

# **YMCA OF SOUTH FLORIDA YSF BARRACUDAS PARENTS HANDBOOK**

**YMCA of South Florida  
Swim Team Locations  
Weston \* Hollywood \* Hallandale Beach \* Homestead**

*YMCA of South Florida Mission:  
To put Judeo-Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit,  
mind & body for all.*

***[www.YSFbarracudas.com](http://www.YSFbarracudas.com)***

Dear Swimmers, Parents and Friends:

The Aquatics staff wishes to **welcome** you to the competitive aquatics programs for the YMCA of South Florida.

**Our programs** are designed to accommodate the novice athlete as well as train the competitive athlete on their way to the Olympics. We adhere to the YMCA motto of “Everybody Swims, Everybody Wins” but also believe that there are athletes who need a more competitive approach to sports. We believe swimming is the greatest sports to provide an excellent healthy fitness program and teach valuable life lessons. We understand being a member of a swimming team is challenging but we also understand the challenges we face every day of our lives.

**Our goal** on the competitive side is to swim and win an Olympic Gold medal for our country. To achieve this goal is a hard road. While few achieve this goal, the path for all those who try provides and has provided swimmers the opportunity to travel, meet new and interesting people, start life long friendships, go to college (some on scholarships) and learn the value of working hard to achieve a desired goal.

To go along with the beautiful facility, we have taken great pride in the selection of the aquatics staff. We undertook a worldwide search for the best possible staff and coaches who will be able to guide the athlete to their fullest potential and still maintain the four core values of the YMCA – Caring, Honesty, Respect and Responsibility.

This package is also to inform you about the team and how you can invest in your child’s development as a parent volunteer. The anatomy of a successful swim team includes enthusiastic parent involvement. By volunteering you will be actively supporting and investing in your child’s development.

**With your help we pledge to do our best, as the YMCA, to shape and guide our swimmers into outstanding well rounded athletes and individuals.**

**AQUATICS**  
**YSF Barracudas**  
***“Everybody Swims, Everybody Wins”***

**Y - Swim – (6 – 15)**

An introduction to swimming & conditioning  
Pre Swim Team  
Learn starts and turns  
Refine all four competitive strokes  
Learn basic training skills  
Attend YMCA meets

**Sizzler Team (8 & under)**

An introduction to swimming & conditioning  
Pre Swim Team  
Learn starts and turns  
Refine all four competitive strokes  
Learn basic training skills  
Attend fun and YMCA meets

**White Team (9 – 10)**

An introduction to competitive swimming  
Refine starts and turns  
Reinforce proper technique for competitive strokes  
Increase knowledge of training skills  
Attend FGC and YMCA swim meets

**Red Team (11 – 12)**

An introduction to a more competitive team  
Reinforce and improve stroke technique  
Refine knowledge of training skills  
Introduction to dryland training  
Attend local and away meets

**Grey Team (13- 14)**

Commitment to competitive swimming  
Advanced technique and training  
Reinforce and improve stroke technique  
Introduction to cross training  
Refine dryland training  
Attend local and away swim meets

**Black Team (15 & Up)**

High commitment to competitive swimming  
Advanced technique and training  
Reinforce and improve stroke technique  
Refine cross training  
Refine dryland training  
Attend local and away swim meets

**National Team (15 & Up)**

Highest commitment to swimming on the National and International Level  
Highest level of technique and training  
Highest level of stroke technique  
Highest level of cross training  
Highest level dryland training  
Achieve Sectional times and/or near National times  
Attend local and away swim meets including YMCA Nationals

## **Mission Statement:**

The YMCA of South Florida and the YSF Barracudas Swim Team seeks to create an environment in which every participant has an opportunity to learn, grow and mature as an athlete. Sports, especially swimming, require discipline of mind and body, teamwork, a competitive spirit, and above all, a sense of commitment. We aim to foster not only a sense of competitiveness among our athletes but also values such as good sportsmanship, goal setting, responsibility, personal drive and Y Core values. This handbook will introduce you to some of the fundamentals of the Barracudas experience.

**To insure we have all your contact information (including emergency contacts) as soon as possible go to the [YSFbarracudas.com](http://YSFbarracudas.com) and fill out the parent's contact information form.**

Competitive swimming is complex sport where coaches are juggling training, biomechanics, starts, turns, and sports psychology to see the character of the young athlete enhanced. Do not be deceived into believing that success happens overnight. By committing to practice a young athlete will be challenging his or her body physically and mentally. Unless we have the support of the parents in regards to a commitment to practice and the endeavors that accompany it, you are deceiving yourself that you will gain character both physically and emotionally. We as a coaching staff are passionate about the positive things that accompany competitive swimming and the commitment to a cause. We will communicate that often on deck by urging our athletes to push themselves beyond the point of mediocrity.

We have established seven different groups at YMCA of South Florida all of which are geared to the individual's age and ability level as well as their commitment level. *Athletes are moved up in groups according to age, physical ability, maturity, and ability to meet goals established by the coaching staff. Parents are encouraged to speak to the particular coach (outside of coaching periods) if there are concerns on the rate in which their swimmer is advanced.*

We strongly believe that a **commitment** to practice and the endeavors that accompany it will determine a young athlete's success. The internally motivated athlete will bring about their greatest potential in this sport.

## **Communicating with the Coaches:**

If you need to discuss an issue with a coach, please call the office to set up an appointment. Our coaches are very busy with the swimmers during practice time and pool deck is not the best place to discuss individual comments or concerns.

## **Fees:**

The practice schedule for each level are posted on [YSFbarracudas.com](http://YSFbarracudas.com). Any changes due to weather etc. will be announced via email and on the [YSFbarracudas.com](http://YSFbarracudas.com) website, if possible. Please note each location may have different practice schedules and monthly fees.

For all locations an annual fee is charged for each swimmer in the program. This annual fee represents an annual payment to USA Swimming and to the YMCA of South Florida. All competitive aquatics fees are non-refundable and non-transferable regardless of the swimmers participation in practices and meets. The swim team is a year round program and cancellation of the swim team draft must be done in writing by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the previous month. If you choose to reinstate your participation on the swim team after 30 days you will be responsible for the fee.

## **Practice Schedule and Team Requirements:**

Practice is the only way to succeed. Parents are encouraged to have swimmers participate in **all** training sessions available. Coaches (like teachers) design practices to build on one another. Teaching of stroke drills, technique and racing skills occur at training sessions and build from one practice to the next. Just as in school, missing a practice session will mean the swimmer misses valuable lessons and an opportunity to improve.

It is very important to:

- 1. BE ON TIME FOR PRACTICE**
- 2. BE CONSISTENT WITH YOUR ATTENDANCE**
- 3. BE PREPARED FOR PRACTICE WITH PROPER EQUIPMENT AND HYDRATION (WATER/GATORADE/ETC.)**

***A minimum number of practices will be set by each coach for each level. However, as a team all swimmers must attend at least 3 workouts per week and at least 2 YMCA and/or USA Swim meets per season (short course and long course). All swim team members must attend all home swim meets.***

## ***Remember, we practice rain or shine!***

### **Required Practice Equipment:**

Each group has different requirements which may change from time to time. Please go to [YSFbarracudas.com](http://YSFbarracudas.com) or your child's coach for additional information.

### **Swimming, Nutrition and Developing an Athlete's Mentality:**

YSF Barracudas cannot see athletic prowess developed in a youngster if what we say at practice is not reinforced at home. Nutrition plays a huge role in a youngster's moods, energy levels, and athletic accomplishments. We highly encourage our swimmers to avoid those foods with nonnutritive value. One of the greatest detriments to athletic performance is the over use of processed sugars and fats. We highly discourage the use of carbonated soft drinks which lead to bloated bellies, false energy release, and a greater dependence on processed sugars and caffeine in order to feel normal. Water (which makes up 65-70% of our body) is by far the best athletic drink available. Well rounded meals of proteins, carbohydrates, fruits, vegetables, and grains are our best advice. The stomach, which takes approximately 1.5-2 hours to empty, should not be full during competition or swim practice. Plenty of water and fruit should be available throughout the competition and during swim practice. Our coaching staff will not tolerate carbonated sodas in our presence. It is up to you the parent to carry on these healthy eating habits at home. If you bring a youngster to our team in order for him or her to get physically fit and fail to compliment that with a healthy diet away from the our athletic environment, you are not providing your child with the fuels need to achieve better physical fitness.

## Competition:

**It's not all about winning:** While winning remains our team objective, the swimmer's individual improvement is the primary focus. Sportsman-like behavior is of equal importance. Respect for officials, congratulations to other competitors, encouragement to teammates, determined effort and mature attitudes are taught and expected. Swimmers are taught to set realistic but challenging goals for swim meets and to relate these goals to training effort. A meet schedule is established by the coaches with the expectation that ***swimmers will attend every meet available at their classification level.***

We ask that parents make the best effort to get their athlete to practice & the meet on time. Tardy athletes miss vital warm-up time and it takes away from the team when the coaching staff has to sacrifice the whole team because of the tardiness of the few. Support and not undue pressure from parents is what an athlete needs in order to internalize motivating forces. Some swimmers have no problem motivating themselves. Others need our (coaches & parents) help to support those positive efforts that are made between the lane lines. At the YMCA of South Florida we look towards the long-term character development of a swimmer.

As parents we all live in a time where we hear of horror stories of overly competitive parents taking away from the thrill of competition a swimmer can be a part of. The coaching staff encourages good sportsmanship within the team as well as with the competition. It is not uncommon for Barracuda swimmers to congratulate the competition or cheer on their friends from other teams. Let us not stoop to the level of some other sports and hold a high standard in regards to sportsmanship, both on the team level as well as the sport as a whole.

Many of the meets the team will attend are based on the time standard of the athlete. All new swimmers start out as "C" or beginning swimmers with no times. Swimmers then work their way up to "B", "BB", "A", "AA", "AAA", "and AAAA." There are also two "seasons" on the swim calendar.

**Short Course**, which runs from September to April and events are measured in yards (Swimmers swim the short length of the pool). **Long Course** season runs from April to August and the events are measured in meters (swimmers swim the long length of the pool). It is wise for a parent to know the general category their child is in. To find out ask a coach for a print-out of a swimmer's best times in yards and meters. Then compare with the motivational time standards list. Here is a sample of some of the meets that swimmers will participate in:

### Local Florida Gold Coast Meets

**8 & Under Sizzlers** These meets are open to swimmers 8 years of age or under on the day of the meet. No time standards are required.

**South Florida County Developmental Meets** –These all-ages meets are developmental meets, with no qualifying times necessary to compete.

**South Florida County Open Meets** – These meets are generally for swimmers participating in their first meet and are open to all swimmers of all abilities.

**Division II Championships** – This twice yearly meet is a championship meet for those swimmers who have not yet achieved a JO (Junior Olympic) qualifying time. This meet is a swimmer's opportunity to earn JO times.

**Junior Olympics** – These meets are limited to those swimmers who have earned Junior Olympic qualifying times. JO's are held twice a year, usually a week after the Division II championships.

**Championship Meets** – These meets included Senior Meets, Speedo Sectional, Junior and National meets have qualifying times in order to compete.

**YMCA Meets** - In addition Florida Gold Coast meets, we participate in YMCA meets. These meets are closed and only open to members of a YMCA.

### **Meet Entry Account:**

Meet entries are made by using the YSF Barracudas website at [YSFbarracudas.com](http://YSFbarracudas.com). Meet fees must be paid on line by credit card or bank draft. No entries will be processed without full payment.

Every Barracudas swimmer should maintain a log (manual or electronic) of his/her times for every event. Such a log allows a swimmer to set personal goals and monitor his/her progress. All swimmers are encouraged to create a "My USA Swimming Page" at the USA Swimming website at [www.usaswimming.org](http://www.usaswimming.org).

### **Meets:**

#### **What to bring to a meet...other than enthusiasm**

- Team swim suit
- Water bottle
- Team caps (2)
- Waterproof sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Hat (head protection)
- Goggles (and a spare pair)
- Towels (one per event)
- Ice chest with nutritious snacks
- Team t-shirt, sweats or parka
- Chairs
- A warm-up suit or track suit
- Games or books to pass the time
- Small amount of cash
- Umbrella/shade

**BE ADVISED THAT ALL SWIMMERS BE AT THE MEET 1/2 HOUR (8 & under) & 1 HOUR (9 & over's) PRIOR TO MEET START TIME IN ORDER TO HAVE ADEQUATE WARM-UP TIME.**

Please help us by getting to warm-up on time since we warm-up as a team, those coming late may not get adequate warm-up which will hamper optimum performance.

**Heat Sheets:** The host team will be selling Heat Sheets prior to the start of the meet. They are for you to be guided through the meet and know when your son or daughter is swimming. The coaches will let everyone know where the starting blocks are but they will not walk your athlete

to the blocks. It is the responsibility of the swimmer and/or the parent to get their child to the right lane at the right time. Swimmers, please come to your coach after your event for some quick feedback on your swims, after swimming it is very necessary for the swimmer to warm down, i.e. swimming slowly and easily until recovered for the next event. Most pools have an area designated for this purpose. We highly recommend purchasing a heat sheet, it's also a way to keep track of times and it makes a great souvenir.

**Awards:** The host team is responsible for posting results as the meet goes on and distributing awards either immediately or up to 15 days after the meet. Any awards not received at the meet will be placed in the awards box located given to coaching staff. Please read the labels on the ribbons or medals in order to prevent accidentally taking awards that are not yours.

### **After the Meet:**

The meet results will be posted on the YSFbarracudas.com website as soon as possible after the meet. Parents please remember swimmers do not necessarily improve every meet. Success in this sport can be very relative depending on congenital white twitch (speed) muscle fiber; anthropomorphic measurements (body shapes), individual bouncy factors, and internal drive...all of these things have been often referred to "talent." Talent combined with hard work and unconditional parental and coach support produces champions. Yet those who work hard and are dedicated, regardless of talent level achieve as much satisfaction from this sport as the talented individual. Talent without hard work will eventually produce an athlete who can do nothing more than sprint 50 yards of freestyle very quickly. Unfortunately that event is only 1 of 18 events for those who partake in this great sport. Please keep this in mind when praising your child for all the hard work they put into this sport.

### **Team Discipline Policy:**

The success of our team's program can be analogous to a boat being rowed by 3 persons: the coach, the swimmer, and the parent. In order for this boat to reach its destination all 3 persons need to be rowing in unison and conforming to our proven program.

Our team's discipline philosophy revolves around this principle: Coaches will not allow an individual swimmer(s) to hamper the implementation of our program on a per practice basis. Disruptive behavior that does not allow the coaches to effectively teach and train nor allow other team members to effectively learn and train will result in the following sanctions:

- 1) A verbal correction to that swimmer concerning his disruptive behavior as well as a verbal warning that if the disruptive behavior is repeated the swimmer will be told to sit out on the bench adjacent to the pool for a period of no longer than 10 minutes.
- 2) If the disruptive behavior is repeated, then a "time out" period of up to 10 minutes time will be implemented. The disciplined swimmer will not be allowed to leave the bench adjacent to the area where the group is training.
- 3) If the disciplined swimmer leaves the area, the coach will notify the pool director/lifeguard in charge that the disciplined swimmer has not abided by his/her time-out and at that time a written incidence report will be made concerning that swimmer situation. The swimmer's parent/guardian will be notified of the particular incident during the practice that caused that swimmer to be put in 'timeout' as well as that swimmer's refusal to abide by the 'time-out' policy.

4) If a swimmer is put into a time-out situation for over 3 times in a 1-week period the swimmer will be placed into a 1-week suspension period. This situation will also be both noted with the particulars of the situation accompanied by the dates of the time-out period and the reasons for the time-out period.

5) If a swimmer is placed into a 1-week suspension period and the disruptive behavior continues, that swimmer will be asked to leave the team.

## **10 Commandments for Swimming Parents**

1. Thou shall not impose thy ambitions on thy child. Remember that swimming is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Don't judge your child's progress based on the performance of other athletes and don't push them based on what you think they should be doing. The nice thing about swimming is every person can strive to do their personal best and benefit from the process of competitive swimming.
2. Thou shall be supportive no matter what. There is only one question to ask your child after a practice or a competition - "Did you have fun?" If meets and practices are not fun, your child should not be forced to participate.
3. Thou shall not coach thy child. You are involved in one of the few youth sports programs that offer professional coaching, do not undermine the professional coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to provide love and support and a safe place to return at the end of the day. Love and hug your child no matter what. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. You should not offer advice on technique or race strategy or any other area that is not yours. And above all, never pay your child for a performance. This will only serve to confuse your child concerning the reasons to strive for excellence and weaken the swimmer/coach bond.
4. Thou shall only have positive things to say at a swimming meet. If you are going to show up at a swimming meet, you should be encouraging, but never criticize your child or the coach. Both of them know when mistakes have been made. And remember "yelling at" is not the same as "cheering for".
5. Thou shall acknowledge thy child's fears. A first swimming meet, 500 free or 200 IM can be a stressful situation. It is totally appropriate for your child to be scared. Don't yell or belittle, just assure your child that the coach would not have suggested the event if your child was not ready to compete in it. Remember your job is to love and support your child through all of the swimming experience.
6. Thou shall not criticize the officials. If you do not care to devote the time or do not have the desire to volunteer as an official, don't criticize those who are doing the best they can.
7. Honor thy child's coach. The bond between coach and swimmer is a special one, and one that contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize

the coach in the presence of your child; it will only serve to hurt your child's swimming.

8. Thou shall be loyal and supportive of thy team. It is not wise for parents to take their swimmers and to jump from team to team. The water isn't necessarily bluer in another team's pool. Every team has its own internal problems, even teams that build champions. Children who switch from team to team are often ostracized for a long, long time by the teammates they leave behind and are slowly received by new teammates. Often time's swimmers who do switch teams never do better than they did before they sought the bluer water.
9. Thy child shall have goals besides winning. Most successful swimmers are those who have learned to focus on the process and not the outcome. Giving an honest effort regardless of what the outcome is much more important than winning. One Olympian said, "My goal was to set a world record. Well, I did that, but someone else did it too, just a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal and I lost. Does this make me a failure? No, in fact I am very proud of that swim." What a tremendous outlook to carry on through life.
10. Thou shall not expect thy child to become an Olympian. There are 250,000 athletes in USA Swimming and we keep a record of the Top 100 all time swimming performance by age group. Only 2% of the swimmers listed in the all-time Top 100 10 & Under age group make it to the Top 100 in the 17-18 age group and of those only a small percentage will become elite level, world class athletes. There are only 52 spots available for the Olympic Team every four years. Your child's odds of becoming an Olympian are about .0002%.

### **In Conclusion:**

- We as coaches will always challenge our athletes to better themselves emotionally, physically, and socially.
- We believe this is no easy task yet we take pride and have passion for the sport of swimming.
- We look to you the parent to support our goals and mission not only at practice but at home as well.

Thank you for your support & understanding.

**Character building in young people today is no easy task. We take pride in the programs we provide at YMCA of South Florida.**