

# **1 IMPORTANT SQUAD TRAINING INFORMATION**

## **1.1 COACHING PHILOSOPHY - NUNAWADING SWIMMING CLUB**

At Nunawading we aim to provide for the requirements of all swimmers in an environment where each child can train and compete to their own level of ability. Each training squad is designed to provide for the specific capabilities and competition demands of the swimmers in the group.

To achieve personal satisfaction and success at all levels attention must be paid to the following details:

For swimmers to participate effectively in a number of training sessions per week it is necessary for them to develop self-discipline, enabling them to get enough sleep, complete their homework, perform at school and follow a healthy diet.

External disciplinary factors, which are applied by the coaches throughout the squads, are reinforced by common rules - a necessity when dealing with groups of athletes in training and competition situations, which are performance (success) orientated.

Some of the main rules, which apply, are as follows:

- Swimmers must bring to training the following equipment in good condition. Fins, 2 pairs of goggles, pool buoy, kick board, paddles and band. Please name all equipment.
- Swimmers are expected on the pool deck 10 minutes minimum prior to the starting time in order to prepare and stretch out.
- Parents are asked to sit out of eye contact with their children, as the child will often modify their behaviour because of the parent's presence. They also become distracted from the tasks they are being set by the coach.
- Parents are asked NOT to bring stop watches to work outs and time their children. Times at training often bear no relation to competition. Training times are only an indication to the coach of the input required from the swimmer.
- Swimmers are required to attend as many training sessions as possible.
- Swimmers are required to follow the directions of the coach without delay.
- At competition, swimmers are asked to compete honestly, and speak to their coach before and after their races.
- Club uniform is to be worn at all swim meets where the club is being represented. The uniform consists of club swim costume (any bathers which are black, navy blue or royal blue), club swim cap; club T-shirt and tracksuit or shorts.

These rules are simple and necessary to provide an environment, which will foster the development of successful swimmers incorporated in a well organised and successful program.

## **1.2 'NO DIVE' POLICY**

In order to provide the safest possible training environment for all swimmers, it has been decided to ban dives and all head-first entry into the shallow end of all training facilities used by the club. Entry to the pool (at the shallow end) during training must be a feet first entry. Diving may still be undertaken during training provided it is at the deep end of all pools and is under the supervision of the squad coach. This 'no dive' policy will be strictly enforced and we ask that all swimmers cooperate with their squad coaches.

### **1.3 HELPFUL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND SWIMMERS**

Many parents go into shock when they are confronted with the time involvement of swimming compared to other sports like basketball, football, netball and many other sports. The reason for this contrast is that the young body is in a foreign environment in the water, where it has to master many difficult skills unrelated to land based activities. Motor skills, fitness and strength improvements need to be developed concurrently and at intervals frequent enough to maintain a steady adaptation to the stimulus, hence the need for multiple training sessions per week.

#### **1.3.1 Training Loads**

This topic is discussed in detail later in this booklet, but the training volumes and intensities vary from group to group depending on the age, experience, ability and competition requirements of the individual.

Our coaches are experienced in assessing the requirements of the individual and will increase or decrease the swimmers load according to how they are adapting.

#### **1.3.2 Progression**

The coaches determine progression within the squad system, both objectively and subjectively. Obviously certain objective criteria must be met in order to train in specific groups, but it is important also for the coach to have the opportunity to make a subjective judgement regarding the admission or withdrawal of a swimmer to a particular squad. For example, we could have a swimmer who easily meets the time standard of a strong squad but may not be prepared to make the training commitment expected from that particular group. In this case, it would be pertinent for the coach to allocate the swimmer to a group, which requires a less rigorous routine.

#### **1.3.3 Training for Swimming and its effects**

There are many reasons why people train for swimming, but the three most important ones are:-

- (1) To improve competition performances
- (2) To be involved in a disciplined exercise regime
- (3) To be a member of a group with common interests and a desire to achieve.

One of the above reasons will be the main reason for a swimmers involvement, as individuals have differing needs. For example; one particular individual may have a far greater personal need to be involved in a disciplined routine than to improve their competitive performances, whereas, on the other hand, competitive performances may be a priority to someone else.

It is vital for us to understand that there is great physical and psychological diversity in the human race. This diversity or variability is carried through to the individual's capability to train. Some people are able to train hard for long periods, whereas others are not as resilient. Coaches are skilled at recognising a persons training capabilities and under the ideal condition will subject them to the appropriate routine. It is important that the parent has confidence in the coach's judgement on these matters. Too much training or not enough training can end lead to the same result - poor performance.

The squads at Nunawading are structured in such a way as to allow for and satisfy the individual differences stated above.

Training to improve one's swimming performance is no simple process but there are some basic rules, which must be observed to gain the optimum response. The body's adaptation to training depends on the following factors:- Frequency, duration, volume, intensity and a combination of these.

The principle underlying these factors is progressive overload. Progressive overload is the term used to describe the gradual increase in the training components to stimulate a positive adaptation process on the body with the ultimate goal of improved performances.

When a swimmer begins training they may come twice a week for 45 minutes, then 3 times a week for 1 hour, then 4 times per week totalling 6 hours, and so on. Over a period of time the volume of swimming completed and the intensity of the training increases.

Usually, when swimmers are young (8-12 years) and training relatively few sessions per week, their performances will improve, mainly due to improvements in their physical fitness, technique, general skill development and natural growth. As the training load increases substantially, the immediate competition performances can be impaired due to fatigue from work outs. Swimmers in this situation are usually involved in squads, which are geared to a number of main competitions per year requiring hopefully a best, or near to best, performance at each one. To achieve this, the athlete is placed under a substantial training overload which forces the body to adapt, but is rarely allowed to recover completely so the adaptations continue to take place. As the major event approaches, the load is gradually lightened allowing major adaptation to occur, and with it, top performances.

Most events in swimming contain a majority aerobic component and a minority anaerobic component (sprinting for 25-50m). From this breakdown we can deduce that the greatest gains can be made by training the aerobic energy systems of the body which involves substantial, frequent doses of short rest interval and distance training (to a lesser degree). In fact, most of the world's great swimmers have a strong aerobic background in their age group training years.

Our muscles are made up of basically two different types of fibres:- sprint fibres and endurance fibres. The proportions of these fibres varies from person to person, but, obviously the more sprint fibres you have the better you will perform over the shorter, faster events.

The sprinter type swimmers often have difficulty in performing the volumes or short cycles that endurance people do, because their muscles cannot assimilate as much oxygen. These people are encouraged to do as much work in this zone as possible, usually at slower speeds to enhance their aerobic power. These swimmers often appear (unjustly) to be poor trainers, but in actual fact may be trying very hard.

#### **1.3.4 Psychological Aspects**

Our experiences in the sport of swimming can in many aspects be positive or negative depending on how objective or philosophical we want to be.

As parents most of us have come to realise that child rearing is a complex task and sometimes we have difficulty being objective with our children's actions and reactions in certain situations. In most situations we will find that children will generally try to please because then they usually receive a favourable response from their parent, teacher, coach or peers. In stressful situations however, this predictable behaviour often becomes unpredictable, as the pleasing response the child may be trying to evoke is not as easy to manifest.

For instance, a child swims an event resulting in a performance, which does not live up to expectations, they then feel that they have failed and they become frustrated. The child may feel inadequate, and may react in a number of ways - they will avoid the people they were hoping to please and receive recognition from, they may speak uncharacteristically rudely, they may be aggressive towards inert objects or accept that these types of performances are normal on occasion and resolve to do better next time.

It is important for parents, athletes and coaches to understand the realistic capabilities of the athlete, without being restrictive of ambition. Swimming is a sport where you can be compared to

other individuals and their performances as well as the athletes own individual performances over a period of time, the latter being the recommended option. This is particularly true for age group swimming because of the huge physical, skill, and psychological discrepancies of development in adolescent people. The abnormally brilliant young age-grouper is rarely abnormally brilliant when they reach the open age groups.

Ambition can be a source of motivation or a source of destruction for the young athlete. It is our role as parents and coaches to help guide our children to achieve their ambitions and not employ them as an instrument to fulfil our own. We have to constantly remind ourselves that the children are in the sport for their enjoyment and we are there to support them. This does not mean, however, that they are not expected to give it their all or shirk the commitment that is expected of them by the parent, coach and club.

The pressure, which we place on athletes and athletes on themselves, can have far reaching effects on performance and self esteem. Pressure arises out of risk taking in one form or another. In swimming, the pressure comes from committing yourself to the risk of failure. An individual's perception of failure is the non-achievement of goals set by themselves, coaches, parents or peers. The person most singularly qualified to assist in setting goals or reaffirm goals that are realistic, is the coach. Parents can sometimes be helpful in setting goals but are likely to be less accurate than the coach. Sometimes it is appropriate to set goals in relation to the opposition, and sometimes in relation to the swimmers past performances.

Undue pressure on a swimmer to perform usually results in the competitor focusing on the final result of a race rather than how they should go about swimming the race to achieve the result they desire.

Sure signs of swimmers succumbing to pressure are excuses being made for a poor performance prior to the event. This is particularly evident when swimmers believe they cannot achieve the goals, which have been set for them, fearing that they will be seen as a lesser person in the event of failure without a reason.

#### **1.4 GUIDELINES FOR SWIMMING PARENTS**

Swimming parents all have one thing in common – they want the best for their children. Your child's swimming experience should be an enjoyable one, which builds confidence and self esteem. Your involvement is vital to this experience, and can be enhanced by observing the following guidelines:

##### **The parent / athlete / coach team**

Each person within this 'team' has a specific role to play. Overlapping the roles becomes confusing and often detrimental to the swimmer.

- **The parent** provides emotional and practical support for the athlete.
- **The coach** provides technical expertise, and motivation in the form of structure, vision and challenge.
- **The athlete** brings the raw material and the desire to succeed.
- Allow the coach to do the job you pay them to do. Realise what is being done with your child now is part of a plan for the long-term development of your child's swimming career.

##### **Swimming is something your child chooses to do.**

- **'There is nothing heavier than great potential'** – avoid putting expectations on your children (even in the form of 'motivation')
- Separate your child's achievements from their value as a person (and your value as a parent) – **love the person, not the swimmer.**
- Measure performances against your child's personal goals

- Allow your child **to take responsibility** for their swimming involvement, their 'successes' and their 'failures'.

#### **What can you do?**

- You are a role model for your children – your behaviour in the swimming environment never goes unnoticed. Deal with outcomes and experiences in a mature, controlled manner.
- Show your support for your children's choice of sport by becoming involved in the running of the club and of competitions you attend.
- Allow motivation to come from the enjoyment – extrinsic rewards (e.g. payment) are always detrimental in the long run.

### **1.5 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

For many reasons performances of individuals will vary over a career and within a season. Swimmers may stagnate, regress or improve. It is common to observe stagnation or regression in female athletes post puberty because, for many, the natural hormonal activity dictates major changes to their body shape and metabolism and may no longer be as streamlined as they were prior to this period. Weight can sometimes become a problem for girls at this stage requiring them to be vigilant with respect to their diet.

Normal growth spurts can have a detrimental effect on training and performance; often swimmers need to have their workload reduced or be completely rested at these times.

Illness has obvious effects on swimmers, although they can train with many medical problems, constant observation must be maintained.

Schooling in the latter years becomes a problem for training but education must come first. With careful planning and organisation, training can be maintained at a level high enough to ensure improvement.

Lack of interest and enthusiasm will also result in waning performances. Often swimmers in this state will not want to take on the responsibility of making the decision to withdraw from training and will develop many reasons as to why they are not swimming well. It is difficult to admit that your heart is no longer in it, or that, you may not be able to swim any faster.

Hopefully the information contained in the last few pages will help with your understanding of swimming as a sport, both training and competition, and some responses your child may display in certain situations.