. Get involved/Get Noticed~!

### ***The Bulletin Board & Web Site/ E-Mail/Remind.com/FACEBOOK***

We strongly encourage you to use our bulletin board & web site ([www.lightningswimming.org](http://www.lightningswimming.org)) for personal top times, meet results, meet entries, upcoming meets, meet directions, warm-up times, and 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.

We also have a **team bulletin board** in the entranceway that carries important information. If you do not take the time to read the posted announcements, you cannot always rely on your youngster to convey complete and detailed information. Most of the questions you may have are posted in these areas and on our website.

**Remind.com** has been established for classroom teachers but has become a great 1-way group texting platform in order to push out immediate information (weather-pool situations, swim meet reminders, congratulatory texts, etc etc).

NUMBERS ARE AVAILABLE AT THE LAKE LYTAL POOL.

The Lake Lytal Lightning **FACEBOOK** page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/413661945336928/>) has been established for congratulatory comments, pics, personal congrats (birthdays, swimmer achievements, special occasions, ....) etc. that surround the team and its staff. It is a closed group reserved for the swim team members and its staff and their families. If you are a part of the team, and not a part of our **FACEBOOK** group, feel free to request to be added on.

The **Advanced Senior Group** encourages communications to coaches when situations arise that may prevent a swimmer from attending practices/being late, etc. Coaches DO NOT engage in extra interpersonal communications with swimmers unless swimmers have particular questions initiated by the swimmer themselves concerning practices & meets. The staff has a policy of not engaging in multiple ongoing texting conversions & topics outside of the professionalism of program topics, its practices, and clarifications needed.



## 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 long standing swim programs since 1996. 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 (due to the fact our staff doesn't know all of the parents, many parents simply "drop-off" their child at pool and not around, or perhaps the parent is working out in the park like many do.)
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 'timeout' 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 15 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. Lake Lytal's mission to see a swimmer reach their greatest potential cannot be attained without a commitment to our program.

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 supposed to go to?

Lake Lytal Lightning attends many swim meets per year while hosting meets us. These meets are sanctioned and governed by USA Swimming, the presiding body over the best competitive swimmers in the world. 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.**

**Developmental 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 or Sr. Champs qualifying time in a particular event, they cannot 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 strictly 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 Area I Developmental Championship meet.

**FGC OPEN MEETS:** these meets are opened to all swimmers of all abilities in the Florida Gold Coast (FGC) Area. Depending on a swimmers ability and maturity level Developmental & FGC Open meets may have cross criteria met for both meets will be up to the discretion of the coach. Usually we have our Dev. Sr. and Adv. Sr attend these meets and our Red & Bronze swimmers attend the Developmental Meets

**FGC Invitational Meets:** Invitation only, same criteria as above however there may be a time entry standard involved.

# Championship Meets

The FGC North BB Champs, 14 & Under FGC Junior Olympics & The 15-18 year old FGC Sr. Championship meets are often the pinnacles of our swim season. The Junior Olympics or JOs have qualifying times which usually are near 'A' times (See Motivational Time Standards on the "[Time Standards](#)" page of the website, yet can be faster.

**The FGC North BB Championships** are for those swimmers who have not yet achieved JO or Sr. Champs qualifying times. These meets are offered twice per year, spring and summer. Swimmers must have achieved a 'BB' time standard to compete.

**The Palm Beach County 'B' Championships** is a Developmental Championship with 'BB>' level swimmers competing in a timed final championship style meet

**FGC Senior Championships** are often the pinnacle of the season for many 15 & Overs; this meet has Championship time standards to be met. Oftentimes swimmers will participate in both the FGC Junior Olympics and the FGC Senior Championships if it deems in the best interest of team scoring and helps the athlete's prowess.

## ALL-STAR and ZONE CHAMPIONSHIPS:

The Florida vs Florida Gold Coast All-Star Meet is a select team from the top 6 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 LSCs 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 cannot compete at zones.

## Sectional Championships

This is an upper level championship meet and the beginning level of potential national championship qualifiers.

Qualifying standards exist (Sectional Cuts) in order to compete.

This meet has the top swimmers in the state of Florida and beyond competing against one another and is held twice per year; spring and summer.

## Futures Championships

This meet, introduced in 2015 will have 3 meets throughout the country. Florida is assigned to the Midwest Section of the Futures Championships. Qualifying times are faster than Sectional Championships and Slower than Jr. National Championships.

## U.S. Jr./Sr. Nationals, U.S. Open and Olympic Trials.

These meets are the apex of USA swimming. There are no age groups (except for Jr. Nationals which is restricted to 18+), these levels have OPEN 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. Jr. Nationals takes place twice a year in Dec. & August. The Olympic Trials takes place once every four years and represent the absolute apex of competitive swimming domestically.

## 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, and States). Every high school season has All-American and Academic 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 many levels 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. Our yearly meet schedule is posted on the website as well. 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 COMPETITIVE program!***
2. A preliminary entry list will be posted on our bulletin board approximately 7-10 days prior to the meet start. Please communicate with the coach if you have a conflict with the swim meet before Finalized entries are submitted to the meet host after preliminary entries have been posted and communicated to swimmer/parent. Please stay in tune with your preliminary entries and communicate with your coach. **WE ARE A COMPETITIVE SWIM TEAM, SO PLEASE RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDING SWIM COMPETITIONS.**
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.*

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 & under) & 1+ HOURS (9 & overs) PRIOR TO MEET START TIME IN ORDER TO HAVE ADEQUATE WARM-UP TIME. A 'REMIND' IS SENT OUT TO HELP SWIMMERS REMEMBER**

#### **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 performance. 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.
4. We ask that parents be a source of unconditional support for their child regardless of performance.
5. As a parent remembers to don't let your negative emotions rule what you say or show to your child. This is a complicated sport with peaks, valleys, and plateaus that accompany it. Keep the „big" picture in mind. Trust a proven program.

#### **C. After the Meet**

1. The staff will post the meet results on our 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. Personal Best swims, important standards achieved, and Team Records broken are often listed on the website as well.
3. An ongoing list of Personal Best Times is kept up to date on our bulletin board and web site
4. An ongoing list of team records is kept.
5. 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 accidently 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 bouncy factors, and internal drive...all of these things have been often referred to as "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 hard work 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 (some exception during summer doubles). Females 1 piece suits only. Males brief or jammer style suits. Drag suits are highly recommended to help in the development of swimming power. Swimmers please have suits that are modest in appearance and **not a distraction to training.**

**Racing Suits:** It is mandatory that all swimmers wear the Lake Lytal Lightning team suit made available from Melanie Andrews for our swim meets. Lightning Team caps are mandatory. These suits are a nylon/Lycra blend with the LLL logo on it. High tech suits are discouraged except for championship competition as our program's goal is to see the swimmer make the swim suit and not the suit make the swimmer. High tech performance suits are encouraged at championship competitions. Exception: Last meet before aging up.

## Practice Equipment

For those whose hair gets in their eyes while swimming, a haircut or a swim cap is mandatory. 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. Goggles are also mandatory.

### All Groups:

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

### Developmental & Advanced Senior:

1. Swimmers must have fins as a 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. Advanced Senior Group: Z2 Zoomers are a part of your equipment as well.
2. A finis center mount snorkel with a low profile is extremely important to our training.
3. Hand Paddles that are only slightly larger than the swimmer's hand. (Silver/Senior Only)
4. Net bags to hold your equipment. 5 bins are available to store your equipment bags are available.
5. Small style kickboard only & pull buoys (provided by the team)
6. A drag suit is highly recommended as a part of your training attire for both male and female swimmers.
7. Surfer baggies are not allowed as they inhibit proper body technique.
8. **Sport drink 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 events 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, and 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.

- Cold Weather: our pool is heated! We will only cancel practices if we deem the pool too cold for practices and not prove a benefit to the swimmer. If air temperatures are below 45 degrees practices may be cancelled and all swimmers involved will be notified at least 2 hours prior or the night before.
  - **REMIND.com: Please sign up for REMIND. These are 1 way text messages sent from the staff to your cell phone when situations concerning practices or meets arise. The sign-up numbers are on bulletin board**

**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 561-310-4924 (prior to 8 pm) or leave a message on my voice mail or speak with me between practice sessions. We encourage you to speak directly with the child's individual coach first.

**CONSIDERATION FOR TEAMMATES and STAFF:** We ask that a parent 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. Please communicate with the coaching staff if you feel you will be late in consideration.

**DO NOT LET RUMOR, GOSSIP, HIDDEN INNUENDOS, OR PERCEIVED COACH/SWIMMER INTERRELATIONSHIPS FROM THE FAR SIDE OF THE POOL DECK DISTRACT FROM OUR OVERALL LONGTERM MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY OF CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT. IT IS EXTREMELY EASY TO FALL INTO THE TRAP OF EXAGERRATION OF 1 PERCEIVED NEGATIVE WHILE MISSING THE 10 REAL POSITIVES THAT TAKE PLACE ON A DAILY BASIS AT PRACTICES.**

## 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. YOU ARE ALLOWED TO SEE YOUR ATHLETES BUT IT IS NOT TO THE BENEFIT OF YOUR CHILD IF HE/SHE SEES YOU; THIS IS A PROVEN GUIDELINE IN ALL SPORTS. DO NOT PROHIBIT YOUR CHILD FROM BECOMING INTERNALLY MOTIVATED; KEEP OUT OF THEIR SIGHT FOR THEIR BENEFIT.**

## 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 a part of. Remarks based on negative emotions and not objectivity can have lasting detrimental impacts on your child's psychological development in sports. 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.

## NO PARENT COACHING ALLOWED on DECK!

- **If we sense a parent is coaching his or her athlete during a practice session, that athlete will be removed from practice so the parent can coach that child on his/her own in the public lap swimming section of the facility or at the facility of their convenience.**
- **Camera/filming during practice. Please refrain from filming of practices. Remember you are filming other underage children as well that are not yours which may make parents of those particular swimmers uncomfortable.**
- **We encourage parents to learn to separate themselves from the practice situation to help your child internalize what the staff in its mission, philosophy & athletic goals are trying to instill.**



# 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 time's 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 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 odd of becoming an Olympian is about .0002%.

**PARENT VOLUNTEERS: OUR SWIM MEETS, FA MILY 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 INTREGAL 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 EVERY ONE 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 parents 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 Keith Coghlan/Coach Pete Ninivaggi**

**Coach Melanie Andrews/Coach Sarah Andrews (Strength & Conditioning)/Coach Jackie Schaub**

**Team Administrator/Treasurer: Melanie Andrews**

# PLEASE READ THE BELOW ADDENDUM CONCERNING SWIM PARENTING:

## 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, and 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 much 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 you, 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, and 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 remonstrance's, 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 competitor's 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 Torpedo 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 no 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 every day 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 "coach ability". 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 coach ability, 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 mean 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 judgment 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 super able 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 rollercoasters. 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 "over coach" as a rule, especially at meets. "Over coaches" 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, over coaching 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 over coaching.

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, and 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