

Kris Reslow

Exeter Swim Team

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What Swimming in the NHSA Has Meant to Me

Five short years ago I began my search for a swim team that had a very high level of competition, excellent team camaraderie and a respect for swimming that was second to none. After much search my parents and I decided upon Exeter Swim Team (EST) because it fulfilled the aforementioned criteria and it was the closest team to my house in Amesbury Massachusetts. EST is a member of both USA swimming and the NHSA, providing all of its swimmers the level of competition and the level of respect they deserve. That was something that I was not accustomed to before I joined EST and the NHSA; I was a member of a local swim team for one short season before I outgrew not only the level of competition, but the lack of respect for other teams as well. Many swim meets consisted of sitting around the pool deck, focusing on my events alone, and leaving promptly after my events concluded. Many times teammates were busy listening to their I-pods or playing their videogames while passing the time. Needless to say, this lack of respect for swimming and teammates quickly sapped me of the enjoyment which swimming gave me.

EST and many of the other teams I looked to join (all in the NHSA) fulfilled the fissure in competition, friendship and respect that was so prevalent on my other team. I knew that whichever team I decided to join would provide me with friends and tough practices while implementing a reverence for swimming and all who participate in it. The change occurred almost immediately after I joined EST. Through dual meets against the likes of Finns, PST, LRW and ESC I quickly learned how the NHSA operates: each team occupies one area of the

deck; teammates and competitors alike join in on ways to pass time between events; behind the blocks everyone is a friend, not an adversary; and the people in the lanes next to you get a congratulatory hand shake and “Nice race” once they finish. On EST I progressed from the “slow lane” to the “fast lane” in practice, I learned how to work hard through a rough set, I found friends who would help me mature both in and out of the pool, and I changed not only physically, but mentally as well; I am now captain of EST and my high school teams, holding multiple records on both teams while continually practicing good sportsmanship.

Sportsmanship permeates every aspect of the NHSA. How many other swimming conferences will perform a show like last year’s groups of 15 and over boys relay teams at NHSA state championships? Every boy in that age group circled up before the event began and did two cheers, one for the upcoming relays and one for the meet in general. It did not matter who was on which team; every kid decided to put aside the “I am good, you are bad” mentality which so many other teams apply to competitors and joined together to have fun through competition. In the simplest terms possible, the NHSA has provided a demanding conference in which my swimming ability, my physical and mental growth, and my ability to make friends could reach their full potential, serving to mature me in every aspect of my life.