

Good Morning

About two weeks ago, the butterflies that found themselves in the pit of my stomach multiplied just as bursts of adrenaline kicked in. My palms began to sweat and my muscles tensed. The referee blew his whistle as I watched my teammate step on the block for his final attempt at making a Nationals cut. These sensations filled me as if the race were my own, even though it was not my turn. My wish was that the nervousness and anxiety I felt would replace his tension, calm his nerves, and focus his mind. After I finished cheering him on and the race was through, I hoped the pure excitement within me could only multiply so he could be just as overjoyed with the awesome swim. An outsider looking into this world of swimming couldn't understand the degree of sacrifices made, the commitment to a team, or the pain endured for what appears to be an insignificant time drop, but it becomes instinctive for teammates.

I joined my Y team twelve years ago, completely naïve to the sport. With time I've learned to touch with two hands in butterfly and that warm-up is necessary before a race. More importantly, however, I've realized the significance of dedicating yourself to a team to learn and grow with. The countless hours spent training to exhaustion has created camaraderie between all of my fellow swimmers. Practice became a place to express my character through actions, making every moment an opportunity to gain strength and knowledge. When hardships arose, it was also somewhere to fall back to for support. The unspoken understanding formed among my coaches and teammates told us when to express a little extra caring and encouragement.

Although I am the sole member of my team down here this week, I do not feel alone. Along with my coach who has supported me through victories and sorrows and my parents who won't ever miss a meet, are all of the other swimmers and coaches who've regarded me as one of their own. The

warm-ups we wear display our team pride, but they do not form walls to divide us. Instead, I've found, they provide more words of encouragement, louder cheering, and exceptional friendships.

Please join me in prayer. Father, we thank you for keeping us safe and strong throughout the season and during this week. We appreciate all of your unyielding support, especially when we've had our doubts. Thank you for these opportunities to grow with our teammates and new friends. And allow us to show everything we've worked for, support each other, and above all, have fun. Amen.

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