

Swim by Eloise Ryden

This past school year was a big adjustment for me in school and outside of school. I started sixth grade at a new school where I had to make friends and get used to a different schedule. Outside of school I was challenged in my extracurricular activities. I was inspired to try out for a competitive swim team because I like being in the water. Even though I already knew how to swim, when I joined the team, I quickly realized that I had a lot more to learn.

There are many groups, based on your skill level. Bronze is the lowest, then Silver, Gold, Junior Olympics, and Nationals. I started out in Bronze because I was new and I had a lot to learn. At first, practice was very challenging, and I didn't have enough stamina. I also couldn't understand the words that the coaches were using. For example, I was confused when they said 'time base' or 'SKIPS' or 'do a four hundred freestyle.' Over time, I learned the words by asking the coaches or sometimes asking the other swimmers.

I faced other obstacles at my first swim meet. I didn't know all the rules, and I got disqualified for breaststroke because I didn't touch the wall with both hands at the same time. I also struggled with the breaststroke kick. One time, my goggles fell off while diving into the pool. I was frustrated, but my coach helped me learn what I did wrong and how I could get better. During swim practice, I would incorporate what she told me to do. I learned how to not get disqualified during meets, and I also learned how to get better at swimming in general. I gained more confidence and was able to go faster than before.

Some of the wins I've experienced include getting my first rubber duck. The race that you swim at a swim meet is called a heat. When you win the heat, you get a rubber duck. I now have three rubber ducks, though two are from a mock meet. The mock meet was just my swim team, and the girls and boys weren't separated. It is like a practice to show people what it is like at a real meet. Moving up to Silver was another win for me. It showed that I was making progress and improving. I think I will continue progressing and doing well at swim meets.

I have gained so much understanding about swimming since I joined the team. I have learned better technique, and the rules about getting disqualified. This also contributes to making me faster. I have learned how to dive far into the pool to get a head start. I have also gotten a lot better at flip turns and open turns, as well as pushing off the wall with enough power to go far underwater.

I think the swim team will also help me learn responsibility and leadership. I have to be responsible for getting to swim practice on time and packing all the right gear. At my second swim meet, my coach asked me to help out a teammate who had never been to a meet before. By helping others, I am developing my leadership skills. I can apply these lessons outside of swim as well, such as at the new school I am going to next year. Swimming provides an excellent opportunity for me to learn valuable lessons and have fun.