

PV girls juggle school, synchronized swimming

They say key to keeping up with work is organization

By **Elijah Grasser**

The Republic | azcentral.com

For most Arizonans, swimming is a way to cool off during the summer.

For Sam Toltzman and Vincenza DeAcetis, it's more than that. Both girls are seniors on the Paradise Valley High School swim team, and both are synchronized swimmers for clubs in the Valley.

In one week, DeAcetis says, she spends about 14 hours in the water for synchronized swimming alone.

"The practices are four hours, and during swim season I go twice a week," she said "On Saturdays, I go six hours."

Add in the time spent practicing for the Paradise Valley swim team, and she could be in the pool for more than 20 hours a week.

That sounds like a lot to keep organized, especially for full-time students. But both girls say it's easy.



Sam Toltzman (left) and Vincenza DeAcetis are busy students. ELIJAH GRASSER/THE REPUBLIC

"It's not really difficult, because I manage my time well," Toltzman said. "I have a schedule that I do. I've just gotten used to it."

And as long as you love what you do, you'll find the time, DeAcetis added.

"You just have to have a balance and have a plan and be organized," she said. "I don't think it's that difficult. You just really have to be focused."

Both girls swim multiple events.

As for which type of swimming is more difficult, DeAcetis and Toltzman lean toward synchronized.

"You have to be really in shape, and you have to have a lot of endurance," Toltzman said. "You have to be flexible, and you have to be able to count with everybody."

Paradise Valley coach David Abrams says that despite the way the girls split time between the two swim teams, they still manage to bring energy to the girls swim team.

"They're definitely motivated for their synchro teams, they're motivated for their last year here at the high school level," Abrams said. "It definitely drives them."

As team captain for the girls team, DeAcetis takes on extra responsibility, as both a leader in the water and as a sort of assistant coach on the side. Abrams isn't based on campus, so sometimes it's up to DeAcetis to organize paperwork and team meetings. But she keeps things running smoothly, Abrams says.

Both girls got their start as swimmers before they were 10 years old. Toltzman says she started off with regular swimming, but her aunt, who is also a synchro-

nized-swimming coach, asked her to come out and try synchro.

DeAcetis, on the other hand, says her synchro career started because of some flashy advertising.

"I was like eight years old at a public pool, and I saw a poster for it," she said. "It was a really pretty poster of all these girls, and I wanted to try it."

They've been hooked ever since, and although they don't swim for the same synchro clubs, it's fun for them to be a part of the same sport.

"We talk about it (at practice) and no one understands," DeAcetis said with a laugh.

Toltzman and DeAcetis plan on swimming after high school. Toltzman says she wants to stay in the Valley, at least for her first two years of college, and keep swimming for time. DeAcetis says she plans to continue synchro, and has her eye on several schools with teams.

Either way, both girls aren't ready to get out of the water just yet.

"I've always been a swimmer," DeAcetis said. "If you're really driven to the sport and you have the dedication keep doing it, it's really fun."