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What Swimming in the NHSA Has Meant to Me

I have been in water since I was two months old. Pools, lakes, and oceans were always a constant in my life growing up. I started swimming competitively at four years old, and have been with the NHSA ever since. When I was little, I looked for every reason to skip practice because, as many kids think, my mom made me do it. What I didn't realize was that swimming would become the sport I loved and valued most throughout my athletic career. In swimming, a sense of self-motivation and perseverance are required to improve. It's a sport with gains, losses and plateaus regardless of the amount of time spent practicing. By focusing so much on meet results, it's easy to overlook rewards from practice and experience. Coming from a swimming family, it was difficult to not compare myself to others' accomplishments. However, the NHSA taught me to value my individuality and personal growth as a swimmer. Despite being tired during challenging practices and races, I knew I could make it through because perseverance motivated me to push harder. To achieve my goals, I had to learn that my best self existed outside my comfort zone. The NHSA allowed me to see the importance of motivation and perseverance which will continually influence my future. The most valuable element I gained from the NHSA is the community that came with it. By swimming for one team my whole life, I have grown up with friends and coaches who became family. Each shared a desire for me to succeed, even beyond swimming. Within the past few years, I have become a mentor for young swimmers, especially through being a coach. Seeing their progress and smiles shows my impact on others which I will never forget, especially because when I was their age, I sought to escape the environment I now foster. My coaches continue to have a faith in me that inspires me to achieve whatever I set my mind to. Whether it be sharing Swedish Fish at meets, or joking about getting a puppy for breaking records, the connections with my coaches and teammates provided me with a perspective to see the best in others and myself which empowered me to reach my highest potential, all while enjoying the journey with my team. The NHSA has shaped me into who I am today, and will continue to shape me beyond my swimming career. My team is my second home, a place with open arms, an underwater sanctuary for my ambitions to flourish. The relationships with my coaches and teammates are irreplaceable and have allowed me to grow tremendously. The NHSA has gifted me with opportunities to be my best self, a version that highlights my perseverance and mentorship to the next generation of swimmers. While my time in the NHSA is ending, I know I will carry its impact with me for my entire life. The memories and lessons will forever be a core influence in who I continue to become.