



PVS ATHLETES NEWSLETTER

RETURN TO COMPETITION

During the month of October, PVS has been lucky to begin returning to competition. Around eight meets have already taken place, and more are set to occur in the following weeks. Because meets can no longer operate how they used to, it's important for us that we reach out and see what other swimmers are comfortable with.

To ensure that all teams are on an even playing field in the upcoming months, PVS is doing everything possible to maximize swimming time for all teams. Unfortunately, because PVS covers two states, Maryland and Virginia, as well as the District of Columbia, guidelines vary from region to region, making it difficult to make one cohesive plan. Larger teams are offering their pools to smaller teams, and doing what they can to share their resources. Now, more than ever, PVS must act as a family, and help one another during these return to swimming months.

A survey was sent out to swimmers last month that asked them about their thoughts retaining to return to competition. With answers flooding in from swimmers from several different teams, masks and enforced social distancing within the pool area seemed to be an overarching concern. Others suggested that live spectating be prohibited and a priority for swimmers 13+, specifically high school students.

Because meets can no longer operate in the same fashion that they used to, cooperation between swimmers, coaches, and parents is the most necessary thing to ensure that as many teams get the opportunity to compete as possible. Live streaming events via Facebook or other streaming services has proven to be incredibly accommodating to parents and other family members hoping to watch their kids swim.

Rockville Montgomery Swim Club (RMSC) is one of the teams lucky enough to host a meet this month. Their National Training Group from their five different locations met at their MLK site. In order to enforce safety precautions, boys and girls were separated into two different sessions, and swimmers were mandated to sit outside in seats already positioned at an appropriate six foot distance. In addition, all coaches, timers and officials were instructed to keep their masks on for the entire duration of the meet. Swimmers were to keep their mask on until right before they entered the water to swim.

Pierre Zeineddin helped to livestream the event, via Facebook, which made spectating from a distance possible. Parents and other family members were able to join the stream at any time, and watch their swimmers. There was also a live chat so that loved ones could still feel connected, even during these hard times.

Pierre offered his opinion on how he felt this new way of spectating. "Unfortunately, COVID has taken away the thrill of cheering in the stands; I wanted to make sure that everyone could do the next best thing and cheer online, in a communal space to support their athletes."

These efforts by Pierre are a wonderful example of overcoming the barriers that COVID has presented us. With cooperation from athletes, parents, and coaches, continuing this sport is possible. Although meets cannot no longer operate in their full form, these meets are nice reminder of what makes this sport so special, which are the communities and friendships that are built.

MENTAL HEALTH IN SWIMMING

October is Mental Health Awareness month, which is a great time to reflect on what you can do to help yourself while juggling this sport.

Swimming not only requires dedication and motivation, but early mornings, long practices, and comparisons to the clock and others can be incredibly draining. It can be difficult to address these issues, as they are often times characterized as "part of the sport," and many feel that the immense amount of pressure put on them is there to help them become another athlete. However, these misconceptions that many swimmers stubbornly hold to be true, can be incredibly detrimental to their progress in the sport.

Swimming is also shown to help with mood and happiness. Endorphins, natural feel-good hormones, are released during practice can help combat the immense amount of stress and anxiety many of us are feeling during these times.

Now more than ever, it is important to reach out if you or a friend need support. In Potomac Valley Swimming, we pride ourselves in the community that we've built through our love for swimming. Below are signs that you or a friend may need help, and sources that you can access for help.

WHAT WORSENING MENTAL HEALTH LOOKS LIKE IN SWIMMING

- SKIPPING OR SHOWING UP LATE TO PRACTICE OFTEN
- NOT CARING ABOUT MEETS OR THEIR PROGRESS IN THE SPORT
- HYPERFIXATIONS ON THEIR "FAILURES," EVEN IF IT SEEMS LIKE A NOT A BIG DEAL
- DISTANT/CHANGED RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR TEAMMATES AND COACHES
- FEELING TO EXHAUSTED TO COMPLETE ANY OTHER TASKS

SOURCES TO ACCESS HELP

"MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES" - USASWIMMING.ORG
"MENTAL TRAINING & WELLNESS" - USASWIMMING.ORG
1-800-273-8255 - NATIONAL SUICIDE HOTLINE

MICROAGGRESSIONS

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO BE MORE CONSCIOUS?

Microaggressions are brief, subtle remarks, whether behavioral or verbal, that are derogatory or discriminatory in nature. They can be both intentional or unintentional, and often times go unrecognized for their ability to appear as a normal remark. Swimming is a predominately white sport, and often times minority groups are presented with subtle comments that may make them feel uncomfortable or out of place.

Black swimmers, in particular, receive a tremendous amount of commentary for preconceived notions about people of color in this sport. Comments range from remarks about their hair to trying to undermining their successes by claiming that black swimmers are "natural athletes." Although subtle, and seemingly unimportant, these small exchanges can cause minority swimmers to feel as though they don't belong.

Swimming is a sport for everyone, and at PVS, we want to do everything we can to ensure that everyone feels excepted. Below is a comment from Nina Allen, a swimmer for Rockville Montgomery Swim Club, about what we, as athletes, can do to better ourselves.

"Basically, I think that being more conscious has to do with the people you surround yourself with and the level of education you subject yourself to receiving. Its the little things that add up such as if your club team only consists of white swimmers, your ignorance is more likely to be higher when encountering swimmers of color at a meet for an example. I also think that a lot of people just believe that racism and micro aggressions only consist inside a small bubble of specific things like the N word; but in reality it is so much more. It can be staring at a POC because their hair looks different straight out of the pool, or even the required specific cut of the team suits...which can be hard for black girls to fit in because of how their bodies can be different. It's also not the job of non-white swimmers to constantly educate people and has often been hard due to being the minority in a predominately white sport; that should be done on the end of the other person. Education is the best cure for ignorance and often leads to the lessening of unconscious racism and micro aggressions. If there are POC on your team, i'd suggest going out of your way to make them feel included (without making it weird) and taking initiative to accept them as who they are despite not conforming to the "norm" in terms of how they look!"