



**2008-2009
Handbook**

For Parents and Swimmers

Bay Area Aquanauts
15403 Pleasant Valley
Houston, TX 77062

www.swimaqua.org

August, 2008

Purpose of this Handbook:

- Document AQUA team policies
 - Provide parents and swimmers a reference document to ensure that AQUA team expectations as set by USA Swimming and the AQUA Board of Directors are clearly understood.
-

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
TEAM PHILOSOPHY	5
AQUA'S AFFILIATIONS	6
USA SWIMMING	6
TEXAS AREA SWIMMING	6
GULF SWIMMING	6
TEAM RULES	7
RESPONSIBILITIES	8
AQUA — THE TEAM	8
HEAD COACH'S RESPONSIBILITIES	8
COACHES' RESPONSIBILITIES	8
SWIM ATHLETES' RESPONSIBILITIES	9
PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES	9
COMMUNICATION	11
E-MAIL	11
WEB SITE	11
MONTHLY <i>STREAMLINES</i> NEWSLETTER	11
GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE	12
FEE STRUCTURE / PAYMENTS	13
BUDGET REQUIREMENTS	13
REGISTRATION POLICY	13
TRAINING FEES	13
FEE INVOICING	14
FUND-RAISING	14
SWIM MEETS AND MEET INFORMATION	15
SEASONS	15
TYPES OF SWIM MEETS	15
MEET INVITATIONS AND ENTRIES	16
NIGHT BEFORE THE MEET	17
AT THE MEET	17
GROUP TRAINING REQUIREMENTS	21
SWIMMING AND SPORTS MEDICINE & NUTRITION	22
SWIMMING AND EAR CARE	24
SWIMMING AND EYE CARE	25
SWIMMING AND NUTRITION	26
AQUA ON-DECK POLICY	31

INTRODUCTION

The Bay Area Aquanauts, Inc. (AQUA) was formed in August 2000 with a vision to establish a premier year-round swim program for the communities in and around the Clear Lake area. The club's membership started with 60 athletes of all abilities and ages, from the beginning swimmer to the most competitive skilled swimmer.

In January, 2005, AQUASTAR was formed via the merger of AQUA and the Southeast Texas Aqua Racers (STAR) swim teams.

When a family joins AQUASTAR, it should expect the team to emphasize the values of commitment, teamwork, conditioning, and sportsmanship. The mission of the AQUA Board members and coaching staff is to:

- Work together with swimmers and parents to minimize the gap between a swimmer's potential and performance.

This handbook for parents and swimmers will provide basic information about AQUA, its policies and the expectations of both parents and athletes in a successful swimming experience on a competitive level.

TEAM PHILOSOPHY

AQUA's team focus is to develop swim athletes by stressing quality instruction before quantity. Team practices/workouts will be managed efficiently and structured according to age and ability of the swimmer. The ultimate goal is to ensure that swim athletes for all ages groups (swim levels) have a positive/successful swimming experience.

Swimming is a unique sport where learning transcends the pool into everyday life experiences. The attributes of the swimmer athlete — i.e., confidence in one's abilities, high self-esteem, goal-setting, perseverance, self-discipline, commitments, and courage to take on a challenge — ensure success in the pool, classroom, and future life challenges.

Through swimming, the year-round swim athlete will learn physical, emotional, and intellectual skills that will last a lifetime. Memories of the medals and records will fade with time. The development of interpersonal skills, discipline, goal-setting, and high self-esteem serves the swim athlete for his/her entire life.

AQUA'S AFFILIATIONS

USA SWIMMING

USA Swimming is the national governing body for all competitive swimming in the United States, having been established for that purpose after the reorganization of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) in 1978. USA Swimming is governed by a Board of Delegates which regulates all aspects of competitive swimming, from age-group developmental swimming programs, to preparing our national swimming contingent for the Olympic Games and other international events.

USA Swimming is headquartered in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and can be reached at (719) 578-4578. For more information about USA Swimming, visit www.usaswimming.org.

USA Swimming is also affiliated with the international swimming body, La Federation Internationale de Natation Amateur (FINA). See www.fina.org.

TEXAS AREA SWIMMING

Within the United States, USA Swimming is divided into 59 Local Swim Committees (LSC). Each LSC is granted jurisdiction over swimming in a specific geographic area of the country, each of which is entitled to representation on the Board of Delegates of USA Swimming.

Texas is divided into five Local Swim Committees: North, South, West, Border, and Gulf. For more information visit www.tsaswim.org.

GULF SWIMMING

AQUA is a member of the LSC called Gulf Swimming [www.gulfswimming.org], which governs competitive swimming in southeast Texas. The primary purpose and objective of Gulf Swimming is the education, instruction and training of individuals to develop and improve their capabilities in the sport of swimming. Gulf Swimming promotes swimming for the benefit of swimmers of all age and abilities, in accordance with USA Swimming and FINA standards, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures.

Any swimmer registered with AQUA — and therefore Gulf Swimming— can swim in any meet sanctioned by any LSC, provided they meet the qualifying standards and provided the meet is not a “closed” meet (e.g., dual, invitational, Zone Championships, etc.). If swimming in a meet sanctioned by another LSC, however, the swimmer will probably be required to provide proof of registration in the Gulf.

USA Swimming is composed of a very dedicated group of volunteers. These interested individuals donate their time, energy and expertise at every level from the national Board of Directors to our very own AQUA parents.

TEAM RULES

When the swim athlete commits to becoming a member of AQUA, he/she shall follow five basic AQUA Team Rules:

1. Any swim athlete who is known to use alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco, or performance-enhancing drugs shall be suspended from the team.
 2. AQUA swim athletes and family members (including parents/siblings) are guests at practice and meet facilities; therefore, all have an obligation to respect the facilities and properties. Every member of AQUA needs to do everything possible to respect this privilege to ensure AQUA is a member in good standing at all facilities and with other teams within the swim community.
 3. A swim athlete shall never interfere with the progress of another swimmer during practices, warm-ups and/or swim meets.
 4. At all times (meets, practices, school, club functions) the swim athlete (and families) shall behave in such a way that his/her actions reflect a positive team image.
 5. AQUA swim athletes and parents must continue to strive toward the goal that AQUA as an organization has an excellent reputation throughout the community (both swimming and local municipalities).
-

RESPONSIBILITIES

AQUA — THE TEAM

Bay Area Aquanauts is a tax-exempt non-profit organization, which operates through parent volunteers, team fees, and corporate donations.

The Board of Directors manages the team financial affairs administratively and establishes team policy, including the selection and dismissal of coaches.

The Board is comprised of eight members — four elected officers and four members at-large. Elections are held annually in April. Nominations for Board members are solicited prior to the elections. Parents and/or legal guardians of swim athletes are eligible for nomination. A minority of the Board may be selected from volunteers outside the team.

The AQUA Board of Directors is guided by the team's By-laws. See the By-laws of Bay Area Aquanauts for additional information.

HEAD COACH'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The Head Coach supervises the entire AQUA swim program. He/she establishes overall team goals and strategies and implements them through the AQUA coaching staff. The Head Coach oversees coaching staff development. He/she also makes final decisions concerning which swim meets the team will attend. The coaching staff also reserves the right to determine which meet events a swimmer enters.

COACHES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The coaches are responsible for designing, implementing, and supervising workouts to provide the swim athletes the best technical training, conditioning, and mental preparation to achieve their highest potential in swimming. This well-rounded approach of technical excellence, physical conditioning, and motivation will minimize the gap between the swim athlete's potential and maximum performance. Additional responsibilities of the coaches are as follows:

- **Initial swimmer placements in practice groups.** This is based on the ability level, level of conditioning, and age of each individual. Once assigned to a group, each swimmer is encouraged to complete the developmental skills within the group in order to advance to the next level. Upon completion of the advancement requirements, and when his/her coach has concurred it is in the best interest of a swimmer, he/she will be placed in a more challenging training group.
 - **Stroke instruction and the training regimen.** Each group's practices are based on sound swimming principles and are geared to specific goals.
 - **Conduct and supervise warm-up procedures for the team at swim meets.** After each race, the coach will offer encouragement and/or constructive criticism regarding the swimmer's performance.
 - **Relay team member selection.** Relays will generally be organized with the goal of assembling the fastest combination of swimmers as determined using official times for the same stroke and distance; however, coaches may apply discretion based on individual or team circumstances when entering individuals in relays, determining order of swimmers, and strokes
-

SWIM ATHLETES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The expectation is that the swim athletes arrive to practice/competition prepared to perform to his/her best. At practices, this means arriving on time with all the equipment required for the training group level, and following coaching direction; during meets, this means being aware of race start times and following coaching direction.

During practices, the AQUA swim athlete shall:

- Be open-minded and trust the judgment of the coach when correction is given.
- Exhibit proper pool/lane courtesy; specifically, not interfering with other swimmers. When passing a slower swimmer, do so in a safe manner. The slower swimmer should also exhibit proper lane courtesy, and allow a faster swimmer to pass easily.

During competitions, the AQUA swim athlete shall:

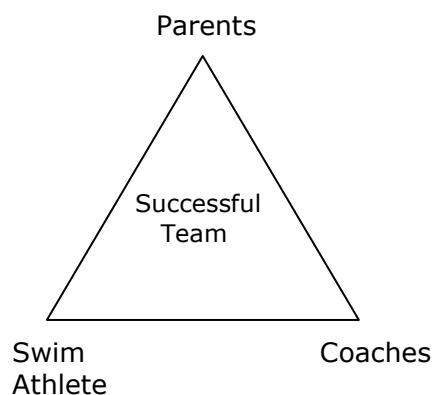
- Exhibit good sportsmanship toward other swim athletes.
- Wear AQUA team logo caps and swim suits [or any solid black or blue suit].
- Respect the facilities, remembering that AQUA is a guest and that all actions will reflect on the team's reputation.
- Clean up all applicable trash before leaving the facility.

It is recommended the swim athlete follow these simple lifestyle activities to ensure conditioning is maximized:

- Get plenty of rest [see Lack of Sleep, page 26].
- Eat well-balanced meals [see Food Group Servings, page 27].
- Ask your coach for guidance for additional dry land workouts, if desired.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

As members of AQUA, the swim athlete's parents play a very important role of support. Specifically, they support the team, the coaches, and the swim athletes. A successful swim program is a triangular relation between parents, swim athletes, and the coaching staff [analogous to the *Safety Triangle* or the *Fire Triangle*].



As parents, it is a difficult transition to trust another individual — e.g., a swim coach — with the responsibility of "grooming" your child to be a successful swim athlete.

The parents must remember to separate the parental instincts of over-protecting the child and remain objective when the family decides to commit to a multi-disciplined sport such as swimming. It is important that the swim athlete and coach relationship be built on trust, discipline, and mutual respect.

The parental role in this swimmer triangle is one of support/encouragement to the swim athlete. The parental support, love and encouragement will motivate the swim athlete; when combined with the coaches' technical training and conditioning, this will provide the swim athlete with the confidence to perform at the highest potential. When the parents do not support this triangle by offering opinions that differ from the coach or the team philosophy, it results in less than optimum swimmer performance (and optimum performance is the goal of all partnerships).

Parents should not attempt to conduct a conversation with the coach or with the swimmer during practice times. If the pool were to be considered a classroom, would a parent enter a classroom and interrupt by starting a conversation with either the teacher or a student? Coaches will be happy to discuss items with parents either before or after practice. If a coach needs to talk to a parent during practice, the coach will initiate the conversation. If a swimmer needs to leave practice early, parents should advise the coach prior to the start of the practice session.

The swim athlete needs to remember that participation at the highest level of his/her ability — regardless of whether they win or lose — is the goal, and parental support along with the coach's respect will always remain consistent regardless of the outcome. This is especially important with the 10-and-under swimmers. Inconsistencies are common with this age group, which can lead parents, coaches, and swim athlete down the road of frustration and breaking the triangle of success. Parents must remember the 10-and-under swimmer still needs to mature physically and mentally. The key is to be patient and allow these younger swim athletes time to love the sport and nurture the commitment to advance further as they mature.

Parents need to be patient with inconsistent times; generally, most swimmers hit a low point during the season. Peaks and valleys are normal. The parents need to be supportive during the down times and help the swim athlete focus on the competitive spirit of participation and trying one's best. A good positive mental attitude is a very important swimming skill that must be nurtured by the parents and coaching staff.

Parents need to remember that children tend to exaggerate when praised or criticized. Parents need to avoid overreacting. They should get the facts, talk with the coach, and discuss situations in an objective manner. Communication is the key.

AQUA is a volunteer organization that requires parental support to function. There are many activities at various levels of participation where parents can volunteer to show their support for the team. Some parents show support by becoming board members or joining a committee. Parents who do not participate in an official capacity as a board/committee member can volunteer to time at swim meets (this is the simplest way to volunteer for the team). Timers are important because the Gulf LSC can fine the team if this obligation is not met. The team cannot be successful without parent volunteers.

COMMUNICATION

E-MAIL

With more than 200 families participating, expeditious communication avenues are imperative. AQUA uses e-mail for most team-wide communiqués; thus it is essential that family e-mail addresses are supplied when registering with AQUA.

E-mailed post-meet summaries from the Head Coach are most informative, highlighting swimmer accomplishments and supplying updated AQUA Team Record and Leader Board times. Practice schedules are also e-mailed every other week or so.

Monthly billing statements are also sent via e-mail.

WEB SITE

AQUA's web site, www.swimaqua.org, is updated frequently during the week as new information for team families becomes available — i.e., meet recaps and results, upcoming meet information, practice schedule changes, event announcements, etc. Team Records, Leader Board information, board members' and coaches' e-mail addresses, Frequently Asked Questions, a feedback form, and meet and team event pictures can also be found on the website.

The website also contains downloadable forms used throughout the season — registration, meet entry, apparel order, etc., and also includes an on-line "bookmarked" version of this handbook and the *Streamlines* newsletter.

It is recommended to check the website several times weekly, especially during the season.

MONTHLY STREAMLINES NEWSLETTER

The newsletter is a monthly recap of meet results, plus other pertinent team information regarding upcoming meets, team apparel, board actions, policies, etc. The newsletter will be e-mailed to members monthly.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

The grievance procedure is designed to be a check-and-balance on the authority of the president of the organization. It provides an avenue for the entire board to resolve issues that may be ignored by the president or perhaps inappropriate for the president to resolve personally.

The grievance committee chairman should prepare written grievances to be presented to the entire board, which serves as the grievance committee. The president or his designate implements decisions by the committee. It should be noted that the function of the grievance committee chairman is not to resolve issues personally; rather, he is to accept, investigate, and prepare a presentation to the board for resolution of the issue.

All concerns should first be addressed to the coach involved, then to the head coach, and then to the president. Unresolved matters are then presented to the grievance chairman in written form. The matter must be reduced to writing so that the concern is adequately understood and so that the matter does not change with time, making it an uncertain target incapable of being resolved.

Once the grievance has been received, the grievance committee chairman should investigate to the degree he feels is necessary. At a minimum, the coaches and the president should be contacted to ensure that proper procedure has been followed. Then the grievance chair prepares and submits a written response to that grievance to the entire board, the grievance committee. The entire board will approve an appropriate response and assign the president or another party to implement that decision.

FEE STRUCTURE / PAYMENTS

BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

Even though AQUA is a non-profit corporation, its financial budget has similar characteristics to any for-profit business. AQUA's budget requires a positive cash flow to assure the satisfactory meeting of coaching payroll, pool rental costs, registration fees, and other team expenses. Expenses begin the first day of every month; therefore, timely training fee collection is crucial to AQUA's financial success. This results in keeping fees as low as possible.

REGISTRATION POLICY

Each September begins a new USA Swimming season. At this time, AQUA begins its annual registration of new and returning swimmers. As part of registration, completion of two forms (one for USA Swimming and the other for AQUA) is required, along with the submission of the registration fee. Both of these forms may be obtained from Board members at the pools, and the AQUA team form may be downloaded from the AQUA web site (www.swimaqua.org). These completed forms and a check payable to AQUA may be returned either to a pool representative or to the registration chairperson. Registrations are welcome throughout the year. Seasonal registrations may be convenient at certain times of the year. Information regarding them can be obtained from the registration chairperson.

The registration fee is determined each year primarily by the fees required from AQUA by USA Swimming and Gulf Swimming. Registration fees are mandatory and non-refundable and are separate from monthly AQUA training fees. Other than a one-week trial period, **NO SWIMMER MAY BE IN THE POOL WITHOUT A CURRENT USA SWIMMING REGISTRATION.** For insurance purposes, this rule is absolute and may not be waived. Registration with AQUA is not transferable from one swimmer to another.

TRAINING FEES

Swimmers are initially assigned to a training group by the coaches. Each training group represents an ability level with entrance and maintenance criteria, practice duration, and set fees. These groups are:

- Red Group (60 minutes training per practice session)
- White Group (90 minutes)
- Aqua group (90 minutes)
- Blue Group (120 Minutes)
- Gold Group (120 minutes)

For more specific group classification criteria, see page 21.

AQUA has a family maximum cap on monthly training fees, as well as a discounted training rate for high school swim team members.

A swimmer's movement between swim groups occurs not only when the swimmer meets all published, board-approved requirements, but at the discretion of the head coach as well. Occasionally, movement from one group to another may involve time-sharing, consisting of spending part of a practice with the former group and part of that practice with the new group.

If a swimmer joins the program after the start of the month, fees are pro-rated for that month. If the swimmer joins after the billing date, the joined month is pro-rated and next month's fees are collected at the same time. Swimmers are allowed to participate on as many or as few days as wished each month; however, the complete month's fees are expected to be paid unless a swimmer goes on the inactive list before the billing period begins. Any participation during a month (even as little as one practice) generates the requirement to pay the training fees for the entire month.

Swimmers wishing to go inactive should let the billing chairperson know at least one month in advance — either in person or via the e-mail address listed on the invoice.

Currently registered swimmers returning from inactive status must notify the billing chairperson and pay all appropriate fees.

FEE INVOICING

Bills are sent by the 15th day of the month. These cover fees for the coming month. AQUA must receive all payments before the first business day of the billed month. Payment by check is preferred; all checks must be made payable to AQUA. Payment should be mailed to the AQUA office address listed on the billing statement. For answers to billing questions, the billing chairperson should be contacted at the email address listed on the bill. The monthly billing statement will be sent via e-mail to the swimmer's family e-mail address on file with the AQUA registrar. If an invoice is not received by the 20th of the month, the billing chairperson or the treasurer should be contacted.

FUND-RAISING

AQUA is a non-profit corporation recognized by the Internal Revenue Service with a 501(c)(3) status. Currently, AQUA does not require swimmers to pay or generate fund-raising fees. To maintain that policy, help is encouraged from parents by obtaining corporate donations, personal direct donations, and by using the Randall's *Good Neighbor* program [just ask Customer Service to code 9266 on your Randall's card] or the Kroger *Share* card. All charitable contributions and donations are tax deductible to the degree allowed by the IRS. AQUA will provide any required tax documentation for any individual or corporate donations.

SWIM MEETS AND MEET INFORMATION

Swim meets are an essential part of the AQUA experience. Although it is not a requirement, participation in swim meets is an effective way for a swimmer to judge progress. Meets also aid the coaches in evaluating the advancement that is being achieved in practice. AQUA swimmers will have an opportunity to enter several meets before the end-of-season championship meets.

SEASONS

The swimming year is divided into two seasons, Short Course and Long Course. The Short Course season is swum in 25-yard indoor pools and generally runs from September through March. The Long Course season runs from April through July and competes in 50-meter pools, most of which are located outdoors. AQUA participates in a minimum of one meet a month. Information is available at practices and on the website, and meets are identified on the monthly practice calendar.

TYPES OF SWIM MEETS

Open Meet — an unclassified meet open to all currently-registered USA Swimming members, regardless of the time standard that he/she has or has not met. Participation in this meet is important as a means of establishing qualified times.

After an AQUA swimmer completes the first meet, the times achieved in the events swum become the qualifying time for this swimmer. Each time a swimmer achieves a faster time for an event, the best time becomes the new qualifier.

Some meets restrict swimmers who can enter that particular meet. An AQUA swimmer may be restricted from a meet because he/she is too fast or too slow. All swimmers entering the water for the first time are classified as "C" swimmers. As they improve, they advance to B, BB, A, AA, AAA, AAAA and so on. Meets may also restrict the swimmer by age.

Meets that restrict swimmers are called classified meets. Classified meets are generally stated as follows:

- *BB and Under* — the swimmer's qualifying times must be slower than A times in the event entered.
 - *A and Up* — the swimmer's qualifying time must be at least as fast as an A time in the event entered.
 - *Qualifying* meets — have their own time standards. The invitation for the meet will have either qualifying times or cut-off times or both identified.
 - *Qualifying* times — the minimum/slowest allowable time swum for the event.
 - *Cut-off* times — the maximum/fastest allowable time swum for that event.
-

MEET INVITATIONS AND ENTRIES

At least three weeks prior to a swim meet, Gulf Swimming will post meet invitations on its web site, www.gulfswimming.org. When the invitation is available, a copy will be posted at practice pools for convenience. These meet dates as well as Entry Form Due Dates will be listed on the team practice calendar. The date, location, time, and order of events are included on the invitation. Seasonal USA Swimming meets may be held over a two- or three-day weekend. Championship meets may be even longer. The swimmer chooses the days and events within the invitation limitations. Coaches should be consulted regarding meet and event selections.

Male events are listed on the meet invitations with even numbers, while female events have odd numbers. The meet entry form (available at the pools or from our web site www.swimaqua.org) should be completed with the following information:

Meet date
Parent's name and phone number
Swimmer name
Swimmer age as of the meet date
Swimmer's USA ID number
Event #/event name/best time for that event or NT for no time
Total amount due

Entering the correct USA Swimming ID number is extremely important. This is the identification that separates a swimmer from all other swimmers in the world. This number is required on all meet entries. The USA Swimming ID number can be found on the USA Swimming membership card or by following this simple format: 6 digit birth date, first three letters of the first name, middle initial, first four letters of the last name (MMDDYYFFMLLLL).

Example:

John Q. Public born on 7/4/90	USA ID # 070490JOHQPUBL
Jane Doe born on 1/1/99	USA ID # 010199JAN*DOE*

The completed meet entry form and a personal check with payment in full to AQUA should be provided to the AQUA meet entry director on or before the meet entry due date. Late entries or payment will not allow swimmers to pre-register for a meet; however, if the meet rules allow on deck registration, the swimmer may enter with host team's Clerk-of-Course on the day of the event for a higher entry fee.

NIGHT BEFORE THE MEET

A good night's sleep before each meet is essential to swimming fast. Meet day will begin very early and require both physical and mental alertness. It is recommended that all meet packing be completed before going to bed the night before. A brief checklist of what could be included:

- Team suit and a spare
- Team swim cap and a spare
- Deck shoes
- Towels (minimum of two)
- 2 pairs of goggles (back-ups are essential)
- A pen/pencil for entering events
- Aqua t-shirt and warm clothing
- A water bottle and food
- Sun screen for outdoor meets
- Medication where applicable
- Favorite book or music
- Blanket and pillow (where space is available)
- USA Swimming card (in a secure location)

AT THE MEET

First meets can be confusing. One should plan to arrive 30 minutes in advance of the team's warm-up time, which can be found on the Gulf web site the Wednesday before the meet: www.gulfswimming.org.

Check In

The first thing to do upon arrival at a meet is to report to the coach. Then, the swimmer needs to "circle in." Somewhere around the pool, usually indicated by a mass of swarming swimmers, a numbered listing of all swimmers entered for each event is posted. One list will be for boys, the other for girls. Each swimmer should find his name for **each** event and use a pen to circle the number beside his name. If a swimmer fails to circle in for an event, he will not be allowed to swim that event. Swimmers frequently write the numbers of the events they are swimming on the back of their hands. During the meet, announcements are made regularly stating event and lane assignment postings well in advance of actual races. One **MUST** pay attention. It is quite easy and very embarrassing to miss a race. If an event is missed, the swimmer's team is assessed a fine. The swimmer's parents will be billed for the amount of the fine.

At the circle-in location, one also has the opportunity to "scratch" an event, indicating that the swimmer does not intend to swim that event. Instead of circling the number next to the swimmer's name, the swimmer places a line through the number AND the name. The meet coach needs to be consulted before scratching an event.

One should pick up a "psych sheet," otherwise known as a heat sheet or a program. The "psych sheet" lists all the events that will be swum, the names of the swimmers and their entry times, and sometimes gives a very approximate time-line for when events will be starting. These programs usually cost about \$5.00 and cover the

entire meet. The meet coach should be told immediately if a swimmer is not listed in the program in the expected events.

Find a place to "live"

The coach will know where other AQUA swimmers are sitting and where the team banner is displayed. Staying with the team is always a good idea. This makes it easier for the coach to locate swimmers, especially if it appears that a swimmer might be close to missing an event. This also helps develop friendships, team spirit and team sportsmanship. Should personal items be forgotten or misplaced, the chances of recovery are much better when they are left around friends and teammates.

Warm-Up Period

A swimming warm-up period is scheduled for all teams before the actual meet begins. The purpose of these warm-ups, which last 30 to 45 minutes, is to raise the temperature of muscles and loosen joints for the upcoming races. Other benefits include getting familiar with the starting blocks, the backstroke flags, the walls and the color changes of the pool depths and the lane ropes. Specific warm-up lanes are assigned to each team. After warming up and after each swim, one needs to stay dry and warm. Some facilities are large enough to offer warm-up lanes throughout the meet. The team coach will provide guidance regarding how and when to use these facilities.

Feet-first entry into the water is the rule for every USA Swimming meet warm-up. No horseplay is allowed. Circle swimming is required. Safety marshals monitor activities and provide instruction that must be followed. Officials from Gulf Swimming also monitor deck and pool activities; their instructions must be followed as well. Disobeying safety marshals or meet officials can result in ejection from the meet.

Diving Lanes

About ten minutes before the end of the warm-up period, lanes will be opened to use for practicing starts. These lanes are always used to start and sprint in one direction only. An AQUA coach will assist in coordinating these starts. Only lanes designated by the AQUA coach should be used for starts.

Competition

The meet is organized into events. The events are paired into a girls event and then a boys event for a given stroke and distance. So Event 1 might be the girls' 200-yard freestyle for ages 15-18. Event 2 would be the same event for boys. The order and description of events is listed in the program. Some meets are pre-seeded, which means that the heat and lane assignments are listed in the program. Most Gulf meets are "deck seeded," meaning that heat and lane assignments are determined at the meet.

Heat And Lane Assignment

A few minutes before the meet is scheduled to start, the heat and lane assignments for the first events are posted. As the meet progresses, later events are posted. It is essential that this posting location be checked frequently throughout the meet. After obtaining his heat and lane assignments, the swimmer should provide this information to his coach.

Talk With The Coach

When the heat and lane assignments are given to the coach, he will initiate a pre-swim conversation. He will ask the swimmer to concentrate on certain specifics regarding the upcoming swim. If the heat and lane assignments are not provided to the coach, he may not see the swimmer's event. If more than one AQUA swimmer is competing in the same heat, he may not be able to arrange to have splits taken for every swimmer. If the pre-swim conversation does not occur, the coach cannot properly evaluate the swimmer's response to instruction in a racing environment. In other words, he is not able to help the swimmer achieve the best result. Heat and lane assignments are frequently not available until shortly before the start of an event. The swimmer should report to the coach ready to swim: AQUA cap on, goggles ready and restroom visit completed.

Where To Go

The coach will help the swimmer understand where the correct starting block and lane is located. In general, the swimmer should be talking with the coach two events before the event to be swum. The swimmer should be standing behind the starting block one event before the one to be swum. Upon approaching the starting blocks one event before the one to be swum, the timer's sheet should be consulted to verify that the swimmer is in the right location.

Once the correct location has been verified, the swimmer should pay close attention to the starter. He will announce the event number and the heat. It is essential that the swimmer know the number of the heat before the one to be swum. When the swimmer is in the first heat of an event, he must know the number of the last heat of the previous event. When the heat before the one to be swum is in the water, the swimmer should step onto the deck and stand behind the starting block, cap and goggles on and *ready to swim*. This signals to the starter, the referee, and the coach that the swimmer is ready for his event. The swimmer should not be fumbling with goggles while on the block.

The Start

Officially, the first signal to step behind the blocks will be a series of short whistles. Then the starter will announce the heat number. Then one long whistle will announce that the swimmers must step onto the blocks [or enter the water for a backstroke event]. The starter will then say, "Take your mark!" The swimmers must quickly assume their starting positions and hold very still; then, the starter will cause an audible horn to sound that starts the clock and the swimmers.

The Swim

Officials will observe the actions of the swimmers in the pool. If any infractions are observed, an official will meet the swimmer as he climbs out of the pool. The infraction will be explained. This information needs to be taken to the coach. Before leaving the deck, the swimmer may check with the timers to see what they have recorded as the swimmer's time. This can also be shared with the coach.

Talk With The Coach [Again]

The swimmer should dry off and visit with the coach again. The coach will review the instructions given before the race and relate the swim performance to those instructions. Congratulations will be offered for good accomplishments. Suggestions may be offered for the next race or for the next practice session. *These moments are invaluable to swimmers and coaches in establishing clear and effective two-way communications regarding expectations and results.* At meets, coaches are trying to reinforce the same plans and strategies developed during practices. This requires consistent one-on-one communication. Parents should not accompany their children to these talks with the coaches.

Warm-Down

Some pools have warm-down facilities. If they are available, the coach will provide instruction for the proper use for each swimmer. Warm-down becomes increasingly important as swimmers mature physically. It's an important time to help pump blood through the muscles, getting rid of the chemicals that cause fatigue. It's also a good way to let go of the intensity that was needed for a good effort.

The Waiting

Swim meets usually have long stretches between a swimmer's events. Sometimes there is almost no time at all between events. Swimmers need to be prepared for both situations. The long boring periods can be easily filled with a book, homework, or a video game. Card games can become social events. Friendships can be developed while sitting in the bleachers. Conserving energy is important: activities that involve sitting and lying around are excellent choices. Standing, walking, running, playing ball, etc. should be avoided.

GROUP TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Coach allowed discretion in unusual circumstances

RED

1. Must be at least 5 years old
2. Must be able to swim 25 yards without aid
3. Must be able to accept instruction
4. Must be able to use kickboards
5. Expected to attend 40% of practices
6. Practice emphasis expected to be stroke technique

WHITE

1. Must be at least 7 years old
2. Must be able to swim 25 yards legally of all 4 strokes, verified by official USA Swimming times
3. Must be able to accept instruction
4. Must be able to use kickboards, pull buoys, and hand paddles
5. Expected to attend 50% of practices
6. Practice emphasis expected to be stroke technique and meet preparation

BLUE

1. Must be at least 8 years old
2. Must be able to repeat 50s of all strokes under 1 minute in practice (at least 4)
3. Must be able to accept instruction
4. Must be able to use shoes, fins, kickboards, pull buoys, hand paddles, and practice clock
5. Expected to attend 60% of practices
6. Practice emphasis expected to be stroke technique, meet preparation, and sprints
7. Must have earned at least three of the following six meet times in yards:

50 free	32.99	100 free	1:12.99
50 back	38.99	100 IM	1:23.99
50 fly	37.99	50 breast	41.99

HIGH SCHOOL

1. Must be on high school aquatics team
2. Must satisfy BLUE group requirements and emphasis
3. Exempt from practice attendance expectations

GOLD

1. Must be at least 10 years old
2. Must repeat swims of 100s of all strokes under 1:40 and kicks under 2:00 in practice
3. Must be able to accept instruction
4. Must be able to use shoes, fins, kickboards, pull buoys, hand paddles, and practice clock
5. Expected to attend 70% of practices
6. Practice emphasis expected to be stroke technique, meet preparation, distance, and sprints
7. Must have earned at least three of the following six meet times in yards:

100 free	59.99	100 breast	1:29.99
200 free	2:19.99	100 fly	1:09.99
100 back	1:09.99	200 IM	2:29.99

SWIMMING AND SPORTS MEDICINE & NUTRITION

CRAMPS

Cramps are common, yet aggravating, factors in swim training, occurring after and during training because of extreme fatigue or unaccustomed exercise. They also arrive after strong, sustained contractions. More often in swimming they are a result of dehydration or an electrolyte and mineral imbalance. Drinking a good sports drink at practice is the best defense against both these factors. A good sports drink is one that provides replacement liquids containing potassium and calcium.

Common areas of cramping for swimmers occur in the quadriceps, calf, and foot. Simple stretching should ease the tightness quickly. A good, old-fashioned side ache that occurs in the diaphragm can be relieved with rhythmic, relaxed breathing done slowly and calmly.

SHOULDER OVERUSE

This problem occurs more often at higher levels of swimming and correlates directly with the amount of yardage swum per day. About 80% of college men and 50% of college women surveyed admitted to some type of shoulder problem in their careers. Besides repetition of motion, the next biggest factors in shoulder injuries are improper technique, flexibility imbalances, and strength imbalances.

Shoulder overuse results in pain, typically in front of the shoulder and over the deltoid muscle insertion spot. Further pain occurs with overhead activities (swimming arm recovery) and reaching and pulling activities (swimming arm propulsion).

Treatment of shoulder overuse begins with a modification of the activity; yardage can be reduced and primary strokes can be rotated. Technical errors can be corrected and flexibility, through stretching, can be better balanced.

KNEE INJURIES

The majority of knee injuries are caused in breaststroke. Novice and highly competitive athletes can develop knee problems. Improper technique and training overuse are both associated the problem. The number one diagnosis is Medial Collateral Ligament Stress Syndrome. This has a higher rate of occurrence in women, particularly those who are flat-footed. General kneecap pain is sometimes felt as the result of inactivity or repetitive use.

Prevention is the key in this area. The best defense in preventing knee problems is stronger quadriceps muscles. As with shoulder overuse, treatment, alternating strokes in practice, reducing the amount of training yardage, and even taking a short break from swimming can produce successful results. Including an adequate warm-

up and gradually increasing intensity are preventative factors as well. Treatment includes icing after practice and simple drop-squats for strengthening.

FOOT & CALF PROBLEMS

It is common for the flutter kick to irritate tendons in front of the ankle, particularly with fin work. Ice, stretch, and strengthen are the recommended solutions. One might exclude kicking for a short while, perhaps wrapping the ankle for reinforcement, and then return gradually to kicking.

TRAINING

To achieve gains in strength, aerobic capacity, and performance, training systems must be overloaded. The bones, muscles, and joints must be subjected to increasing stresses. However, quantity is not the same as quality. A gradual progression of exercise yields optimal training.

SWIMMING AND EAR CARE

Otitis externa, also known as “swimmer’s ear,” is an acute inflammatory disease of the external ear. The cause of infection is generally bacteria, although viruses or fungi are infrequently the culprits.

An outbreak occurs as a result of the breakdown in the integrity of the ear’s skin lining. Excessive cleaning, which may abrade the lining, is one way a breach can occur. Leaving the ear canal without its protective coating of cerumen (wax) raises the risk of *otitis externa* because the cerumen’s acidity and antimicrobial elements protect against such invasions.

Swimming is associated with *otitis externa* as a result of prolonged immersion resulting in the maceration of the ear canal skin. This softening also allows bacteria to enter.

Anatomic factors, namely a narrow or long external auditory canal, also seem to predispose some to *otitis externa*.

SYMPTOMS

- Intense ear pain
 - Pressure on the tragus or pulling on the pinna produces extreme pain.
- Edema (swelling)
- Erythema (redness)
- Otorrhea (pus)
- Debris in the canal
- Itchiness
- Hearing loss

TREATMENT

- Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen
- Antibiotics

PREVENTION

- Avoidance of excessive cleaning of the ear canal, the use of earplugs while swimming, and prophylactic treatment, when appropriate, can help to prevent *otitis externa*.
 - Using a 1:1 mixture of white vinegar and alcohol (or a similar commercial preparation available in pharmacies) once a day after swimming. Four or five drops in both ears can avert most cases of recurrent *otitis externa*.
-

SWIMMING AND EYE CARE

RISKS

Some sports present more risks for our eyes than others. The dangers of eye injury from sports that involve a thrown or hit ball, a bat or stick, or body contact are obvious. Swimming is a low-risk sport when these factors are considered. But swimming does involve other risks to the eye which are not as obvious.

By necessity, public pools contain high concentrations of chemicals. The drying effect these chemicals have on the skin and hair is experienced by most swimmers. Eye irritation and/or burning after swimming are also common symptoms.

PREVENTION

Taking a shower to rinse your skin, hair and eyes is important after each workout. If your eyes do sting or burn, a lubricating eye drop, such as *Hypotears* can help. But the most important preventative measure you can take is to always wear well-fitting goggles every time you swim to minimize water contact with your eyes.

CONDITIONS

In addition to preventing chemical contact, the goggles also give the added benefit of reducing ultraviolet (UV) light exposure. Sunlight damage to the eye can include the long-term risk of cataracts and possibly retinal disease. UV exposure may also cause pingueculas and pterygiums, fleshy growths on the white of the eye that become easily red and irritated, and may eventually extend into the cornea. Short-term, excessive exposure can produce a burn on the surface called photokeratitis. It is painful, like sunburn on the skin, and the effects may last a few days, depending on the severity.

The sun risk to eyes is higher around water or pavement, both of which reflect UV radiation. Sunlight is particularly damaging during the summer months and during midday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. . . just the conditions and hours for most swim meets! Children are especially vulnerable to the sun's damaging effects. They're exposed to more UV radiation because they spend more time outdoors, and young eyes allow more UV rays inside (due to a larger average pupil size).

PROTECTION

So how can swimmers protect their eyes? It takes a little planning. Goggles for in the water, definitely, but what about all that time between events at meets? A wide-brimmed hat will keep about 50 percent of UV radiation from reaching our eyes. That's a good start. But everyone should complete the protection with adequate sunglasses. Look for a label that says "Blocks 100 percent of UV-A and UV-B."

When you pack for that next Long Course meet, be sure to include the goggles for eye-protection in the water and sunscreen to protect your skin, and throw in a hat and sunglasses for in between events. Remember that no one is immune to sun-related eye damage.

SWIMMING AND NUTRITION

LACK OF SLEEP

Poor sleep the night before a competition or consistent bad night sleeps leading up to an event can cause fatigue. Sleep is important because it is the time when actual physical growth occurs and tissue recovery from daily activity takes place. The number of hours needed for rejuvenation is age-dependant.

AGE	Hours Of Sleep Needed
9 yrs	10 1/4
10-11 yrs	9 3/4
12 yrs	9 1/4
13+ yrs	9
16-20 yrs	8-9

IMPROPER FUEL REPLACEMENT

Like any diverse subject with multiple ingredients, there is the need for moderation in the food diet. Overeating, under eating, and preference eating can cause immediate and long-term problems. Swimmers of all ages need a good diet for many reasons: to supply energy for exercise for other activities, as a source of nutrients for growth and development, and as a framework for future health. Studies show that males continue to grow into their 20's and women can continue to create body fat into their 20's.

The body needs calories for energy, and it can only come from food intake. Correct fuel provides proper energy. If enough calories aren't provided, then proteins, which should be used for tissue development, are detoured and used as energy replacement.

Daily caloric needs are age- and activity-dependent. A 4-to-10-year-old needs 36 calories per pound of body weight (1,000-3,000), and a teen needs 1,600 to over 4,000. Teenagers in hard training routines can require up to 6,000 calories per day. Maturation and menstruation are additional factors in the caloric intake equation.

FOOD GROUP SERVINGS

Every day the body needs:

- 3-4 servings of yogurt/milk and other calcium-rich foods
- 6-11 servings of bread, cereal, pasta and other grains
- 5 or more servings of vegetables and fruit
- 2-4 servings of protein-rich foods such as egg, meat, poultry, fish and cooked beans

CALCIUM requirements from the FDA were increased in 1997. It is now recognized that decreased calcium intake over a lifetime leads directly to the onset of osteoporosis. By increasing the calcium intake at younger ages, it is the same as saving for retirement. You'll be better prepared for later life. Estrogen helps calcium get into the bone. Women that have late or delayed menstruation may experience delayed bone development and thus require extra calcium.

GREEN LEAFY VEGETABLES provide fiber and calcium, but the calcium contributions are minimal compared with dairy sources.

GRAINS provide fiber and many other healthful dietary ingredients. Breakfast cereals are excellent sources of fiber contributing to healthy intestinal tracts, particularly when combined with milk.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES should become your food choice to think of first. They are both high in carbohydrates and fiber. Though the fiber is indigestible, it is highly beneficial in lowering the risk for older age-related diseases, constipation and hemorrhoids. Fiber requirements for ages under 20 is roughly your age +5 to equal the needed grams per day. In addition to providing excellent energy from carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables also supply vitamins, minerals and special phytochemicals needed for growth and health. Always include a variety of these items for good vitamin intake.

PROTEIN is the building block of growth and high in many essential ingredients including Zinc, fiber, vitamin B and more.

Top 10 Protein List

- 1) Tuna
 - 2) Lentils and rice
 - 3) Nonfat yogurt
 - 4) Clams
 - 5) Lean beef
 - 6) Skinless chicken breast
 - 7) Pinto beans & tortillas
 - 8) Salmon
 - 9) Dark turkey meat
 - 10) Tofu & baked potato
-

FAT is a necessary ingredient in any diet. Fat carries flavor and provides energy, but is slow to digest. It can remain in the digestive tract for up to 72 hours after consumption. There are three types of fat associated with cooking. Saturated fats are the bad ones. They're the ones that hold their shape at room temperature. They do provide pure energy, but at the risk of elevated blood cholesterol levels.

Mono-saturated fats, from avocados, olive, canola and peanut oils, are healthier for your heart and blood pressure. Polyunsaturated fats are the ones that are more liquid, providing essential fats for skin and the immune system. Walnuts and almonds are good snacks in this category.

VITAMIN & MINERAL SUPPLEMENTS

It is becoming a common practice for consumers to fill in their dietary gaps with supplements. On an occasional replenishment basis this may be useful, but supplements do not provide the complete and necessary chemical interaction, as do real foods.

NUTRITION AT COMPETITION

Good nutritional preparation begins the week before the event. Eat between 2,500 - 4,000 daily calories. This includes about 450+ grams of carbohydrates daily, and 80 grams of proteins daily. As the taper increases, the total food intake should be reduced to compensate for reduced exercise; if not, then sluggishness from overeating results.

HIGH-CARB FOODS AT MEETS

There are ways to enjoy the restaurants found near swim meets. Follow these simple rules:

Burger places:

- Order 2 small burgers instead of one large one.
- Hold the cheese and mayo.
- Substitute a baked potato for fries.
- Alternatives: grilled chicken, soup, salad, bean-based chili.

Pizza places:

- Thick or double crust.
- No extra cheese.
- Limit pepperoni and sausage.
- Chose vegetarian & lower fat items like ham and Canadian bacon.
- Alternatives: pasta, salad (but watch for high-fat dressings).

Mexican places:

- Soft-shelled and burritos.
- Easy on cheese.
- Bean burritos for increased carbs (watch for the effects of "Rafinos").
- Add rice and plain tortillas.
- Substitute salsa for guacamole & sour cream.

PERFECT PRE-RACE MEAL

Stay within your normal eating habits. Don't get talked into or try anything unusual right before your event. Eat 2-4 hours before the race. Have your meal be high in carbs (100-200 grams) and low in fat and protein. These two are too slow to digest and require too much additional blood in the process.

Example: bagel & jam, banana, sport drink, cooked rice or baked potato.

For the athlete that finds they get too nervous to eat properly as their race draws close, they can consider buying sports nutrition drinks.

FOODS TO TAKE TO A MEET

- Fruit, dried fruit, juices (limited)
- Bagels, bread, low-fat muffins
- Sport drinks, low-fat energy bars

If there are more than two hours between races, take some dairy items such as yogurt, low-fat cheese and crackers.

Try limiting or avoiding these items during and immediately before competition:

- Fatty Foods - Fast foods, ice cream and fries.
- High Protein Foods - Meats, dairy and protein supplements.

FLUIDS

Sweating and dehydration does occur in swim training and racing. The early warning signs of dehydration are:

- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Poor concentration
- Flushed skin
- Light-headedness
- Dark urine
- Muscle cramps

The best rule of thumb to follow for ideal hydration levels is to create 4-5 full bladders a day. Water is the cheapest and best source. Just remember to clean the water bottle daily if you use it regularly. Gatorade, PowerAde and All-Sport drinks are excellent sources of carbohydrates and fluids. Studies have shown that carbohydrate fuel does provide immediate contributions in practice. Avoid soda, Kool-aids and fruit juices during practice, because they require additional digestive fluids be brought in from elsewhere in the body to break them down.

PERFORMANCE BOOSTERS

There is a long list of items on the current "quick-fix" performance boosters menu: amino acids, Creatine, bee pollen, caffeine, and baking soda, to name a few. None is a sure thing or we'd all already be using it. There are many different factors that combine for the perfect nutrition plan. Sports energy bars are a convenient way to get the nutrients you need. A bagel with dried fruit helps in a time crunch. Choose something that is low-fat and fortified with vitamins and minerals. Carbohydrate gels go down well. Look for about 25g of carbs and 100g of protein. These are tasty items, and when taken with water, come in handy when you swim many events with no rest time in between.

AQUA ON-DECK POLICY

The following is the AQUA team policy relating to use of facilities during official team-sanctioned practices. AQUA recognizes facilities included in its pool rental agreements and various covenants of its insurance policy in formulating this policy statement. AQUA's objective is to maintain a safe environment for athletes, coaches and spectators. The policy is written to provide general guidelines; individual pool layout and local rules may vary.

1. Coaches and Board members shall have authority to administer the policy.
2. All athletes, coaches, and spectators should read, understand and adhere to local rules posted at practice facilities.
3. The coaches on deck have responsibility for supervising practice and assuring proper use of practice facilities.
4. The practice facility includes pool, deck space, restrooms, walkway access, bleacher areas and parking lots. During the hours of team-sanctioned practices, only coaches and athletes should utilize on-deck areas. On-deck areas are defined as those utilized by athletes and coaches during the normal course of practice that include the pool, pool end deck space, and a buffer along each side necessary for unrestricted movement of the coaches and athletes.
5. Spectators, defined as anyone in the pool area other than coaches and athletes participating in the practice, may utilize deck space and bleacher or other seating areas provided outside the pool-length buffer at each practice facility. Spectators should avoid pool-end deck spaces.
6. Spectators should avoid activities that may be disruptive to coaches, athletes and other spectators during the hours of team-sanctioned practices. Parents or guardians should ask questions of the coaches either before or after practice, and they should supervise their minor children to assure proper use of practice facilities and adherence to this policy.
7. Some practice facility deck spaces include diving boards and non-swimming equipment such as exercise bikes and tumbling mats. These are not included in our rental agreements and as such should not be utilized by AQUA coaches, athletes or spectators.
8. Other areas of the practice facility such as equipment lockers and storage rooms are also off limits. AQUA athletes are expected to come to practice with their own training equipment, and equipment owned by others and stored at the practice facility is not included in our rental agreements.
9. It is the expressed desire of the Board that each practice facility have a knowledgeable parent or Board member available to answer questions relating to registration, meet entry, etc., who should be positioned so as to avoid disruptions to practice. If individual pool layout requires use of on-deck space for information displays, these may be provided in areas accessible to spectators that do not disrupt practice and that are permitted by the coaches at that facility.
10. We should leave practice facilities clean and free of debris, regardless of their condition when we arrive. AQUA is a guest at practice facilities, and as a team we should work to maintain good standing at all times.

It is not the intention of the Board to restrict spectator access to practice or to the coaches, nor is it the intention of the Board to detract from the AQUA team experience. It is our obligation, however, to provide a safe practice environment. The Board endorses this policy and it reminds all who use our practice facilities to be gracious guests there.
