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Wilton Y Wahoos – CT

The third finals session of this year and I have officially completed my swimming for the week. Being a backstroker, I swam the 100 on Monday and the 200 today, rounded out by a declared fall-start in the 400 IM, my third cut for this year. Over this year, I have battled an obscure ailment with my upper thighs. When I race, especially long distances, they cramp up and basically give out. The doctors we have seen so far have little to say, but we are hoping an answer will come soon. As for my swimming, my legs really hadn't bothered me in awhile...until this morning. Usually, I am a back-half swimmer in the 200. Today, by the time I got to that 6<sup>th</sup> lap, I felt as though someone had taken a baseball bat to my legs. I managed to finish within a second of my best time, which made me very happy. But the pain didn't go away until about 20 minutes after the race. I think that pain alone taught me a lot about this sport. I remembered back to times when this pain was nonexistent and I had cried because I didn't do as well in my event as I had wanted to. To put it nicely, if I were able to see myself then at this point in my life, I would've slapped myself. This sport is so mental and swimmers are often extremely critical of their swims, good, bad or indifferent. But I never knew what it felt like to try your heart out and still not go anywhere until today. Don't get me wrong, I was extremely pleased with my overall time. But I could just remember all those times when I'd tell myself, *Don't worry, you can kick harder next time* or *Next time I'll just blow through the water*. Today I tried that and it seemed to fail me.

But, in light of those events, I've learned that you can't let races attack your persona. Being a senior, I knew a lot of kids were watching what I was doing. And, even more importantly, there is also someone extremely special here with me this year...my 13-year-old rookie sister. When I finished, I knew I had to pull myself together. I can't deny, I did shed tears on account of the pain in my legs. But I knew I couldn't let her see me get upset about my swim; if she saw me like that, she'd think it was ok to get upset about racing, which I strongly believe it is not. And I think having these thoughts in my head really helped me pull through what was a frustrating situation. I have only my sister to thank for that...she's my constant reminder that no matter what you think, it's not the end of the world.

Now, after a somewhat gut-digging entry, a smile lightens my face as my coach informs me of my teammates' accomplishments at time trials. We often forget to acknowledge those who did not necessarily make the cut, but still time trial and have amazing swims. Lucy, my best friend who helped me with my journal last night, did a best time of the season after struggling with hepatitis all season. Another friend who had knee surgery in the fall did a best in the 100 free. And the list goes on and on. They were definitely my inspiration of the day, especially since they were able to do all this after being out and about all day long. I must run now...Gate Guys vs. parents relay! Let's go Gate Guys!!!