

SWIMMING AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

By Linda Hass

The task of excelling in both their studies and their sport is especially challenging for swimmers, who tend to be serious students and whose sport requires a considerable time commitment. Be sure to read the article, "Balancing Athletics and Academics" by Linda Hass, in the April issue of Swimming World Magazine. In the following story, Linda Hass looks at the connection between swimming and academic success:

Swimmers are serious students.

You probably already knew that, but the NCAA's new academic measurement, called an "Academic Progress Rate Score" (APRS), quantifies it among Division I institutions. The results of APRS data show that swimmers are among the top performing students when it comes to academic eligibility, retention and graduation.

Researchers have long debated the-chicken-or-the-egg question of whether the sport itself contributes to academic success--with its emphasis on goals, time management and discipline--or whether students with those pre-existing qualities are attracted to the sport.

Most acknowledge there is at least a connection, says Erik Christianson, NCAA director of public and media relations.

Samantha Arsenault, NCAA Woman of the Year for the State of Georgia in 2005, has been able to look at the link between school and the pool from two perspectives: 1) as a collegiate swimmer and 2) as a high school teacher.

"The swimmers in my classes are excellent students," she says. "They're very conscientious, and they tend to belong to honor societies."

Annette Salmeen, 1996 Olympic gold medalist and a Rhodes Scholar, also has noticed a connection.

"Swimming contributed tremendously to my overall education," says Salmeen, a post-doctoral fellow at Stanford University Medical School. "There were so many things that I learned from the sport--about working with people, learning from frustrations, making choices, trying new approaches....I still draw from my swimming experiences all the time."