

News For

SWIM PARENTS

Published by The American Club Swimming Association
2101 North Andrews Ave., Suite 107
Fort Lauderdale FL 33311

When Swimmers Return From Camp

Concern: My daughter was able to do a 50 meter freestyle in 32 seconds from a push off in practice while at camp, which is her best time. Now that she is back home, she can't even do a 32 in a swim meet.

Response: A coach we know took two nationally ranked age group swimmers to a USS elite training camp several years ago. He told us how amazed he was to observe and time with his own watch these young swimmers perform sets in times they had never done at home.

Was it better coaching? The swimmers told him that it was a matter of competition and a matter of pride. They worked so hard in six workouts over three days that it took them over a week to recover once back home.

Too often swimmers fall into a niche at home where they EXPECT to out-perform some swimmers and EXPECT to be out-performed by other swimmers. Going to swim camps gives swimmers a chance to be a star away from home. Many swimmers will do exceptional things that can take them several weeks or in some cases, a whole season to duplicate at home. This is not a problem with coaching, it is a problem with what swimmers expect of themselves in a given environment.

If the swimmer can return home and break out of the EXPECTED, they have learned a great lesson.

In addition to the above explanation, coaches are concerned that some camps give swimmers times that are not altogether accurate. Swim camps are businesses and they thrive by bringing swimmers back year after year for positive experiences and by having swimmers spread the good news of their positive experience. One of the most positive experiences a swimmer can have is going a life time best time. Parents and coaches should be wary of best times reported during practice swims or "time trials". Accept only times done in sanctioned swim meets.

Concern: My child learned stroke techniques she never learned at home and trained differently than she does at home. Why doesn't the coach teach this way?

Response: Keep in mind several things:

1. Communicate with the coach. Ask about the "new" techniques and training the swimmer learned at camp. Often times "new" techniques or training are not new at all, but are simply taught with different words.
2. Swimming performance is not produced

by a direct cause and effect relationship. There are many ways to teach a given technique and there are many techniques that can produce a given result. Techniques used at camp may simply be a different, though not better, attempt to produce the same result which can be produce at home.

3. Children are very impressionable by their temporary new coaches at camps. As an example, imagine how you, a parent, feels when your child returns home from home practice one day and announces that he is now going to drink three glasses of milk each day because the coach said it is a good idea, even though you have been trying to get your child to do this for years! Swimmers go to camp and hear the same things the coach at home has trying to teach but because it is being said by a new camp coach, it is now important and the child will enthusiastically accept this advice as the best way.

4. Just because it is done at camp a certain way, does not mean it is the only way or the best way. Staff members at camps are often times less experienced and less knowledgeable than your home coach.

5. Be open and cooperative with your home coach. Many coaches do not like swimmers going away to swimming camps because swimmers return home tired, out of synch with the season training plan, and full of "new" ideas that may not be very new. When selecting a camp for you child, ask the coach to help you select a good camp. There a many very good camps.

6. If you have a young and relatively inexperienced coach make sure that you turn your child's experience at camp into a POSITIVE one for the coach and team and not a NEGATIVE one for the coach. Share thoughts with the coach rather than demand changes based on something experienced at a camp that is perceived as being the right and only way. Help your coach grow,

send your coach to camp! You can make sure your coach has every opportunity to be up on the latest in technique, training, administration, and sports psychology by sending your coach to the ASCA World Clinic in the fall and the USS Coaches College in late spring.