

The Outdoor Pool: Friend or Foe?

By Julia



Summer in Minnesota is fleeting, and most residents leave their homes to enjoy the warmer weather.

For swimmers, it means one thing: outdoor meets. We live and breathe and practice for the two or three weekends a year when we get to race outside in the sunshine, instead of being stuck inside.

So, we took a look at the good and bad things regarding about outdoor meets:

The Good

Tanning. If there is just one thing that's great about swimming outside, it's the opportunity to get a nice tan. (Unless you're me, then you get a fantastic sunburn). *Don't let your coach catch you, it takes all the fun out of it!*

Waterslides. I haven't been to an outdoor pool in Minnesota yet that doesn't have at least one water slide. And, if you're nice, there's usually a very pleasant pool manager that will let you go down them when the meet is over.

Popsicles. Outdoor meets get **hot**, and the one thing that can beat the heat is a nice popsicle. Try to find one of those at an indoor meet!
Oh wait—you can't.

The Not-so-Good

Rain. Horrible, awful, pouring-down rain with dark skies that—unfortunately—are not accompanied by lightning and thunder. Since it's just a shower, there is no thirty minute delay, which means you have to swim in the rain. There isn't much worse than swimming underneath pouring skies, weighing you down with each drop of rain. At such a time, avoid backstroke at all costs: rain in your mouth as you swim isn't very desirable.

No cool down pool. We all dread cool down—until it's not available. A nice five-minute easy swim is far preferable to the unbearable burning in your legs that accompanies a lack of cooling down.

Tiny blocks. I haven't met an outdoor pool yet that has normal-sized blocks. Unless you're under five feet tall, there's a very slim chance that you are going to be able to cram

The Good	The Not-so-Good
<p>Storms. One strike of lightning, and the meet is delayed thirty minutes. What a <u>great</u> way to get out of that 800 free you were supposed to do today! Plus, you get to sit in the car or under a tent and watch movies until the all-clear. What's better?</p> <p>Warm pools. Every swimmer dreads the initial jump into the freezing cold abyss that is the indoor pool. Outdoor pools are usually warmer, since they are mostly used for recreational swimmers who also do not enjoy the cold of indoor pools.</p> <p>Seeing your shadow on the bottom. I <i>love</i> being able to see my shadow on the bottom of the pool. It makes me feel like an Olympian when I am able to watch myself swim! Maybe not everyone enjoys it, but I think it's pretty cool.</p>	<p>yourself on top of thirteen inches of slippery plastic.</p> <p>Backstroke. As a backstroker, outdoor pools are my worst nightmare. Between the blinding glare of the sun and the inability to swim in a straight line in the middle of the pool, outdoor backstroke is miserable.</p> <p>Super shallow. Just about every outdoor pool in the universe is crazy shallow. Three feet at the shallow end and five feet in the deep end. I've scraped my nose and my back on the bottom so many times in outdoor pools, I've lost track. Word to the wise; stay close to the surface on dives and turns!</p> <p>Wind. Not only is it cold when you're in the pool, it's destructive. The flags flip up, tents fly over the fence... It is not in any way conducive to fast swimming. Tie down your tents and anything else of remote importance. The wind does not discriminate.</p>

Of course, there's good and bad in everything, but in this case, I think the positive aspects of outdoor swimming far outweigh the negatives. So, with this in mind...

Enjoy the last few weeks of your summer season, Minnesota Swimming!