



Off The Blocks



Four Questions to Ask Before Signing Your National Letter of Intent...By Rick Paine

With Spring Break now over, I want to welcome everyone back to the pool. There were many great swims in March by PVS swimmers from all our clubs but now it's time to refocus, rededicate oneself to the grind and reset goals.

Congratulations to the PVS Zone Team swimmers and coaches on their 1st place finish at SC Zones!

Good Luck to all of you this LC season!

Bill Marlin

PVS General Chair

The regular signing period is right around the corner (begins April 15 and goes through August 1). Swimmers and especially parents use the term "signing" very loosely. "Signing" refers to the National Letter of Intent which is the swimmer's binding commitment to attend a school in exchange for an "Athletic Grant in Aid".

A NLI is only issued if some form of athletic scholarship is provided. D-I and D-II schools are the only ones who provide an NLI.

NAIA schools have their own version. Here are some questions we have all of our swimmers ask before they put their "John Hancock" on the National Letter of Intent.

Before you sign ask the following questions:

ONE

What is the school's policy on 5th year aid? It may take 5 years to complete the degree, but the swimming scholarship only goes for 4 years. Schools are allowed to pay for the 5th year, but I suggest asking up front.

TWO

If there is not a full scholarship offered, ask about what it would take to get a scholarship increase after the first year.

THREE

Will the school pay for health insurance?

FOUR

Where does the team go for Christmas training and who pays? This is

not negotiable, but it could be an expense. A school is not allowed to pay for expenses for one swimmer and not the rest of the team.

If you were not offered an athletic scholarship you can still have an official signing at your school. We suggest that you sign your housing documents or some schools will offer a letter of commitment that recruits can sign.

Congratulations, you are about to embark on 4 of the most exciting years of your life as a college swimmer. Nothing else in life compares to being part of a college athletic team.

Rick Paine is an expert on College Swimming and the recruiting process. He is also the Director of Swimming at [American College Connection](#).

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Eight Reasons Why Swimming Makes You a Better Parent...By Elizabeth Wickham



Swimming is a great sport for building character in our kids. As supportive swim parents, we rearrange calendars and vacations to accommodate the swim schedule. What do we get in return? I'm not talking about college scholarships, but how does being a swim parent make us a better person?

1. **Discipline.** We take our kids to practice all the time. Monday through Saturday—and for meets, Sundays, too. We also drive in the wee hours for practices.
 2. **Volunteering.** We step out of our comfort zones and take on new roles to help our team. Mine included asking businesses for donations—plus public speaking at parent meetings. You jump in and do what needs to be done. Volunteering makes us good citizens and
 3. **Less is More.** We learn that the swimming pool is a place to step back and let our children figure things out for themselves. Sometimes, it takes a coach to give us a hint to do so.
 4. **Patience.** Swimming teaches us to be patient. We wait at practice. Wait for kids to finish their showers. Wait for best times. Wait at swim meets to watch our swimmer swim for a few minutes.
 5. **Good sportsmanship.** By cheering for other swimmers, we can model good sportsmanship for our kids. Also, by
 6. **Humility.** No matter how proud we are of our kids, we learn there are faster, more talented swimmers. Once you start going to meets, you find out about faster meets with more swimmers. It never stops. A record holder—at any level—will get that record broken.
 7. **Appreciation.** I'm impressed with how hard my kids work. They work to achieve goals without immediate success. I wonder if I could have been a student athlete?
- Community.** Is there a stronger community than swimming? Swimmers and swim parents are family.

Cultural Swim Meets and Events

Date: Throughout 2015

Where: Across the nation

The [2015 Cultural Swim Meets and Events Calendar](#) features an extensive list of cultural swim meets and events occurring throughout the year. The calendar will be updated periodically so check back for updates.

More Information: Contact Manuel Banks, USA Swimming's Diversity & Inclusion Membership Specialist at mbanks@usaswimming.org if you would like to add your Zone, LSC, or swim club cultural swim meet or event to the calendar.

The Best Carbs To Include In The Training Diet

By Jill Castle, MS, RDN

Carbohydrate-based foods are a swimmer's best buddy when it comes to fueling for competition. Carbohydrate-containing foods can offer a quick burst of energy, or they can load up the muscle with a lasting source of fuel. A swimmer's training diet should contain two types of carbs: simple carbs to provide a fast source of carbohydrate (think sports drink or dried fruit) and complex carbohydrate foods to offer sustained fuel (pretzels, bread, potato).

Carb loading is the idea that eating a high carbohydrate diet prior to competition prepares the muscles with a ready source of glycogen (carbohydrate that is stored in the muscle) so the swimmer will avoid early muscle fatigue, low energy, and experience superb performance in the water. Although a popular concept, carbohydrate loading is not proven to be effective in young swimmers.

For one, carbohydrate loading is an approach based on what we know about the adult metabolism of carbohydrate. The reality is there is little scientific evidence supporting the benefit of this practice in the younger athlete (pre-pubertal or pubertal children and teens). Additionally, young swimmers don't store carbohydrate in their muscles as well as adults. Females, because they have less muscle mass than males, store less. It's not until teens reach adulthood that they may see the benefits of carb loading.

Instead, researchers advise a daily high carbohydrate diet for young athletes so they have a readily available fuel source for their working muscles.

The healthiest and best way to get optimal amounts of carbohydrate is to eat a diet that is loaded with fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low fat dairy products. Some of the best carbohydrate-based foods the swimmer can incorporate into daily meals and snacks are starchy carbs.

Despite the media spin that carbs are "bad," starchy carbs are a good fuel source for the swimmer. Here are some starchy carbs to incorporate in meals and snacks, along with some of their nutritional benefits:

Sweet potato: A baked sweet potato is full of fiber and vitamin A. Nix the brown sugar to keep it a healthy option.

Potatoes: Potatoes are high in fiber, potassium and vitamin C. Eat them baked, not fried, most of the time.

Rice: Rice is low in fat, and if you chose brown or wild rice, you'll get a kick of fiber as well.

Quinoa: Quinoa offers a good source of fiber, potassium, healthy

fats, protein and magnesium. Cook it like you would cook rice.

Pasta: A classic pre-competition meal inclusion, pasta is a favorite among youth athletes. Bump up the fiber by opting for whole wheat versions.

Corn: It may surprise you to know that corn contains protein and iron. It's also a good source of vitamin B6 and magnesium.

Peas: Peas enhance the diet with potassium, fiber, protein and vitamin C.

Beans and lentils: Beans and lentils are a nutritional powerhouse. They are low in fat, high in protein, fiber, potassium and iron.

There are many more carbohydrate-rich foods swimmer's can include in their training diet. Try whole grain breads, cornbread (made with cornmeal), shredded wheat cereal, cornflakes, pretzels, bagels, English muffins, and oatmeal.

Which carbs will you add to your diet?



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Potomac Valley Swimming

Coaches Competition Meeting

will be on Wednesday, May
13th

at 7:00 p.m. Location TBD

Process vs. Outcome: Focus on the Right Things

BY KATIE ARNOLD//NATIONAL TEAM HIGH PERFORMANCE CONSULTANT

As most of you reading this are aware, we are less than 18 months away from the first day of swimming at the Olympics. We are only 16 months out from the start of our Olympic Trials. At this point in the quad, a lot of time and energy is being put into the goal-setting process, and while the end goal will be different for every swimmer, I would always argue that the most important word in this sentence is "process." Unfortunately, for competitors at both Olympic Trials and the Olympic Games, success is most often judged on the outcome and who gets their hand on the wall first.

So how do you set process-based goals to prepare for outcome-centered competitions? Focus on these three things:

1. **Work on both strengths and weaknesses.** Just because you are great at underwater dolphin

kicking, doesn't mean you should stop working on it. If your turns are great and your starts are not, you should be working to make both of these things better. All of the best athletes across all sports work every day to improve on both their weaknesses and their strengths.

2. **Make better choices.** Maybe you are the hardest worker on your team, and you focus on eating the right things to fuel your training, but you aren't getting enough sleep. Or maybe your sleep habits and training are on point, but your diet isn't meeting your needs. It could be that you think you are doing all of the right things, but you aren't focusing enough on recovery. In my experience, very few people are making the best possible choices in every facet of their lives. The key is to identify the choices you can

improve, and then to actually do it!

3. **Have a plan.** The best swimmers in the world become fairly predictable in terms of race strategy and execution. This is because they have a very specific race strategy which they have executed over and over again. Stroke counts, dolphin kicks, breathing patterns, and splits are all important elements of a race plan. The more you rehearse this plan, the more automatic it becomes when it comes time to race.

All three of these suggestions are process-based and can have a positive impact on performance. The most important part of this is to focus your energy on the things that are within your control (process) so you don't waste your energy on things that are outside of your control (outcome).

4 Tips to Improve Your Start

By Russell Mark, National Team High Performance Consultant

Even though it's championship season, it's still not too late to improve your start. Here are a few easy things to keep in mind.

On the block, your "take-your-mark" position primes you for action. Four things to be mindful of:

1. High Hips
2. Eyes Looking Down
3. Arms Loaded
4. Rear Foot Behind Your Hips

The hips are the central point of your weight, and gravity will help you create the most speed upon entry if you have them as high as comfortably possible while standing on the block.

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