

# TEAM MANUAL



Welcome to SA! Your family has made a choice to become part of one of the finest and fastest growing swim teams in Florida. The purpose of this manual is to acquaint you with every facet of our team, as well as provide you an overview of how USA age group swimming works.

## Where Do Swimmers Start Out?

When new swimmers join the team, they are placed with the group that best fits their swimming ability. Seminole Aquatics currently has seven training groups: Age Groups One – Five and Senior Group. While we would prefer to keep swimmers of similar ages together, the groups are actually more ability-based rather than age-based. Placement within specific groups is a decision that is made by the coaching staff following a brief swim test.

## About USA Swimming



USA Swimming is the governing body of the sport of swimming in the U.S. Seminole Aquatics is a registered and sanctioned club member of Florida Swimming, one of the more than 40 associations making up USA Swimming, Inc. Through this member association, USA Swimming sanctions all events, records, etc., while providing insurance for all member teams, coaches and officials. In short, it's what separates Seminole Aquatics from the less serious, recreational swim teams and swim leagues. Because of our affiliation with USA Swimming, all swimmers must become registered athlete-members with Florida/USA Swimming in order to compete.

## Swim Training

Just like learning the strokes and turns, swimmers need to learn how to practice. As a swimmer improves, his/her coach will begin asking the athlete to work harder and give a better effort. This is the only way that swimmers can ultimately reach their potential. For kids that are new to sports, this can make them

tired and cause some discomfort and muscular soreness. While we never want a swimmer to push through pain that may indicate a serious injury, the reality of competitive swimming is that, in order to progress, the swimmer has to work beyond the “comfort zone.” In short, the harder you work, the better you get!

## Practice Do's and Don'ts

Swimmers at Seminole Aquatics need to do the following on a daily basis:

- Arrive at practice ***at least*** 10 minutes before the scheduled start time to stretch, get equipment ready, and go to the bathroom one last time. Don't get in the habit of walking onto the pool deck right when practice is supposed to be starting! This causes the training lanes to finish their warm-up set at different points, fouling up the continuity of the workout. Have respect for your coach and your teammates by making it a point to ***be in the water on time***.
- Do not get out of the water in the middle of practice, unless it's an emergency. Again, swimmers should get their training equipment ready, go to the bathroom, and have their drink at their lane when practice begins. Swimmers that get out of the water continually for minor reasons quickly develop a reputation for being poor workers.
- Look at (and listen closely to) the coach whenever the coach is giving instruction.

- Never engage in horseplay anywhere on the pool site.
- Always strive for perfect form while training.
- Always watch the pace clock and pay close attention to your sendoff time.
- Always obey the lifeguards. Swimmers that repeatedly violate pool rules will be asked to leave practice, and may be removed from the team.

During practice, we would like our swimming parents to refrain from talking to their children, unless of course, it is an urgent situation. One of the worst

things that a parent can do is to attempt to offer stroke correction or race analysis to the child. Most kids just want parents to be supportive, ***not to be their coach***. Furthermore, even the most knowledgeable and well-meaning parent can give conflicting advice to the swimmer, leading to confusion.



## Advice for Swimming Parents

Over the years, we have seen far too many promising young swimmers literally forced out of the sport by well-meaning parents that refused to realize that their own “enthusiasm” was killing their children’s love of the sport. Below are some of the behaviors that all parents should avoid if they want their children to become happy and successful swimmers.

# Ten Sure-Fire Ways to Ruin a Young Swimmer

By Seminole Aquatics Head Coach Tony Ackerson

1. Sit on the pool deck and watch your child practice every day, openly encouraging him/her to work harder.
2. Discuss swimming constantly at home, and make it clear that you expect great results at every swim meet.
3. Attempt to offer coaching suggestions to your child, as you are certain that you see things that the coaches must be missing.
4. After every race, give your child a detailed analysis of how the child could have done better. Compare your child's poor race to that of the child that won the race.
5. Get wildly excited and give material rewards for a good meet performance and then show your own disappointment the next time when your child does not swim a best time.
6. Force your child to go to practice every day, even when the child wants an occasional day off to do something fun.
7. Tell your child about your own successes as a star athlete, or those of your child's siblings.
8. At meets, follow your child everywhere on the pool deck, making certain that the child is prepared for optimum performance. Talk constantly about preparing for the next race, and go through a series of reminders of what your child must do in order to be successful. Make sure your child warms up before each race, and follow your child to the warm-down pool after each race. Don't allow your child to hang around other kids in between events, or participate in other "distractions", such as playing with friends. Treat every swim meet as though it were a business trip.
9. Get a stopwatch, and instantly rattle off your child's split times when they come over to you following a race. Know all of your child's times even better than your child does.

10. Become so involved in your child's swimming career that you feel personally successful when your child does well.

Any parent that has ever done any of the things listed above will often say that their child *liked* the parent to do these things at some point. But **inevitably, kids grow up to realize that they want their parents to love them unconditionally, but not to coach them.** Let your child be the one to initiate discussions about swimming. And, if you really want to help your child reach a "championship-level" in the sport, do the following:



1. Support your child by driving him/her to practices and meets, and by getting involved in team functions, volunteering at swim meets, etc.
2. Love your child. Be happy just spending time with your child at a swim meet. Don't be overly interested or concerned with times or results. Get just as excited about the not-so-great swims as you do with the great swims.
3. Take pleasure watching your child swim, regardless of the result or outcome of a particular race.

If parents ever want to talk to Coach Tony Ackerson (Seminole Aquatics Head Coach) or the age group coach for their child, we encourage the parents to contact the coach in question to set up a conference. Such conferences should not take place on the pool deck during practice time, however.

# Goal Setting

There are a variety of reasons that people get involved with competitive swimming: Going to swim practice is fun, swimming is great exercise, you can make new friends, etc. But at some point, there should be a focus within each swimmer on setting some personal goals. Regardless of whether the goal is simply dropping time in the next meet, qualifying for Age Group Championships, or winning an Olympic gold medal, setting goals leads to improved performance.

While we very much want to keep swimming fun, we also want to produce swimmers that maximize their talents. This can only be done through discipline, goal-setting, and a personal commitment to excellence--all of which are traits that greatly benefit people throughout their lives.



# Swim Meets

Our team averages one swim meet every month or so, which are typically held on weekends. Swimmers may choose the events that they would like to swim. On occasion, coaches will guide the kids in these decisions. All meet schedules and specific meet information will be available at [www.seminoleaquatics.org](http://www.seminoleaquatics.org). Parents simply need to complete the online registration form by the deadline.

Choosing a swimmer's first meet is always a big decision for new families. This decision should always be made together by the swimmer, coach and parents. New swimmers are often terrified of competing out of a fear that they're not good enough, only to find that they do much better than they ever thought was possible. In addition, they have a great time competing with and cheering on their SA teammates.

## THE TYPES AND PROGRESSION OF SWIM MEETS

1. **Dual Meets:** One team against another (typical of summer league teams, very informal. Perfect starter meets for beginners).
2. **Limited Meets:** Great for newer swimmers. These meets exclude swimmers who are faster than an established time standard. "B" meets and the Area 2 Championships fall into this category.
3. **Invitational and Open Meets:** Run over a one, two, or three-day period and involve several teams. Typically, no time standards are needed in order to participate.
4. **Championship Meets:** Participants must make qualifying times in order to compete. Age Group Championships, Sectionals and Senior Championships are the most common championship meets in which we participate. These meets feature preliminary swims in the morning, with finals at night. The top swimmers (ages 10 and up) from the morning events qualify to swim in the evening finals.

## AGE GROUP DIVISIONS AT MEETS

While people of all ages can attend and compete in swim meets, the competition is arranged so that swimmers of similar ages are competing against each other. Most swim meets that we attend will have the following divisions:

- ❑ 6 and Under
- ❑ 8 and Under
- ❑ 10 and Under
- ❑ 11-12
- ❑ 13-14
- ❑ 15-16
- ❑ Senior

Ribbons (and on occasion, medals) are generally awarded to the top eight finishers in each age group. In addition, some meets give out ribbons to the winners of each individual “heat.” These heat winner ribbons are a great way for all kids to feel a sense of accomplishment, particularly if they may not be one of the fastest kids on the team.

## MEET BEHAVIOR

We encourage our swimmers to wear their team apparel (t-shirts, caps, swim suits, parkas, you name it) to the meets. We’re proud of our swimmers and we also want other teams to know who we are. We also like to sit and cheer as a team. Shade cover is always a precious commodity at the spring/summer meets, so any families that have portable shade structures are encouraged to bring them.

Heat sheets are either provided online or sold by the host team for each swim meet, and they detail the heat and lane assignments for all swimmers. *It is the parent and/or swimmer’s responsibility to not miss an event.*

Coaches are usually on the side of the pool watching swimmers in the water, recording split times, or giving instructions to swimmers on upcoming events. Coaches cannot be responsible for searching a facility in an attempt to round up swimmers before each event. The swimmer needs to pay attention to the progress of the meet so that he/she can meet with the coach at least 10 minutes before the event for last minute instructions. After the event, the swimmer should immediately see the coach again for any post-race analysis and congratulations. At that point the swimmer should swim 100 to 400 yards / meters in the warm-down pool (coach’s discretion).



One more thing about behavior at meets: At Seminole Aquatics, *we stress character.* This applies to proper language, and conducting ourselves in a way that makes

our families proud to be associated with our team. We are the team that behaves respectfully during the National Anthem. We are the team that stays in the water until all of the competitors finish a race. We are the team that encourages and congratulates our opponents after races. While we want to cheer our own teammates, we never want to degrade our opponents or their teams. Great efforts, whether our own or another team’s, deserve to be applauded.

# What Is a Reasonable Timetable for Improvement?

Most kids improve fairly quickly as their strength and endurance improves. Just how fast improvement will come is determined by several factors, such as physical coordination, attentiveness to the coach, work ethic and previous swimming experience. Typically, kids will “chip away” at their best times from meet to meet, only to find out after a year or two that they have made enormous improvements in their times.

One boy joined our team in September of 2002 as an 11-year-old of average height and weight. He had some previous athletic experience as a baseball player and as a swimmer on a non-USA Swimming team, but he and his mother both saw an immediate difference in the level of training at Seminole Aquatics. He came to practice five to six times a week for 1 and ½ hours per day, and he competed about once every two months. These were his results in the 100 yard freestyle over 11 months:

| <b>DATE</b> | <b>TIME</b> |
|-------------|-------------|
| Oct, 2002   | 1:15.50     |
| Mar, 2003   | 1:10.79     |
| Aug, 2003   | 1:06.37     |

In the 200 freestyle, the results were even more impressive, dropping from a 2:33.62 the first time he swam it to a 2:11.30 just ten months later. The 2:11.3 was an Age Group Championship qualifying time. It should be noted that for the most part, these time drops followed a slow, steady progression— a second here, a half-second there, etc, etc.

This same boy ended up swimming for the Seminole High School swim team. In 2005 as a freshman, he went times of 54.0 in the 100 free and 1:54 in the 200 free, and he eventually ended up placing fourth in the Florida High School State Meet as a senior, going a school-record times of 20.81 in the 50 free and 46.38 in the 100 free; he ended his career as a swimmer for Florida State University and competing at NCAAs. While not every swimmer at SA will attain these kinds of heights in the sport, it goes to show that even the best swimmers start from humble beginnings, and that hard work can accomplish a great deal.

This is not the greatest success story on our team, but it is just a good example of a good kid that came to practice faithfully, worked hard, and listened to his coach. At Seminole Aquatics, there are many, many more stories like this one.

The one thing that all coaches learn is that there is no one formula for predicting success with kids. Every coach has a story about a “can’t miss” prospect that was dominant at age 10, only to end up quitting swimming entirely by age 12. Just as common is the story of the child with little to no apparent ability that plugs away for several years, eventually becoming a championship caliber athlete. At Seminole Aquatics, we’ve seen both types.

What we like to tell our athletes is that if you come to practice consistently with a good attitude and work hard, good things will happen. They won’t happen overnight, but they will happen.



## Meet Entry Fees and Procedures

Swim meet information is emailed to SA families two weeks in advance of the meet and posted at [www.seminoleaquatics.org](http://www.seminoleaquatics.org) for online meet entry. Most of the meets in which we participate are local (Orlando, Winter Park, Longwood, Altamonte Springs). Some championship level meets (meets that require qualifying times to attend) do require some travel, but are almost always within the state. When the meet info is posted, look it over carefully, noting the times and dates of the events that the swimmer wants to enter, as well as the warm up times and meet start times each day.

Meet entry fees are billed to members' accounts and typically range from \$20 to \$40, depending on the kind of meet and the number of events that the swimmer wants to enter. Please remember that the meet entry fees are non-refundable once the meet entry has been sent in by Seminole Aquatics. Also, our team policies preclude us from allowing swimmers to enter swim meets if their account status is not current. Our team is charged by the host team for all swimmers that enter a meet, and it is imperative that we collect all swim meet fees. We simply cannot do business under the impression that families will pay swim meet entry fees when they do not pay for their monthly training fees. Seminole Aquatics will review the entry before the file is exported to the host team. Any swimmer whose account is not up to date will be removed from the entry file.

## Team Information Website

E-mail is our team's communication lifeline. You can also sign up to receive text messages by following the directions on our website, under the NEWS tab.

## Swimming/Meet Nutrition

There is no shortage of advice available regarding the subject of how athletes should eat. Our team position is one that is held not only by most registered dietitians and sports nutritionists, but is also based on common sense:

- Good food is the equivalent of good fuel for a performance racing automobile.
- Fad diets and best-selling, quick-fix nutrition books that involve any "revolutionary" new ideas are more than likely detrimental in the long run, and should be avoided at all costs. Avoid the latest crazes.
- There is no miracle food or drink (a legal one, anyway) that enhances performance, prevents cramps, builds muscle mass, or eliminates muscular fatigue.
- The best diet for high performance athletes is one that is loaded with whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, along with healthy protein sources (lean meats, low-fat cheeses, skim milk, etc). High fat foods and simple sugars should be consumed only in moderation.
- Water is essential to performance, both in training and racing. Especially in summer, try for 6-10 glasses daily.
- At meets, staying cool and hydrated is of major importance. Eating low-sugar snacks (fruit is an excellent choice) helps aid in preventing dehydration as well.
- The words, "I'm on a diet" should never be used; rather, all athletes should commit to eating sensibly. Doing this, in conjunction with hard training will allow the body to find its own ideal training and competition weight.

# Team History

The Seminole Aquatics team was formed by Tony Ackerson in May of 2000, following the completion of the Larry A. Dale Aquatic Center, a \$1.2 million Olympic-size pool located on the campus of Seminole High School. Coach Ackerson had served as the Seminole High varsity swimming coach since 1987, and while the team had considerable success during this time (a girl's 50 free state champion, a boy's state runner-up in the 100 back, and three consecutive top-15 state team finishes), the team still lacked the age group feeder program necessary for championship-level competition.

The drive to put the pool on campus began in earnest in 1996 when Coach Ackerson and a group of committed swim team parents began meeting to develop a strategy for obtaining a pool. With the key help of City Commissioner Whitey Eckstein (who had long argued for a city pool in Sanford), things began falling into place. Along with then-Mayor Larry Dale, Eckstein orchestrated a \$500,000 commitment from the Sanford City Commission. The Seminole County Commission matched that total, while the Seminole County School Board donated the land on campus. The state-of-the-art pool was completed in January of 2000, and Coach Ackerson was named Aquatics Director for the City, becoming the manager of the new facility.

Beginning with only two swimmers on the Seminole Aquatics roster in May 2000, the club has grown substantially and has produced countless Junior Olympic and Senior State Championship qualifiers, Junior Olympic Champions, High School State Champions, All-Americans and nationally ranked Top 10 swimmers, (including two National #1 athletes), and U.S. Olympic Trials Qualifiers. The Seminole High School swim team has benefited as well, winning numerous individual and relay state titles and becoming a perennial Top-Ten team finisher.

# Training Facilities

The Dale Aquatic Center is the home venue for Seminole Aquatics team training. This 50-meter by 25-yard full Olympic-size pool was built using the same Myrtha design technology utilized in the competition pools at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia. The waveless gutter design, combined with an average depth of 8 feet makes it one of the fastest training and competition pools anywhere. Dry land training for our Senior-level swimmers takes place in the Seminole High weight room.



The fee structure at Seminole Aquatics is designed to be simple as well as affordable. The monthly cost depends on which training group is involved, as well as the number of swimmers that your family has in the program. For any questions regarding your account, contact [billing@seminoleaquatics.org](mailto:billing@seminoleaquatics.org).

### **MONTHLY FEE PAYMENT**

Seminole Aquatics only accepts online payment through our Auto Pay system. All drafts occur on the first of each month. Once you register your CC or ACH will be saved into our system. If you need to change your card type after that, you will need to sign in to your account using your email as your log in and the password that you set up during registration. If you have any problems with signing up for online payments email [billing@seminoleaquatics.org](mailto:billing@seminoleaquatics.org). If your financial situation precludes you from using Auto Pay, please communicate with us immediately by emailing [billing@seminoleaquatics.org](mailto:billing@seminoleaquatics.org). If you are planning to take a break from swimming, please email billing in advance of the month. Otherwise, you will be billed for that month.

If you will be leaving the program for more than one month, email [billing@seminoleaquatics.org](mailto:billing@seminoleaquatics.org) so that any outstanding charges can be cleared. Your account will be suspended at that time. When you plan to return, email us that you plan to return prior to the first of that month so that we can activate your Auto Pay. Due to class size restrictions, we cannot guarantee placement back on the team. Members taking more than six months off will need to re-register with SA.

## **How To Get Started: Initial Registration Process**

Any prospective swimmer can e-mail [admin@seminoleaquatics.org](mailto:admin@seminoleaquatics.org) to arrange a time to meet with a coach for a free evaluation. A staff member will then perform a brief swim test to determine the child's readiness to join a team. In general, if the child can swim one length of the pool (25 yards) without using the bottom and alternating freestyle arms, then the child can be placed in one of the training groups.

The next step is to register online at [www.seminoleaquatics.org](http://www.seminoleaquatics.org).

There are no formal attendance requirements at Seminole Aquatics. Families take vacations, people attend religious functions, and athletes will miss practice from time to time for a variety of reasons. We understand this.

Obviously, the best results in this sport are obtained when there is a serious commitment made to swimming, and regular attendance at practice is part of that commitment. Athletes that attend practice only sporadically at best are hurting their own development.

If the situation arises where an athlete's practice attendance and work habits are less than acceptable, then that athlete may be dropped from the program in order to make room for another athlete that wants to join the training group.

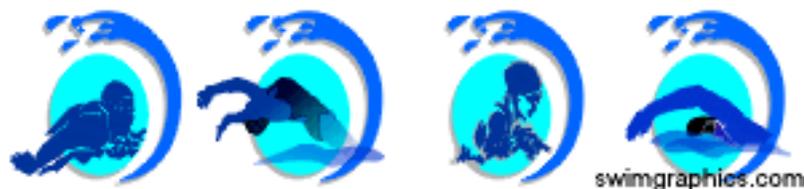


## The SA Training Groups

**Age Group One:** This group is made up of youngsters ages 5 and up that are able to swim 25 yards freestyle with alternating arms, without struggling to make the distance. They may be able to swim some backstroke, but do not have breaststroke and/or butterfly. Typically, these are children that have been through several sets of swimming lessons and have done our Summer Stingray program. Practice lasts one hour a day, three days each week. The emphasis is on building strength and stamina in the water, while introducing the four competitive strokes, racing starts, and turns in a fun environment.

**Age Group Two:** Swimmers in this group are continuing to work on their strokes. They are beginning to develop more stamina and completing 50 yards is no longer a difficult task. They will have the basic idea of butterfly and breaststroke, although the strokes will still be very rough. Age Group 2 swimmers must be able to complete 6 x 50 Free on an interval of 1:45. Swimmers in this group should be strong enough to complete practices of 1,000 yards. They continue to develop their strokes and more dives and turns are introduced. Practices last for one hour per day, four days per week.

**Age Group Three:** In this group, strokes are continuing to be developed and training sets make up a large portion of practice. These swimmers must be legal in three strokes. Age Group Three swimmers can do correct turns for all four strokes and can dive proficiently. Swimmers in this group can swim interval sets reading a pace clock and can complete a set of 10 x 50 freestyle on a send-off interval between 1:10 and 1:30. While practice continues to last for one hour per day, five days a week, swimmers are being encouraged to work harder in order to move up to the next training group.



**Age Group Four:** In this group, swimmers are already solid in the four competitive strokes and are beginning to test their physical limits. Swimmers should be able to make sets of 16 x 50 free on an interval of :60 or less, and 5 x 100 free on an interval of 2:00. Swimmers in this group can easily swim sets of 1,000 yards or more. Emphasis is on making the transition to more disciplined and demanding forms of training, while continuing to perfect technique on strokes, starts, turns, and finishes. Practice for this group lasts 90 minutes, five days per week, and yardage each session averages between 3,600 and 4,500 yards. Swimmers in this group need to be self-motivated and regularly attend practice and swim meets.

**Age Group Five:** Age Group Five is the transition group into Senior swimming and the AG5 group practices directly with the Senior swimmers. As with Group Four, the swimmers are solid in all four strokes, starts, and turns. However, the swimmers in this group possess the physical strength and endurance necessary to perform the harder sets that the Senior Group does on a daily basis (hard butterfly sets, low-rest interval repeats, etc). Swimmers in this group must be extremely serious about their swimming, as well as conscientious about their level of work. Practice lasts 90 minutes, six days per week, and the daily yardage averages between 4,000 and 4,800 yards. AG5 swimmers are required to participate in at least four swim meets a year including two of the four Seminole Aquatics' Day at the Races meets.

**Senior Group:** When an athlete is physically and mentally tough enough, the Senior Group offers a training regimen designed to provide optimal athletic performance. Weight training is added at this point, and two-a-day workouts are offered during the summer. Heavy emphasis continues to be placed on stroke, start, turn, and underwater swimming technique. The Senior Group primarily consists of high school swimmers, and afternoon training yardage typically

ranges between 5,500 and 6,500 yards, although 9,000 yard sessions in the summer months are not unheard of.

## The Summer Stingrays Team

Each June and July, Seminole Aquatics runs a “Summer League” team called the Stingrays. The goal is to bring in new swimmers, ages five and up, and introduce them to competitive swimming. We participate in a handful of meets, but they differ from USA sanctioned events in that there are no disqualifications and every child receives a ribbon in every event.

In addition to the new children that register for this two-month program, the swimmers in Age Groups One, Two, Three and Four also participate. Each child gets a Seminole Aquatics Stingrays T-shirt and a Seminole Aquatics team cap. Specific information, including online registration, dates, and times is available on our web site each spring.

Due to the size and demand of our summer program, we cannot allow switching between morning and afternoon groups. There are no prorations for lack of attendance, weather, summer vacations, etc. No refunds are given once the program has started.



## Athletes Visiting For Short-Term Training

Throughout the year, Seminole Aquatics plays host to visiting high school and college swimmers. The fee for holiday and short-term training is \$5 per practice.

## Private Lessons

At Seminole Aquatics, attention to detail is one of the keys to our athletes’ success. We are confident that our practices can offer the best training and produce the best results of any program in the state of Florida. However, there is no denying that one-on-one instruction can be very beneficial. This has become a hot topic on several area teams, in which some of their swimmers have sought outside help from private coaches. There are several problems with this.

First, these private coaches typically tout their over-inflated credentials, and charge hefty amounts for “one-on-one” practices, which they recommend anywhere from once a week to once a month. Since they have no pool, they usually “sneak” in to an area pool, often posing as a family friend or relative (they do this to avoid paying rent to the pool, then pocket the full amount for the lesson).

Second, the running joke among several top coaches is that the privately tutored swimmers usually look worse than they did before the private workouts started. This is entirely consistent

with adolescent athletes receiving conflicting advice on stroke technique from multiple authority figures.

Still, there is nothing wrong with an athlete wanting some individualized work. If you would like to schedule a private session, please consult with your child's coach to discuss times and pricing. And visit our [web site](#) for Information and Pricing.

***THANKS FOR BECOMING A PART OF  
SEMINOLE AQUATICS! ENJOY THE  
JOURNEY!***