Holiday Training…or, How NOT to Undo the Work You Have Done

Are you planning on traveling over the Christmas break holidays? Will you be staying home? Either way, you have a nice break from school. No classes. No tests. No homework. It is good to take this break between semesters. Your mind and spirit need that kind of refreshing time to be with family, celebrate and enjoy 8 hours put back into your day.

However, this is not a good time to take a break from swimming. Many a season has been sent to the trash heap; many goals have been rendered unattainable by taking inappropriate and prolonged breaks from the season.

Here is how it works:

➢ The short course season begins relatively slowly, emphasizing skills, habits and a gradual increase in practice volume (yardage, smileage, etc.) and intensity. This allows for the athletes to adapt properly and make the conditioning/strength gains necessary for the championship season, about 7 later.

➢ Along the way, their progress can be measured, not just in the times they achieve, but in how they structure their races and handle 3-day meets.

➢ Rest assured…they are pursuing their goals and getting more and more stoked about the end of season possibilities. They are also getting more tired and stressed; tired from the accumulation of homework and tests, later nights and more difficult practices.

➢ The beginning of this phase of the year coincides with Thanksgiving break. Family travel and gatherings rightly dominate the week. However, many choose to take that week off from swimming and a whole bevy (look it up) of problems ensue. Some are immediate, like poor performances at a meet or recurrence of an injury. Some are subtle in that they are simply set back a week in their training. ***Either way, that week off took its toll***.

➢ The lead up to Christmas break is filled with a lot: High emotion and excitement about the season, more studying due to tests and projects, at least one Prelim-Final format swim meets…and a partridge in a pear tree. All the while, we are stressing regular practice attendance and scheduling before the break.

➢ By the time the holidays are here, an athlete, who has been coming to practice regularly and according to the group's requirement, is poised to really take off in training and see the season turn for the better. In a way, the holiday break is a bit of a crossroads in that the training assumes a solid baseline of conditioning AND the meets (beginning in January) are all pointed towards the Championship portion of the season.

➢ If the swimmer takes protracted amounts of time off over the Christmas break, major damage on that season is done.

So, what do we do if we have to travel?

1. Communicate with your coach as early as possible.
2. Go to www.usaswimming.org and click the "ABOUT" tab at the top. You will see the "Find a Local Club" link. Click it and find a club to swim with while away. All you will need to do is email

their coach to see if this would be possible. It almost always is. We have swimmers with us regularly over the holidays.

3. If you cannot find a club…find a pool. Your coaches will be happy to email you practices while you are gone. (We prefer that you swim with another team over training on your own! It's funner and you will get more done.)

Soooooo, what if we aren't traveling? Can't we take some days off? C'mon, it's the holidays. Right?

It is the holidays, correct. Rest after practice with a big nap and meal. Get together with friends. Watch some movies. Do all that! It is important and necessary. However, if your desire is to swim your best, get best times, get new cuts and be better than you have ever been…why would you choose to take days off from swimming if you didn't have to? Why voluntarily select mediocrity?

Youth and above come to all practices. AG and SR3 come to practice in the same amounts you are accustomed. (Feel free to come more! Your swimming will thank you for it!)

"Mediocrity is a path cleared by fear, leveled by apathy and paved by comfort."
― Craig D. Lounsbrough

SEE YOU ON DECK, CHAMPS!

Coach Pike