

Over the past eleven years, swimming has been a wonderful tool that has sharpened many areas of my life. My swimming career all started with the Taylor Mill Stingrays as an '8 and Under.' I can remember my first day of practice when I was seven years old. The water was freezing and the coaches had to throw my best friend and me in the pool to start practice. My NKSL coaches were the first to teach me the basics. Fast forward eleven years later; I am swimming my final summer as a Stingray and also as a Northern Kentucky Clipper. I have had innumerable ups and downs, successes and failures, and great memories with the sport of swimming.

Aside from my parents, swimming has taught me many lessons in life. I have learned that time management is a great skill to acquire, and all of my thanks go to swimming for that one. With practices at 5:00 am three mornings a week, I have not only learned to get all of my homework done ahead of time, but to also take each day head-on. This may involve packing a to-go breakfast to eat in the car on the way to school, have my books with me before school starts, and anticipating everything I will need from 5 am to 7pm.

Swimming has taught me a great deal of discipline over the years. I have learned that talent can only go so far, and hard work takes it from there. By working hard in practice, my goals for the season become clear and I know what I am working for every time I dive in the water. The tough practices and willingness to work hard in the pool has filtered into my schoolwork and lifestyle. I just graduated with a 4.0 GPA and it was certainly not easy. Swimming has taught me that failure is not easily acceptable. When I blew a test, I would often find myself staying after class and discussing with the teacher about what went wrong and what I could do to improve next time.

Along with time management and discipline, swimming has also taught me perseverance. One day of practice I may feel like I'm on top of the world and on another given day I may feel like a last place finisher. When all I wanted to do was give up and surrender, something inside of me would not allow it. Maybe it was the discipline, perseverance, or the fight within.

Sometimes I do not achieve my goals I set for a specific meet or season, but I cannot let that get me down. I have learned that thinking more on the positive side is much brighter than the negative. A goal not met just makes me want to chase it even harder the next opportunity I receive.

I have taken into account all that swimming has taught and mentored me over the years and applied it to my senior year. Last November I signed to swim as a Cardinal for the University of Louisville and attend the School of Nursing. I would not have made it to the Division I level without the help of my parents, coaches, and my faith. They are what made a little '8 and Under' Stingray into the 18 year-old young lady that I am today.

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce myself to you and for your consideration in investing in my future.

Jackie Sherrard