

## What Swimming in the NHSA has Meant to Me

Swimming has become my life these past 13 years. Swimming 6 times a week, 10 months a year has become my routine. I have been around a pool my whole life, whether it was swimming lessons or watching my older sister, who swam as well. There is no doubt that swimming takes dedication. Staring at a line at the bottom of a pool for hours on end is not easy. Sure I had thought of quitting multiple times, but I don't know what I would do without it. It has been a part of my life forever and has kept me busy for as long as I remember. The truth is, I need swimming to keep me going. Not only does it keep me physically tough, but also mentally tough. Swimming is a sport where you constantly feel and want to quit, but you know you can't because the pay off for the hard work is all worth it in the end.

I have worked my way up from the annoying little kid in lane 1, to a role model and leader of lane 6. I am often used as an example for the little kids on what to do and what not to do. This has made me a better person knowing that I have little ones looking up to me. I enjoy being the leader that I am because I can relate to when I was the little kid listening to the lane 6 kids years ago. A lot of who I am today is thanks to the kids that I looked up to when I started swimming. I was very fortunate to have a great group of older guys on the team that I could look up to and who treated me like a little brother. They were like my "brothers from another mother." I loved my older "brothers", and I worked and worked hoping to one day be as fast and as good as they were. I realize now that it is my responsibility to be a role model to the younger swimmers, just like my "brothers" were to me. And now that I am older and am at the point of where they once stood, I can reflect back on how hard I worked to get to where I am today. Sure I have given up on lots of fun things because of swimming like sleepovers or trips to the beach with friends, but I believe that it was all worth it. A typical response to my non-swimming friends has always been, "Sorry, I have practice" or "No, I have a meet".

Swimming has never been easy on my mind or my body. Advil has kept me going all these years, and it is a normal occurrence of coming home after practice and not wanting to move because of how much the body hurts. Mentally it takes a toll on you because people naturally want to talk to other people, and in swimming you can't. You are forced to stare at a line at the bottom of the pool for minutes at a time with limited air. And when you are at the wall between sets or laps there's either no time to talk or you are too tired and out of breath to have a conversation. This just means that when my friends and I aren't swimming, there is constant chatter!

Swimming in the NHSA has been my whole childhood. Swimming is all I have ever known since I can remember. I have been around a pool for 18 years, and will continue to be for many more to come. It has been the foundation for some of my best memories. From 8 hour bus rides to swim meets with friends, to after swim meet pool parties at my house. Without the NHSA I wouldn't have these unforgettable memories. It has not only been a part of my childhood, but in fact my whole childhood, and I would never do it differently.