



AT THE OBERLIN SWIMMING POOL last Wednesday, Daniel Jordan (above) stretched before he got into the pool for swim-team practice. Gracie Tate (below left) and Gabrielle Johnson held hands while they walked to the pool.



Swim team prepares for last two meets, league

Three times a day, kids stretch their arms and legs and do "ab" work on the concrete next to the shimmering blue water.

They stretch their muscles and warm up before jumping or diving into the cool water. The first session starts at 6:30 a.m. with mostly older kids, 13 and up. There are practices at noon and once more at 5 p.m. to round out the day.

About 45 kids from 4 to 18 participate on the Oberlin Swim Team. The swimmers use the Oberlin City Pool for these practices, joining minutes before it starts, stretching out on the concrete between the bathrooms and the pool to get ready for their laps.

Swimmers on the team, said

coach Stephanie Blau, learn the basics, including how to swim, responsibility, teamwork and discipline. Practices aren't required, she said, so it's up to the kids to show up and work. How much they put into practice, she added, will determine how they do at a meet. Some will show up for one of the three, or in some cases, all of the practices.

The swimmers have four regular-season meets and the league meet during the summer. Meets in Wray and Burlington, Colo., are already over. The two left are in Goodland on Saturday and Oakley, on Saturday, June 26. The league meet will be in Colby on Friday and Saturday, July 9 and 10.

Meets last all day, said Mrs. Blau.

So far the team is doing well, with lots of kids placing in the top six in their events.

The team places in meets may not reflect what the swimmers really do, she said, because Oberlin just doesn't have the numbers that other teams do. While Oberlin has 45 swimmers, Colby has over 100. Fewer swimmers mean fewer team points, so the overall scores don't really reflect how well the swimmers are doing.

Mrs. Blau said Oberlin has had a swim team as far back as she can remember. She said she swam on it as a kid for 15 years. She's coached the team now for seven seasons and her kids, Kiah, Keagen, Jakobi and Kyleana, all swim.



IN THE WATER, Jamie Soderlund (above) took a break before she swam more laps. Mackenzie Urban (left) stretched her arms before practice.