

Swimming and Swim-parenting 101

For Veteran Parents

- Now is the time to discuss with your swimmer season goals
- Questions to guide that discussion:
 - Have you just entered a new age group or are you at the top of your age group ?
 - What would you have liked to achieve last year; is it achievable this year ?
 - Is this goal achievable ?
- Examples of goals; I want to.....
 - Finish practice...
 - Lose weight....
 - Qualify for New Englands
 - Qualify for Age Group Championships
 - Finish in the Top 16
 - Break a team record
 - Go 100Free under 1 minute

For New Parents

- Welcome to swimming
- Swimming has a well-earned reputation to teach kids about:
 - Time management
 - Goal-setting
 - Confidence
- Swimming World and Junior Swimmer (September 2002) notes that 'By and large, swimmers at all levels of education-from grade school through college-perform well beyond other athletes and even nonathletes when it comes to academics. The discipline they learn in the pool translates well into the classroom... and into life after college.'
- Marlins Annual Swimmer student awards recognize team members who are on their school's honor role: this usually includes about 80% of the team.

Success Requires Dedication

Athletes

- As an individual sport, you can come to practice as frequently as you like; come more frequently and train diligently, the probability of success is greater

Parents

If you choose to become actively involved in your athlete's swim season, the probability of success is also greater

- What does actively involved mean ?
 - Tracking times,
 - Making choices about events
 - Supporting the team through volunteerism

Competitive Swimming is divided into YMCA and US Swimming

YMCA

Limited to clubs affiliated with YMCA

YMCA mission is focused on broad participation

US Swimming (USS)

Open to all US Swimming members

USS mission is to support national swimming through Olympic competition

Our club participates in both YMCA and USS meets

YMCA Swimming

- Only available to YMCA organizations such as:
 - LEHY
 - Cheshire
 - Branford
 - Greenwich
 - Westport
- Includes Dual Meets (VSY Marlins vs. one other team such as above)
- Championship meets are:
 - Y States
 - New England Championships – Boston
 - Y Nationals
- FAQ: Why don't we swim against the Mystic Y ? They are in the Yankee Cluster, and VSYMCA left the Yankee Cluster league some time ago. Yankee Cluster Ys typically do not participate in USS swimming, and we wanted access to this more competitive venue.

YMCA Swimming: Dual Meets

as described on VSYMarlins website

The team competes against one other YMCA swim club such as

- Branford
- Laurel East Hartford (LEHY)
- Every swimmer in each swim level is expected to participate
 - Marlins,
 - Age Group I,
 - Age Group II,
 - Seniors
- Swimmers will compete in age groups:
 - 8 and Under,
 - 9-10,
 - 11-12
 - 13-14
 - 15-18 (also sometimes referred to as 15/over).
- In these meets, the coach decides and enters each swimmer in event where he/she can best benefit the team.
- These are small, low-key meets and a great venue for beginning swimmers to 'get their feet wet'





YMCA Swimming Championships

as described on VSYMarlins website

The team will participate in YMCA Championships at the end of the season. These include:

- Y-States,
- Y-New Englands
- Y-Nationals.
- “official times” would include dual-meets between local YMCA swim clubs. **All meet times are eligible for qualification**
- Swimmers also must have swum in at least one regularly scheduled Y-sanctioned meet in that season.
- The specific rules for individual championship meets do vary somewhat, so you and the coach should ensure you read the individual meet requirements.
- Y New Englands and Y-Nationals have qualifying times, often referred to as ‘cuts’.
- These times are available on the websites for these meets, and also on our own VSYMarlins.org

A word about New England Championships

- YMCA event
- Boston, in March
- Important note for Athletes with birthdays December-February
 - In this meet, athletes swim in the age group reflective of their age as of **December 1**.
 - This meet is unique in this respect !**
 - Athletes who 'age up' in the first quarter of the year will swim in their new age group for USS meets, but in the old age group for New Englands
- Cut off times are similar to Age Groups, but there is an opportunity for kids with birthdays between December-February
- This is a really wonderfully fun meet. The Harvard Pool is inspirational and a trip to Boston can be a wonderful reward for a good season.



A word about Y-National Championships

- YMCA event
- Not age restricted, but in practice, only the Senior swimmers qualify
- We have had one swimmer qualify for this meet the last few seasons.
- Parents of younger swimmers are likely to hear talk about this meet, but it does not have any real impact on the younger swimmers other than....
- We are all very proud to have VSY swimmers who have achieved this level

USS Swimming: The Facts



- Available to all USS members
- Find lots of information about USS meets at ctswim.org
- USS does not include an 8/U age group; younger swimmers have to compete against the 9 and 10 year olds
- Many Y clubs (such as Wilton, Westport, New Canaan and Greenwich) swim USS also, but not all Y clubs swim USS
- USS championships are:
 - Regional Championships
 - Age Group Championships
 - Senior Championships
 - Eastern Zone Championships
- These championship meets require that you qualify by swimming a particular time, often referred to as 'cuts'
- Exception: there are some events at Regionals that do not have qualifying times.

USS Championships Qualification

- USS protects their 'brand' with strict rules as to the conditions for a qualifying time
- There needs to be a certain number of officials to ensure that their database is not diluted with erroneous times
- Only times achieved at USS meets will be eligible for qualification for USS championships (**not Y events**)
- Our club plans to host their first Age group Qualifier in November
- These meets are sometimes denoted Age Group Qualifier on Ctswim.org

S10-15	BRS	10/30/2010	10/31/2010	Age Group Qualifier
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USS Swimming: The Pro's

- Swimming USS meets introduces a swimmer to a host of competitive opportunities
- Swimming in USS meets gains eligibility for USS Championship meets
- Times achieved in USS meets are posted in the *FAST* database at www.ctswim.org. You can do all sorts of queries against this database to track your performance against other swimmers state-wide

Address  <http://www.ctswim.org/>



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USS Swimming: The Con's

- USS meets tend to be big and crowded and can be intimidating to new swimmers; you should go, but go prepared
 - In light of the criteria imposed on these meets to be Age Group Qualifiers, there are lots of referees, and you will be disqualified if you swim illegally
 - 8/U should understand that they are swimming against older swimmers
-
- FAQ: What is being disqualified ? The referee will note that the athlete performed a stroke illegally. The final times will note that the athlete was disqualified. Usually, the coach or referee will make an effort to explain it to the athlete. There is no dishonor associated with it, but it can be disappointing.

USS Championships: Regional Championships

- End of February
- Each club is assigned to one of four venues
- This meet has minimum and maximum qualifying times
- There are no qualifying times for 50Y events for <13 yo
- Not only do you have to go fast to get in, but if your time is fast enough to qualify for Age Groups, you may not swim that event in this meet.
- For this reason, this meet is often referred to as the 'Last Chance to Qualify for Age Groups'
- If you win your event, you get a pretty blue swim cap that can make your swimmer very proud

USS Championships: Age Group Championships

- March, at Wesleyan University
- This is essentially our State Championship
- Qualifying for this meet should be a long term goal for new swimmers, although we usually have one or two young swimmers that qualify
- In 2012, 12 team members qualified for Age Group Championships



USS Championships: Senior Championships

- February, at Wesleyan University
- This meet is not separated into age groups; all qualifiers are ranked against each other, independent of age
- For the most part, qualifiers tend to be the older swimmers, because the qualifying times are fairly competitive
- In 2012, five team members qualified for Senior Championships

What are zones ?

- The highest age-group qualifying meet
- Follow Age Groups Championships by about two weeks
- Short Course usually in Rochester
- Long Course Pennsylvania or Maryland
- Zones have cuts similar to the AA USA times
- Athletes who have qualified for Zones become a member of the Connecticut Zone team for that event
- Athletes travel with and are coached by the Connecticut Zone Team, so no VSY team participation is required
- Kids will tell you that they 'give' you a cool new swim bag, two swimsuits and other gear
- It is not 'given'; it costs several hundred dollars to participate in Zones
- Short Course: you must make the cut, and moreover, they only take the top 3 times (top 2 times for older age groups)
- Long Course: you must make the cut in more than one event; they do not take athletes qualified in only one event
- Marlins have occasionally qualified one or two athletes for this event

What to expect in your first meets

As with any new sport, there will be mistakes:

- Disqualification
- Goggles come off
- Swim the wrong stroke
- Swim the wrong distance

The Good News

- You will definitely swim a best time
- You will definitely have a lot of fun with your friends
- Particularly if you remember to congratulate the swimmer in the next lane, you will get to meet other swimmers from around the state
- Your time will be posted on the *FAST* database if you swim in a USS meet

Younger swimmers

- Younger swimmers may not understand how 1 event has several heats
- Younger swimmers may perceive a performance inferior where their finish order in the heat is lower (4) than a previous performance (2)
- It is worthwhile to explain that comparing times is a more reliable way to evaluate a performance
- Many meets will hand out trinkets to heat winners, which can be fun for the kids, but also puts undue emphasis on heat winning, which has a significant component of luck
- You can illustrate this by showing them the results from the entire event



How should my swimmer get started ?

Learn to swim legally

The most important goal for the first season should be to learn to execute the four strokes correctly so that you will not be disqualified.

Make friends and have fun

Making friends and having fun is the first step to becoming a dedicated swimmer. If your swimmer looks forward to practice and meets, the rest will come naturally

Sportsmanship

Many of our swimmers are young athletes, who do not yet know how to handle victory or defeat gracefully. Coaches and parents should work together to educate swimmers on what words are supportive in a competitive environment

How should my swimmer get started ?

Qualify For Regional Championships

- **Low Hanging Fruit:** There is no time standard for any of the 50Y events (Fly, Back, Breast or Free) for Regional Championships
- All new swimmers should try to swim all four events, for a quick, easy qualification; with the caveat that you should ensure that you can swim the strokes legally
- Watch out for the dreaded Fly, and the backstroke turn
- Swimming all four events will start to give you an idea of what events you like most.



Tracking Times on VSY Marlins

- All times swum by Marlins athletes will be posted on vsymarlins.org
- All championship cut times mentioned here:
 - Y New Englands
 - Age Group Championships
 - Senior Championships
 - Zones
 - Y Nationalsare also posted on vsymarlins.org, as well as our team records
- By going into the space marked 'My Account>My Meet Results' you can run a query comparing your athlete's times with any of the cuts
- The VSY Marlins website functionality is also available at meets through the Parent On Deck Application

Tracking Times at meets

For more interesting spectating, invest the time to build a simple cheat sheet to help you appreciate your swimmers performance.

The seed times, provided at the meet, are not always your most recent times

Noting also the date when a best time was set can help evaluate whether the expectation of a 'best time' is realistic. If the best time was set last weekend, perhaps it is not realistic to expect a new best time for a few weeks.

Once you build the sheet, it will only take a few minutes to update it and print it the night before you plan to attend a meet.

Even easier, consider downloading a free app called meetmobile, supported by Active.com.

Event		Time	Date	Power Points	Age Group	Zones		Time	Date	Power Points	Age Group
50Y	Freestyle	28.03	2/6/2011		25.74			39.25	2/26/2011		31.99
100Y	Freestyle	1:02.23	2/5/2011		55.99			1:27.32	12/11/2010		1:12.49
200Y	Freestyle	2:13.46	2/27/2011		2:03.24						2:38.99
25Y	Backstroke	22.78	1/14/2007		na			22.25	1/18/2009		21.00
50Y	Backstroke	33.88	12/18/2010		na			43.55	2/13/2011		38.49
100Y	Backstroke	1:10.75	2/13/2011		1:05.49			01:34.4	2/6/2011		1:23.49
25Y	Breaststroke	25.00	1/14/2007		na			22.41	2/13/2009		na
50Y	Breaststroke	32.07	2/6/2011		na			46	2/26/2011		44.99
100Y	Breaststroke	1:12.00	12/18/2010		1:13.99			1:45.67	2/5/2011		1:37.99
200Y	Breaststroke	2:42.37	1/8/2010		2:40.99						
25Y	Butterfly	24.57	1/14/2007		na			26.41	10/24/2009		20.30
50Y	Butterfly	36.5	1/23/2010		na			50.4	1/22/2011		37.99
100Y	Individual Medley	1:08.88	1/9/2010		na			1:35.84	2/13/2011		1:22.49
200Y	Individual Medley	2:28.02	2/25/2011		2:19.49			3:25	2/5/2011		3:04.49

How do I get one of those blue and yellow jackets ?

- Athletes finishing in the top 16 in the *FAST* database of any event at the end of either Long Course and Short Course seasons have the option to purchase the jacket for about \$80.
- Must be listed in top 16 in *FAST* database
- Finishing in top 16 at Age Group Championships is usually not adequate, as the database includes swimmers who may not be competing in that event at Age Group Championships
- Announcements come from CT Swimming in November
- Also includes invitation to a State-wide banquet at Aqua-Turf



A word about Parent Volunteerism

Timing

- When our team participates in a meet, the team has an obligation to provide volunteer parent timers (**for meets at VSY and at other facilities**)
- The number of timers depends upon the number of swimmers we have in the meet
- The meet cannot start until all of the timers have been identified
- Timing is not scary:
 - Only skill required is to operate a stopwatch
 - If you screw it up, it is OK because there are multiple backups (the real time is recorded electronically)
 - It provides an opportunity to participate in the meet up close

Home meets

- As the host team, we have the added responsibility to set up and manage:
 - Colorado timing system
 - Concession stand
- For larger USS meets the list of responsibilities grows larger (parking, logistics, heat sheets, etc.)

We ask that all parents volunteer to the best of their ability and help share the work associated with hosting meets

A word about Parent Volunteerism

Other opportunities to volunteer

- Organizing or lap counting at annual swimathon
- Maintaining the team bulletin board for the season
- Participating at VSY Marlins Parent Organization (VSYMPO) Board meetings
- Joining the VSYMPO board or one of the committees (social, publicity, etc.)
- Helping to plan the annual end of SC season swimming banquet
 - Food
 - Decorations
 - Venue
 - Tickets
 - Awards
 - Trophies

A word about Parent Volunteerism

Did my child join the Marlins Swim team or did I join a volunteer organization?

➤ We have found that your child's hard work in the water when paired with parent volunteer efforts and the efforts of the coaches work in synergy resulting in a better overall experience for the kids.

➤ Your input will make a difference and will be appreciated by your children and by others!

❖ **The VSY Marlins Swim Team is a unique group within the VSY bonded by the shared interest of competitive swimming and growth of the children**

Welcome !

Helpful links

Below please find some links to websites we discussed:

www.vsymarlins.org registration forms can be found under the tab News

www.ctswim.org go here for meet announcements and the swim results database

www.Metroswimshop.com online swim gear

www.swimoutlet.com more online swim gear

www.swim2000.com even more swim gear

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/vsymarlins> like the Marlins on Facebook !

Swimming Vocabulary

- Cuts: a time that must be achieved in order to qualify for an event
- Aging Up: achieving a birthday which causes you to swim in a new age group
- Walls: refers to pushing off the wall coming out of a turn
- Streamline: a linear position most advantageous when coming out of a turn or after diving in
- Circle seeding: arranging the athletes across the heats of an event such that the fastest swimmers are distributed evenly across all heats
- Pullout: one pull and one kick taken after the dive and after the turn underwater in breaststroke
- Breakout: first few strokes after a start or turn
- Set: a group of intense intervals usually done in a stated amount of time
- Power points: Points assigned on the USS website to a certain performance based on age, gender, stroke, distance and time. Power points make it possible to compare between performances of differing strokes or distances.
- Lap: one length of the pool
- Track start: Start technique with one foot ahead of the other
- Grab start: Start technique with both feet at the front edge of the block

Swimming Vocabulary

- Aquablade: a 'technical suit' made of special fabric that is thought to increase speed. Moderately expensive
- Fastskin: a 'technical suit' as above, but more expensive
- Dry-Land: training done out of the pool typically consisting of weights and body circuits; generally limited to the more mature swimmers