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Dear Parents,

Too often efforts are made in the wrong way to gain an advantage on the competition. I spend countless hours with our swimmers showing them ways to take advantage of opportunities during their races. Turns, breathing patterns, stroke mechanics and other disciplines are some of what we work on. Despite my requests to the contrary, parents frequently try to get involved with the process. Sometimes this manifests itself in purchasing high end swim suits, or, on the dangerous side, allowing or encouraging the consumption of caffeine laden drinks. I would like to address the use of stimulant beverages by our young athletes. Such products as Red Bull, Rock Star, Monster, Piranha and others contain high amounts of caffeine and other ingredients that either enhance the effects of caffeine or contribute additional sources of caffeine. With most of these drinks it is impossible to tell exactly how much of any given ingredient is contained in the product. The advertising for these products is, at best, misleading.

I cannot stress enough that I am diametrically opposed to any of my swimmers consuming any of these products. Caffeine is a drug with many side effects. We have read too many stories of athletes (amateurs and professionals) who have been found guilty of doping. The I.O.C. has strict regulations on drugs used to enhance performance, and I, for one, stress each swimmer's work ethic as being the most important focus for improvement. These products can, in some cases, bring an athlete into the area of disqualification. Also, if not more importantly, there have been cases where individuals consuming stimulants during competition or training have experienced serious, life threatening side effects.

I have included an article produced by the United States Anti-Doping Agency regarding these drinks. The USADA is responsible for managing both In- and Out-of-Competition testing for athletes in the U.S. Olympic Movement including Olympic, Pan American, and Paralympic athletes. A major goal in testing is to achieve quality and consistency in the collection process and prompt, efficient handling of results.<sup>1</sup> Please read this material, and take it seriously. I want all my swimmers to focus on natural enhancements, mainly attitude at practice, improvement in stroke/turn mechanics, streamlining, and race tactics. Teaching them to use drugs before or after competition is not sending them the right message. Swimmers should be more concerned with not being dehydrated. Sports drinks such as Gatorade and PowerAde or just plain water are what are best for young aspiring athletes. Missing practice the day after the meet due to 'exhaustion' or a headache are signs something is wrong. All swimmers who wish to compete on the national level should rely on a sound, safe training regimen.

Thank you for the loving support you provide to your swimmer(s).

Swim-cerely

Coach Ed Collins

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.usantidoping.org/>