

News For

SWIM PARENTS

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Why Should A Club Support Its Elite Athletes Financially?

By John Leonard

Recently a club board member called me, and asked a simple but important question. *“I’ve heard that a lot of clubs spend money to send their better athletes to nationals and some, even to Sectionals, is that correct? And if they do, WHY do they? What does the Club get out of it?”*

Good questions, simply and directly asked. Hereafter, my equally simple and direct answer.

Yes, a large number of clubs that attend higher level meets, whether they be Sectionals, Junior Nationals or Senior Nationals, (or in some cases, even the Grand Prix series of meets) financially support their club athletes to those meets, to some extent.

What extent? It runs the gamut from a few hundred dollars of assistance to paying their way to the event. What does that cost? Use \$350 as the average round trip airfare to an event, use \$120 per night for 4 nights in a hotel, and \$50 a day for food, and you rapidly have a bill of \$1030.00 and you haven’t rented a vehicle yet for local transportation. Yes, high level meets are expensive.

Now, you can use some “family travel mileage” to reduce the airfare, you can share a hotel room with 1-3 others to reduce that, and you may be able to eat reasonably healthy for less than \$50 a day, but any way you cut it, it’s not cheap.

So why do clubs do it? ***Basically to “DE-LIMIT” the aspiration level of ALL of their team athletes.***

Once an athlete has been in any sport for awhile, most of them dream of competing at the highest level. As they get a little older, we realize that the travel necessary to do so, can

be a substantial drain on a middle class family. No one I know likes to have their dreams limited by the financial costs of those dreams or the financial costs of working for that dream.

A fine writer by the name of Rudyard Kipling, once wrote, "*The strength of the pack is the wolf. And the strength of the wolf, is the pack*". When the "wolf" on your team (the highest level athlete) qualifies for a higher level meet and they don't attend because of money; the dream dies, not just in that athlete, but in ALL the athletes of the team. "*The team didn't support Tim to the Sectionals, so he couldn't afford to go.*" It's a killer, and every child on the team, right down to the 8 and under's will hear something about it whether they understand it all or not.

And it kills the aspirations of others.

When the pack does not support the wolf, the wolf will look to go where another pack will support them. And should. Conversely, when the pack DOES support the wolf, that wolf has a strong obligation to come home, explain the marvels and wonderfulness of going to Sectionals, Jr/Sr. Nationals, the Olympic Trials or the Olympic Games and help fire and fuel the dream for every other generation in that pack/team. The wolf has to be willing and able to "give back" to the pack. "*The strength of the pack is the wolf*".

I can also hear the parent who says, "*Wait a second, my child isn't going to nationals, all they want to do is swim and have fun*" That's correct and understandable. But my question is, do you want your child to be in a program that limits how far they can dream of going? Or do you want your child (like I want mine) to be UNLIMITED in their ability to dream of achievements?

The team contributing financially to the aspirational meet expenses of its top swimmers, is in reality, unlimiting ALL its swimmers. And we can all take pride in making that contribution to our team, our friends and our community.