

News For

SWIM PARENTS

Two A Day Workouts for 12 and Unders?

By Guy Edson, ASCA Level 5 Age Group

Should age groupers (age 12 and unders) be going to double workouts? There isn't an absolute answer to this issue, and there are no studies or surveys on the topic. What we are left with is our good judgment.

Is it a technical issue and therefore becomes the decision of the coach? Or is it an eat/sleep/school/family issue and the responsibility of the parent?

The coach's role is to look at the time of the year, the quality of the swimmer, the needs of the swimmer, and the long term development of the swimmer. The parent's role is to make sure the child is healthy. Difficulties arise when coach or parent overstep their roles.

What is the bottom line? We (parents and coaches) use our good judgment to create an environment and opportunities for swimmers where they are improving, happy, and in it for the long haul.

Here are some of the factors to consider and some of my thoughts on each:

Age of the swimmer. 8 and unders? Are you kidding me? 9 year olds, probably not. 10 year olds, maybe. Highly motivated 10 year olds *might* come to doubles during the summer and perhaps to an occasional stroke session every two or three weeks during the school year. 11 year olds can do doubles in the summer and once or twice a week in the school year. 12 year olds can do doubles in the summer and, if they are very good, *might* go 3 doubles during the school year.

What does "might" mean? It means that in some programs where coaching and parental philosophies match up and where the swimmer has the background and ability, it does happen.

What is the motivation of the swimmer? This may be the most important factor. If the age group child is not motivated for double workouts then don't push it. (Remember, we are talking about 12 and unders here.)

Time of the Year (school year versus summer). School is more important than swimming. Getting enough sleep to do well in school is mandatory. During the school year, parents need to make the call on this... but, parents should not be pushing the children to doubles if the coach doesn't feel they are ready for it.

Biological maturity of the swimmer. Because girls mature earlier and because girls tend to be better at the national level much earlier than boys, with 12 year old mature girls who can handle school on less sleep, they *might* be coming to 2 or 3 doubles a week.

Individual or group. Sometimes, even when the swimmer is capable (physically, mentally, emotionally) of double workouts, there is a level of hesitation or anxiety – simply an “uncomfortableness” of being singled out and being different from teammates. For that reason sometimes it makes sense to bring at least two swimmers together into the school year double workout environment.

In any case, *progressive* is the key word. Speak with the coach about the progression for moving your age group swimmer into double workouts, especially during the school year. Starting with maybe one stroke session every two weeks and building to 1, then 2, and maybe 3 doubles a week for the very advanced 12 year old.

Now, I have not used the word “guidelines” here. The above is a mixture of personal opinion mixed with observations of a wide range of programs over the past 35 years. The difficulty with issuing “guidelines” is that they put boundaries on those who coach at the edges and often times those who coach at the edges end up leading the way.

Bottom line revisited: Use good judgment.

End note: Just in case you are wondering...What did I do when I was a full time age group coach? The best age group team I coached were multiyear state champions and we had one nationally ranked 10 year old and 5 nationally ranked 11-12 year olds, all girls. Our better 10 and unders were restricted to one workout a day all year around with the exception of the nationally ranked girl who came to morning sessions once every two weeks for start, turn, or stroke work. All our 11-12's were invited to 3 morning workouts plus 5 afternoon workouts in the summer. During the school year they had the option to come in for start, turn or stroke work once every 2 weeks. A couple of our 12 year old nationally ranked girls came to one or two morning workouts a week during the school year.