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WHY TAKE PART IN TOP

TOP (Tiny Olympic Prospects) is a ranking program SWIM Magazine began in January 1983. It is designed to develop 7, 8, 9 and 10 year-old swimmers by encouraging them to swim distance events and by providing them with national recognition.

Here's how it works. Short course rankings will be published each February, May and July as shown below. There will be a list for each age from 7 through 10. Club time trials or dual meets will be ranked once. Unlike TAG, this will not be an ongoing list. Each submitted performance will be listed once only.

Just use the entry form provided to your coach by SWIM and return it to use by the designated date. It's FREE to current subscribers, **for non-subscribers a \$ 5 participation fee** will be charged.

BACKGROUND

You must learn to crawl before you walk is one childhood truism most of us have heard before. It sounds simple — you have to learn to go about things in the proper order and you have to master one skill before you're ready for the next. Crawl before you walk.

The same principles hold true when swimmers from 6-10 years-old are training says Laurentian University swim coach, Dr. Jeno Tihanyi, a Ph.d in child growth and development. The message is: distance swimming should precede sprint work. Alex Baumann is a good example of what can happen.

"Alex swam his first serious sprint when he was 16," said Tihanyi. "He was competing in the 1981 winter nationals in Victoria and he set a Canadian record."

Tihanyi explains why distance rather than sprint swimming is important for young age groupers. "Research indicates that you must develop your aerobic base as early as possible in order to be able to capitalize on it later. If a youngster has not developed a tremendous aerobic base during the formative years —preadolescence to early adolescence—that individual may not be able to develop an adequate aerobic base. Young swimmers lack effective explosive strength which limits their efforts in

sprinting. One may interpret this as a greater predisposition for longer and slower swims which appear to be in concert with their physiological readiness.

"Longer swims in training and competition may also make it easier to adjust stroke techniques because the swimmer isn't working on a high turnover and is able to control the stroke a little bit better. You can change a stroke much easier without it being a negative experience for the swimmer."

To continue his training logic, Tihanyi says, "This age, 6-10, is a period of consolidation, when the growth rate of children is rather slow and constant. This is the period when the motor skill repertoire of children takes on new dimensions. Children experience a great sensitivity to learning new skills and must be exposed to a wide array of motor functions.

"Since a young swimmer's growth is inevitable, especially changes in the proportions of the arms, legs and trunk, the coach is obliged to change stroke mechanics. Distance swims can help the process, sprints can make it difficult."

Finally there is an element of psychology, according to Tihanyi. "Young swimmers need to have intermediate success. They'll try when they see improvement. It's much easier to improve on a 400 free, 800 free or 1500 free, than it is on a 50 free.

"The interest of children in athletic endeavors should not be limited to swimming alone. Children must be exposed to many sport skills and opportunities to allow for a wide and diversified development. This should limit their hours in swimming. Three or four hours of swimming per week in this age range is sufficient exposure to insure future growth in swimming in later years and would leave adequate time for play and other pursuits."

IMPLEMENTATION

Once every three months, an in-club time trial would be done in the distance events comprising the TOP program. Existing local competitions, which are sprint oriented, would continue to be the main focus of swimmers at this age level.

TIMES TO BEAT

Better one of the existing event records as listed below and receive a FREE special SWIM suit. Just send us your name, address and suit size.

GIRLS

Age	Distance	Time	Name	Year
7	200 free	2:55.04	Donna Wu,AQUA,	1985
8	400 free	5:49.44	Sandy Sabo,DDO	1983
9	800 free	10:45.42	Julie Bodenbender,AQUA	1988
10	1500 free	19:11.70	Alexandra Gabor,WGB	2004
7	100 I.M.	1:28.46	Donna Wu,AQUA	1985
8	100 I.M.	1:27.52	Donna Wu,AQUA	1985
9	200 I.M.	2:50.84	Leslie Downson,WISC	1988
10	400 I.M.	5:36.76	Stephanie Shewchuk,PCSC	1985

BOYS

7	200 free	2:50.36	Joshua Hammervold, UCSC	1997
8	400 free	5:22.65	Doug Wake,YLSC	1986
9	800 free	10:27.10	Doug Wake,YLSC	1986
10	1500 free	18:41.93	Michael Calkins,VICO	1989
7	100 I.M.	1:29.77	Andrew Bignell,SSMAC	1991
8	100 I.M.	1:21.38	Andrew Bignell,SSMAC	1992
9	200 I.M.	2:41.91	Tobias Oriwol,PCSC	1995
10	400 I.M.	5:29.10	Tobias Oriwol,PCSC	1996

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