

## **The Myth of an Overnight Success – Real Success is a Result of Establishing Building Blocks Over a Long Term Development**

By Nancy Hennessy

Gator Swim Club, Gainesville, FL

When Mary was 12 she qualified first in the preliminaries at the championship meet. Never before had she qualified for a championship final. "WOW!" "That came out of nowhere." "Unbelievable." Such were the comments that Mary received. Her coach, though very excited, was not at all surprised. Mary's "overnight success" had been a long term developmental process in the making for 6 years. Only now had Mary begun to tap into her potential.

Mary began swimming at the age of 6. When she turned 7 she began swimming at the local year round club. In her first year, Mary swam 2 days a week with the beginners' group where stroke technique was the primary focus. The group was designed with a lot of kicking and drilling and FUN! In the summer Mary swam primarily with her summer club but still continued to practice with her year round club 2 days a week as her parents and year round coach were seeking consistency in coaching and the continued encouragement of the year round coach. Mary remained in this group for 4 months following the end of the summer season building upon her skills and aerobic base while laying down the first block of her foundation.

In the early spring of her second season, Mary moved to the next developmental group in her year round program. She was now legal in all four strokes and displayed the strength, desire and ability to move up. At this time she began swimming 3 days a week. The emphasis remained on kicking and stroke drill work with a bit more intensity aerobically and lots of FUN! Most of the stroke drills were repetition for Mary. As she grew stronger and more aerobically fit, Mary was able to do the stroke drills for longer durations with greater proficiency. In a sense, this was a review for Mary, only a bit more demanding. She spent 2 years in this group. She maintained very consistent attendance during both the short course and long course seasons while still being able to enjoy her rewards in summer league swimming as well. The second layer of cement was drying.

In the fall of the next season, Mary moved into the next developmental group. Due to her consistent attendance and much repetition in the previous group, the transition into this group went smoothly. It was quite challenging, but with sound fundamentals, she was able to take on the new challenges and up the ante aerobically. She was now practicing 3-4 days a week for 1 and ½ hours per practice. Most of the stroke drills were repetitious in nature but there were added steps to each drill and more conditioning while performing the drills. In her first season with this group, Mary had 100% attendance over the holiday training period. With this commitment she immediately added another block to her foundation. At this level Mary was now becoming more accountable for her swimming, more frequently making stroke corrections without a coach's request, knowing and staying on intervals and beginning to keep a log and knowing her best times.

During the long course season, Mary, again regularly attended the recommended number of practices, continued to improve and learn stroke drills, and aerobically improved her ability to train due to the challenges of long course training. She repeated this cycle in her 2<sup>nd</sup> year with this group adding one day per week more consistently. The foundation was growing ever stronger.

In Mary's 5<sup>th</sup> season, she entered the top group in the age group program. Her stroke drills were very proficient though she continued to improve them and make stroke corrections. She was aerobically very fit coming off a summer of long course training and high attendance percentages throughout her time in the sport. Because of these, she was very well prepared for the rigors of the training at this level. At this time she stepped up her attendance to 5-6 days a week and in her first year in this group won an award for 90% attendance for the year. This was a big goal and accomplishment for Mary.

Now in her 6<sup>th</sup> season and a top 3 finisher at a championship meet, it comes as no surprise. All of Mary's coaches have participated in her "overnight success" over the past 6 years. Each season she has made all the necessary

adjustments and raised her level of commitment. Some came more easily than others, mentally as well as physically. As she grew and matured, as she became more aerobically fit, and as she faithfully built her blocks and securely cemented them into place, Mary's "overnight success" could only be explained as PREPARATION.

Mary always participated in meets along the way and usually improved yet never set the pool on fire for many to notice. She was patient, she had very loving and committed parents, and she listened to her coaches. She quietly and cheerfully built her blocks, with a broad base, one on top of another, that has become a solid foundation for many successes to follow.

Congratulations!!