

What Swimming in the NHSA's has Meant to Me

By: Allison Gowers

Ever since I was 7 years old I knew the importance of the New Hampshire Swim Association Season and Championship Meet. From the very first practice at the beginning of each swim season I always heard about the "championship" meet. Right from this practice the end goal was always the NHSA Championship meet. The monthly reminder we heard was "remember, if you want to swim at NHSA's you will need to swim in at least four meets this season." I knew right away how important this meet was to my Coaches and the Team as a whole.

As I got older I recognized the importance of the league. Even at the first travel meet of the season to UVAC, the team swam against great teams at the pool and had amazing bonding experiences together and separately. Going out to dinner as a team and "safely" running around the hotel like crazy taught me how fun it was to be a part of something special. Throughout the season as my team participated in other NHSA meets, we would see the same swimmers and be able to build a bond that would carry through to each meet, no matter where the meet was held.

Being a part of an NHSA team has taught me leadership qualities that I have applied to other aspects of my life. For the years I swam with kids not in my own age group, I made sure my teammates who were not swimming were cheering for everyone. Today I am always cheering on my team, running up and down the pool deck to make sure my friends see me cheering for them. As I watched the older swimmers both at regular meets and championship meets, I always wanted to be like them so the younger kids would look up to me. NHSA has taught me that no matter how old I am, my team isn't just who you practice with, it's everyone who swims around me. There would be many years where our Coaches would have to put together a last chance meet at our home pool just to ensure everyone got that extra chance to be eligible to swim at NHSA's. The goal was always swimming for the team, and earning as

many points as possible for the overall score. When my team merged with another NHSA team 2 years ago, I was able to share my past experiences of the meet with my new teammates who had never done a team oriented meet at the end of the season. It was a fun way to share what I had learned from the meet over the years.

The annual NHSA Championship exemplifies the truest definition of the word "Team." From my very first championship meet at the very young age of 7 through all the meets I have participated in, I witnessed all forms of team spirit. The spirit starts during the weeks leading up to the championship meet. Whatever race my coach wanted us to swim, we swam. Even though our races may not have been our favorite, we never questioned since we knew it meant scoring points for the team. The meet has always been a highlight of the season. From watching the 8 and unders do their first relay ever, to the seniors jumping in the pool with funny costumes on. Watching the older kids participate in these activities made me so excited to grow up and now that my senior year is here I can't believe that this will be my last NHSA Championship meet . This meet has been a part of my swim career for over half my life, I wish I could be the little 8 year old excited to swim the 100 IM relay with my best friends again.

NHSA will always be a part of my history with swimming. I still have my collection of heat winner ducks, ribbons and medals. I will be sad to close this chapter, but I am very excited to be swimming in college and carry with me all the team qualities that I learned from being a part of NHSA.