

**PARENTS...YOUR ATHLETE NEEDS YOU**

To have a successful program there must be understanding and cooperation among parents, swimmers, and coaches. The progress your youngster makes depends to a great extent on this triangular relationship. It is with this in mind that we ask you to consider this section as you join the San Luis Obispo Swim Club and reacquaint yourself with this section if you are a returning San Luis Obispo Swim Club parent.

You have done a great deal to raise your child. You create the environment in which they are growing up. Your child is a product of your values, the structure you have provided, and the model you have been. Human nature, however, is such that a parent loses some of his/her ability to remain detached and objective in matters concerning his/hers children's athletics. The following guidelines will help you keep your child's development in the proper perspective and help your child reach his/her full potential as an athlete.

The coach is the Coach! We want your swimmer to relate to his or her coach as soon as possible concerning swimming matters. This relationship between coach and swimmer produces best results. When parents interfere with opinions as to how the swimmer should swim or train, it causes considerable, and oftentimes insurmountable, confusion as to whom the swimmer should listen to. If you have a problem, concern, or complaint, please contact the coach.

Best kind of parent: The coach's job is to motivate and constructively criticize the swimmer's performance. It is the parent's job to supply the love, recognition, and encouragement necessary to make the child work harder in practice, which in turn gives him/her the confidence to perform well in competition.

Ten and Under: Swimmers in this age group are the most inconsistent swimmers and this can be frustrating for parents, coaches, and the swimmer alike! Parents and coaches must be patient and permit these youngsters to learn to love the sport. When a young swimmer first joins SLO, there may be a brief period in which he/she appears to slow down. This is a result of the added concentration on stroke technique, but this will soon lead to much faster swims for the individual.

Even the very best swimmer will have meets where they do not do their best times. These "plateaus" are a normal part of swimming. Over the course of a season times should improve. Please be supportive of these "poor" meets. The older swimmers may have only two or three meets a year for which they will be rested and tapered.

**PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

Please make every effort to have your swimmers at practice on time. Realize that your child is working hard and give all the support you can. Encourage good diet and sleeping habits. They will serve your children well.

1. The greatest contribution you can make to your swimmer's progress is to be a loving, supportive parent. In this handbook is a reprint of an article called, "The Ten Commandments for Parents of Athletic Children". It offers some very useful and sound advice.
2. In the Appendix section of this handbook, there is a copy of the "Terms and Conditions for Participation in the San Luis Obispo Swim Club" that you signed when you registered with the Club. Please familiarize yourself with these items.
3. San Luis Obispo Swim Club has a reputation of hosting swim meets of the highest caliber. A significant percentage of our operating budget is generated from the Club hosting at least three swim meets each year. One of the commitments made when you joined the San Luis Obispo Swim Club was to help work our own swim meets. We usually host a meet in July, one in November, and one in April. Every family is expected to provide one worker per session of the meet.
4. It is hereby the stated policy of the San Luis Obispo Swim Club, coaches of the San Luis Obispo Swim Club shall not engage in the practice of driving swimmers, except for the following:
  - Emergency situations (i.e. swimmer left behind)
  - Parental obligations (parent/coaches who carpool with other families)
  - Team trips

## COMMUNICATION

**Web Page** – Your best source of immediate information is our team's webpage at [www.sloseahawks.org](http://www.sloseahawks.org). The web site is constantly updated to provide the latest information for all interested in the San Luis Obispo Seahawks.

**Weekly Updates** – Every Monday SLO team members will receive an e-mail giving that week's pertinent information – practice changes, deadlines, latest meet information and news. If you do not receive this e-mail send the Head Coach your e-mail address.

**Family File** -Most written communication, such as the newsletter, meet information sheets and schedules, cut times, etc., will be put in a file folder on deck that has your family name on it. It is the swimmer's responsibility to check their folder daily.

**Water Log** - The team publishes a monthly newsletter called "Water Log". Results of the last swim meet general information from the coaching staff and announcements from the Board of Directors are covered in the newsletter. Make sure you and your swimmers read the contents of this when it is distributed.

**Bulletin Boards** - The bulletin boards at the pool provide meet information in detail and entry summaries for upcoming meets. It is the swimmer and parents responsibility to double check each meet entry after it is posted. Mistakes sometimes happen in meet entries, however, it is much easier to fix them one month prior to a meet than on the actual day of competition.

When contacting the coaches, please be considerate. The best way to speak with the coaches is to meet them after practice. They usually make themselves available for 15 minutes to answer questions, provide information, etc. Sending a note to the coach with your swimmer is a good way to get information to them. Office Phone number is: 543-9515.

## PROBLEMS WITH THE COACH?

One of the traditional swim team communication gaps is that some parents seem to feel more comfortable in discussing their disagreements over coaching philosophy with other parents rather than taking them directly to the coach. Not only is the problem never resolved that way, but in fact this approach often results in new problems being created. Listed below are some guidelines for a parent raising some difficult issues with a coach:

1. Try to keep foremost in your mind that you and the coach have the best interests of your child at heart. If you trust that the coach's goals match yours, even though his/her approach may be different, you are more likely to enjoy good rapport and a constructive dialogue.
2. Keep in mind that the coach must balance your perspective of what is best for your child with the needs of the team or a training group that can range in size from 20-200 members. On occasion, an individual child's interest may need to be subordinate to the interests of the group, but in the long run the benefits of membership in the group compensate for occasional short-term inconvenience.
3. If your child swims for an assistant coach, always discuss the matter first with that coach, following the same guidelines and preconceptions noted above. If the assistant coach cannot satisfactorily resolve your concern, then ask that the head age group coach or head coach join the dialogue as a third party.
4. If another parent uses you as a sounding board for complaints about the coach's performance or policies, listen empathetically, but encourage the other parent to speak directly to the coach. He/she is the only one who can resolve the problem.

## The Ten Commandments for Parents of Athletic Children

Reprinted from The Young Athlete by Bill Burgess included in "The Swim Parents Newsletter"

- I** Make sure your child knows that - win or lose, scared or heroic – you love him/her, appreciate their efforts, and are not disappointed in them. This will allow them to do their best without a fear of failure. Be the person in their life they can look to for constant positive reinforcement.
- II** Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic ability, his/hers competitive attitude, their sportsmanship, and their actual skill level.
- III** Be helpful, but don't coach him/her on the way to the pool or on the way back, or at breakfast, and so on. It's tough not to, but it's a lot tougher for the child to be inundated with advice, pep talks and often critical instruction.
- IV** Teach them to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be "out there trying," to be working to improve his/her swimming skills and attitudes. Help him/her to develop the feel for competing, for trying hard, for having fun.
- V** Try not to re-live your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure; you lost as well as won. You were frightened, you backed off at times, and you were not always heroic. Don't pressure your child because of your pride. Athletic children need their parents so you must not withdraw. Just remember there is a thinking, feeling, sensitive free spirit out there in that uniform who needs a lot of understanding, especially when his world turns bad. If he/she is comfortable with you – win or lose – he/she is on their way to maximum achievement and enjoyment.
- VI** Don't compete with the coach. If the coach becomes an authority figure, it will run from enchantment to disenchantment, etc., with your athlete.
- VII** Don't compare the skill, courage, or attitudes of your child with other members of the team, at least within his/her hearing.
- VII** Get to know the coach so that you can be assured that his/her philosophy; attitudes, ethics, and knowledge are such that you are happy to have your child under his/her leadership.
- IX** Always remember that children tend to exaggerate, both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before over-reacting.
- X** Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. Some of us can climb mountains, and are afraid to fight. Some of us will fight, but turn to jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain areas. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear, but a means of doing something in spite of fear or discomfort.