

What Swimming in the NHSA Has Meant to Me

Joining my first competitive swim team at the age of 6, I was never very fond of sports that didn't entail throwing or kicking a ball to your teammates. Growing up playing every ball sport imaginable, it was difficult to transition every fall to a sport that wasn't played on a field where teamwork and communication was required. What was even more daunting to me at this young age was the unfamiliarity of swimming: the cold water, the pressure of making intervals in practice, or the pressure of big NHSA meets such as the annual state meet where hundreds of eyes were on me as I raced. What led me to stick with the sport and eventually find a love for it was the strong sense of community in the NHSA and the traditions that I now find comfort in.

As I complete my 12th year swimming for the NHSA, I often still swim next to the same kids I first competed against over a decade ago, whether they be long-time teammates or swimmers on opposing teams. No matter my relationship with them, every one of them has pushed me to become a better swimmer and has helped me achieve cut times and personal goals I never thought possible. Something that I have never found in any other sports community is this collective desire for everyone to succeed, not just oneself. In an early winter meet in 2022, one of my teammates was doing a time trial to make the 200 butterfly Senior cut time. This boy was the only one in the pool in between the morning and afternoon session, however many of the teams were there early. After swimming his race and making his cut time by less than 0.1 seconds, the entire pool area erupted in cheering. There were about a dozen swimmers on my team present and cheering for him, yet there had to have been ten times more parents, swimmers, and coaches on other teams that were all ecstatic that he had reached his goal. This type of community that genuinely cares about the collective success of all its participants is extremely rare and I am very thankful to have been part of such a community for so many years.

Looking back on my time swimming for the NHSA, I cherish the traditions this organization has upheld and the memories I have made in this community. From receiving rubber ducks after winning a heat to participating in the themed celebration for the senior swimmers every year at the championship meet, these traditions reinforce the inclusive, supportive community of the NHSA. From receiving lessons and advice from the senior swimmers as a young rookie to becoming the senior swimmer that helps the younger kids along, I could not be happier contributing in a positive manner to the organization that has done so much for me as I grew up. I will be forever grateful for the ways in which the NHSA has shaped the person I am today and has allowed me to make lifelong memories that will be forever cherished.