



Working in an Independent School Environment: The Bolles School Program by Gregg Troy & Larry Shofe (1995)

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Coach Larry Shofe is currently the Senior Coach at the Bolles School Sharks in Jacksonville, Florida. He has been with the Bolles School Sharks since 1988 and has 13 State Championships, 4 Junior & 1 National Championships. Before coming to the Bolles school, Coach Shofe coached at the Amberjack Swim Club in Jacksonville, FL (6 years), Head Coach Jacksonville Episcopal High School (6 years), Head Coach Old Dominion Aquatic Club (5 years), Head Coach Old Dominion University (5 years), Men's Assistant coach University of California Berkeley (2 years). Coach Shofe received his MA in PE & Exercise Physiology, Athletic Administration from the University of California Berkeley in 1977.

Coach Greg Troy is currently the Head Coach of the Bolles School in Jacksonville, Florida. Over the past 18 years with the Bolles School and Bolles Sharks, Coach Troy's programs have produced 20+ Olympians, 22 Florida State Championship Teams, 3 National Prep Championships, 7 Junior National Championship Teams, 1995 USS National Championships combined. Coach Troy was the 1995 Pan Am Coach and in 1993 he was the National Junior Team Assistant.

Greg Troy: First thing I'd like to tell you is that anything is possible and I am the prime example of that. In 1977 when I went to Jacksonville and went to Bolles I was not a whole lot more knowledgeable than I am now. I'd like to think I have gotten more but I'm not sure sometimes. I walked into a program where there were 14 athletes total. There was no club situation at all. We had average facilities which was a 25-yard pool. It wasn't great but it was good for the time. We had questionable administrative support from the standpoint that I was a young guy and walking in real new and I had one other job prior to that. They said they were going to support me but I wasn't real certain about it. I certainly wasn't in a position that I still called everyone above me "sir" and "yes, sir" and "no, ma'am" and "Mr." and "Mrs.". I was really lost and I had a full plate in front of me.

They had some high expectations because there was a great tradition at school. I had a full class load, two preparations, and one study hall. I worked on the dorm staff and lived in the dorm. Due to my inexperience and youth, desire to coach swimming and feeling like it was going to be a good position, I was working for next to nothing! I had a head master who did a great job of hiring. We started the club team from scratch. There was no assistant coach in any position and we were probably walking among the most highly competitive swim areas in the State of Florida from the standpoint that D. Schlessmeyer was at Jacksonville Episcopal and won the Nationals my first year there. He had some of the best girls in the nation which included Nancy Hoggshead and several others.

On the plus side, the school did have a great tradition of swimming. They have been good for a long time. And there was no preconceived way about how to go about it. Over the course of the summer prior to my start, (I

started in October,) everything had fallen apart. There was basically nothing left so I got a chance to start all over. I'd like to tell you I was successful because of the good things I did but I think the main thing is that we were a little bit lucky. My only real goal at the time was I that I knew I liked working with kids. I really enjoyed being around young people and I like to see them improve and I had been fortunate enough to add a few people that had scored at Nationals and knew that I wanted to put people at that level if at all possible or certainly give them the opportunity to do it!

Today we have a hundred to a hundred and twenty athletes that swim on the high school team alone. We have 250 to 300 in our club program and I can't tell you exactly how many because we had 65 new swimmers show up a week and a half ago and today is the day they are supposed to turn in all their paperwork if they want to join the team. We have great facilities. Right now we have our own 50 meter pool.

I have eight to 10 assistants that are some of the best people I have ever worked with. I'll talk about that a little bit later. We have won national titles, both junior and seniors several times. We have won our high school state meet a lot of times. We certainly had a lot of real great individual performance All-Americans and Olympians. And while it would seem there's no problems (we have no parents organization that some people would feel would be a plus), I can give you some insights on the negatives in certain manners, too.

We have too many athletes and our pool is saturated. My help is overworked. So there are still challenges but they are a different set of challenges. I guess what I'm trying to tell you is anything is really possible

because if we can do that in Jacksonville with a lot of hard work by a lot of people, I think it can be done anywhere. I can't give you any real simple reason why but I know that part of it is related to having worked in a private school environment and working with people that are true professionals that are interested in having things move forward. I wish I could real simply lay things out for you. I can't.

Our organizational structure: I have been fortunate. I worked for 18 years now for the same Head Master. The school itself has evolved from 500 students to 1500 students on three different campuses at the moment. When we started the program the first thing I did is I sat down with the head master and decide what the school really wanted. I think sometimes the biggest mistake we make in any situation is you need to know what the goals of the organization, whether it be a parents organization, whether it be an independent school or public school, you need to know what goals they are looking for. If you don't know what their goals are it doesn't mean that their goals have to be the same as yours but you need to know what their goals are and value what they expect from you because if you don't you are going to be unsuccessful. It doesn't mean you need to change your goals but it means you at least have to know where they are and getting your goals to meet theirs, it's going to take progress and time working towards those two things.

We looked at what the school wanted and the things the school was looking for. They were looking for a situation where we offered people they wanted to get a good education, and a great athletic opportunity. Were they interested in great swimmers per se? No. They were interested in giving people who wanted to be good swimmers and be good students at the same time the opportunity to accomplish those things.

Fortunately, that agrees a little bit with my philosophy so we can put those things together. They wanted to be able to do it in an environment where you understood that the people were paying a high price and making that commitment towards education.

There was some pressure to win. They definitely wanted to win swim meets but they didn't want to win the US Nationals. They didn't want to have people win the Junior Nationals. They wanted to have people represent the school that they could be proud of and that were real positive. Factors were positive in motivating people in the community that would in fact bring other students to the Bolles school. They made the facility available as we saw fit, again dependent upon no preconceived notion. So I had the opportunity to sit down and discuss with them what I thought was important and what direction we wanted to go with the program. We set goals for each individual and we set up the program based around my goals for the team. First of all, we wanted to have a good high school team. We wanted to try to win the high school mythical if possible. We have won the women a couple times. We've never won the men.

We wanted to be as competitive and win the high school State meet as often as possible but always keeping in mind that our general philosophy was we would sacrifice whatever it took for the individual to accomplish those goals. Probably our best male high school teams have fallen in years where our best athletes were either foreign or international level athletes and they swam our high school state meets unshaved or at a semi-prepared condition because there was something that was more important for them sometime in the upcoming six weeks to two months. I think that this philosophy makes the athlete believe in what you are doing more. I don't

think it's a me-over-team situation. The whole team understands it and values those things.

The organizational structure of the team as I saw it was that we have a pretty standard high school practice. We were given one period a day where I'm scheduled as their PE teacher and we ran doubles. We took our high school team and what we did is mirrored what our USS team would be. And then our whole high school structure set up around that.

We have double practices three days a week. We had two hours in the morning. We have three hours in the afternoon. Day to day what the practice times were are as important as how we related to other people on campus and made things go.

We tried very hard to work with faculty members and put the faculty in the situation where they become supporters of the swim program and this isn't too much different — in Fort Myers I worked in a public school environment and I found the same thing. I think if you take time and you work with the faculty members in your institution we can make the swimmers. The nature of them being basically good students and good people to start out with they are role models when compared to other athletes and the faculty members respect and help you.

I think every once in a while you need to make some commitments to education. There are some major meets that we'd like to attend that we can't attend because they coincide with the week before our exams or the week

after our examination, sometime right around test period, where we can't go. But those aren't insurmountable objects. They are things that you work around. Plus, what happens is that the faculty becomes a real consistent group of people that will stand behind you and work toward the athletes and give the athletes a respected situation on campus. They will actually encourage people to swim!

One of our major problems at school at the moment is, because the athletes make up work, they don't show up to class on time and it is something we have to work at. It doesn't happen by accident. I mean, you constantly have to reinforce with the athletes that they are there to be students in addition to being athletes and we've got, quite frankly, some kids that would much rather be swimmers than they would be students. I think that the emphasis on what you ask them to do is real important so we are constantly working with them from a grade standpoint. One of our major problems becomes that the faculty members sometimes aren't as demanding with them as we are at the swimming pool and faculty members sometimes will ask the student if they have enough time to do their work because they realize their practice schedule so we constantly even ask them to be more demanding, not less demanding, than the other students and they value that.

In setting up the varsity program, we spent a lot of time working with the school stressing to them that if they really wanted people that were good swimmers and they wanted to attract swimmers to come to school, there also had to be some provision for them to train and swim on a year round basis. So from the very start we emphasized a club team and a year-round participation as being very important to the success of the high school level. As a matter of fact, what it has actually evolved at our school is that the school administration realizes that they always feel that the club program is

more important than what the high school team is. And if you have a chance to work in an independent school situation I would emphasize to you that if you can convince your people of that, the administration director at school becomes your biggest friend because he likes nothing better than anything that creates a good public image. What happens? We have a lot of seven, eight, nine, and ten year olds that come to school at Bolles later on who do not continue swimming. They don't really want to swim but their first exposure to the swim program is to Bolles, has been through the swim program. Age groupers came to campus, swam at first, but then but then got involved in other sports. Their first exposure is one of a positive light; and the school really likes that because we have actually shown that we are a professional organization interested in the individual and that's one of the main reasons why they make contact with the school. I cannot over emphasize if you work with a private institution how important that is because they view it as students and indirectly it's dollars because while we are in the business of education, the business doesn't go in if the bottom line doesn't show at least dead even. We are not in it to make money, but we're certainly in it to make sure the situation perpetuates itself.

So what happens is our high school team has actually become a vehicle for success during the rest of the year. We tried as often as possible with our staff to tie the staff directly to the school. When we hired people through the club program we try as often as possible to tie them to some position at school.

We have one assistant coach whose position evolved, He's presently a full-time coach. When he started as a part-time coach, his first position at the school was to pick up students, specifically swimmers early in the morning, and drive them into campus because they needed a special bus

route to get them in. As often as possible, we try to get them involved in the dorm program and work in other areas of school.

Our U.S.S. club situation evolved from encouraging the school that we needed to do that and the first goal was to try to supplement what the varsity team did throughout the year. It makes the program much more continuous in that we coach both. In a public school setting, the same situation is possible. When I worked in Fort Myers we had an identical situation but it requires time on your part to go in and sit down and talk with the administration, talk to the board members, to talk to the teachers and make sure they see the importance of the program. We've always stressed with our administration is that swimmers are great people — that they are people that are goal oriented. They are committed as students. They represent the school in a real positive manner.

Our Head Master spoke with me this past year and was discussing in particular at that point boarding students and his comment to me was, (and again it's the same person I have been working with for 18 years), "I know they are no angels. I just had one that was kicked out of school this year that didn't do all the right things and we always have a few that are in grade problems. But that they are always working in some direction and they are the most positive members of the school society even though they are not involved in a whole lot of fringe activities because of their swimming activities." He said what they have actually become is they have become role models for everyone else. I think it's because we are working with people that are professionals that are really interested in children, that they like to have swimmers as boarding students because they are the most conscientious people you can work with from the standing they have goals and orientation.

Larry came from another institution that didn't value swimming as highly. What has happened is the swim program has also become kind of a model for the other athletic programs on the campus. They don't always like it. Our football coach is pretty begrudging about using the medicine balls and the surgical tubing that we do, but every once in a while they have taken our medicine balls and used them on the side when they think we don't know it; but they have taken a whole lot of the same products, same training devices we use, general fitness things and they do a lot of them. Fortunately we have this ability to work with them and we have some things they have done, too.

When we started our club, I started from nothing. And in the course of the first two months, we were fortunate enough it was a small team that did have a board run organization that used our facility. We went to those people and explained to them that we wanted them to stay on campus. We had no desire to force them out of the swimming business at all. Which I think quite often is the opposite approach that people would take. Again, I'd like to say this was by design but it was just lucky. And we told them what their hours were going to be when we started a full fledged program that it was going to have a low impact on them but we would do everything we could to work with them, at which time they came back and suggested the possibility of joining us. I sat down with the head coach and he was basically an age grouper so we inherited a club team of 20 to 30 athletes that actually became the nucleus of our club team. So, from the original 14 that we started with, we ended up with about 44 on the first year!

In the nature of taking that over, we also inherited a parents organization and I found that working with those people was a very positive situation. I

offer to you some thoughts on working with parents: if you think you want to work in an orphan's home it's a real mistake. I know it's a common coaching statement and a little bit of a joke, but the parents are the single most important resource that you have that you can work with. And what I've always tried to do is try to encourage their support.

I gave a talk for Bob Steele at one of his local coaches clinics about working with parents and the single biggest thing we do wrong as coaches is let parents set the tempo for where we are at. We view them as being a problem before they actually become a problem or are afraid they are a problem before they ever become a problem and we think they are going to coach before they ever start coaching when in fact, by the nature of doing that, we tend to ignore them. We tend to be short with them. We tend to treat them as outsiders when the single most important thing in their life is in the pool so we have to find some way to motivate their interest. And for me that single biggest thing is you have to sell the parents, regardless of whether a child swims well or swims poorly, that you are interested in their child as an individual and working forward. I am not going to say we don't have parent problems. We have those. And our parent problems are even heightened because we have people that come to us from other places and within the Jacksonville community. There have been as many as six or seven other clubs in the Jacksonville area in my 18 years. We named our team the Bolles Sharks and the common response in town was we should have been the Sharks of Bolles so our initials would be SOB's. When other swim team families from the Jacksonville area come to us, is the last resort. It's not the place they really want to be.

But the single biggest mistake we make as coaches is we know that there's a problem usually. You know when an athlete isn't doing well. You usually can tell ahead of time that the parent thinks the athlete isn't doing well. If

you put it off and put it off until the parent calls you, then they have become the expert and you are defending your position. The single biggest thing you can do as a coach working with parents, is to pick up the phone and call the parent and tell them there's a problem before they have a chance to call you. Almost invariably, if you can do that before they even know there's a problem, then they realize that you are caring and you are interested in their child and you don't present the problem as something like we are kicking the child off the team and we are throwing the family out of the club. You are soliciting their support and asking them how can we deal with this problem, what can we do?

Quite frankly, we have some of the worst parents in the world from the standpoint of reputations coming into our program and quite often those people are the easiest to work with after we've had them two years. But you need to understand where the problem is and you've got to make sure that they understand that you are interested in their child and you've got to be interested. I think I've gotten even better about after having children myself because my perspective is entirely different. Now I can understand their commitment to their child. I understand why when they see their child at practice or see them at the meet and see something wrong, they are only watching one individual. It's much easier for them to see something wrong. If they are one of those really good parents and you discourage them to come to practice, you don't ever want them to do anything, just let their kids alone, it becomes even more heightened because they don't see their child swim very often. When they see them swim, they all of a sudden see this glaring error and it's glaring to them because they haven't seen them. It's usually something that has happened over a course of time so then it becomes a major problem for them. They want to talk to you about it.

We have always taken a philosophy, be it right or wrong, maybe everyone can't do it or shouldn't do it, but our practices are always open. We tell them as soon as they come to the team they are more than welcome to come and watch the practice but they are not allowed to coach in any manner. All the assistant coaches are told that the first time the parent is involved in practice they have to walk over immediately and tell that parent that they'd love to talk with them about their child's problem, they'd appreciate any input they get from the parent about what the child is doing wrong, but the place would be a fiasco if 40 sets of parents were to come out and want to be involved in coaching the team. And they understand that.

By the same token, what we do at practice isn't top secret. It's not like we are trying to prevent them from being there. It's not like we don't want them to see what's going on and the mere byproduct of them coming to practice every day, they start to see what their child does wrong. They start to see that maybe Suzie doesn't do everything right. Now they are going to see that Joan does things wrong, too, and they might come to ask you about that, but they are going to see their child do some things wrong. Quite often, they may even come ask you what they are doing wrong and ask if there is any way they can help? You can tell them I've just never had a problem with it. The more open we are with them it seems like the better they are to work with. We do the same things about trying to give them jobs to do.

Working with the parents board — I have a recommendation for anyone that works with a parents board. The nice thing about it, in an independent school environment, is that we want everything to be through the school. All our billing for our Sharks organization and our club organization is run through the school. The school pays our payroll and everything. That's a real plus. I'm not sure everyone can organize it that way but if you work with

an independent school I am not sure what yours is like but in ours, one of the major concerns is always cash flow. If you can show them cash flow, money coming in every month even if it's going out at the end of the month, they just like the idea that it's coming in. We paid pool rental to them and everything. We have gone from a percentage situation and now we are on a pool rental situation every month. It's reasonable because they understand that we are a feeder program to the school at the same time as we are for providing a good public image outside.

But out of necessity and putting the two clubs together, we ended up with a parents board. If you work with the parents board and you have problems working with them and you want to get rid of your parents board, I think the single most important thing you can do is assume as much responsibility as they let you have. Every time there's a job at the board meeting that someone doesn't want to do, take it. Every time it doesn't matter how menial the task or how time consuming it's going to be for you. If you want to take your parents board out of being in a situation where they are constantly in your hair take the responsibility for as much as possible and what you are doing indirectly is usurping their power. We reached a situation in the first 10 years where I just kept taking more and more of the power and it wasn't power, it was just doing things but doing things is a power. So we did more and more of the things and I gave it to other assistant coaches or I did it myself. I used my wife to do as much of it as I could and when we eventually got to the situation where we had a parents board in theory but nobody did anything. We finally got to the point where the president of the club's child stopped swimming and he turned in his resignation and there was no longer need for a parents board.

At that point they couldn't get anyone that really wanted to be the president and the first time they said they were having a problem I volunteered

immediately. I told them I was real interested in the club, I had been there a long time, I'd love to be the president, at which point I picked a treasurer, which treasurer happens at the moment to be Larry's wife. With all the other board members, as their child got to the point when they graduated and left the school the parent decided staying on the board was more than what they wanted to do. As we rebuilt the board we tried to put the right people in the positions to start with. I had a president that did what I asked him to do and worked with him. We fought some battles. There were times that they wanted to know some things especially about the school situation. But again, I was responsible to the Head Master, not those people, and they were dependent upon me for pool time so maybe I was in an idealistic situation. Everyone can't be there. Larry's wife is treasurer now and my wife is the meet manager. She doesn't like it all the time but she runs all the meets. Larry is the vice-president.

So we still have a yearly board meeting. The last time we had one we also had a team meeting. Of the 150 families in the club, 15 to 20 of them showed up.

I want to emphasize that contrary to popular belief most of our kids speak English. They are not from out of the country and they don't live in a dormitory. We board 70 boys when we are at our capacity. The most we ever had is 28 to 30 boys boarding. We didn't board girls prior to three years ago and our girls boarding program only boards 50. The most we ever had in the girls dorm is 15. So they are a significant part of the team but they are real isolated.

All the parents in our club and all our athletes belong to two organizations. They are a member of the varsity team and they are a member of the USS team. The kids on the USS team practice and use the

school facilities but they use it after our commitment to the varsity team is already done so I wear two hats. I like to tell the parents I have to make sure I always take care of the varsity program first. They get the priorities and the hours. That's where my first responsibility lies and I take care of that, but we don't have much fighting between the groups. It just never existed. We stress with the coaches that it doesn't matter where the club team athletes go to high school. We try to provide them with the same opportunities. We have athletes that go to the rival high schools and swim in the same districts. We have had people at Bolles not go to the State meet because we coach people from other schools that swim better at the district meet and the kids accept it. They are really great about it. It's just a matter of presenting that we are all in it for the same reasons.

There's little or no resentment from the standpoint of the school of outsiders coming in and using the facility because they realize it's a selling point for the school. My head master has said in a board meeting that the most positive comments he gets every year stem from the fact we host our local city, country club league championship and the people are surprised how well it runs. They love being on campus. They like the facility and they like our staff being around talking to them. It has become a feeder program for the school and a feeder program for the club.

So I guess working with parents you need to make yourself an expert, fight your battles on your ground, and not fight their battles on their ground. I've often thought it would be really great and probably be hilarious if a successful coach would do a description of their career and highlight all the things NOT to do. I always go to clinics and hear people tell what to do. But I have found in my personal situation that by sitting back and watching other people and going to meets and watching other clubs, I've learned more about watching what people do in my opinion that was wrong, how they

could have made a decision a little bit better than I've learned about people telling me what to do right. It strikes me that one of the biggest mistakes we make as coaches is putting ourselves in a lose/lose situation. We do that a lot with parents. We want to fight battles that we can't win. They are just interested in their kid. We look for as often as possible to put ourselves in a win/win situation. Can you make a parent happy and still have the kid swim, well maybe not quite as well sometimes. I think maybe we compromise some performance once in a while but the people we are compromising the performance on, almost invariably, it was going to be the same situation anyway, it was just going to be a bigger battle.

I've gotten so much better in about the last 8 to 10 years. I have Larry to thank for that. He came to me after about two years working with me and explaining to me I was spending too much time worrying about what the kid that was doing wrong was doing wrong and not enough time worrying about what the kid that was doing things right was doing. It's helped me a lot. I'll probably live a few years longer, yell at a whole lot less at people and everyone seems happier. That's how the organization and the club is set up.

[response to question from audience] We have people in our club practice that go to probably 10 different high schools. We have our high school practice and then the other people practice afterwards. They do the same practice, they just start at different times because of when they are out of school. We have times when people in the evening have been better than what our varsity team's been at school. (Some of our best athletes have been the evening swimmers). We have had one or two years where we had three or four people that had the senior standard in the late practice and no one had it in our guys varsity team. They are member of both groups. All the morning practices, they all go together. The weekends practices and all the summer practices are ability based so it's a mixture

of everyone. Anytime there's a vacation or school break, we put it all together. Then we do that as much as possible.

[response to question from the audience] In convincing my administration to allow both teams it is important for you to know that they were sold a little bit on swimming to start with, which made my job easier. I think it's real important that you sit down with your administration on a one-to-one basis when they have time to do it. And you stress to them what you are looking for. They are not used to talking to coaches in other sports that come in and say that they want to have kids that are good students. They are not used to that. The football coach doesn't do that. The basketball coach doesn't do that. We've got some great professional people at our school and all of our sports programs are outstanding. But they just don't go in and do that. You got to go in and the first words out of your mouth are that you want to have good people that are good athletes and good students. Good students and good people are first.

During Larry's first two years with me, we worked with some athletes that quite frankly I was trying to be a social worker more than I was a swim coach, I guess, and I was trying to reclaim some people that had some great talents but they weren't willing to do what they needed to do. At the same time, we had some really outstanding athletes in that group and I'd like to have those years over because I think I hurt the outstanding athletes trying to help some other ones. And Larry and I made a decision after that, that no longer we were going to work with people that weren't basically good people. We've asked some really good athletes to leave the program. Quite frankly our administration respects that and we rarely try to have athletes who have been declared ineligible reinstated. Our eligibility requirements are if they have two D's they are ineligible or if they fail a class they are ineligible. There's an appeal procedure and I think in 18 years I have appealed two or three students. They were all foreign kids or someone who is away from home the first time.

[response to question from the audience] There's nothing that's been more positive than having the foreign athletes in because they are much more committed than our American athletes are. They appreciate the opportunities they have. It's twice as hard for them academically. Some of them speak different languages and don't speak at all American and our academic people cut them no breaks at all. The only break they have is we have an ESL course that they can take. And they come in and they handle everything and study twice as hard and like what they are doing. And they are good students. So I think you sell those type of things to them. And it takes time. Again, I have been lucky and they gave me some time to do it. But the other thing I found is you are really working with people that are professionals and interested in what they are doing and an interest in education.

Some other things people ask: I asked a few coaches I know for some questions and things they thought I should cover because I think it's a little tough to ask questions sometimes in this situation. I am not ever coaching for the money. I have been real fortunate. I've gotten to the point since my meager beginnings where things are a little bit better at school and it's not just because they wanted to be nice to me. But I do it because I like what I do and I like working with young people. If you do it because it's a job, you are doing the wrong thing. You need to get out right away. You never want to compare the number of hours you want to put in to do it right and put that on a pay scale.

It seems to me there's an awful lot of us in the profession that when another job becomes available that's actually a step up, the first thing we do is apply for the job, interview for the job and then we tell the people we are already

working for. For some reason as a profession we seem to have this fear that people hold it against you because you look for a better situation. We are really lucky in swimming. We work with people that are highly educated. They are very good in the business sense and they know exactly what they want to do. If you walk in to them and explain to them the very first time you are talking to someone about the job, especially if the people courted you, and you go in, you tell them you are looking at another job and why are you looking at it and the reasons why, they value that. They do not hold it against you. It makes you that much better in planning.

Now how many times do we talk to someone and they say so and so left this job and they gave everything the other guy wanted to him right away? All of a sudden they realized what they were missing. They would have realized that if the first person would have gone and told them. I am not talking about using this as a method of leverage. I think you walk in point blank and you just explain the situation to them and why. Again, I guess I have been lucky but they've always come back to me in a situation where what can we do to make this situation better. That's how we got a 50-meter pool built. Because it was a priority. They told me they were going to build it when I first came to school.

But you ought to remember that people that we coaches tend to be critical and only be on one side. Our schools, our clubs, they are running a business. I don't care if they are running the board of directors. I don't care if they are running your public school or private school. They are running a business. And their business is to hire people for what they can get them to work for that is reasonable. They'll find things for you if you present to them why it needs to be done but you need to be working hard and doing a good job up front.

Other things I emphasize to the school: Publicity, we certainly like the publicity. We certainly like having Jackson on the cover of Swimming World and they like the won-loss record and self-discipline for students. Emphasize an involvement.

We have never cut anyone from the high school program in 18 years. We've evolved, like I said, from 14 students. We actually have, just on the high school team, 80 varsity team members. We have another 30-25 to 30 on the junior high school. Then, our elementary school. I take one night of my varsity practice and we offer it as a convenience for people that are on our club team. Our age group practice doesn't start until 5:30. We run a 3 o'clock practice right in the middle of our varsity practice three days a week for people's convenience to come in. We tell them right up front that we are not staffed as well to handle them then. We don't feel it's as good a practice, but if as a matter of convenience they feel like their 10-year old would be better off swimming 10 in a lane than one in a lane and come in three days a week we'd rather have them come in and do that than drop out of the sport completely.

That becomes a real selling point at school because when I sit down about once every fourth or fifth year and get an opportunity to talk to our board of directors, when you tell them that you have 100 to 110 people involved in the sport they are ecstatic and they don't care what level those people are at. They don't care if they are 59 for a hundred yards or 59 for a hundred meters. The school values involvement, they value the people moving along.

Frankly I think American athletes are pampered a little bit. We are so used to having everything perfect that we think it has to be perfect for them to swim well and I think sometimes we have to get back to that situation where they are swimming with some younger kids and they see some true enthusiasm and things. I think our kids are jaded lots of times.

Summer league swimming: I think this is a real big thing for us. It may be for other people's programs. We have a lot of clubs that swim in the summer. We let our swimmers go back ask them to come back whenever they have a chance. We ask them to try to bring a friend back with them. They always swim in summer league. 30 kids swim in the summer and won all H. P. trophies. We lost age group championships the first 4 or 5 years because so many of our kids were unattached. We had 65 kids show up at tryouts. All were B or better swimmers. Good people show up. It makes my job better. I think we're taking an organization that, if we fought it by the nature of age group parents, they would of stayed in that summer program only.

I'd leave you with 7 things:

Patience – need to be patient to give things time to work. We jump around too much.

Flexibility but consistence – need to be interested in the total individual and that's our goal.

Cooperate with other people. Use other assistance.

Teach responsibility to athletes. It's always someone else's fault. It's the teacher's fault they didn't understand. Or it's the coach's fault. They want to blame it on the coach. Put responsibility where it belongs, directly on the shoulders of the athletes. They're responsible to get to practice. It's their responsibility for their performances. Their performances need to make me a better coach. Sometimes we feel we need to make them better swimmers. They need to come to us and ask questions and be asking what we do.

Honesty – The more honest you are right up front with them, the better off you are. I don't care if you are talking to parents organizations, board members or administration.

Caring – I think what you need more than anything else is caring. You need to care about yourself and you need to care about the kids you work for or family. You might spend more time with them than their parents do. You need to care about them.

Luck – The last thing you really need to be is to be lucky. I think that's a lot of what I had going for me.

