

The Parent and The Coach

Reprinted from Hannula's Hints, Written by Dick Hannula

A very common topic in any swim coaches' chat session is parent involvement. Most coaches agree that the parents do present a definite factor in the success or failure of their swimmers. More than one coach has changed jobs because of parent involvement and usually it has been a negative experience for the coach who has made this change. I have heard coaches compliment a great swimmer with the remark that the swimmer has "great parents". I am quite certain that you have also heard coaches describe a swimmer as having "lousy parents"? Is there something that coaches can do to encourage parents to become "good swimming parents"?

Some parents give coaches ulcers, a lack of job security, a lack of confidence, and a general case of jitters. This is true, and many coaches have tuned in a deaf ear to parents over the years. Are there general characteristics that describe "good parents"? The American Swimming Coaches Association asked some of the most successful coaches about the "ideal swimming parents".

"The ideal swimming parent is one who supports and encourages his child without pressure." -- Richard Quick, former United States Olympic Head Coach.

"The ideal parents are the parents who follow and don't lead". -- Peter Daland, Former USC Head Coach and two-time United States Olympic Coach.

"The ideal swimming parent supports, backs, and listens. This parent understands long range goals. This parents sees beyond today." -- Dick Jochums, Head Coach, Santa Clara Swim Club. Dick has coached several Olympic swimmers.

"The ideal parent is usually someone who has dealt with children other than his own, such as a school teacher or a coach. The parents are not as emotionally involved as intelligently involved. The parents also realize that there is much more to learn than just swimming fast." -- Jack Nelson, former US Olympic Coach.

"The ideal swimming parent is one who supports their child as a person, not as a swimmer." -- Jonty Skinner, former World Record Holder.

The kids who perform the best are the ones with supportive parents who let the coach have control of the child's swimming career." -- John Collins, Badger Swim Club Head Coach. 1983 ASCA Coach of the year.

"It is important for the parents to be physically, mentally, and financially supportive of their youngster. The parents should support the interest and well being of their children." -- Don Gambriel, Past University of Alabama Head Coach and 1984 Head Olympic Coach.

“The ideal swim parent needs to have a sense of humor and is primarily interested in the development of his child as a person, not a swimmer.” -- John Leonard, ASCA Director and former Lake Forest Swim Team Head Coach

“Some kids may perform better for a while with harassment and pressure from parents, but in the long run. It is best if the swimmer develops his/her own goals and discipline”. -
- Rob Orr, Princeton University Head Coach.

“An ideal swimming parent is someone who realizes his child’s limitations as well as his achievements. The parent is supportive but not demanding and loves the child whether he wins, loses or draws.” -- Penny Taylor, Past Parkway Swim Club Head Coach and Former ASCA Board Member.