

August 27, 2020

Dear SHS Swimming Prospective Student-Athlete, and Parents,

A LOT of information about the upcoming season is contained over the next few pages. Ordinarily, we have a Team Manual online for the SHS Swim Team, but there's been nothing "ordinary" about 2020. This letter will serve in its place. Please make sure that BOTH swimmer and parent read ALL of this closely, as there are some major changes this season.

First off, in a normal, non-COVID world, all of our swimmers, fast and slow, new and old, would all train together in the afternoons. Because of COVID, however, my primary focus is on limiting swimmer exposure as much as possible, in a way that still allows us to train at the same level of excellence that we have for some 33 years.

This season, I had to make a decision whether or not to have a team of more than 40 swimmers; due to the Coronavirus, many teams have limited their rosters to their fastest 24 to 36 swimmers only, the ones that will likely compete for them in the end-of-season District-Region-State meets (the FHSAA "State Series"). In the process, many coaches have disbanded their developmental and JV groups. Assistant Coach Brittany Hamzik and I felt strongly that we should try to do everything we could in order to accommodate as many of our swimmers as possible. To that end, I have broken our high school team into two training groups, a morning group with Coach Brittany, and an afternoon group, training with me (*If you believe that you were left off a list, please email me ASAP at swimseminole@hotmail.com*).

Decisions on who to place into what group is based on how many kids I feel can train safely in the conditions that we are presented with. In the summer club season, with swimmers coming from home, and not sharing the pool with any other teams, I could accommodate 66 athletes (a max of 3 per lane) in my Senior club group. Now, with school back in session, and the season approaching on August 31, and over 70 people expressing interest in the team, I need to trim that afternoon number down to the 40 or so swimmers that are not only the fastest, but that can also handle the workload.

While many of the morning swimmers just need more time to develop and get faster, there may be swimmers that don't get assigned to the afternoon group that actually COULD handle the workload. However, practice habits from the summer solidified my opinion about the relative "seriousness" of some swimmers. Let me explain:

As parents, you'll see your kids come home after a three-hour workout with wet hair, and you may marvel at their commitment and work ethic. On the pool deck at practice, I often see something very different---many swimmers lacking focus, arriving late, getting out early, stopping frequently during sets, constantly fiddling with suits, caps, and goggles, and not working to their potential. They are typically the kids that join the team for largely social reasons, or to list "swim team" as an activity on their college applications.

These are not bad kids; to the contrary, they're some of the nicest kids you'll ever meet. But there are several kids on the team that simply don't work very hard at this sport. And, on a fast, State-level team, when we have limited space, I can't take valuable time away from the hardest workers to ask other swimmers why they keep stopping so often. In my training group, the student-athlete must be not only highly motivated, but also *self*-motivated.

I want to make it clear that I never have asked my swimmers to do anything that I didn't do myself, as an athlete. I started very late in the sport, as an 11th grader. I started out as the newest, slowest kid on a very fast, very good high school team. I went to mandatory morning and afternoon practices, and I never had any expectations of anything; heck, I was happy just to be on the team. I worked hard, and I got better. And I'll bet that in two years of high school, and four years of college swimming, I can count the total number of times I stopped in practice on one hand—and two of those times were for broken or dislocated fingers, that I taped and continued swimming with.

Here's an important point: If an athlete in the afternoon group is underperforming, and an athlete in the morning is overachieving, I may end up switching them into different groups. This is something that you need to be prepared for, should you commit to the team. Being in the morning or afternoon group at the beginning of the season is no guarantee that you'll stay there.

No one is going to be "handed" anything on any of my teams, based on seniority, how much your parents help out, or how nice of a person you are. There are no "gifts" on this team. *The only thing that I can guarantee that you'll be "given" from me, is an opportunity.*

Here are the training groups, as of now:

AFTERNOON HIGH SCHOOL GROUP (Coach Ackerson, 2:30-4:50 pm on all weekdays except Wednesday, which will be 2-4:50 pm, beginning Monday, August 31)

Cale Tomlin	Dawson Joyce	Santiago Rocha	Jackson Haines
Bobby Newland	Jack Sumter	Ethan Antolick	Demetri Hill
Bryce Crouch	Ryan Stier	Julian Bame	Mason Haynie
Gabe Haynie	Henry Kehler	Parker Wilk	Bogdan Timofti
Jennifer Cressman	Roman Ciancimino	Logan Herrick	Mateo Friedman-Bello
Samara Metcalfe	Dayle Snively	Morgan Walker	Abby Culbertson
Cassidy Hardin	Emily Slater	Kate Brown	Stephanie Akakabota
Daphne Boos	Kelsey McMullen	Ashalia Bakhsh	Sydney Stressen-Reuter
Maddie Shea	Juliet Manikis	Morganne Young	Emily Cummings
Anneli Brugge	Elin Brugge	Olivia Ciancimino	Laura Guske
Travis Lommerse	Emily Gross		

MORNING HIGH SCHOOL GROUP (NOT club; Coach Brittany Hamzik, M-W-F mornings from 5:30 am until 6:45 am, plus Saturdays from 9-10:30 am, beginning Monday, August 31)

Bea Newland	Mercedes Newland	Noah Mojica	Laura Trujillo
Clarisse Villegas	Jamie Malloy	Sarah Padilla	Mariaangel Lozada
Aryan Akula	Henry Chen	Devin Daniels	Dillon Dorrell
Tyler Emerman	Elijah Frazier	Noah Gutch	Luke Jongsma
Liam Prepetit	Alex Rothman	Treyvon Stanley	Manny Velazquez
Ashlyn Abbott	Kalina Hancock	Lily Lenhof	Imani Kimbrew-Cross
Esther Liptai	Brylynne Myatt	Hailey Sejpal	Katie Swanson
Kiarrah Tyrell	Joel Quiles	Huy Nguyen	

ANY new swimmers/ incoming freshmen, that have been CLEARED by the SHS Athletic Department to participate in Fall sports will be in the morning group, unless Coach Brittany or Coach Ackerson approve them for the afternoon training group.

Obviously, I would prefer to have everyone train together in the afternoons, as we used to before COVID-19. But the Coronavirus has changed nearly everything that we do, and the way that we do it.

MORNING WEIGHTS (Tuesday and Thursday, 6- 6:50 am, and Saturdays from 8- 8:45 am, beginning Tuesday, Sept. 1)

Due to COVID-19, we are limiting the weight room to only the 12 swimmers, listed below (if any of these swimmers choose not to do the weights in the morning, I'll replace them with another athlete). These swimmers must wear masks and clean gloves the entire time they are in the weight room, and will work in "pods" of four, with each pod using separate pull-up bars and free weights.

GROUP ONE

Dawson-Jackson
Gabe-Mason

GROUP TWO

Stephanie-Emily S.
Olivia-Dayle

GROUP THREE

Anneli-Abby
Morgan W.-Elin

In previous years, we would have 25-30 swimmers of all abilities in the weight room. This is obviously a big departure from that. And there's no doubt that some swimmers and parents will wonder, "Why just 12? Why not 16?"

The simple answer is that I think 12 swimmers is safer than 16. And I think three pods of four swimmers, following protocols, can work safely in the weight room. And the safety of ALL of our student-athletes, and their families, is my absolute priority.

I also can understand the frustration of swimmers feeling that they can't get better if they can't "get the work in". However, please keep in mind:

1. The work we do in the weight room is purely supplemental, and accounts for possibly 5% or less of our total, season-end results, in my opinion.

2. We primarily focus on pull-ups, bench press, jump squats, and abdominal work.
3. These exercises can be replicated at home, or at any fitness club (you can get memberships at some clubs for as little as \$10 a month).
4. Any of the non-club, afternoon swimmers are welcome to train with Coach Brittany in her morning group as well, at no charge. However, I will still be training the SR club group separately in the mornings. More about that . . .

COACH BRITTANY'S MORNING SWIM GROUP vs SENIOR CLUB TEAM MORNING SWIM?

Here's the difference between the two:

Coach Brittany's morning swim group on M-W-F is for the high school swimmers that aren't able to be in the afternoon group, due to a lack of speed, endurance, or work ethic. She will also have practice for these swimmers on Saturdays from 9 until 10:30 am. There is no fee, other than the \$30 SHS Team Support donation that we ask of all of our families. There is **NO NEED TO SIGN UP FOR ANYTHING**. If a swimmer has been assigned to the morning high school training group, and is cleared to practice, he/she simply shows up.

The Seminole Aquatics Senior Group for Sept-Oct-Nov is a three-month training group with me (Coach Ackerson) that also practices at the same times on M-W-F mornings (5:30 am until 6:45 am). I'll work exclusively with the club swimmers in that group while Coach Brittany works with the high school morning group. The swimmers in the SR morning Group will also practice on Saturday mornings from 9-10:30 am. The cost for this group, as it is club swimming, is \$60 a month, and participation is limited to the fastest swimmers. Current club swimmers wishing to do the SR Group morning practices with Coach Ackerson should email billing@seminoleaquatics.org to notify the club that they wish to participate in the mornings.

ATHLETIC CLEARANCE: Before you come to any high school practice, beginning on August 31, you must show up as having been **CLEARED** to participate. For more info about physicals and clearance, click [HERE](#). *Please do not contact me*; if you have additional questions, you need to contact Amanda Hicks at 407-320-5057. Don't assume that because you got a physical a couple of weeks ago, you're somehow "cleared" to participate.

REMINDE TEXT GROUPS: Please join for information regarding the team. Parents will have a separate text group:

Athletes: Text the message @noleswim to 81010 (if parents join the athlete group, I'll delete them, as we have limited space in this group).

Parents: Text the message @268kfee to 81010.

COMPETING THIS SEASON: As I said in a previous letter, the likelihood is that not everyone will be able to swim in official high school competitions this year, due to COVID-19. For some of our swimmers, their connection to the team may simply be training three mornings and one Saturday a week and working toward an opportunity.

TIME TRIALS FOR COACH BRITTANY'S GROUP: Coach Brittany is planning on running a couple of time trials for her group. These won't be official meets, but they will allow swimmers to gauge their progress.

CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON/ STATE SERIES: In previous years, the season works like this: We have dual or tri meets (team vs team), then in October we have our championship meets. First, the Conference meet, which has no bearing on advancing into the later meets. Then, in late October, we traditionally have the FHSAA State Series, a three-week period of consecutive District, Regional, and State championship events. We put our strongest lineup into the District, and then only the fastest performers qualify to advance to the Regional, and ultimately, the State Meet.

Obviously, with COVID, we don't know for certain how all of this plays out this year.

In terms of our District lineup, with limitations of four entries per event, and a max of two individual events per swimmer, you don't need to be a mathematician to realize that only 28-34 of our swimmers will be competing in that meet. So, even in the afternoon group, there are going to be as many as one-fourth of that group that will not get a District swim. Such is life on a fast team, and I want to make sure that everyone understands what they're getting themselves into.

Again, seniority plays no role. We will put our best lineup together for championship meets.

The fastest kids on our team have worked the hardest, and the longest, to get there. It isn't easy, and it doesn't happen overnight. The fastest kids on our teams have done the early mornings, the cold winters, the hot summers, the rainy seasons, the long hours of training, and they didn't take long, extended breaks. They didn't just decide two months ago to suddenly start working hard. Several went from being some of the worst swimmers I've ever seen, to becoming some of the best I've ever had, simply by working their brains out. I've got a ton of All-America plaques in our office wall containing the names of kids that were some of the *least* talented kids you'll ever see.

SHOWERING/ DRESSING FOR SCHOOL: There's no easy way around this--- due to COVID, our bathroom showers have been closed, and the bathrooms are limited to four people at a time in the morning for changing. Here are the alternatives for our morning swimmers:

1. There is an outdoor shower that can be used for washing hair and rinsing off, one person at a time.
2. There is also a hose on the pool deck that can be used to rinse off.

For swimmers going directly home from morning swim, there's no need to shower off or wash hair on site.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR THE TEAM: A one-piece, competition-style swimsuit, preferably black in color, is preferred for dual meets. Buy these anywhere you can get a good price. Good

goggles are a must as well, stick with name brands, like Speedo, TYR, or Arena. If backpack space is an issue, you might consider a chamois instead of a big towel. *There is no need for a large swim equipment bag.* Pack a large trash bag in your backpack each day to protect your things at the pool in the event of rain. Finally, purchase over-the-counter ear drops to prevent Swimmer's Ear, and use them after each swimming session.

Where Do Athletes Leave Equipment? With COVID-19 protocols, no personal equipment can be left at the pool. Wear your mask into the facility every day. When you walk in, socially distancing the entire time, place your personal items on a chair or taped mark on the bleachers, or by one of the colored cones. Neither the pool nor SHS is responsible for any loss or theft that takes place at the pool. Again, bring a plastic garbage bag in your backpack each day to put around your bag in case it rains; storing all of the backpacks/ swim bags close together under shelter defeats the whole purpose of social distancing. AND, **DO NOT EVER LEAVE ANYTHING IN THE BATHROOMS OR POOL BREEZEWAY!**

Team Equipment Order: We will do a team order for a team suit, team t-shirts, team swim caps, and other optional team apparel as soon as we have our final roster determined. All team members must purchase a team t-shirt (approx. \$15). Team warm-ups, hoodies, sweatshirts, and bags will also be available for purchase, but these are not required items. More info will come out regarding this via the Remind text system.

Parent Meeting: There will be a Zoom call scheduled, please stay tuned to Remind.

Fundraising and Team Support: As our sport is 100% responsible for covering our own expenses, we have instituted a Team Support donation request of \$30 per family this season (it's usually \$40-50). We do this in lieu of the conventional route of online solicitations, candy sales, car washes, and assorted other team fundraising projects that might put our swimmers at risk. We would kindly ask that all families participate in this and support our team. There will be a line item on the Team Apparel order and can be included with your check for team apparel.

Personal Behavior Expectations of Our Student-Athletes

Tobacco, Alcohol, Illegal Drugs, Vaping: All of these can negatively impact a swimmer's performance. There is no debate. Physical and/or psychological addiction, in any form, is a bad thing. It can, and will, affect not only the swimmer and his/her performance, but that of the team as well. So, to put it simply, if these things are part of your lifestyle, stop. We value our student-athletes, and we want to work with individuals that want to maximize their abilities and help contribute to our team. If you choose not to stop, get away from our team. We have big plans. Most importantly, if you CAN'T stop, please get help. Coach Ackerson can provide you with contacts if you have a problem.

"Deck Changing": This practice of changing clothes on the pool deck, with only a towel around the waist, is against most pool facility rules, including ours.

Profanity/Crude Behavior: The way that you conduct yourself as a member of this team makes a huge statement about not only you, but about your team and your school. This extends to the pool, the pool deck, the locker rooms, and even the pool parking lot. Always remember that the young kids in the age group program at Seminole Aquatics look up to you. YOU are their heroes.

Parking Lot: Caution is to be taken at all times while driving on campus, particularly near the pool parking lot, as children arrive each afternoon for their Seminole Aquatics practice. If the coaches or lifeguards observe fast or careless driving, you will be prohibited from parking near the pool, and your parents will be notified.

Keep Our Facility Clean: Throw away disposable water bottles each day and take pride in our facility. This is your team's HOME. Let's act like it.

I'm looking forward to this season more than any other. There are so many obstacles this year, but that is exactly when we are at our very best. Thanks in advance for working with me, and for supporting our program.

Tony Ackerson

Head Swimming Coach, Seminole High School

swimseminole@hotmail.com