

What Swimming in the NHSA Means to Me

As a little girl I often hid behind my older sister and allowed her to take the lead. It was comfortable for me to stick by her side and pursue whatever interest or hobby she was invested in. Swimming began as another one of those things. I swam because my older sister was doing it. I assumed swim team would last for a summer or two and then we would move on to the next sport. Twelve years later I am unable to imagine my life without competitive swimming. When I was little, I lacked confidence and was content living in my sister's shadow. Swimming in the NHSA has given me strength and a deep understanding of who I am and what I am capable of.

I can remember two central moments throughout my years in the NHSA that impacted me the most. The first was at a meet the summer before I turned thirteen. I was nervous leading up to my race and didn't have any expectations. I remember looking up at the clock, then at my coach, then back at the clock in complete disbelief. I had just shaved six seconds off my 100-breaststroke time. I was overwhelmed with emotion and so proud of my achievement. It was a totally new feeling of strength I wasn't used to. I had accomplished something I never thought was possible and my confidence began to grow.

The second memory was more recent and created a turning point for me. It had been a challenging year in and out of the pool. I was about to swim the 200-breaststroke. This would be my final chance to make the cut I had been reaching and working toward all season. Waiting to swim my heart and mind were racing. When I got up on the block, I felt ready. I swam, looked up at the clock and immediately felt extreme disappointment. I wouldn't be going to Florida with my team. It felt like a gut punch. I curled into a ball and wanted to disappear.

In swimming I've experienced both sides. The moments that still make me smile and the times I've felt like the whole world was working against me. These experiences allowed me to strengthen as a person. The positive memories gave me confidence and pride in what I could accomplish where the harder moments motivated me to shift my energy and continue fighting.

The New Hampshire Swim Association has taught me how to be successful in and out of the pool and more importantly, how to deal with defeat. I am no longer the insecure and nervous girl in the shadow of my older sister. My experiences through swimming are ones that I will hold onto and learn from for the rest of my life. In my next chapter, I will be ready to face challenges head on. The NHSA and this brilliant sport of swimming have made me the person I am today.