

# Parent's Guide to a Swim Meet Weekend

Hey Parents

Here are some good tips for the upcoming meet for new and experienced parents:

Most meets during the season brings much excitement, so make a strong effort to keep your swimmer relaxed and at ease. Keep each swim in perspective. Your swimmer will have some “good swims” and some “not so good swims”. In every race, there will be something that goes well and things which need to be addressed and worked on in practice. They might be asked to try something different or new, like a race strategy, flip turn, breathing pattern, or a new technique skill of a stroke. Most of the time changing something equals a slower performance at first. At DAC, we coach for the long term and short cuts only compromise this goal. While it is natural at first, to logically look at meet to meet when comparing improvement, it doesn't take in to account many factors. Most swimmers have their best time towards the end of the season, so now at the beginning of the next season, they are just getting back into the water and relearning skills, and developing new skills. Compare season to season, not meet to meet. And never compare swimmer to swimmer. Each person will improve at different rates throughout the early stages of their swim career, and especially during puberty. Be patient. Long term success is the goal of this sport and is kept in perspective always by the coaching staff and needs to have the support of the parents to keep your swimmer's best interest in mind. Keep the meet a fun, enjoyable, and good experience for the swimmer.

## Here are some highlights about swim meets

- Relax and have fun....and keep your swimmer relaxed...and keep yourself relaxed
- Bring Chairs for you and your family to sit in (most pools won't have seating)
- Show up 15 minutes before warm up time
- Team Stretching will start 5-10 minutes before warm up time
- WARM UP with the TEAM; A swimmer's body is just like a car on a cold day. They need to get the engine going and warmed-up before they can go all out. Swimming laps does not equal wasting energy for upcoming races.
- Wear a DAC cap during the meet, support and represent your TEAM.
- Wear a DAC shirt during the meet.
- Encourage, Encourage, Encourage your swimmer both before and after the race---correcting is the coach's job
- Buy a Heat Sheet and mark when your swimmer is scheduled to swim---Event#; Heat #, Lane #
- Bring a Highlighter for marking the Heat Sheets
- Have your child go talk to the Coach about 8-10 heats (more if it is a shorter event, less if it a shorter event) before their heat for advice, and have your child go talk to the Coach immediately after they complete their swims. This is often neglected and performance is always affected.
- Generally, the coach follows these guidelines when discussing swims: (1) positive comments or praise (2) suggestions for improvement (3) positive comments
- Bring plenty of dry towels (2 per day is a good). One towel is normally drenched after warming up, and the first few events.
- Most importantly, don't be afraid to ask questions from more experienced “meet parents”--they've all had their first meet at some point and remember what it was like.
- Keep your swimmer rested and seated. Be watchful for them walking around too much. They need to keep their legs fresh. The biggest/strongest muscles in the body are in the legs and swimming is a leg dominated sport.

- Nutrition is very important, and usually overlooked
  - Don't drink or eat foods loaded with sugar
  - Big misconception is SUGAR = ENERGY, you will experience a sugar crash at some point during the day. Stay clear of sodas and candy for the weekend. This includes CAFFENINE.
  - Eat a good breakfast, even if you swim in the afternoons
  - Bananas, oatmeal, fruit, bagels are GREAT.
  - Foods during the meet are raisins (best form of carbs.), granola, yogurts, Gatorade, fruit juices
  - Drink plenty of water through the day and one full glass the night before
- Be Prepared. Plan ahead for something to go wrong during the meet
  - Like goggles or a swim cap breaks (hopefully not a swim suit)
  - Have an extra pair in a zip lock bag when you go to the blocks
  - I have seen some swimmers bring a small bag or "fanny pack"

I added a few questions/concerns that are always asked at meets by parents of all teams, and I am sure you have asked yourself the same question at some point.

**Question:** *Should I be concerned if my daughter gets DQ'ed at the meet?*

**Answer:** It is important for both you and your daughter to realize that her coach would not enter her in an event for which he does not think she is ready. Does this mean she won't get disqualified? No, that's part of a learning process that every swimmer encounters. Taking risks is part of the sport. While learning to master the skills of proper stroke and turn technique, there is a chance your daughter will get disqualified. If this happens, it is a great learning experience. It will teach her how to deal with failure and how to improve her technique the next time so it doesn't happen again. Let her know that it happens to all swimmers.

**Q:** *Why does it seem that my child's swimming is so inconsistent? One meet he drops 5 seconds a swim and the next meet he adds time? In addition the coach keeps telling him that his times are not the most important thing, it's how you swim the race.*

**A:** Times at this stage are not a true indication of your child's abilities. In fact, it is not unusual for your child's times to fluctuate as they learn to maintain proper technique. Perhaps your child's coach has asked her to maintain a certain number of strokes per length and they accomplished that goal. Although the time was not what you expected, this is an outcome while the coach is focusing on the process of swimming efficiently. Be patient and supportive during this developmental stage of your child's career. Times will improve once your child is more consistent with their technique.

Most meets are computerized. There are generally two ways a swimmer gets to his/her lane:

1. A swimmer usually reports directly to his/her lane for competition a number of heats before he/she actually swims. Check with your swimmer's coach for specific instructions.
2. In some novice meets, a swimmer's event number will be called, usually over the loudspeaker, and he/she will be asked to report to the "clerk of course" or "bullpen". Swimmers should report with his/her cap and goggle. Generally, girls events are odd-numbered and boys events are even-numbered. Example: "Event #26, 10-Under Boys, 50 freestyle, report to Clerk of Course." The "Clerk of Course" or "bullpen" area is usually where all swimmers checked in before the warm-up.
  1. The clerk will usually line up all the swimmers and take them down to the pool in correct order.
  2. You can expect at least 4-8 heats of each event.

### **This situation happens every meet...don't let it happen**

When a swimmer has completed all of their events, they and their parents get to go home. Hold on...Make sure, you as the parent, check with the coach before leaving to make sure your swimmer is not included on a relay. It is not fair to other swimmers who may have stayed to swim on a relay where your swimmer is expected to be a member and they are not there. Explaining to three young athletes why they can't swim because the forth left too early is not a very fun conversation.

Results are usually posted somewhere in the facility. Awards are often gathered for a team and given to the coach at the end of the meet (normally aren't immediately ready). The coach will give the awards to the swimmers at a later time.

If your child has a poor race and comes out of it feeling badly, talk about the good things. The first thing you say is, "Hey, that's not like you....I know you are disappointed, but it's not the end of the world!" Then you can go on and talk about the good things the child did. **Don't talk about the negative things and don't keep talking about the race.** Drop it and get your child to focus on the next race or something enjoyable coming up after the meet! **Limit the "post mortems!" Don't let one race ruin the next race, or the rest of the meet.**

If your child comes up to you and says, "That was a bad race, don't tell me it wasn't," there is nothing wrong with a swimmer negatively evaluating a race. The important thing is for the athlete not to dwell on it. You should direct the swimmer to focus on something good. "All right, you have had a bad race. How do you think you can do better next time?" Immediately start talking about the positive things.

### **Miscellaneous**

Baby or talcum powder--To "dust" the inside of swim cap. This helps preserve the swim cap and makes it easier to put on.

Bring Something to sit on Often times the swimmer area may be located in a gym or cafeteria. Example: sleeping bag, old blanket, or anything that will be comfortable to sit on. The swimmers will be spending a lot of time on it.

Sweat suits bring one. Each swimmer may want to bring two because they can get wet and soggy.

### **Special Parent's Note**

The pool area is usually very warm. Therefore, you need to make sure you dress appropriately. Nothing is worse than being hot at a swim meet. It makes the time pass very slowly!

### **A Coaches Plea to not happen...this happens every meet**

Don't ask the meet volunteers, or who is running a meet for the following:

- About any awards, including high point award
- why a time isn't correct
- points were not counted correctly

Always come to Coach Dan'l in this situation. And let him handle this concern personally. Every meet has mistakes and errors. I promise to solve the situation or find the answer to any and all situations. Normally it will take time or will need to be fixed after the session has finished in order to not hold up the meet.

**Also**

If your child misses an event...its not the end of the world...its not the Olympics, even though this has happened at every meet, don't cause an "all-to-frequent situation" to escalate to a bigger problem. It's not the ideal circumstance, but the coaches realize it will happen at a swim meet and address the problem with understanding, but make a point to not let it happen again. We'll address the factors that lead up to this situation and provide a solution.

Don't tell your swimmer to sit with you. If they get caught up in a conversation with you it is easy to get distracted. For example, at the Germantown pool, for them to walk down to the pool deck form the stands it can't take up to 3 to 5 minutes. Missing their heat can and will happen. Don't let them sit with you.

Coach Dan'l Murray