

Swimming in the New Hampshire Swim Association has meant a lot to me and taught me a lot about myself. It has taught me how to be a teammate, how to focus, and how to persevere. When I started swimming at the age of seven, I could have never guessed that I would still be swimming as a senior in high school... mainly because I couldn't imagine myself so old. My 11 years of swimming have been a big factor in contributing to who I am today and who I want to be in the future.

One of the first things I learned from swimming was how to be a teammate. At seven years old, swimming was my first athletic team. It was also unique as a team because it involved "big" kids, much older than me. While swimming can seem like an individual sport from an outsider's perspective, I gained appreciation for how swimming is truly a team sport. I learned the ins and outs of lane etiquette, realized I always swam faster during relays, and felt the bond of companionship formed after a hard practice. Today, I am still very close friends with those that I started swimming with and continue to make close friends every single year. I always looked up to the older swimmers on the team. They taught me how to cheer, helped me put my hair in my cap, and encouraged me with candy, notes, and tattoos. When I was younger, I looked up to those older swimmers and vowed to be like them one day. As I have grown older, I have made sure to stay involved with swimmers of all ages. Since I remember looking up to my role models who helped me out, I try to always support younger swimmers on my swim team, even serving as an assistant coach for a local swim program.

Swimming in the NHSA has also taught me how to focus. Through swimming, I have learned how to focus both mentally and physically. In a sport where everyone tries so hard to cut even just a tenth of a second, it is important to learn how to mentally focus at practices and at

meets. I have learned how to mentally prepare for races and the benefits of having both a good attitude and confidence. Through swimming, I have learned that often times the result of a race is a reflection of my thinking before it. This has caused me to teach myself how to focus on my pre-race process and what is really important. Physically, I have learned how to pay attention to the most minute details of a swim, from working on streamlines and pullouts for countless hours to perfecting a start. Each tiny detail that I have focused on has helped me improve, making me see that hours of practice does pay off. I have had to learn the patience needed to see improvements as well as the ability to focus on my goals and path to achieving them.

Lastly, I have learned perseverance, mainly through the sport of swimming. There have been many hard practices that have pushed me to my physical limits but I have learned how to dig in, not give up, and continue giving my all. Often times, when other teammates bail on a set, I continue to push myself to finish the sets and make the time intervals so that I will become a stronger swimmer and a stronger person. It would be easy to make excuses, to avoid a difficult set, but in the end, I know I would only be cheating myself.

NHSA swimming has shaped me into the person I am now and the person I want to be in the future. I plan to pursue a career where teamwork, focus, and perseverance will be critical to my future success. The aspects I have learned from swimming have shaped my life as a student and an athlete and will be valuable in my future endeavors.