

Courtesy of Stephen Henderson

To many, it appears pretty straight forward what a swim coaches job is, what they like about it, and what they aren't crazy about. Sure, coaches enjoy seeing their swimmers and team perform well, success is inevitable in a coaches gratification. To that end, it goes without saying that coaches don't always jump at the chance to give up their weekend to stand on a pool deck cheering on their team. Rarely being home before 7:00 on a week night is not a huge perk of the job either. Yet, there are so many rewarding elements of coaching that happen behind the closed doors of the pool deck, parts of the job that make every weekend on deck feel worth it.

As coaches, we love to see our swimmers...

1. Make Connections

Coaching is teaching, and all of us spend a lot of time doing just that. We teach our swimmers skills and technique, racing strategy, and life skills; such as how to face adversity and overcome disappointment. Whether our swimmers master a turn, or nail their pacing in a 500 Free which they once struggled with, we take pride in that. Seeing our swimmers apply our teachings on the way to being successful is such an added plus, and gives us a gratifying sense of achievement.

2. Embrace a Challenge

Nobody can argue that swimming is one of the most physically demanding sports. Competitive swimmers all work incredibly hard throughout 11 months of the year just to shave tenths of a second off their personal best time. While the grind of every day training can be difficult on swimmers, it can also be tough on coaches, who try to keep workouts engaging and motivating for their long term success. Our favorite practices are the ones where our swimmers are working hard and happy about doing so. Difficult sets and workouts don't always need to be bland and repetitive, but can have challenges set with incentives and motivating variables included to lighten the mood. Seeing swimmers recognize achievement in a workout will leave any coach in a good mood when they finish that practice. We constantly want our swimmers to do what they love, and to love what they do.

3. Grow Up

All great coaches have two passions for their job, passion for sport, and passion for people. Swim coaches are unique in that our seasons are three times longer than your ordinary soccer league, and that we typically get to coach swimmers for two or more consecutive seasons. In that time, we witness our kids change and grow up as individuals. We face triumph and failure together, sometimes over the course of several years. When you see swimmers upwards of 8x each week for workout, you get to a point where you can almost read their thoughts. Swim coaches share a bond with their groups that is unique, and we greatly enjoy being invested in our swimmers' lives, far outside what they do in the pool.

4. Say Thank You

These two words mean a lot coming from parents of swimmers, but nothing melts our heart more than when a swimmer thanks us. No matter what the age, it never gets old to be shown appreciation, whether at the end of practice or meet, or during the holiday season. Coaching is a selfless job, and we all work hard to be the very best for our kids on a daily basis, no exceptions. When our swimmers recognize our work, our sacrifice, and our passion, we are always truly grateful. Hearing “thank you” from a swimmer can turn a tough day right side up instantly. Nothing beats it.

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