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2<sup>nd</sup> Edition: Liege, Belgium

## The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual EU Swimming Invitational: Slupsk, Poland

This weekend, the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> October, brings the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual EU Swimming Invitational!

The city of Slupsk and the Skalar Slupsk swimming club are this year's hosts, and will welcome nearly 360 swimmers from 9 countries: Belgium, the Czech Republic, Great Britain, Hungary, Israel, Moldova, the Netherlands, Poland, and the United States.

The Invitational is an international competition open to clubs from Europe and beyond.

The event has two main ambitions: to promote European citizenry as well as transatlantic relations by allowing swimmers to meet and share their interests in the sport and in life. It also seeks to provide an international swimming meeting open to all levels of athletes that is infused with a spirit of competition and festivity.

The EU Swimming Invitational takes place as a rotation, in a different city and country each year. The first edition took place in Paris, France in 2006. Liege, Belgium hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in November 2007.

We are looking forward to the weekend and wish all of the participating teams much success!

*Julia Galan  
Coordinator, EU Swimming Invitational*

## Tynemouth ASC: Primed for Poland

**F**ive members of Britain's Tynemouth Swimming Club will participate in the EU Swimming Invitational this weekend in Slupsk.

Tom Brunton, Greg Stephenson, Peter Mackey, Aaron Shepherdson, and Nathan Doyle will represent their country and their club in 9 individual events and both relays.

The swimmers all participate at the county level in Great Britain and have been training hard in preparation for the event.

To raise the funds needed for the trip to Poland, the boys organized a sponsored one-hour relay swim. They accomplished 6.3 kilometers in that hour, collecting more than £1500.

Tynemouth Swimming Club is located in north-east England and is the oldest club in the region of Tyneside. We wish their swimmers the best of luck this weekend!



## THE FALSE DICHOTOMY OF SLOW & FAST

*Michael Brooks  
Head Coach, York YMCA, Pennsylvania (USA)*

There seems to be a very odd – and harmful – constellation of misunderstandings about kids, talent, and performance that I have found to be very common among parents and swimmers.

Some of the many parts of this tangle of thoughts are: that teams

are inhabited by 'slow kids' and 'fast kids'; that each of these groups is set; that kids cannot or do not move from one group to the other, as if kids had tattoos marking them for life from the moment they enter the program; and that coaches can talk about excellence, high expectations, and high goals with the 'fast kids' but not with the 'slow kids.'

Parents and kids seem to accept this division and the supposed chasm between the two groups. Parents of 'slow kids' seem to assume that their kids will always be 'slow' and that they should have no expectations of advancement and few hopes of substantial improvement. The kids are almost taught that they shouldn't expect much, shouldn't dream too high. And not much is expected of them

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as a result.

Parents of 'fast kids' seem a little too pleased with the level their kids have reached, even if there is enormous room for improvement when those levels are compared not with the current local performances but with state and national levels. Kids are often treated as superstars because they win a dual meet against the neighbors.

I think that both of these approaches are seriously misguided, and that when widely held they can torpedo the program and the individual swimmers in it. Neither despair nor complacency is worthy of us, and neither is an appropriate response to our actual situation.

Some important considerations:

**First:** What do you define as fast? Winning an event at a dual meet? Qualifying for Districts? Qualifying Regionals? Qualifying for Nationals? Making the Olympic team? How about not just qualifying, but finaling or even winning at one of these meets? Getting a National Top 16 time? Breaking a league record? A National record? A world record?

Where do we set the bar? By the easiest of these standards, we have a lot of fast kids on the team. By the most strict, we have none. In fact, the higher the level you define as 'fast', which means the bigger your vision and the higher your goals, the less likely you are to define yourself as a member of the 'fast kids club,' because you are dissatisfied with your current level and want to reach higher and swim faster than you do right now.

**Second:** I do not believe in a permanent underclass. As I frequently tell the kids, "fast swimmers are fast for a reason, and slow swimmers are slow for a reason." Certain behaviors and ways of thinking lead to swimming fast, as night follows day; certain others lead to swimming slow, just as certainly.

So, if you want to be a champion, do what the champions do. If you come to practice, if you work hard when you're at the pool, if you think about and work on improving your strokes every day, if you challenge yourself and your teammates every day to swim faster, if you refuse to accept your supposed limits, if you get just a little bit tougher every day, then you will wake up each morning better than you were the night before.

The Olympic motto is "Citius, Altius, Fortius." The English translation here is not 'fast, high, or strong', but '**faster, higher, stronger**'. I think that distinction is important, and in that distinction lies our whole reason for being.

There is not one single person so un-talented that they cannot get much better than they are now. And there is not one single person on this team so talented that they cannot get much better than they are now. The whole point is to get better. Every practice. Every meet. Every kid. No matter where you are on the spectrum of performance from world's slowest to world record holder, you can always get faster. And you should want to.

Forget about 'fast', forget about the pecking order and ranking yourselves and others, forget about status. **When we do that, "fast" takes care of itself and "slow" disappears.** «

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