



Volume 6, No. 08
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www.swimaqua.org
Hotline 281-488-1582

Turning today's potential into tomorrow's performance!



AQUASTAR
Houston, TX 77062

AQUASTAR

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Amy Castro

Head Coach
Harold
Johnston

Head
Assistant
Coach
John Burke

NEXT BOARD MEETING

Tuesday,
Sept. 12

8:30 pm

Gloria Dei
Church,
Nassau Bay

ALL PARENTS
INVITED AND
ENCOURAGED
TO ATTEND!

Short Course, Here We Come !

11-up meet: Oct. 6-8

The first meet of the 2006-07 short course (25-yard) season will be held Oct. 6-8. It is an 11-up open meet, at the NWAV pool (Klein Forest HS). A map to the pool is on our website. All swimmers who are at least age 11 by October 6 (first day of the meet) are eligible to attend.

This season-opening meet is a great chance for older swimmers to achieve the first of their two regular-season meet attendance requirements. This is the first opportunity for those Aqua group swimmers wanting to move up to Blue to demonstrate their commitment to competition. White group swimmers who want to achieve Blue group qualifying times can also use this meet to begin or continue that process.

For those on school **PE waivers**, one component of the grade is attendance at one meet per grading period. This is a chance to meet that requirement right off the bat. Let's get the season off to a great start, and set an AQUASTAR meet attendance record!

10-under meet: Oct. 13-15

The second meet of the season is Oct. 13-15. It is a 10-under open meet, to be held at the HCAP pool (Kashmere HS). All swimmers age 10-under as of October 13 (the first day of the meet) are eligible, even those who have never attended a USA Swimming meet. Red group swimmers who want to achieve promotion to the White group can use this meet to begin or continue that process. A promotion to the White group requires meet-certified proficiency in all four strokes (must swim the stroke in a meet without a disqualification).

Welcome Coach John Burke !

AQUASTAR is pleased to welcome Coach John Burke to our team family! Coach Burke started the Annapolis, Maryland Swim Club in 1991, and coached there until 1998. He was a coach with the North Baltimore Aquatic Club from 1998-2002, then returned to Annapolis from 2002-2006.



Coach Burke has had the pleasure to work with athletes who placed in the USA Swimming Top 16 lists, and in the Top 8 at both the Eastern Zone short course and long course meets. His swimmers and relays have set Maryland swimming records. John served on the Maryland Swimming board of directors as the Age Group Chair, and on the zone team coaching staff. He is an ASCA level 4 coach.

John has been married for four years. He and his wife Ann have two children, Emma (3) and Klara (1). They reside in Pearland.

WELCOME TO TEXAS, Y'ALL !!

No one cares less about your ego than a stop watch !

AQUASTAR to Host 14-&-Under Meet October 27-29

Parent and teen volunteers needed!

Because we did such a great job last year running our 10-&-under meet, AQUASTAR was selected by Gulf Swimming, the governing body for Houston-area USA Swimming teams, to host a **14-&-under meet**, Oct. 27-29, at Baytown Sterling High School. Swimmers, officials and families alike who participated in last year's meet commented on how well-run the meet was, and about the great hospitality we showed our visitors. Let's do it again!

The competition between this year's host teams to have the best meets in Gulf Swimming will be tougher than ever. **Therefore, we will require a lot of participation from swimmers, parents and other volunteers to maintain the great reputation we earned last year.**

Be sure to watch for more information in the newsletter and on the AQUASTAR web site as the meet date gets closer.

"In Your Lane"



Name: Vivien Tsou

Age: 14

School: Clear Brook HS

Swim Facts: 6 years of swimming for STAR and AQUASTAR, which should be STAQUA.

Practice Group: Blue

Favorite Stroke: Breaststroke

Least Favorite Stroke: Backstroke

Favorite Part of Practice: Kicking, conversing, swimming

Least Favorite Part of Practice: Having my leg pulled so someone can pass me, dealing with a bad lane rope, and nasty chlorine

Hobbies & Interests: Painting, drawing, music, movies, piano, dinosaurs, animals (especially cats), humor, Spanish soap operas, comedy TV sitcoms, green, swings, the beach, sleeping, and eating! =D

Other: I want to be a veterinarian or paleontologist when I grow up; but truthfully, I don't actually want to grow up.

Awards Distributed at Luau

2005-06 Short Course Award Winners

Most Valuable	Most Improved
10-under Madison Varisco Corey Duke	10-under Gina Fossati Allen Hu
11-12 Lauren Nutt Cameron Dyer	11-12 Christa Walker Ryan Swaney
13-14 Caroline McElhany Cole Cragin	13-14 Julia Sepulveda Will Kolodgie
15-18 Jenny Claydon Michael Piper	15-18 Jennifer Joines Mark Grijalva

2006 Long Course Award Winners

Most Valuable	Most Improved
10-under Madison Varisco Corey Duke	10-under Claribeth de la Cruz Francis Kim
11-12 Amy Chan (no boy)	11-12 Christa Walker Larry Ying
13-14 Caroline McElhany Cameron Dyer	13-14 Kelsey Castro Luke Hamilton
15-18 Kari Budd Cole Cragin	15-18 Jenny Claydon Mark Grijalva

For New Swim Parents

(From USA Swimming)

Welcome to the exciting world of swimming! By joining AQUASTAR and USA Swimming, your child has become a member of one of the country's largest, most organized, and competently-coached youth sports. There are many benefits to participating in the sport of swimming:

Meeting terrific people. Many swimming friends become lifelong friends.

Exercise for cardiovascular and overall fitness.

Life skills. These include time management, self-discipline and sportsmanship.

Fun! Age group swimming can be fun, exciting and rewarding.

Remember that not every swimmer becomes a world record-holder, but everyone can gain from his or her swimming experience!

AQUASTAR BIRTHDAYS



AUGUST

James Mitchell	8/1
Haley Derauf	8/2
Robert Ellis	8/2
Jon Fouty	8/5
Alyssa Mullery	8/5
Madeline Gregory	8/6
Leanette Burkes	8/6
Taylor Beck	8/7
Kelsey Gonzales	8/7
Allen Hu	8/7
Aason Wang	8/10
Austin Wang	8/10
Martin Zuber	8/11
Mary Allsep	8/11
Daniel Riojas	8/13
Matthew Counts	8/14
Kelly Derauf	8/14
Hannah Mossbarger	8/15
Joseph Kirasich	8/16
Chuck Prosch	8/16
Whit Prather	8/18
Monica Beggs	8/20
Jenny Claydon	8/20
Dingbo Shi	8/21
Stephen McKinney	8/23
Kyle Gonzalez	8/24
Catherine Besmar	8/25
Chris Berger	8/27
Emily Adamiak	8/29
Andrew Witt	8/30
Asa Clemons	8/31

SEPTEMBER

Wesley Robbins	9/1
Elise Adams	9/1
Mike Garske	9/3
Sarah Jacobson	9/3
Matthew Temofonte	9/4
Andrew Bottolfson	9/4
Grace Baliker	9/5
Angela Sun	9/5
Steven Mao	9/6
Jacqueline Maher	9/7
Katie Crumpler	9/8
Melissa Watson	9/8
Joseph Gonzalez	9/8
Alexandria Lawrence	9/8
Jon Larson	9/9
Tim Clemens	9/10
Blake Swaney	9/11
Lyndsey Gonzales	9/14
Jill Cooke	9/15
Jeremy Dao	9/15
Sierra Dyer	9/16
Taylor Watson	9/16
Nick McGee	9/17
Karen Baker	9/18
Ruth Bernay	9/19
Howard Kuan	9/19
Ross Haskins	9/19
Nick Clemmer	9/19
Jill Johnson	9/21
Miguel Archundia	9/21
Bob Brisco	9/21
Lauren Pham	9/23
Fernando Tejada	9/24
Amara de Silva	9/24
Bonnie West	9/27
Riley Haizlip	9/29
Mason Thompson	9/29

AQUASTAR MEET INFORMATION SUPPLEMENT

Understanding meet lingo is key to choosing meets for your swimmer

"Short Course," "Long Course," "14 & Under A," "BB & Under" — What does it mean?

With short 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 (hence, "short") indoor pools and generally runs from October through March. The long course season runs from April through July and competes in 50-meter (hence, "long") pools, some 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, a 10 & Under Open 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. (This differs from the area's CCSL summer league, which classifies swimmers for the entire summer based on their age on May 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 time from a previous USA swim meet must be slower than the "A" time standard for the event entered (some BB-under meets allows swimmers to enter with a No Time; see below).

--**A and Up** — the swimmer's time from a previous USA swim meet must be at least as fast as the "A" time standard 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 slowest allowable entry time swum for the event (in a previous USA swim meet, a swimmer must have swum at least as fast the qualifying time, to enter an event at a meet with qualifying times)

--**Cut-Off Times** — the fastest allowable time swum for the event (if swimmer has recorded faster times than this in a previous USA swim meet for an event with cut-off times, he cannot swim that event at that meet).

In addition to the basic designations concerning which swimmers can attend a meet, there are often additional entry qualifications listed on the meet invitation which 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 and AQUASTAR web sites. AQUASTAR will post links to the meet invitations for those meets in which 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 meet entry chairperson 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 web site. 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 in which meets they're interested and eligible to swim. Generally, there will be no more than two meets a month for which a particular swimmer is eligible, 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 Swimming official time limits, 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 which 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 easy to use, and upon your submission, are emailed to our meet registrar 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." If you know your swimmer's times, you can enter that information. If you don't know or are unsure, the team keeps a database of official times. You can also look up this information on the Gulf Swimming website. There is a link to the "Swimmer Times Database" on the lower-right hand side of the AQUASTAR website.

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;; AQUASTAR adds 25 cents per event to cover administrative costs and to pay for relays. For example, if the meet invitation 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. AQUASTAR covers the cost for swimmers entered into relays.

You may pay for your meet entry costs via a separate check, or adding your meet fees to your monthly training check and noting the meet info on your check. Please be expeditious in sending in your meet fees. You may mail or submit payment to the parent on deck at practice. The BEST way to pay meet fees is to open a meet entry escrow account, described elsewhere. It eliminates multiple checking-writing and late payments.

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. But, 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 (that’s three “A” times), the swimmer can then enter any other event at the meet in her age group or division, even if they don’t have an A time in that event (although if a swimmer has an NT in an event, the swimmer should verify that 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 and distance, but only has a “B” (slower) time in that same stroke in a different distance, the Up/Down rule will allow him to swim the immediate shorter or longer distance of that stroke in that division at a BB-up meet. 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-up” events entered at his best time, or possibly with NT, at a BB-up meet.

Enter with NT, No Time? – In meet invitations which 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 *slowest* official time (from a previous meet) a swimmer can have and still enter a particular event. A Cut-Off Time is the *fastest* time a swimmer can have (from a previous meet) and still enter a particular event (i.e., if he has swum faster in a previous meet than the current meet’s cut-off time in that event, he cannot participate in that event in the current meet).

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” (see next).

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 by the meet computer. 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.

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 Swimming 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. Not so at USA Swimming meets.

At a USA Swimming meet, swimmers need to be aware of *where* they need to be, and *when* they need to be there. *There is no formal 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 web site main page, or by going to the Gulf Swimming web site 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 him/her discuss this with his/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 (but, as long as you're there . . .). 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 web site

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 name and date
- Email address
- Swimmer name
- Swimmer age as of the meet date
- Swimmer's USA ID number
- Event #/event name/best time for that event or NT for no time
- 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. Kid, born on 7/4/90 = USA ID # 070490JOHQKID* (use an asterisk if there is no middle name, or last name is less than four letters, etc.).

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 year, 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 1-1½ hours in advance, which you will generally do anyway as warm-ups are usually around that time. There is usually a table set up for on-deck entries, or the process occurs at the “clerk-of-course” table.

Entering on-deck allows for flexibility if you aren’t sure til the last minute whether or not you are going to be able to attend a meet, but there is a price. The entry fees for on-deck entries are generally doubled from pre-meet levels, so be prepared to pay \$7-\$10 per event entered. The on-deck entry opportunity usually ends at 8 a.m. for a 9 a.m. meet start time. NOTE: Entering on deck has notionally the same effect as “circling in” to the clerk taking your entry. If you do not swim an event you on-deck entered, even if it is an event the next day of the meet (except for illness), the team (and swimmer) will be fined \$5. Example: You enter “on-deck” Saturday morning at the meet for an event that day, and also for an event scheduled for Sunday. If you do not swim that event Sunday, then the team (read: swimmer) will be fined \$5 for a “no show.” If you *do* show up on Sunday, be sure to check the circle in sheets before the meet and circle in if you are listed, as you may have been added to the meet software.

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 and lanes

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, say, 7:45 a.m., 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 in the eyes of meet officials, 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 instances where one “Kelly” circled in for another “Kelly”; or even worse, scratched the wrong Kelly from an event. The names are sometimes listed in alphabetical order.

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, circle-in sheets are generally pulled from the circle-in area 45 minutes before the event will occur, to allow events to be seeded in the meet computer.

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”

See paragraph at top of previous page concerning the procedures, advantages and disadvantages of entering on-deck.

Step 5: Swimmers should check in with the AQUASTAR coaches

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 is 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 Swimming web site, www.gulfswimming.org or the AQUASTAR web site. Below the link for the meet invitation is a link for warm-up information. The warm-up assignments are also in the psych sheet sold at the meet. 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 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 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’s races!

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 numbers.

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 change 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, young swimmers (and parents unfamiliar with a new pool location!) 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!

For more information, 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 home page.