

The Continuation

Kick, kick, kick, is the only thought in my brain. As I feel my heart rate begin to increase, I can see it getting harder to swim through the water, getting more out of breath after each stroke. *Get there faster*. The more my heart raced the more I pushed, needing to get to the wall as fast as possible, wanting to put everything I had emphasized at practice into this race. And right as the hand touches the wall and the time stops, only then do I begin to take a deep breath and let out a joyous cheer.

My mom taps me on the shoulder to tell me I have done a good job. With a smile on my face, I make my way over behind the blocks to find my swimmer. Even though it wasn't me swimming, I watched every millisecond of the race, jumping, screaming, and even making kicking motions with my hands. The young athletes I have coached this season have been improving exponentially and I could not wait another second to tell them how much they just beat their best time, and how amazing they swam.

Yes, swimming has given me a sport, a way of exercise, an outlet to be who I want to be, and some of my best friends, but above all swimming has made me a coach.

I have been swimming since I was 5. I would love to say I am unique, but my mother, grandfather, and uncle are really my inspiration. Swimming has been in my family long before I was 5 years old. As a newborn, my mother would carry me around as she coached her practices. And now, as a senior in high school, I am back to walking up and down the pool deck.

I recently rejoined the team I first started my competitive swimming journey with. In September I started my last year of swimming and my first year of coaching. I have been lucky swimming in NHSA to have such amazing coaches spread out between two teams. Therefore I would also say I am a pretty good coach, seeing as I am a sponge of the most influential coaches'

knowledge I have collected over my 13 years in this organization. Every day before my own practice I coach the 7-12 year olds alongside my mother and other coaches. Nothing can prepare you for the feeling of somebody listening to you wholeheartedly about the sport you have spent your whole life trying to master. As I stand on the pool deck, reminding my swimmers that they have to finish backstroke on their backs, I am overwhelmed with obligation. Overwhelmed with excitement. And overwhelmed with trust. I am obligated to teach these kids everything I know, to keep them responsible and knowledgeable in this sport that we both want to continue to get better at. And I trust that I can be that person. I trust that I can be the one to get them to where they want to be because I was them. I remember my first coaches. Some of them still coach me today. And I trust myself in trying to live up to the expectations these wonderful coaches and my mother have set for me. I trust that I can be a coach for my swimmers.

And now, at my last NHSA Championship meet, I find myself at a crossroads. Questioning what I look forward to more. Finishing my journey in the NHSA with fast swims, or beginning my swimmer's journey as they take off on their very first championship meet ever. I can only hope that this NHSA Championship meet solidifies their love and determination for this crazy sport they have just begun, the same way it did for me all those years ago.

This meet will not be the last championship meet I attend, because now it has led me into my newfound love for coaching, where I will remain on the pool deck. And I will continue to swim, through my swimmers, through coaching.