



Morgan Sanders  
REPORTER

## Coming up for air

### Athlete recalls successful swim meet

I look over the edge, staring down at my toes, curling over the side. I don't hear anything other than my heavy breathing. I come back to life, seeing the people around me, waiting for the buzz that would change our lives in a second.

I feel my sore arms grip onto the side of the pool as I pull back, forcing my legs to bend to the max, my toes scraping against the cement. When I hear the buzzer, everything is silent.

I feel the water hit my face and my necklace push against my throat. Knowing I did a perfect dive, I feel a grin on my face as I laugh, thinking of winning.

I kick my legs instinctively and pull my arms out of

the water to feel the clean air again. I don't take a breath, because I don't need it. When I get to the end of the pool, I don't slow down. I knew I needed to win.

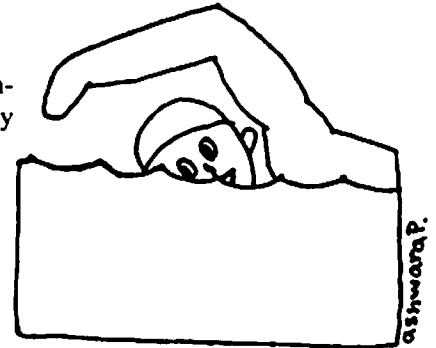
I pull my arm one last time, flip my body around and turn myself over so that my belly is facing the bottom of the pool again. My feet kick off of the wall, giving me a strong boost, and I come up for my first breath. I breathe the hot air into my chilled body as big as I can. I hear the crowd cheering my name for a second, but then I focus back on the race, and it's gone.

I feel the bubbles tickling around me, the water sloshing everywhere and the soreness really kicks in, but I ignore it.

My lungs burn for another breath, but I try not to let it affect me. "I have to win," I tell myself. I push even harder to get to the other end. My arms and legs become weak, and I feel like I'm going to fall over.

I see the bottom of the pool, and out of the corner of my eye, I see the wall, getting closer. I push myself to go as fast as my body can take because I know I can rest when I get out of the water. No matter how bad it hurt, I knew that I could beat them. I had the strength. I had the spirit. I had the faith.

I pull my arm back and slam my hand against the wall. Pain shoots towards my



fingertips. I splash the judges and timers as my feet sink to the bottom and I stand on the rough floor again.

I force myself out of the pool, water pouring off of my body, and I ask for my time. A lady comes running toward me with a first-place ribbon, meaning I beat two 14-year-olds, two 16-year-olds and one 18-year-old. A smile appears on my face because I knew that I could do it.