

On Ageing Up and Expectations

We interviewed a 20 year old woman who had a national age group record at age 10. When she turned 11 she joined a group of excellent nationally ranked 11 - 12 year old girls. She continued to improve but struggled emotionally and was not happy. Just before turning 13 her family moved out of state to a city with a nationally prominent swim team for the specific benefit of the swimmer. Unfortunately, she didn't enjoy her new surroundings and moved back and joined a different team.

She told us in the interview that the reason why she had a difficult time as an 11 and 12 year old was that "everyone" expected her to continue being great. We asked her who was included in "everyone" and the answer was...everyone, coaches and parents and friends. .

When swimmers age up, B swimmers and national record holders alike, it is time for communication between the coach, swimmer, and parents. Don't assume that the swimmer knows and understands that the coach and parents aren't expecting a ribbon in the next meet. Give swimmers special support and encouragement when they age up.