

# I COACH SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO

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After a recent meet, a parent spoke to me about the conversations taking place in the stands about the swimmers. Some parents talked about everything that their child needed to change to improve. Others wondered why their child was not improving as much as another swimmer on the same team. Others expressed doubt that the coach was doing enough to make the swimmer improve. None of the comments were about whether the child was having fun or noting the improvements that did happen. Did these parents share their thoughts with their child when he or she came to the stands? I hope not. All of these concerns are the purview of the coach. All of these parents mean well. They want their children to be happy and to be successful. They want to help. Sometimes parents help their children so much that the activity, in this case swimming, becomes more about the parents' feelings than the athletes'.

It is important for the young athlete to be able to own her swimming. What I mean by this is that the desire and work and commitment need to come from the athlete. Some parents make the mistake of wanting swimming success for their children so much that there is no room for the child to discover on her own whether or not she wants to do it. Some parents are so busy making sure that everything is taken care of that the child never experiences any failure. If a child never experiences disappointment or failure, she will never learn how to recover from it. She will not know the value of appropriate consequences for her lack of action. She will not be motivated to change.

*continued on page 2*