

Understanding the Club Athlete's Mindset/Purpose in the High School Environment

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Who am I?

- First of all, I am son of a Pennsylvanian state champion coach
- Head Coach @ Kingwood since 2017-18
- Boys State champions and Girls State Runner-up 2020
- Top 5 (Top 3 boys) finish for both programs since I began at KHS which was the first for Boys since 2011
- Club Background:
 - Head Coach Eagle Swimming Association 2013-2017
 - Head Coach Radnor Aquatic Club (PA) 2004-2012

Quick Activity

- Write down 3 positive ways you characterize your club swimmers.
- Write 1-2 ways negative ways you characterize your club swimmers.
- During the presentation, see how you can build upon the positive and change your mindset on the negative.



Who is the Club Athlete? What do they want to gain from High School Swimming?

- Most important question to answer for a successful relationship with the club athlete
- What most athletes think...
 - High school is about FUN!
 - High school gives me a an opportunity to RACE more often (not always a good thing!)
 - High school gives me a role/purpose in the school culture.
 - Builds character
 - Sorry for this... but many believe high school should be a supplement to their training, not the bulk.

What We Want!



- Someone who is going to be loyal to our program
- Someone who shows up every day, works hard, and is a model for others in the program
 - Uses their influence to help others rise up
- Someone who sees the Team success over Individual success
- Someone who sees the high school coach as a partner in their success (MOST IMPORTANT for the mindset of the athlete as well!)
- Someone who wants to leave a legacy (high end) or contribute to a positive culture (basic).



A quick look at Culture

- Culture of swimming differs from region to region & state to state.
- Very engrained typically and difficult to change the club vs. high school culture.
- Examples:
 - Pennsylvania: Club coaches are HS coaches in many places; some other states: no club during HS season. Etc.
- High school a part of the school day in Texas, which has its advantages, but A HUGE disadvantage is waking up most mornings to train.
- It is ok to have very high expectations, but expect your club athletes to not come to EVERY practice.
 - E.g. we offer 5 mornings most weeks; Club swimmers only required to attend 4.
- Clubs have very specific cultures too... encourage vs. discourage

How do you influence the culture?

- May need to work hard to instill the culture through traditions, etc., if they don't already exist or alter norms if they are not working.
- Make HS the place to be from a FUN standpoint and offer a training opportunity that the kids desire.
- Still need to portray being a place of serious training
- Be a relationship builder.
- Create communication with stakeholders



How do we marry the mindset of both the athlete and high school coach?

- It all starts with culture from both parties
 - What does the partnership look like? What barriers do I need to break down?
- Communication between high school coaches, the athletes, and club coaches is crucial
- The big picture
- Club vs. High School shouldn't be the debate... Mindset should be Club & High School
- The following 8 traits are a guide to specific things that we utilize to get buy-in:

The Essential 8 non-negotiables a high school coach needs for their club athlete to reach their potential

- 1. Listen
- 2. Empower
- 3. Be Positive and Show Mutual Respect
- 4. Create a Mutual Value System
- 5. Be willing to see the athlete's perspective
- 6. Partner in their goals
- 7. Develop your expertise
- 8. Show a vested interest in what they are doing at club and act upon them

1. Listen

- Listen to the athlete's needs/expectations
- Be a mentor to help build a relationships
- Do they need a mental break?
- What are they missing in their workouts?



2. Empower

- Give athletes leadership roles
- Value their feedback (both positive and constructive)
 - Practice design (some is not negotiable)
 - Meet lineups
- Help build relationships by allowing them to build each other up
- Create opportunities for the Club swimmers to teach other athletes.
 - Use their skills to their advantage
 - Builds ownership for their role on the team

3. Be Positive and Show Mutual Respect

- Respect is a two-way street
- Respect is earned
- Positivity leads to success and helps build relationships
- Positivity does not = lack of accountability
 - Must hold your athlete's accountable. You can lose your athletes if they feel that the club athlete is getting away with something because they are faster/more committed outside of your realm.

4. Create a mutual value system

- Encourage athletes to participate club by showing you value it
- Value their love for club
 - Monday-Thursday: Kingwood only caps
 - Friday: Free-will Friday, can wear their club caps
- All relationships are solidified when common acceptance of another's values occur.
 - Common on the club side is valuing hard work and dedication.
 - Common on the high school side is understanding they expect more “fun”
- This idea goes for other extracurricular activities as well.

5. Be willing to see the athlete's perspective

- This the most difficult thing to do in my opinion
- We expect our athlete's to see our perspective, but we need to do the same without quick judgement
- Perspective enables us to find middle ground
- An athlete's perception is their reality unless otherwise changed
 - I believe this is where most conflict arises



6. Partner in their goals

- Be mindful of the athlete's big picture
- Have goal sheets and meetings (LISTEN!)
- Create an environment where the kids consistently talk about their goals
 - Don't shun their goals when they are not HS based (or vice versa)
- Re-evaluate, ask questions, and provide feedback that applies specifically to their goal.
 - Be a student of them and what they want to achieve



7. Develop your expertise

- Where can they see you as an “expert”?
 - What do you do really well?
 - How can you give a different viewpoint?
 - What are your defining characteristics?
- Examples:
 - Dryland/Weight Room
 - Technique aspects
 - Relationship building
 - Sprint Training



8. Show a vested interest in what they are doing at club to find a balance in their training

- Questions to ponder
 - What type of volume are they doing at club?
 - What type of sets do they typically do what days? Anaerobic, Aerobic, Kicking focused, heavy land, etc.
 - What are the major meets the kids are attending for club? How can you work that into their training?
- How will you adjust and strike a balance? How do you monitor overtraining or undertraining?



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Thank you & Questions

- Contact: mtrobins@humbleisd.net



How Kingwood trains



- Focus on components that create a balance for our athletes from HS to club
- Non-negotiables
 - Kicking & Underwaters
 - Speed & Power
 - Dryland/weight room
 - Lots of descend work with a focus on changing speeds and heart rate moving through the energy
 - Utilize equipment

How we train continued...

- Speed Everyday in some way
- Break into groups (let athletes choose to an extent)
 - Sprint
 - Midsprint (free/stroke/& IM)
 - Long Sprint
 - Breast
 - IM
- Test kicking: helps determine taper length/workload
- Break into several taper groups depending on event, size, strength and ability to recover