

Barracuda Aquatics Club

High School Swimming Policy

Our policy at BAC about high school swimming for 12-14 year olds is based upon the individual swimmers' experience and maturity with the sport, but also based upon what we believe is important to that individuals' future in the sport.

In general, we do believe that 12-14 year olds do not belong on high school teams. But, we also believe that nothing in this sport is that black and white. Please do not take that wrong, we do think high school swimming has a very important role in the swimmers' future. We support the high school programs that are in our area and try to work with the high school coaches as much as possible to ensure success in all of our swimmers. We just believe there is a right time for each swimmer to start their high school career and it usually is different for each swimmer.

Our program at BAC is built on the philosophy of development of each swimmer that involves both physical and mental development. We are about long-term success and setting up our swimmers to have their potential realized at ages 17 and older. What these swimmers do at the ages of 12-14 will have an effect on when that potential will be realized. In general, the dominating high school swimming philosophy is about the now. What can you do for me right now? It's less about development and more about how each swimmer will help the team during the 13-week season. As a result, the potential exists for each swimmer to be used in a way that benefits the team not the individual. For a 12-14 year old that can be detrimental to their development in crucial areas. What is lost is technique, exposure to various events, aerobic development and the learning of mental side of this sport. These things can be lost because of the fast and furious way of high school swimming. The focus becomes winning and racing as opposed to technique and development.

There is no question that high school swimming has its' place and we think it is very valuable for our older swimmers and brings them pride in swimming for their school and the great atmosphere at meets that cannot be duplicated. It has a lot of huge positives once swimmers understand the sport and develop themselves technically and mentally. Every single coach on the staff at BAC has swam in high school and our head coach has coached high school swimming at three different high schools over an 11-year span. And, one of our Age Group/Junior coaches is currently coaching high school. We believe it is a great format for swimmers, but we also believe the swimmers need certain development before really benefiting from the experience.

Our concern is with our swimmers' future. We have had to deal with many 12-14 year olds that have swam high school. And, the predominant result is their development as a swimmer goes backwards in technique and in understanding the sport. The sport of swimming is complex and the ups and downs these swimmers experience can be difficult and the swimmers need to take the time to learn how to deal with these ups and downs before they are put into a situation where speed is the only expectation. We want our swimmers at BAC to thrive in this sport and find their maximum potential at ages 17 and older. The decisions they make now will affect that potential. We want the right decision for all of our swimmers. If that means they wait a year and develop or if it means swim high school now, we want to make sure our swimmers are weighing all the pros and cons before deciding. Because of these issues above we are planning as a coaching staff to sit down with our 12-14 year olds in the next week or so and discuss with them the pros and cons of high school swimming. We are also planning on talking to each swimmer individually to let them know what our recommendation will be for them this fall and winter.

If you have any questions on this subject that are directly related to your swimmers' decision please do not hesitate to ask our coaches on deck or e-mail them. We will sit down with you and discuss the decision if you wish.

Thanks,
BAC Coaching Staff

