

Sports News



PHOTOS BY STAFF SGT. DAVID DONOVAN

Jessica Shoemake, 13, Penguins team member, swims the butterfly stroke during practice in Elmendorf's pool at the Fitness Center Oct. 18.

Like a penguin to water, base youth athletes take to pool

By Senior Airman Amy Morrisette
3rd Wing Public Affairs

Walking into Elmendorf's pool isn't like walking into most pools. While it's a traditional, lap-shaped pool with a shallow and a deep end, it has penguins in it.

However, these penguins can only be seen between the hours of 5 and 6 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and instead of black and white, they're black and shades of yellow.

These penguins are the athletes who make up Elmendorf's Youth Swim Team.

This year, they have invaded the Fitness Center's pool in growing numbers. "We've got 15 swimmers from ages 6 to 13, and we've just added a new swimmer," said Penguins' head coach Jeff Olmstead, 3rd Services Squadron. "Our mission is to get people fit, and to have fun through team work and individual efforts. We practice hard as a team, and lately we've seen peaked interest in competing."

Not only do the Penguins work on honing their skills three times a week, six of the swimmers compete against local swim teams. "They compete in 8 to 10 meets throughout the year, mostly at Bartlett High School. They compete against private teams from around Anchorage," he said.

According to assistant coach, Mrs. Shelley Loera, spouse of Airman 1st Class Randy Loera, 90th Fighter Squadron, competing has been an awakening experience. "Some of the Penguins have really learned about their individual abilities during the competitions," said Mrs. Loera. "At most of our meets, our athletes compete directly

against each other, which usually makes for competitive practices."

Coach Olmstead's teaching philosophy, which he's established during his 16 months as head coach, is "the word competitive means 100 percent effort."

"The primary focus is to enhance advanced skills for competitive swimming. I make every effort to help them improve and introduce new strokes if time permits," he said.

Now that fall is here, the Penguins who choose to compete have just begun competing and are gearing up for another competition Saturday.

To prepare, Mrs. Loera said she gets in the water with them. "I've started really working with the younger children, especially, to get them to understand the four strokes better, along with kicks and turns," she said.

"Practices also include dry-land workouts and group-study sessions with videos," said Coach Olmstead.

While the Penguins know that being on the team takes a lot of practice and discipline, it's fun — and one of the most recent additions to the team can hardly wait. "I haven't been to a practice yet, but I'm really excited," said Morgan Graybeal, 7. She said she has her black suit and yellow swim cap all ready to go.

If you have a child interested in joining the Penguins, visit the Fitness Center. Youth must already know how to swim.

For swimming lessons, registration is under way for beginner and advanced-beginner lessons. The lessons are offered Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

Additionally, water aerobics will be offered Monday through Friday from 6-7 p.m. for the month of November.



Penguins' coach Jeff Olmstead, 3rd Services Squadron, demonstrates a proper stroke technique, while two Penguin team members watch.

Free bowling for deployed spouses

The Chapel invites spouses of deployed military members and their families to free bowling and pizza Sunday from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Polar Bowl. Space is limited. For a reservation, call 552-4422.