

## The Ladder of Success



Success in competitive swimming is like climbing a ladder. Each new rung in the ladder is another level of achievement for your swimmer. At the local level, here in PVS, there are four championship level meets that are put on by Potomac Valley Swimming. At the bottom level is the 18&Under Championship meet. This meet is for our entry level swimmers who do not have very much experience and limited training. 18&U Championships has a “No Faster Than” (NFT) qualifying time. We refer to this as a “top end cut”. Training 2-3 days a week or 60-90 minutes is sufficient to qualify for this meet.

At the next level, or rung in the ladder, is the PVS 14&Under Junior Olympics, commonly referred to as JO’s. This meet has “No Slower Than” (NST) qualifying times. We refer to this as a “bottom end cut”. You will also see SCY and LCM under the qualifying times columns in the meet announcements. This refers to Short Course Yards and Long Course Meters. We compete in LCM over the spring and summer seasons and in SCY in the fall and winter season. The JO meet is a trials and finals type meet. All swimmers compete in the morning preliminary session and the fastest 16 swimmers in each event return for the finals session in the evening. It is during the finals session that the swimmers earn points for the team and medals for their achievements. Relays are a part of this meet and big points for the team. Training 3-4 days a week for 60-90 minutes is sufficient to qualify for this meet but if your child has a goal of making finals in this meet, then he / she needs to be training 5-6 days a week for 60-90 minutes. Additional dry land training may become necessary as well.

The third rung in the local ladder of success is the PVS Junior Championships. This meet is referred to as a “window” meet which means it has both NFT qualifying times and also NST qualifying times. This means that your child could be too slow or too fast to swim in this meet in certain events. Like the JO meet, this meet is currently set up as a trials and finals meet in the spring but is only a timed finals meet in the summer. A timed finals meet is where the swimmers only compete in the morning and there is no finals session in the evening. All points and awards are determined from the first, and only, swim in each event. Training 4-5 days a week for 90 – 120 minutes is sufficient to qualify for this meet but if your child has a goal of making finals in this meet, then he / she needs to be training 5-6 days a week for 90-120 minutes per workout and be a very hard worker in practice. Additional dry land training may be necessary as well.

The fourth rung in our local ladder of success is the PVS Senior Championships. Like JO’s and the spring Jr. Champs meet, this meet is a trials and finals meet. This meet has NST qualifying times for both SYC and LCM and is the top meet here in our local area. But it is not even close to the pinnacle your child can achieve in the big picture of USA Swimming. Training 5-6 days a week for 90-120 is sufficient to qualify

for this meet but if your child has a goal of making finals in this meet, then he / she needs to be training 5-6 days a week for 90-120 minutes per workout and be a very hard worker in practice. Additional dry land training and two a day workouts two days a week may become necessary as well.

The next rung in the ladder takes us to the Regional level of competitions. Travel will be involved at this level and above. Here at this level you will find the Eastern Zone All Star meets and the Eastern Zone Speedo Sectional Championship meets as well as the IMX Championship meet and some Regional Swim Camps your child can qualify for if talented enough. The Eastern Zone encompasses all states from Virginia up north to Maine and is made up of 12 LSC's like PVS. An LSC is a Local Swimming Community, our LSC is Potomac Valley.

At the Regional level, and the fifth rung in our ladder, is the Zone meet. There is a Zone meet for SCY in the spring and one for LCM in the summer. The Zone meet is comprised of the fastest swimmers from each LSC in the Eastern Zone. Each LSC selects an All Star team to travel to the Zone meet. The PVS SCY Zone All Star team is made up of the fastest three swimmers in each event, each sex for the 9-10 age group and the 11-12 age group. The fastest two swimmers in each event and each sex are selected to compete in the 13-14 age group and the 15-18 age group. For the LC Zone meet in the summer there is simply a NST qualifying time to make the meet. It is possible at this level for your swimmer to be too fast for this meet in the 13-14 age group or the 15-18 age group. This is a trials and finals meet where the fastest eight swimmers come back to compete in the evening finals session. If your swimmer has ambitions of qualifying for this meet and being selected by the LSC to compete then he / she will need to be training 5-6 days a week for 60-90 minutes a day regardless of age. Some of our 9-10's could make it on slightly less training but it is very difficult to do so. You'd have to be an animal in workout to have a chance.

The next rung up the ladder is the Eastern Zone Speedo Sectional meet. This meet is a trials and finals type meet with both SCY and LCM qualifying times. There is a Spring SCY meet and a summer LCM meet. This meet is similar to the PVS Senior Champs meet but with faster competition. Your swimmer will need to be swimming 5-6 days a week and be a very hard worker to qualify for this meet. Additional dry land training and two a day workouts two days a week may become necessary as well. Only the hardest workers make finals at this level.

In addition to these meets there are also additional opportunities for your swimmers to participate at the Regional level but again, most of the time, only the hardest workers get these opportunities. First there is the Eastern Zone IMX Championship meet. This is a new meet to the USA Swimming schedule and though it is not as challenging to qualify for as the Zone or the Sectional meets, there is a minimum qualifying standard. To qualify for the IMX meet you must swim all of the required IMX events in your age group. By doing so, you are awarded points for each swim. The faster the swim, the more points are awarded. Your sum total of all 5 or 6 events will determine your over all IMX score. Currently a swimmer must have 1,800 points in order to qualify for this meet. Over the next several years, if the meet gets more popular, the points required to qualify may go up. This meet is on the same level as our PVS JO meet. More info on the IMX meet can be found at:

<http://www.usaswimming.org/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabId=1731&Alias=Rainbow&Lang=en> and here

<http://www.usaswimming.org/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabId=1720&Alias=Rainbow&Lang=en-US>

Next are the Regional Zone Swim Camps. There is a distance camp, a diversity camp (new this year for ethnic minorities) and a regular camp. To qualify for one of these camps you generally have to do it one of two ways...be one of the fastest 1-2 swimmers in your Zone in an event (LCM) or have the minimum IMX score required. More info on Zone swim camps can be found at:

<http://www.usaswimming.org/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabId=1439&Alias=Rainbow&Lang=en>

Moving on to our National Level competitions and our 7<sup>th</sup> rung on the ladder of success is the NCSA Junior Nationals meet. This meet is most often held in Orlando, FL in March. This meet is pretty much on the same level as the Speedo Sectional meet but is open to the entire country for swimmers ages 19 and younger. This is a trials and finals meet with the top 16 swimmers coming back to the evening finals session. This meet is held only in the Spring and is swum in SCY three years then is held in LCM during the Olympic years. This allows swimmers to qualify for USA Olympic Team Trials which only has qualifying times in LCM. Your swimmer will need to be swimming 6 days a week and be a very hard worker to qualify for this meet. Additional dry land training and two a day workouts two days a week may become necessary as well. Only the hardest workers make finals at this level.

Next up the ladder (8<sup>th</sup> rung) is the USA Swimming Jr. Nationals meet. This meet is held in SCY in December and in LCM in August. This meet is similar in style and format to the NCSA Jr. Nationals meet only faster competition. The meet is trials and finals like all the big meets above. Your swimmer will need to be swimming 6 days a week and be a very hard worker to qualify for this meet. Additional dry land training and two a day workouts two to three days a week may become necessary as well. Only the very hardest workers make finals at this level.

Continuing upward, our ninth rung on the ladder is the US Open. Then the 10<sup>th</sup> rung is the USA Swimming / Conoco Phillips National Championships, then the 11<sup>th</sup> rung is the USA Olympic Team Trials. Our top rung in the ladder of success is the Olympic Games. What was said about the above meets can be repeated here as far as training and hard work goes. These meets are all similar in style and format only the qualifying times and competition keeps getting faster. Those swimmers with the internal drive and desire who also have the correct level of parental support will be able to achieve these highest levels of competitive swimming success.

You have to be an animal everyday in workout to achieve the highest levels in USA Swimming but those foundations start at the entry level. Potomac Marlins have a program in place at each facility for your children to achieve the highest level of success they can dream of. There is no need to switch teams to reach the next highest level. Potomac Marlins have sent four swimmers to the USA Olympic team trials with a 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> swimmer most likely by 2012. These swimmers have stuck with the program and moved through our system year by year, coach by coach. If your swimmer can dream it, they can achieve it right here with us. You just have to allow your swimmer the ability to keep progressing

through our program and realize that to achieve the big time results they have to make that commitment to train very hard and be consistent with attendance. It may mean that they have to swim more days per week and push themselves harder in workout but that is the price they have to pay to achieve the success they dream of. Good Luck to all who dream big!

Coach Bill