

What Swimming in the NHSA Has Meant to Me

Ever since I was little, I've loved the water. In the summer you could find me riding the waves at the beach, splashing in the backyard pool or fearlessly cruising down the steepest slide at the water park. My parents thought the obvious choice of a sport for me would be the swim team, so they signed me up with the local NHSA club team. At the time, I thought it was the worst day of my life! Faced with the prospect of swimming back and forth for hours on end, I complained and whined about going to practice. Little did I know the impact the swim team would have on my life. Today, I realize that swimming in the NHSA has helped me to grow into the person I am today.

Swimming competitively taught me to persevere through life's most challenging moments. Each practice had tough sets that I didn't want to do. "Hmmm... maybe it's time for a bathroom break," I'd think to myself. Then a coach would encourage me to keep going and I would. At swim meets, my time would drop little by little and I soon realized that maybe all that hard work was beginning to pay off. Eventually, I learned to persevere on my own and it carried over into my life outside the pool as my school work improved, too.

My coaches taught me how to set goals for myself. I'm not always the most motivated person on my own, but with the encouragement and support of the coaches, I was able to set goals, work towards them, and achieve. Countless hours spent working on technique and fine tuning strokes paid off for me this year. While it was at my high

school state meet that I finally got a chance to stand on the podium, I know that my time spent swimming year round in the NHSA laid the foundation that helped me to achieve this goal of mine. It meant a lot to me to know that my NHSA coaches were there in the stands cheering me on.

Many people think swimming is an individual sport, but that's not true. In between swim sets, there was time to get to know the people swimming with me. Hanging on the wall... maybe a little too long sometimes... I made friends. Cheering for each other during races, hanging out in the hot tub after practice, and racing together on a relay helped to strengthen those friendships. As I moved into high school and began racing on a varsity team, it was fun to run into my NHSA friends at swim meets. Even though we were on opposing teams for these meets, we still cheered for each other. We were friends.

Swimming in the NHSA during the past nine years has made a big impact on my life. I've learned how to persevere, set goals for myself, and most importantly make friends. It's hard to believe that my swimming career has come to an end, but I know that these lessons learned while swimming in the NHSA will carry with me for the rest of my life.