

How to use Rankings and Time Standards

In a society that wants to rank everything from how much movies make to how schools perform on standardized testing it is important to know how to use these lists properly. I know people look at them and say they don't matter or there are flaws but, if used properly, these lists can give you direction and a crude evaluation tool.

Without taking into account the length of season, biological age differences in swimmers of the same chronological age, or training differences and mistakes contained in the list, you can use these numbers and lists to evaluate your progress or set goals.

Maintaining your level from season to season requires more than just maintaining your current level because as you get older the same level of achievement is more challenging. For example, if you were ranked 25th in Ontario in the 200 back last season and hope to maintain that level of success, you will have to cut your time from 3:12 to about 2:55. If you wish to improve your standing, then you would have to make more of an improvement. For example, if you wanted to set a goal of winning the 200 back at Provincials. when you were 12 in that same event you would have to go a 2:28 approximately. So leaving that till the next season is not a great plan. You need to set smaller goals to get there.

Maintaining a time standard also requires a certain level of improvement. If you make Regional Standards at 11 years of age, then you will still have to get faster to be able to attend regional championships when you are 13. But if you only maintain that average level of improvement, it would be hard to jump to another level such as medals at Provincials or making Nationals.

Comparing yourself to others is not always a wise thing to do, but it can give you a small and inaccurate measuring tool for how you are doing. If you were 1 min behind a swimmer in the group above you and then the next year you were only 20 sec behind them this might mean you are closing the gap.

When you hope to improve your race times, you must also increase your expectations at practice. You can't keep holding the same times at workout and expect to race any faster.

If the same swimmer from the 200 back example above wanted to represent Canada some day, she could plot a path of how to get there... Making Provincials, Medals at Provincials, making Club Nationals, medal at Club Nationals, making Nationals, medal at Nationals and then a member of the Canadian National Team. If she then failed to increase her expectations and where she wanted to head, then she may well spend a few years on the National team but may never make an international podium or an Olympic Medal. You see that there can never be a point where you are done or you stop advancing.

Use these tools carefully and remember that as soon as you stop reaching you will stop achieving.