

A Habit

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I can remember very vividly a conversation I had at lunch one day with my friend. As I was eating a cookie I said, “I should really start working out more,” to which he replied, “Matt, you swim two hours a day; isn’t that working out?” I thought about his statement and realized, ‘oh yeah, swimming is working out.’ For in that moment, it became clear just how habitual swimming truly is, how big a part of my life it is. It is this habitual state of swimming that makes it such a unique sport and that helps to create a bond between swimmers.

There are very few sports, if any, which compare to swimming. In what other sport do the athletes train multiple hours each day of every week for months on end simply to compete for a matter of minutes? However, swimmers understand their position and continue to practice everyday. This ability to train for a goal months away reflects the character of swimmers. To be patient and understand that hard work doesn’t pay off immediately is a trait hard to learn; however, swimmers experience it everyday. They are constantly showing up to practice to train for their big meet months away. They must realize that each day counts and each day will bring them closer to their goals. That is why we show up to practice. Not for the immediate result, but for the result to come.

It would be unfair to claim that simply because we are swimmers we learn what hard work and dedication means; this is true of any sport. But again, it is the immense amount of time swimmers put into their sport that defines them. And because every swimmer understands the hard work and dedication each individual puts into the sport, an atmosphere of mutual respect is formed. Very rarely is such a level of understanding seen in sports. To be part of a community in which the each member is as involved as the next is truly an honor. Like in my conversation that day at lunch, swimming is such a tremendous part of the athlete’s lives. It becomes a habit. As

much as swimmers may say they hate the sport and don't want to practice, they will always show up because it is such an immense part of their lives.

We have all sacrificed hanging out with friends, school events and even sleeping in on the weekends to wake up for practice. There are times when we question going to practice, but we would be nothing without swimming. As boring as it may be to others, swimming back and forth while staring at a black line on the bottom of a pool can be the most relaxing part of our day. For two hours a day we can empty our minds and think about nothing but the task at hand. When we are in the pool, nothing else matters. Even though it can be disappointing to miss out on events with our friends, there is nothing more rewarding or satisfying than going a best time and achieving the goals we set for ourselves. We know if we don't go to practice we will not get the satisfaction of looking up at the scoreboard and seeing the sacrifices we have made pay off.

While a day off is nice (for it allows plans to be made without the interference of practice), a day without swim feels empty. The off-season doesn't feel right. With so much extra time, it becomes difficult to stay busy. When the season ends, it feels as though a piece of the swimmer is missing, as if something has been thrown off balance. And this is because swimming is truly a sport that becomes a part of the athlete's life. Swimming has left a tremendous impact on my life and the best memories I have are with the family I call my team.