

The Swimming Experience

What are the things that we would ideally like children to take away from a sporting experience? Fun, accomplishment, work ethic, confidence, self-discipline, and a life-long love of fitness may be just a few. Well, there is a sport that can offer children all of those things wrapped up in one. That sport is competitive swimming!

Throughout the years many people in different communities across the world have recognized what type of person comes from a competitive swimming background. Student-athletes in University swim programs across North America are known for their incredible self-discipline, time management skill, and commitment to excellence.

Many swimmers such as Beth Botsford and Ron Karnaugh have gone on to compete internationally while successfully completing medical school. Anette Salmeen went on to become a Rhode Scholar and Olympic Gold Medalist. These are only a few examples of swimmers who have learned through their sport important skills that are needed to be successful in all areas of their lives. Achieving success is a process, a journey that has many lessons that come along the way. In the sport of competitive swimming there are many aspects that young athletes learn that will develop their character for the rest of their lives.

Athletes are put into a unique situation right from the beginning. They are taught that doing a good job comes first. Who teaches them this? Their sport does by stressing personal best times. As a result, most competitive swimmers learn early in their careers that what's important is not the ribbon, medals, or awards you win, but whether or not you do the work you need to improve yourself. These traits develop in an ideal environment that stresses the importance of self-reliance and co-operation. Although swimming is an individual sport and teaches children a great deal about responsibility and independence, an aspect that is often forgotten is that it is also a team sport. Swimmers are involved with a team that is heading in one direction; a team that is focused on supporting and helping every athlete to achieve their personal aspirations. Athletes not only benefit from the support of their teammates in their individual pursuits, but also learn how to support others and work co-operatively to become better people.

As a result of learning many of these lessons, most competitive swimmers also learn the value of being a certain kind of person – a person with a good character.