



STREAMLINE



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April 2006

www.swimaqua.org
Hotline 281-488-1582

AQUASTAR
Houston, TX 77062

Turning today's potential into tomorrow's performance!

AQUASTAR

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Meet Entries
Amy Castro

Head Coach
Harold
Johnston

NEXT BOARD MEETING

Annual
Membership
Meeting!

Tuesday,
APRIL 11

8:30 pm

Gloria Dei
Church,
Nassau Bay

**ALL PARENTS
INVITED AND
ENCOURAGED
TO ATTEND!**

Long-Course Season is Here

First Meet, U of H, April 21-23

OPEN TO ALL SWIMMERS!

Entry Deadline April 8!

The U of H is a great meet to attend to kick-off the long-course season. Although swimmers aren't required to enter meets, AQUASTAR is a "competitive" swim team and there are many benefits of entering meets. Most importantly, meets allow coaches to evaluate swimmer progress and they allow swimmers see the results of their hard work at practice. Not sure what events to enter? Just ask your coach!

TOP FIVE REASONS ALL AQUASTARS SHOULD ATTEND THE U OF H MEET:

1. It is an open meet- everyone qualifies to attend regardless of their times or whether they've ever swum in a USA swimming meet.
2. It completes a meet requirement for Blue and above swimmers.
3. It allows swimmers with NT (no time) to earn times. Swimmers cannot swim an event at one of the end-of-season champ meets if they do not have a time in that event.
4. Most families will only have to stay half the day; 13 & ups swim in the a.m. session and 12 & unders swim in the p.m. session.
5. And finally: Because our coaches, families and friends want to see what our swimmers can do!

See the AQUASTAR website for links to the meet invitation and entry form. If you have questions about meet entry, contact Amy Castro at Amy_Castro@ictstexas.com.

Don't know what "long course" means? Have no idea how to enter a meet or what to do when you get there? See the "Meet Supplement" beginning on page 3 of this newsletter.

Plan to Attend Annual Membership Meeting!

Our annual membership meeting will be April 11 at 8:30 p.m., at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church. This meeting is a great opportunity to have a say in the direction of the team by voting for next-year's board members. If a quorum of members is obtained, parents will also have the opportunity to participate in a Q & A session with the board.



AQUASTARS EXCEL AT TAGS

The team contingent, pictured with Coach Harold, earned 196 points, the most in team history. They finished 10th in the state in overall point standings.

Watch Practice Calendar for Seasonal Schedule Changes

Each year during long-course season our practice schedule changes. Practice begins again at the Strawberry pool this week. Also, we temporarily lose the La Porte pool during the summer-league season as the La Porte Dogfish summer league team use the pool. Finally, the Pearland pool will be added to the schedule when weather allows. **Be sure to watch the practice calendar closely in April and May for schedule changes or call the Practice Hotline at 281-488-1582.**

April Birthdays



Be sure to wish each of these AQUASTAR swimmers a HAPPY BIRTHDAY this month!

Jennifer Cunningham, **4/2**
 Cameron Dyer, **4/2**
 Ryan Swaney, **4/2**
 Pete Dunn, **4/3**
 Cassie Nagle, **4/5**
 Ashley Gao, **4/6**
 Cole Cragin, **4/7**
 Matthew McDugle, **4/7**
 Morgan McDugle, **4/7**
 Kaitlin Kirasich, **4/9**
 Nika Cranmer, **4/12**
 Jaryd Robinson, **4/12**
 Julia Marr, **4/14**
 Cassandra Hinshaw, **4/15**
 Matthew Chapa, **4/17**
 Maria Castaneda, **4/18**
 Sharon Chu, **4/19**
 Morgan Ehmling, **4/21**
 Travis Roof, **4/25**
 Stanley Sun, **4/25**
 Dennis Wang, **4/28**
 Michael Cragin, **4/29**
 Sarah Cragin, **4/29**

Training Group Promotions

The following swimmers qualified for promotion to the next higher training group based on their performance at end-of-season meets.

From White to Blue: Luke Romanko

From Gold to Senior: Will Stephens

"In Your Lane"



Name: Nancy Chan

Age: 14

School: Clear Lake HS

Swim Facts: 6 years with STAR/Aquastar. Swims and plays water polo for CLHS.

Practice Group: Blue

Favorite Stroke: Backstroke

Least Favorite Stroke: Breaststroke

Favorite Part of Practice: Kicking

Least Favorite Part of Practice: Sprinting or Endurance Sets

Hobbies & Interests: Plays piano and flute

Other: Her best friend is Wendy Tsai



Name: Amy Chan

Age: 12

School: Space Center Intermediate

Swim Facts: 5+ years with STAR/Aquastar

Practice Group: Blue

Favorite Stroke: Butterfly

Least Favorite Stroke: Breaststroke

Favorite Part of Practice: Practicing Flip turns

Least Favorite Part of Practice: Starts

Hobbies & Interests: Playing piano and harp

Other: She has two extremely hyper hamsters

AQUASTAR MEET INFORMATION SUPPLEMENT

Understanding Meet Lingo Key to Choosing Meets for Your Swimmer *"Short Course?," "Long Course?," "14 & Under A?," "BB & Under?," What does it mean?*

With long course beginning, many families who are newer to year-round swimming are confused about the terminology associated with year-round meets. Below is a "short course" on translating meet language into everyday speak.

SEASONS

The swimming year has two seasons, short course and long course. The short course season is swum in 25-yard indoor pools and generally runs from September through March. The long course season runs from April through July and competes in 50-meter pools, most of which are located outdoors. AQUASTAR participates in a minimum of one meet a month. Information is available at practices and on the website, and meets are posted on the monthly practice calendar.

TYPES OF MEETS

Open Meets — unclassified meets open to all currently-registered USA Swimming members, regardless of the time standard that he/she has or has not met. These meets are great places for novice swimmers to establish qualifying times.

Some open meets may be restricted to certain age brackets. For example, the first meet of this year's short course is a 10 & Under Open. This meet is open to any swimmer who is 10 or younger as of the time of the meet. Most invitations will indicate the birthday cutoff as of the first day of the meet. For example, a meet scheduled for October 1-2, would probably indicate that the swimmer must be 10 or younger on October 1.

Additionally, some meets restrict entries based on their swim times. All swimmers entering the water for the first time are classified as "C" swimmers. As they swim events and achieve faster times, their times are categorized using USA Swimming's "Age Group Championship Based Standards." The time standards are on the Gulf Swimming website under the "Time Standards" link on the left of the page. From slowest to fastest they are: B, BB, A, AA, AAA, AAAA and so on.

Classified Meets – meets that restrict swimmers based on swim times. Classified meets are generally grouped as follows:

BB and Under — the swimmer's qualifying times must be slower than A times in the event entered.

A and Up — the swimmer's qualifying time must be at least as fast as an A time in the event entered.

Qualifying Meets — have their own time standards. The invitation for the meet will have qualifying times, cut-off times or both identified.

Qualifying Times — the minimum/slowest allowable time swum for the event.

Cut-Off Times — the maximum/fastest allowable time swum for the event.

In addition to the basic designation concerning which swimmers can attend, there are often additional entry qualifications listed on the meet invitation that are important to note, as they can often increase the number of events a swimmer can swim at a particular meet. See the "Meet Entry Terminology" section below for more information.

Meet Type Examples:

10 & Under Open: This meet title indicates that swimmers of all abilities may enter with any times as long as the swimmers are 10 years old or younger as of the deadline indicated in the meet invitation. The age cutoff deadline is generally as of the first day of the meet. These meets are also generally open to swimmers with “NT,” or No Time, meaning a swimmer has not swum that event at a USA Swimming meet.

BB & Under Meet: This meet, when no age limit is indicated, is open to any swimmer with times no faster than the BB times listed in the USA Swimming “Age Group Championship Based Standards.” These meets are also generally open to swimmers with “NT,” or No Time, meaning a swimmer has not swum that event at a USA Swimming meet.

14 & Under A Meet: This meet title indicates that swimmers participating would be 14 or younger and have at least “A” times in the events they’ll be swimming. The designation of A, BB, B, is based on USA Swimming “Age Group Championship Based Standards.” The time standards are posted on the Gulf Swimming website under the “Time Standards” link on the left of the page. There are also links to the time standards on the home page of our website, www.swimaqua.org. There are exceptions to the time standards for some meets however, as an “Up/Down” rule often applies. More information on additional rules follows.

THE ANNUAL MEET SCHEDULE

Every year, Gulf Swimming gives its associated teams the opportunity to bid to host a meet in the upcoming season. By spring, the Gulf Swimming schedule is set for the following Short and Long Course season. Because there are so many teams and swimmers in the Gulf region, certain teams are “invited” to attend certain meets in the area.

Approximately four weeks before a meet entry deadline, the invitation is posted and available on the Gulf Swimming website. AQUASTAR will post links to the meet invitations for those meets we are eligible to participate on our website approximately 3 weeks before the meet entry deadline. About two weeks before the meet deadline, a link to an online meet entry form is posted along with a team deadline date.

It is important for parents to note that AQUASTAR’s deadline will be earlier than the entry deadline noted in the meet invitations in order to allow our volunteer meet entry chairperson Amy Castro to collect all meet entries and fees and submit them as a group to the hosting team.

**MEET INVITATIONS**

At least three weeks prior to a swim meet, Gulf Swimming will post meet invitations on its web site, www.gulfswimming.org. When the invitation is available, a link to the invitation as well as an entry form will be posted on the AQUASTAR website. The date, location, time, and order of events are included on the invitation. Seasonal USA Swimming meets are usually held over a two- or three-day weekend. Championship meets may be even longer. The swimmer chooses the days and events within the invitation limitations. Male events are listed with even numbers, while female events have odd numbers. Swimmers should consult their coaches regarding meet and event selections.

THE MEET ENTRY PROCESS

Once the links to the meet invitation and entry form are available, parents and swimmers should discuss which meets they're interested and eligible to swim. Generally, there will be no more than two meets a month that a particular swimmer will be eligible for due to the structure of individual meets. To keep competition fair and to limit the number of swimmers at a particular meet, meets are generally structured with either an age limit, USA official time limit, or both.

The information below will briefly explain the meet titles and terminology. However, every meet has the potential to be different; therefore, it is important that parents thoroughly review a meet invitation before entering a swimmer for a particular meet.

There are generally two ways to enter a meet, either in advance through the team, or by entering "On Deck" for those meets that allow on-deck entry.

Entering in Advance – To enter in advance through the team, click the "Meet Entry Form" link for the meet you wish to enter. The forms are very easy to use and are automatically emailed to Amy Castro for processing. Complete all information on the form, including the complete description of the events entering, for example, "Event #11, 10 & U girls 50 free."

Again unlike summer league, swimmers pay individual entry fees for each event in which they enter. Note that the per-event cost listed in the meet invitation is not what you will pay, however; AQUASTAR adds 25 cents per event to cover administrative costs. For example, if the meet invitation you download indicates that the entry fee per event is \$3.50, our online meet entry form will calculate your amount owed as \$3.75 per event

In addition to entering using the online system, you can enter using a paper-copy meet entry form, which you can get from the parent-on-deck at your practice pool. You can complete the form and mail it along with payment for entry fees to AQUASTAR or you can give both form and payment to the parent-on-deck at your practice pool.

Entering "On Deck" – If you are unsure about whether you will be able to attend a meet, most meets offer the option to enter "On Deck," meaning you can simply show up on the morning of the day of the meet you want to swim and enter then. Generally, meet entry costs are doubled for on-deck entries.

In addition, on all Meet Invitations, you will see somewhere near the Order of Events page a box or table listed "Entry Rules." This is where you can find out any specific things that you need to know about the meet such as if you can enter with NT [no time] or not. Some of the terms you should know about are below.

MEET ENTRY TERMINOLOGY

Three-Event Rule – This rule comes into play when a meet is designated "B & Up," or "A & Up," etc. It allows swimmers who may have three or more BB times or A times to enter additional events at their best time, or in some instances with NT. For example, a swimmer wants to attend an A & Up meet and the meet indicates that the "Three-event rule" applies. If the swimmer has A times in the 50 Free, 200 Free, and 100 Back, the swimmer can enter any other event at the meet in her age group or division. If a swimmer has a NT in an event, the swimmer should verify NT entries are allowed at the meet.

Up/Down Rule – If a swimmer has a qualifying time, for example a "BB" time in a particular stroke, but only has a "B" time in that same stroke in a different distance, the Up/Down rule will allow him to swim the immediately preceding or following distance of that stroke in that division. For example, if your swimmer has a "BB" time in the 100 freestyle, he would be eligible to swim the 50 Free and 200 Free "BB" events entered at his best time, or possibly with NT.

Enter with NT, No Time? – Meet invitations that say “Yes,” swimmers may enter with no time. NT means a swimmer has not participated in that event at a USA Swimming meet. Remember, summer league times do not count as official times for USA Swimming. Therefore, even if your swimmer has participated in those events in summer league, he is still a “No Timer” for USA Swimming events.



Yard/Meter Rule – Swimmers with "A" or "BB" times in yards in a stroke automatically have "A" or "BB" times in meters of that stroke for that age group/division. However, if a swimmer has not established an "A" or "BB" time in meters, the swimmer must enter the meter event at the qualifying time. The reverse is also true: swimmers with "A" or "BB" times in meters automatically have "A" or "BB" time in yards, but until a yards time is established, a swimmer must enter the yards event at the qualifying time. Swimmers entering the Senior Division of a meet **MUST** have made the Senior-qualifying standard.

Qualifying Times and Cut-Off Times—Not all meets have qualifying and/or cut-off times. When they do, a Qualifying Time is the minimum or slowest time a swimmer must have to enter a particular event. A Cut-Off Time is the maximum or fastest time a swimmer can have to enter an event.

Pre-seeded versus Deck-Seeded Meets – First, “seeding” is the process of assigning swimmers to heats and lanes according to their submitted or preliminary times. In a pre-seeded meet, all swimmers swim their events in lanes and heats determined by entry times submitted prior to the meet. If swimmers don’t show up for their events, the lanes they were assigned to will be empty, which slows the meet down and can be a disadvantage to swimmers who have to swim next to empty lanes. In a deck-seeded meet, the heats and lanes are not determined until about 45 minutes before the event, which minimizes, but does not eliminate the possibility of empty lanes in a heat. Most Gulf Swimming meets are deck-seeded, so do not forget to “circle in.”

Circle In (What does it mean to "circle in?") – At a deck-seeded meet, the host team posts a list of all swimmers who have entered each event. Swimmers must find their names on the list for each event they intend to swim and circle the number next to it. “Circling-in” tells meet officials that the swimmer is at the meet and intends to swim circled events.

Swimmers pre-registered for a meet who decide **NOT** to swim an event(s) do not have to make any special notifications; they simply do not circle in for the event(s). The event sheets are removed from the circle-in area about 45 minutes prior to the expected start time of the event so the event can be seeded. If a swimmer doesn’t circle in, the swimmer is scratched from the event without penalty, although meet entry fees are not refunded. If a swimmer circles in, but then does **NOT** swim a particular event, the swimmer’s team is fined \$5 for the event and the fine is passed on to the swimmer.

For more information about meet processes, terminology and rules, visit the AQUASTAR website, www.swimaqua.org, or the USA Swimming website, www.usaswimming.org. The USA Swimming website has a great section for parents on all aspects of competitive swimming. Click the “Parents” tab at the top of the homepage.

Meet Attendance 101

A Step-by-Step process for making your first meet fun and successful!

Parents who have never attended meets, as well as those whose meet experience is limited to summer-league meets, are often concerned about knowing exactly what to do at a year-round meet.

First, it is important to note that USA meets, although similar to summer-league meets, require the parent and swimmer to be much more autonomous AND aware of the meet schedule. For example, in summer league, swimmers are to report to the ready area well in advance of their event. A parent-volunteer hands them a card, sits them in the appropriate seat, and ensures they stay together and get to the blocks at the right time in the right place. If swimmers have not made it to the ready area, the announcer will call their name asking them to report to the ready area.

At a USA Swimming meet, swimmers need to be aware of where they need to be and when they need to be there. Theoretically, there is no ready area. At most, there might be seats or benches behind the timers to wait on your event. Swimmers must watch which events are in the water and be waiting in the area behind the timers or poolside as their event is getting close. Additionally, they need to know their heat and lane assignment and be ready to get to the blocks on their own when the heat before theirs is in the water.

If a swimmer is not behind the blocks right before their heat gets ready to swim, the heat will proceed without them. The meet will not stop and wait for a swimmer, nor will the announcer call for a swimmer to proceed to the event. If swimmers are not near the blocks when their event is called and behind the right block when their heat is getting ready to start, they will miss their event.

Another major difference between the way USA meets and summer-league meets are run is that USA meets do not allow anyone but swimmers and officials on the pool decks. Parents stay in the stands, and swimmers must navigate the process on deck by themselves, or with the help of the coach or more senior swimmers.

Following the steps below will help ensure a swimmer's first, and all subsequent USA meets are positive experiences for both the swimmer and his or her family.

Before the Meet

Be certain to read the meet invitation completely. It includes, dates, times, locations, maps, event order, important rules, and other information. For example, some meets will be indoors and families may not be able to bring chairs or coolers into the pool area. Other meets are at outdoor pools, where parents will want to bring tents, coolers and chairs. Meet invitations may be viewed via a link on the AQUASTAR website main page, or by going to the Gulf Swimming Website and clicking the meet information link. Scroll down the list of meets until you see the name of the meet you plan to attend and click the link on the right that reads, "Invitation."

Step 1: Decide which meets to attend and what events to enter

For detailed information on meet types and terminology, please read the previous article. However, the best way to select the appropriate meets and events for your swimmer is to have your swimmer discuss this with his or her coach either before or after practice. Remember, although most meets run two or two-and-a-half days, you do not have to attend each day nor do you have to enter the maximum number of events each day. Meet entries should be decided based on the advice of the swimmer's coach, the family's schedule and the swimmer's desire to compete!

Step 2: Use AQUASTAR's Online Meet Entry Form to submit your entry OR Plan to Enter "On-Deck"

Online Meet Entry through AQUASTAR

If you're sure you'll be attending, you can save yourself time on meet day as well as money by entering the meet in advance through AQUASTAR's Online Meet Entry system. Complete the meet entry form with the following information:

- Meet date
- Parent's name and phone number
- Swimmer name
- Swimmer age as of the meet date
- Swimmer's USA ID number
- Event #/event name
- Total amount due

Entering the correct USA Swimming ID number is extremely important. This identification separates a swimmer from all other swimmers in the world. This number is required on all meet entries. The USA Swimming ID number is on the USA Swimming membership card or by following this simple format: 6-digit birth date, first three letters of the first name, middle initial, first four letters of the last name (MMDDYYFFFMLLLL). Example: John Q. Public born on 7/4/90 = USA ID # 070490JOHQPUBL

The completed meet entry form and a check with payment in full to AQUASTAR should be provided to the AQUASTAR meet entry director on or before the meet entry due date. You can also set up a Meet Entry Escrow Account anytime during the season and entry fees are automatically deducted from the account. Late entries or payment will not allow swimmers to pre-register for a meet; however, if the meet rules allow on deck registration, the swimmer may enter with host team's Clerk-of-Course on the day of the event for a higher entry fee.

MEET ENTRY ESCROW ACCOUNTS

AQUASTAR has pre-paid meet entry fee escrow accounts for members as a convenience to eliminate repeated check writing. Accounts are set up and tracked by our treasurer and work something like Harris County's EZ Tag toll road accounts; you open the account with an initial payment and the balance is drawn down as you enter meets.

Members open accounts by paying, for example, \$50 toward future meet entry fees, and then draw down on the account over time as you enter each meet. Simply indicate on the meet entry form that you wish to pay for that meet using your escrow account. When the escrow account balance drops below \$10, we will automatically invoice you for the amount necessary to build your account back up to \$50 or whatever amount you choose. When used with the [on-line meet entry form](#), this eliminates all paperwork when entering meets. This method is particularly convenient to a parent not typically at practice around the time entries are due. This also makes the meet entry process easier to do in advance, avoiding the higher cost of entering "on-deck" at a meet.

Contact the treasurer today about setting up *your* meet entry escrow account!

Entering ON-DECK

Most meets will allow swimmers to enter "on deck," meaning the swimmer can show up the morning of the meet a designated time in advance of the meet start, and register for the meet. Generally, you must arrive 1-1.5 hours in advance, which you will generally do anyway as warm-ups are usually around their time. There is usually a table set up for on-deck entries, or the process occurs at the "clerk-of-course" table. The entry fees for on-deck entries are generally double, so be prepared to pay \$7-\$10 per event entered. On-deck entry opportunity usually ends at 8 a.m.

Step 3: Know when you need to arrive at the pool for the meet



What time a swimmer needs to arrive at the pool depends on two things:

- 1- whether the swimmer is pre-registered or needs to register "on-deck"
- 2- the team's scheduled warm-up time

At USA meets, there are generally two and sometimes three warm-up shifts. If a swimmer is pre-registered and AQUASTAR is scheduled for third shift warm-up at 7:45 am, there is no need to arrive at the pool at the first warm-up time with a sleepy, grumpy swimmer.

Conversely, arriving at the very last minute might mean parking and seating will be difficult to find, depending on the meet location. Therefore, plan your arrival time using common sense.

Step 4: Arriving at the pool and "circling in" or "scratching" events

If Pre-Registered for the Meet with AQUASTAR

When swimmers arrive at the pool, the first thing they should do is "circle in." Circling in lets the meet officials know that swimmers have arrived at the meet and intend to swim the events circled. A swimmer who is not circled in is not at the meet, even if the coach knows the swimmer is present. If the circle-in area is in a common area or lobby, parents may circle swimmers in while their swimmers proceed on to check in with the coach. However, sometimes the circle-in area is in the pool area where parents are not allowed. In this case, swimmers will have to circle themselves in.

The host pool posts several lists of the day's events and swimmers registered. Generally, there is a laminated poster board with girls' events and one with boys'. To speed the process, swimmers should know their event names and numbers. Then, they simply look down the list of swimmers for the event, find their name, and circle the number to the left of their names. To be safe, swimmers can circle their entire name. If swimmers are circling themselves in, they should be sure to verify their first AND last name before circling in. There have been many instances where one "Kelly" circled in for another "Kelly." Or even worse, scratched the wrong Kelly from an event.

Swimmers should repeat the process for each event they plan to swim that day. If a swimmer registered for an event, but decides on the meet day not to swim it, the swimmer should "scratch" the event by drawing a single line through their name. If a swimmer signed up for an event, but is not sure if he or she will swim it that day, the swimmer can wait to circle in later in the meet; the swimmer does NOT have to circle in for everything at once. However, depending on the host team's procedure, the circle-in sheets are generally pulled from the circle-in area approximately 45 minutes before the event will occur to allow events to be seeded. Therefore, it is imperative swimmers make decisions to circle in or scratch by this time. At some meets, announcements may be made letting swimmers know which events are closed for scratches.

If NOT Pre-Registered and You Plan to Enter "On Deck"

Most meets will allow swimmers to enter "on deck," meaning the swimmer can show up the morning of the meet a designated time in advance of the meet start, and register for the meet. Generally, you must arrive 1-1.5 hours in advance, which you will generally do anyway as warm-ups are usually around their time. There is usually a table set up for on-deck entries, or the process occurs at the "clerk-of-course" table. The entry fees for on-deck entries are generally double, so be prepared to pay \$7.00-\$10.00 per event entered. On-deck entry opportunity usually ends at 8 a.m.

Step 5: Swimmers should check in with the AQUASTAR coach(es)

Once swimmers have either entered on deck or circled in, the next step is to check in with the coach. Checking in with the coach lets the coach know the swimmer is at the meet and provides an opportunity for the coach to provide the swimmer with any special instructions. Keep in mind that coaches rotate responsibilities for attending meets; therefore, your swimmer's regular training coach may not be at the meet. However, there's no need to worry, the coaches communicate with each other before each meet and are aware of each swimmer's abilities.

Step 6: Swimmers need to get themselves to warm-ups

Host teams are required to publish warm up lane assignments, timing lane assignments and a meet time line on the Wednesday of the meet weekend. Access this information via the Gulf web site, www.gulfswimming.org

Below the link for the meet invitation is a link for warm-up information. The warm-up assignments are also posted in the psych sheet. Swimmers are to proceed to the warm-up lane when their warm-up time is scheduled. Parents are not allowed on the pool deck, regardless of swimmer age.

Step 7: Parents should purchase a psych sheet

Host teams create and sell "psych sheets" or "heat sheets" which are full of helpful information. They include information such as like warm-up schedules, schedule of events, names of teams attending the meet and number of swimmers represented for each, a list of swimmers signed up for each event (which of course won't include all swimmers, as some may on-deck enter) a tentative meet time line, and more. Psych sheets cost \$5-\$7 for regular meets and \$10-\$15 for championship meets. They are a great investment for the helpful information they contain AND are a fundraiser for the host team.



Step 8: One adult from each family checks in with the AQUASTAR timing scheduler

Attending teams provide a certain number of timers for the meet based on the size of the team contingent at the meet. Therefore, a team with 100 swimmers at the meet would probably be required to provide more timers than a team with a contingent of 25 swimmers. In addition, sitting in the timer's seat is one of the best places to watch your swimmer race!

AQUASTAR designates an experienced parent at each meet to coordinate team timer sign up. Although the meet entry form allows you to indicate which shift you are willing to time, you still need to check in with the timing coordinator at the meet, as people sometimes decide at the last minute not to attend a meet. Generally, no one will be asked to time for more than a one-hour shift unless the team is short-handed. It is imperative all parents check in with the AQUASTAR timing coordinator to ensure adequate timer coverage.

Inadequate coverage reflects poorly on the team and causes meet delays. The timing coordinator will do his or her best to ensure you have the timing slot you'd like. However, timing assignments are on a first-come, first-served basis, so be sure to sign up early.

Step 9: After warm-ups, swimmers should remain in or close to the pool area

Although swimmers are generally allowed to leave the pool area, it is important that swimmers keep a close eye on what event is in the water so as not to miss their event. Again, if swimmers are not where they are supposed to be when their heat is ready to go, the heat will go without them. If swimmers are in event #47 and the meet has just started with event #1, it's probably safe to leave the pool area and visit with the family, but keep a close eye on what events are in the pool and which ones are "on deck" by listening to announcements, scoreboards, and watching the event flipcharts.

Step 10: Swimmers should watch for heat and lane assignment postings

Just as there is a circle-in area, there is an area reserved for heat and lane assignments. Heat and lane assignments are determined based on "deck-seeding" the swimmers from the circle-in sheets and on-deck entries. Once an event is seeded, the heat and lane assignments are posted.

Generally, swimmers with NT (no time) in an event, as well as swimmers with slower times swim in the first few heats and swimmers with the fastest official times are in the last heat of the event. Heat numbers start with "1" and run through as many as necessary depending on how many swimmers registered for the event. Each swimmer should check their name CAREFULLY on the heat and lane assignment sheet and note their heat and lane.

Step 11: Swimmers must check in with an AQUASTAR coach shortly before each race

Once swimmers know their heat and lane assignment, they should check in with the coach to let the coach know their heat and lane assignments and for some final advice for their race, the stroke and anything special about swimming in that lane.

Step 12: Swimmers must watch CLOSELY for their events to begin

USA meets can move quickly. Even experienced swimmers have found themselves eating a banana in their tent, only to hear that their event is in the water. The best practice for swimmers is to stay in the pool area, close to the blocks well in advance of their own heat.

A good rule of thumb is to be with their coach at least one event before their own to let the coach know they are ready to swim and to allow the coach to instruct them when to move toward the blocks. Additionally, parents who purchase a psych sheet will know the **approximate** schedule of events; the key word being APPROXIMATE, as meet schedules can be changed due to changes in numbers of registered swimmers on meet day and other delays. Always be sure to allow for event delays as well as times when events will move more quickly.

Step 13: Swimmers must get to the blocks and get ready to swim!

At USA meets, swimmers are not lined up and escorted to the blocks. Therefore, swimmers should be behind the blocks at least three heats before their own heat to ensure they are physically and mentally ready to swim when their heat is called. The swimmer should also check with the timer to make certain they are behind the correct block and their name appears on the timer's sheet. This is especially true for younger swimmers attending their first few meets.

Frequently a young swimmer will confuse lanes 1, 2, and 3 with lanes 6, 7, and 8. When the heat is called, swimmers will follow the instructions of the meet starter who will use verbal commands as well as a series of long and short whistles, to let swimmers know when to get on the blocks, when to get set and when to go. Swimmers will learn these signals and have practiced them beforehand several times at practice before attending a meet.

Step 14: Swimmers must check in with a coach immediately after finishing their event

Once the swimmer is out of the water, he or she should go right to the coach for feedback on the race. This ensures both the coach and swimmer have the race freshly in their minds and can discuss what went well, and what to work on next time.

Step 15: Parents should cheer and encourage their swimmers!

From the time swimmers leave the blocks to the time they return to you in the stands, the parents' job is to **Cheer and Encourage**.

The best advice from coaches and experienced parents is to let the coach be the coach, not you. One of the worst things a parent can do is to analyze a swim right after the swimmer gets out of the pool.

If you let the coach provide swim critique and you provide love and support, your swimmers will learn a love of their lifelong sport!