

## Parent Handbook

### **PARENT HANDBOOK INTRODUCTION**

During the first few weeks of the swim year, the head coach will talk with each swimmer in order to discuss their personal programs. All members, especially new members, will be brought “up to speed” with team procedures at this time. Returning members will also meet with the coaching staff in order to set our targets, goals and expectations for the year.

At the first practice you will need to bring some swimming goggles that fit, a bathing suit and a water bottle. We encourage you to drink water before, during and after each practice in order to be properly hydrated. As the water temperature at the pool is usually on the high side, we would also encourage you to eat a healthy snack after each practice in order to replenish your salt levels. If a regular meal will not be soon a small bag of chips, pretzels, crackers, etc. is preferable!

Please find below a list of our programs. Feel free to discuss these with us should you have any questions. Generally the programs are designed to start out with a lot of work on the technical side of swimming while the athletes are improving their endurance. There will be 3 -5 hours of pool time per week and some dry-land training available. In October the team will start to enter competitions where improved skills can be showcased.

The Norfolk Hammerheads Aquatic Club is a private organization run by an elected Board of Directors. The team also has an independent executive that governs and operates the club during the swim season and is elected on an annual basis. The executive is made up of primarily parents/guardians who donate their time to ensure that the club operates effectively and in the best interests of our swimmers. All swimmers register with the Club

### **NORFOLK HAMMERHEADS GROUP STRUCTURE**

#### **Gold**

Members of this squad will train to compete with success at the National, Junior and International level. The head coach will identify those swimmers that have the potential ability to train at the Gold level. Athletes will have the opportunity to experience a high level of training, personal goals, character building and challenging oneself continuously.

Swimmers in this group will work consistently toward character development, self discipline and making informed daily decisions that will define the high level athlete they are capable of becoming.

Gold functions as a microcosm of the sport, whereby the strongest swimmers will ultimately rise to the top. The culture of this group is becoming more competitive all the time, and all swimmers have a daily opportunity to excel among their teammates. Athletes in this squad should be looking beyond Age Group competitions and be relentlessly seeking access to Senior National (open) and International Competitions.

Athletes in this squad must be prepared and willing to train at the prescribed volumes and intensities including maintaining a minimum 90% attendance in order to compete at swim meets.

Due to the high level of dedication, determination, and pushing the limits of oneself, there will be swimmers who at times may not be able to continue on with the program. Swimmers who have been asked to move to this group must enter with the understanding that it will be hard work, however many swimmers will be extremely proud of their accomplishments and at the same time will discover that it can also be a lot of fun too.

Those swimmers who are willing to commit to the work, follow the program and consistently push themselves beyond even their own expectations will be champions, in essence those who are “tough enough” will succeed.

#### **Silver 2**

Members of this squad will compete with success at the Regional, Festival, Provincial Age Group and National Age Group Championships. Although older swimmers will be a part of this squad at the outset, we will endeavor to make Sr. Silver a squad

comprised of athletes aged 12-14. Pre-Gold will live up to its namesake- it will prepare athletes for promotion to the Gold Squad.

The focus of this squad's training program is to offer training that is specific to the demands of racing, and bridge the gap from the general speed and endurance work that is done before the onset of puberty. Athletes will be challenged mentally and physically at practice as they learn to manage themselves through more complex training objectives.

Although this squad will not endeavor to offer the intensities demanded in Gold, the training program will be challenging nonetheless. Like Gold, this squad is a melting pot. Not every athlete who joins the squad will complete the season. This healthy attrition is present in all performance based programs in all sports, and our team should not be an exception.

Athletes will be promoted to this Silver 2 squad from Silver 1 between 9-12years old. Athletes may remain in this squad for extended periods as they prepare for placement in Silver 2.

### **Silver 1/Bronze 2**

The Silver 1 Squad, along with its sister group Bronze 2, will turn our young swimmers into young RACERS. Strokes will be re-taught and modified, drills will be mastered, training habits will be established and daily dryland training will be introduced.

Most importantly, swimmers will be Coached with enthusiasm and pushed to race each other every day. Athletes will learn to win, and to lose, with pride. Athletes will learn that the thrill of competition is the heart of the sport: that winning is special and worth chasing, and that losing is a lesson that must come over and over again to make those rare wins possible.

Bronze 2 will be for swimmers who graduate the Juniors program relatively quickly, and Silver 1 will be for swimmers who do not graduate our Juniors program until 10 years of age or who are placed on the team as older swimmers. This two pronged approach will ensure that all swimmers have an opportunity to move to Silver 2 at some point.

The strict age groupings in these two squads will ensure that athletes are trained in a manner appropriate to their stage of physical development, and standardized skill requirements can also be imposed more easily.

### **Bronze 1**

Swimmers will be placed in this squad directly from neighborhood or City lesson programs, from other competitive programs or will be promoted from our Juniors (learn to swim program) program.

Swimmers in this squad will work extensively on creating the habits that will eventually make or break their careers as teenagers: reading the clock, counting strokes, breathing patterns, push-offs, dives, turns and breakouts.

Swimmers will also learn lane etiquette, sportsmanship and teamwork. Swimmers will be taught to see themselves as athletes not participants, and as racers not as recreational swimmers.

Last but not least, swimmers in the Bronze 1 Squad will perform basic training sets suited to their age and physical development.

### **Juniors**

Juniors is an entry level competitive program for 10 and Under swimmers. All facets of competitive swimming will be introduced and explained, and athletes will practice these skills, drills and techniques in fun environment that emphasizes racing and competition as often as possible. Athletes will be divided into small groups and work through the content of the practice under the direction of the Lead Coach.

Lane Coaches will be used to help teach objectives and manage the practice. This program is 8-10 weeks long and renews throughout the season. Athletes will be promoted into the Bronze 1 or Bronze 2 (on occasion the Silver 1) as they become ready to do so.

### **Masters**

The masters program is for mature athletes who wish to keep fit, while maintaining stroke fundamentals and speed. While most

masters' swimmers do not compete, they are all training as if they do. The program offers stroke correction, good workouts, Aerobic power and endurance conditioning. There are many meets that the Masters can attend throughout the year.

## **ON A SWIM TEAM**

### Time Standards

In Ontario there are six sets of time standards, "AA" through "E". These standards divide swimmers within each age group according to speed. There are different time standards for different meets. This type of competition allows individual improvement to be more visible. A copy of the time standard is available from Swim Ontario.

Please { [HYPERLINK "http://www.swimontario.com/index\\_sr.php?id=1657"](http://www.swimontario.com/index_sr.php?id=1657) } for a complete list of those at Swim ontario.

### Swimmers who wear glasses

The Norfolk Hammerheads has a deal arranged with the Simcoe Optometric Clinic for prescription swim goggles. The cost of these goggles will be \$54.95 per pair. This price includes the prescription lenses and the dispensing fee. These goggles are of good quality and will enable the swimmers who need glasses to focus under water while swimming. This is especially important for turns. The clinic is located at 100 Colborne St, Simcoe. 426-3123.

### Age group swimming

Age group swimming in its present form enables young swimmers to compete against others of similar age, ability and build. The age groups are 8 and under, ten and under, 12 and under, 14 and under, 16 and under as well as an open category for swimmers of all ages. The swimmers are also separated by gender and compete accordingly.

### What is competitive swimming?

Competitive swimming programs provide many benefits to young athletes. They develop self-discipline, good sportsmanship and time management skills. Competition allows the swimmer to experience success and to learn how to deal with defeat while becoming healthy and physically fit.

There are over 150 swim clubs in Ontario that are divided into six regions. The Norfolk Hammerheads Aquatic Club belongs to the Western Region division of Swim Ontario. Swim Ontario is in turn affiliated with Swimming Natation Canada (SNC). SNC is affiliated with the world governing body of swimming that is (FINA) the Federation Internationale de Natation Amateur. FINA sets all the rules for our sport worldwide. Both the Team and the individual swimmers pay a fee to SNC to allow for participation in SNC sanctioned swim meets. This fee is additional to your club fee and the amount is decided by SNC yearly. SNC has two levels of registration for swimmers: Novice and Competitive.

As the Club's executive is elected annually to ensure the effective operation of the Team's activities, so is the Western Region executive. Two members from our club sit on this board. The Western Region Executive and Swim Ontario set the general rules and standards by which we all operate.

## **THE STROKES**

### The Skills and the Competition

The four competitive strokes are freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly. As you watch your swimmer compete or train, they will be swimming these strokes or a drill that is designed to practice a particular part of that stroke.

The freestyle is an event where one may swim any stroke one wishes. However, almost always, the stroke used is the front crawl, which is characterized by an alternating overhand motion of the arms and an alternating up and down flutter kick.

The backstroke consists of an alternation motion of the arms with a flutter kick. Legally the swimmer may also swim any stroke one wishes as long as he/she is on their back. On turns, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall. The swimmer must remain on their back when finishing the race.

The breaststroke requires simultaneous movements of the arms on the same horizontal plane. The hands are pulled from the breast in a heart-shaped pattern and recovered under or over the surface of the water. The kick is a simultaneous somewhat circular motion similar to the action of a frog. No flutter, scissors or dolphin kick is permitted. On turns and at the finish, the swimmer must touch the wall with both hands simultaneously.

The butterfly features a simultaneous overhand stroke of the arms combined with an undulating dolphin kick. In the kick, the swimmer must keep both legs together and may not flutter kick, scissor kick or use the breaststroke kick. The butterfly was developed in the early 1950's as a variation of the breaststroke and it became an Olympic stroke in 1956.

New skills events have been added to development and championship meets. These include kick races, sculling races, gliding distance, count the number of strokes per length, plus time events and distance events.

The individual medley, commonly referred to as the "IM", is when the swimmer begins the event with the butterfly, then changes after one fourth of the race to backstroke, then to breaststroke and finally to freestyle.

In the Medley Relay, all four strokes are swum. The relay team is made up of four swimmers. The first swimmer swims backstroke, the second swims breaststroke, the third swims butterfly and the final swimmer swims the freestyle

**Marshalling:** when the swimmers are at a swim meet, they are always together on the pool deck as a team. The coaching staff will make them aware of their next race and prepare them for it. Prior to their race, the swimmer goes to an area (called Marshalling) where they are given their time card, which will tell them what heat and lane they are in. From there the athletes will hand their cards to the timers before the start of the race. When they hear the whistle blow, they may get onto the starting blocks.

**Starts:** Many races are won or lost by the swimmer's performance in the start or during the turns. In the start, the starter will check that all swimmers are motionless. When the swimmers are set, the gun or starting horn is sounded to start the race. Most of our meets invoke a one-start rule that means that there are no second attempts for the swimmer who has false started a race. The swimmer is told after the race that he/she is disqualified.

**Turns:** In turns there are definite rules to follow in each event.

In freestyle the only rule in regards to turns is that the swimmer must simply touch the wall with any part of their body.

In breaststroke and butterfly the swimmer must touch the wall with two hands simultaneously before making their turn.

In the backstroke the turn rules are more complex. The swimmer can simply touch the wall while still on his/her back and then spin around and continue the backstroke. The swimmer can also turn onto his/her stomach just before the wall and is allowed one arm pull before they must initiate a flip turn. This is a turn that must be practiced in order to be done correctly and efficiently. The best method is to count the strokes from the flags and through practice know when to turn. Most disqualifications at meets are on backstroke turns.

**Disqualification:** Disqualification of races, whether for incorrect stroke or turn technique or for a false start, are an inevitable part of competitive racing. Disqualification's happen to all swimmers at one time or another and the coaching staff works with the swimmer on the technical and sometimes, psychological changes that will enhance and correct the race for the next time. Each race will be a learning experience and a new challenge, making competitive swimming a sport that is worth the effort to work hard and achieve positive results. The team coaching staff is there for each swimmer through all the challenges and successes and each NHAC swimmer will find a positive and supportive environment as a member.

Note: Disqualification is of the race, not the swimmer.

## **ROLE OF THE SWIM PARENT/GUARDIAN**

It is important that all swimmers are on time for the workouts and that each swimmer is attending on a regular basis. The swimmer needs to be at the pool 15 minutes before each workout starts. This is a critical time for stretching, equipment preparation and prompt practice starts, as well as time to meet friends before workout.

In order to aid in our child's training we must consider physical and mental aspects of each child. The swimmer requires a sound diet consisting of well-balanced, nutritional meals that meet the energy requirements of the child. We have no interest in telling anyone how to feed his or her children, however should your child develop into a highly ranked competitive swimmer, then you should expect the diet to become an issue. Adequate rest is also essential.

>Like all parental roles, money is involved! You will have a sense of this after reading through the next section on "Meets"! We must cover the cost of our swimmer's fees, minimal equipment costs and team wear, travel cost, entry fees for meets attended and other requirements for fundraising.

>Volunteer parents are needed throughout the year to assist with our various committees and to help out at swim meets and other club functions. Please volunteer your services. We need each and every one of our members, and your help will be greatly valued and appreciated.

Once the swim season is underway and all of our swimmers are registered, a phone directory will be made available to all members.

All parents must remain off the pool deck at all times, both at the complex and at all meets (when not officiating). Swim Ontario insurance requirements dictate this guideline! Also it is the sole responsibility of our Head Coach and Coaching staff to direct the swimmers and deal with meet issues in the proper manner. Sometimes we are tempted to be involved in coaching, even as we sit above the pool deck. It does help to address issues directly with the coach, after workouts or as illustrated under "communications" in this handbook. While the coaching staff is involved with 20-30 swimmers at a time, you are watching just one. Should you see something that the coaching staff should know about, please feel free to mention it.

Always remember that your biggest role should be one of encouragement and support. A simple formula to remember is this: Encouragement increases natural enthusiasm. Our staff does not advocate a gold medal performance at each and every meet. They do, however, recognize and congratulate genuine effort. If a swimmer is led to believe that they must produce medals to receive recognition, then we begin to undermine their natural enthusiasm. A swimmer who is victorious in a race should receive enthusiasm, but should not be put on a pedestal. However, a swimmer who is beaten out of a ribbon should not be scolded.

Young swimmers are very aware of disappointment and a continued discussion only makes things worse. As young athletes, these swimmers are remarkably tough and it doesn't take long to recover from a temporary setback with support and encouragement. Athletes cannot be winners all the time, but with proper support they will learn to accept that winning doesn't mean bringing home all the ribbons all of the time. Ribbons are nice, but if there are no personal time improvements to accompany the award, its attractiveness will soon wear off. Help to encourage fun and good times; sports are meant to be enjoyed!

## **SWIM SEASON**

The swim season is divided into two categories:

Short Course refers to swimming in a 25meter pool, such as ours.

Long Course refers to swimming in a 50meter pool.

Our Fall/Winter season begins in September. During the first few weeks, all swimmers will meet with the coaching staff and together they will determine what program is best suited for them. The season ends for each individual swimmer according to their final championship meet. Novice swimmers will have their finals in early May. Competitive Hammerhead swimmers competing in the long course season will have their final meet in early June.

### **Meets**

Aqua 7 league

This is a league for our entire team.

Races are usually one length for younger swimmers, two or four lengths for older swimmers

There are 6 meets per year plus a championship meet in May.

Meets are held on Sundays.

Swimmers must compete in 3 meets throughout the year in order to qualify for finals.

Teams in this league include Wilmont, Stratford, Ancaster, St Thomas, and Simcoe.

For this year we will have two away meets and two home meets that count towards the year.

There will also be two invitational meets throughout the year.

Novice swimmers can participate in this league.

#### Development Meets

Swimmers are basically swimming to improve their own times

Gives swimmers the opportunity to prepare for competition at invitational and championship meets in a competitive atmosphere

Transition is now in progress through Western Region Swimming in regards to meet scheduling and setups.

#### **Invitational Meets**

Organized by individual clubs for specifically designated levels of swimmers

Although the program is approved or sanctioned by SNC, the individual club can set their own program for the meet.

Swimmers must be registered as competitive.

#### Championship Meets

Competitive swimmers that have qualified with certain times.

Western region "B" Championships (Short and Long Course)

Provincial Age Group Championships (Short and Long Course)

Ontario Team Championships (maximum of 20 swimmers)

Junior and youth National Championships.

Team Championship

#### **Home Meets**

NHAC hold 2 or 3 meets per year.

Meets are fun and every swimmer registered with SNC is encouraged to participate

Parents are encouraged to attend a Timer's clinic before the first meet

Clinics will be very straightforward and will be held on a swim night

All swim parents are encouraged to volunteer their time at these meets.

All of the meets mentioned have their own qualifying time standards, which are set either provincially or nationally. Your swimmer could have a time that would qualify him/her to swim at the Western Region Championships but might not be fast enough to swim at the Provincial Age Group Championships. As the swimmer improves he/she may travel to more competitive meets. The Head Coach will determine the meets your child attends.

Entry fees for these meets will range from \$5.00 and up per event depending on the meet. Some events will be one-day events (either held on a Saturday or a Sunday), others two days, and still others may be Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Notify the coach at all times when circumstances prevent attendance at a meet. It is always helpful to discuss your swimmer's schedule and expectations directly with the Head Coach. Our coach is available after workouts at the pool, by telephone e-mail or through our mailbox system at the pool. The meets will be posted on the swim team bulletin board well in advance of the event. There will be enough time for individuals to decide whether attendance will be a "go" or a "pass".

(will be modified) It is your responsibility to check the bulletin board and take your name off the meet registration sheet by the due date. When the swimmer's name stands, the coach will assume that he/she will attend, the swimmer will be entered in the meet and the swim fees for those races will be charged. If you want to go to a meet do nothing. If you do not want to go to a meet, then cross your name off. If you do nothing, then we assume you want to go.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Website – Information about meets, practices, etc. Will be posted on the Website. It is the responsibility of individual families to check the information and to sign up for meets to confirm attendance. After the due signing date, the Head Coach will follow through on the action required for the listed event. MEET SCHEDULE will list dates, meets and locations. It will also contain Meet Packages. Meet Packages are detailed info on the individual meets. This includes detail location and meet event times etc. Mass emails sent to the team are also posted on the Website in case of email change or issues. Please check the News/Blog in case you are not receiving emails. If you are having any issues please email our main email address { [HYPERLINK](mailto:norfolkhammerheads@gmail.com)

"<mailto:norfolkhammerheads@gmail.com>" } CALENDARS will display either everything needed to know or broken up with Just swim practices or swim meets. The swim meets will also have links to Meet Packages. Other information will also be posted on the website so please check periodically.

Emails – There are regular emails sent to all families during the whole year. These will include reminders of events, fund raising, team apparel, etc. If anyone is not getting these emails please contact the above email address to confirm your correct email address.

Equipment and Team Wear – Swimming, unlike most sports, affords athletes the luxury of competing with a minimum of equipment. We start with the basics of a swimsuit, cap and goggles. Some other items you may also consider are team suits, sweat suits, T-shirts, swim bags, flippers and hand paddles. Team swimwear can be purchase from the Team Wear representative. Please be advised that all team wear purchases will be prepaid. The coach's request that each swimmer have two team caps and as many goggles that fit as possible. Nothing is as distracting to a swimmer (and their coach!) than not having the right equipment at the right time!

Publicity – As our swimmers travel to and compete in various swim meets, their results will be sent to local newspapers through the team Publicity Rep. Generally speaking we receive very good publicity from all of the newspapers to which we send results. Inevitably, however, somebody's name, somewhere along the line may be left out of an article. Please don't take it personally – it has simply been an oversight! Communicate with our publicity rep as our rep is committed to giving the very best coverage and recognition for the swimmers as is possible.

NHAC Directors – The Directors meets regularly and a member is almost always around the pool during practices for you to talk to. Any parent/guardian or swimmer is welcome to attend Director meetings for information purposes and input.

## **FINANCES**

NHAC is a privately run non-profit program. The Club provides the coaching, rents the facilities and purchases some of the equipment that the team uses during training, such as flutter boards, flippers, stop watches, Hy-tek Meet Manager, Hy-tek Team Manager and pull buoys just to mention a few. The program fees that you will pay will go to the Club for those expenses. It is a reality that fundraising is a necessary part of any organization and we look for the choices that will be most effective and enjoyable. The funds raised go into the NHAC Swim Team account and pay for such things as Coach's training, advertising, as well as a host of other expenses such as coaching fees.

## **COACHING**

**Trent McNicol** – As the head coach, it is Trent's responsibility to present our program to the swimmers. Trent will design a program that is appropriate for each level of our team. "The main focus of our program will be on stroke techniques and swimmer development. We will encourage fitness and fun while working on the fundamentals of our sport. There is a lot of hard work in this sport and with that comes confidence and a positive attitude."

Let the Coach Coach!

The Head Coach steers the swimmer's direction within the program. The team supports an athlete-centered vision that is driven by the coach and supported by the executive and family. Remember that the coaches are the ones fully qualified to judge a swimmer's performance and technique. As parents our role is to provide support for the swimmers. The best way to help athletes achieve their goals and reduce the natural fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make a mistake and if your swimmer does make one, remember that he/she is still learning. Encourage all efforts and point out the things done well. As long as the athlete gave his/her best effort, each young person deserves to feel like a winner.

A few final words...

This Manual has been prepared and meant as an informative and helpful handbook for you. Keep it for handy future reference.

Enjoy the Norfolk Hammerheads Aquatic Club – You'll meet great people and make great friends, too! Welcome!

## **REFUND POLICY**

If a swimmer is no longer a member of NHAC for medical reasons, a portion of registration fees will be refunded. Swim Ontario Fees, Western Region Association Fees and Shark Fest however are non-refundable. Club fees shall be pro-rated and refunded accordingly to the nearest month end. Any Outstanding Meet Fees must be paid in full prior to the issue of any refund. Refunds will be issued 30 days from written notice accompanied by a copy of a doctor's note.

After February 1 of any swim season no refund will be issued unless accompanied by a copy of a doctor's note.