



SWIM TEAM MEMBERS dived off the starting blocks (above) during her butterfly stroke for the team's next meet. The swimmers practice three practice on Friday at the Oberlin pool. Albany McDonald (below) practiced times a day.



Swimmers practice their strokes

Three times a day, 29 kids, under the guidance of their coach and a volunteer helper, take to the Oberlin pool, swimming laps, practicing turns and jumping off the blocks to prepare for swim events.

Coach Stephanie Blau said the team started practice at the end of May and had already been to four meets. The group has one meet left and then it's off to the league meet on Friday and Saturday, July 11 and 12.

There won't be a meet here this year, said Mrs. Blau, because the city's old pool isn't regulation size.

The swimmers, she said, practice

three times a day for an hour each time, at 7 a.m., noon and 5 p.m.

This year, said Mrs. Blau, Kellen Doeden has volunteered to help with the team, gathering community service hours for a college scholarship.

The team, she said, has been doing well this year, with each member pulling his or her own weight. The squad usually places second or third against teams that have twice as many swimmers, she added.

During the season, said Mrs. Blau, she tries to teach all of the kids ages 4 to 16, how to do the four main strokes, freestyle, breast, back and butterfly. The kids also learn to work as a team and have team unity.

Swimming teaches self-esteem and how to be responsible, she said. At the meets, each swimmer is responsible for getting to the starting block when their number is called. Swimming also teaches sportsmanship, she said.



FOUR SWIMMERS (above) worked on their freestyle stroke under the instruction of their coach, Stephanie Blau. Mollie Tate (right) took her starting point at the block while Kelsey May (below) waited her turn.



— Story and photos by Kimberly Davis