

Blog 41 – My First Swim Meet

On January 18th, the NIS swimmers got up way before the sun and tramped over to school in preparation for the NIS invitational swim meet. That day, there were a total of 359 students (81 of which were NIS students) from 10 international schools participating in the competition, which lasted the whole day. It was my very first swim meet and one of the most nerve racking, exciting and unexpected events I have ever participated in.



The NIS swimmers are split into four groups according to their level: gold, silver, bronze and transition squad. I joined the transition squad three months ago. You can tell from the name that my team members are preparing themselves for entering the school swim team. Usually, the bronze, silver and gold squad members are the only swimmers allowed to represent NIS and compete at swim meets. But this time our coach decided to give the transition squad members a chance to compete in this NIS invitational swim meet. When I first heard this, I didn't know what to do or say since a swimming competition was way out of my thought bubble. The thought didn't even make a full trip around my brain and I began shaking my head like a pellet drum as if by instinct. I've only joined squad for three months and he wants me to compete!? I really couldn't picture myself standing on that diving board, waiting for the gun to signal the start. Encouraged by my friends in the upper squad levels, I forced myself to sign up for three simple events. That morning, I woke up at 5:30, threw my clothes on top of my swim suit, gobbled down some eggs and toast, grabbed my stuff and flew out the door on my bike. At school, the outside air was still cold, piercing at my face. All the swimmers gathered at the cafeteria and listened to our coach's long speech of encouragement and advice, trying to boost up our level of adrenaline.

After 15 minutes of warm-up, everyone began preparing for the real competition. I was extremely nervous and nauseous yet uncontrollably excited to see what it's like. My first event came creeping closer and my legs began wobbling beneath me. When I stepped onto that diving board, I kept repeating my coach's favorite sentence: "Finishing the race is success all by itself." The starting gun seemed to blow my mind blank as it blasted through my ears. Before I knew it, my arms were flying and my legs were moving like a motor propelling me down the lane. When I got to my second lap, my arms began throbbing and my legs gradually slowed down, but I still touched the wall on the other end and finished with an aching smile stretched on my face. My friends ran over and congratulated me for finishing my first event ever. I've been in many competitions before such as math, spelling, piano and dancing, but for some reason, this one seems to be the one I've been the most nervous for. But after that first event, pride and confidence began building up inside of me as I headed on for my last two events for the day. My events flew by pretty quickly and during my last one, my best stroke, I wasn't as nervous and even anticipating it just a bit. And just like that, I was done competing. I skipped over to the changing room and got changed out of my swim suit and into my regular clothes. I was so happy I could finally cheer for my friends and enjoy the rest of the relay competitions.

Out of nowhere, my friends ran over to me with an excited yet pleading expression on their face. "Angela, Angela! Change back into your swim suit! You're in a relay team now," screamed my friend. "Relay team? Are you kidding? I've FINISHED my events, I'm DONE with competing!" My expression was troubled and confused and I was speechless. At that time, one of the coaches came running towards me and began clarifying the situation "One of our relay team members is not here today. You are the only one who is in the right age group and available at the moment." It was silent for a couple seconds that seemed like forever when suddenly, the coach paused and told me "Go and get changed, your fourth event is starting in 10 minutes." I bolted down to the changing room, jumped into my swim suit and zoomed down to the swimming pool to join my relay team with beads of sweat running down my forehead, even in the chilly weather. It was then that I realized I was substituting for a *boy* who didn't come. My coach told me a lot of things but he forgot to tell me I was going to substitute for a boy. But I still stepped up onto that diving board and dove right into the water along with a whole row of boys wearing shorts. At that time, I promised myself I would find out who that boy was and show him what I've got. I could hear my friends screaming out my name and saw them following me right beside the pool, encouraging me to go faster. I punched the time pad (that records your time) hard in the middle and lifted myself onto the floor. I was done. After that, teachers, coaches and all my friends came up to me to pat me on the back and congratulate me for finishing the relay. No one remembered what place I came in, but the fact that I substituted for a boy in a relay team and helped NIS earn one point was something that everyone knew.



In the end, NIS won *second* place overall, something that hasn't happened in quite some time! Everyone went up to touch the humongous silver cup and some even kissed it, joyfully screaming "NIS rocks!" After this swim meet, not only did I improve on my swimming, I also learned another sentence that will keep me going in every situation "Perseverance equals success".

