

Tips for Meets from your Delta Coaches

MEALS:

Your swimmer needs to eat a big meal before they come to the pool. They should have it finished about 30 to 60 minutes before warm up. This meal will need to carry them through 30 to 40 minutes of constant swimming during warm up, 4 or 5 races, and warm downs, all in a 4 to 5 hour period. It needs to be big but comfortable. Let them eat what they like within reason. 40%-30%-30% carbs - fat- protein is a good mix.

WARM UPS:

Arrive at the pool with enough time to find a parking space, a seating place, to find the locker rooms and still have enough time to have your swimmer in their suit 15 minutes before warm ups. Easy, right? Just watch your swimmer wander around looking for friends, the concession stand, the new stuff at the swim shop that they need to start thinking of reasons to justify their need for. All of a sudden its 5 after and Johnny is not in the water with his friends yet, and if he is like some . . . it's another 15 minutes of wrestling with cap wrinkles and crossed goggle lines and he's **STILL** not in the water! The warm-up situation in Illinois can be pretty crowded and crazy, which means if they are late then they do not get to warm-up properly. They have to fit in with the others and it can affect their first and second swim.

POST WARM UP:

Your swimmer needs to be aware of their events and the pace of the meet - how much time they have between events and how much time between snacks, drinks, and potty breaks. They will need to eat. You will eat when you are hungry. They, on the other hand, will be swimming when they remember that they are hungry or they are just about to swim and then put it off until later. Then they are playing in the warm down pool or with friends under the bleachers and forget to eat. Please remind them. Snacks of bagels, bread, crackers or fruit and vegetables are good. Fruit juices and watered down sports drinks are also good calorie fillers.

The swimmers need to know what heat and lane they are in for their events. Please keep them informed as the meet goes on of these upcoming assignments. They need to report in to their coach before they swim for instructions or reminders on skills or strategies. After their race they need to talk to their coach about their swim, both the good and the bad. This is the coaches' job! After all this time they return to you where you say, "Did you have fun?" "That looked great!" "Man I love to watch you swim!" "I love you." "I love your suit." or any other nonjudgmental comment. Remember, you are there for support, empathy, encouragement, but **NOT** for coaching.

PRELIM/FINALS MEETS:

During a prelim/finals meet, the afternoon meal is the hardest to plan and fit in. Try 4 medium size meals and not 3 big meals. Keep in mind the time table of their next swim, the next session and their need for sleep/rest. The swimmers who swim in the afternoon session of a prelim/finals meet need to wake up early enough to be able to eat **TWICE** before arriving at the pool for noon warm ups. They need to eat again before finals and again after finals. The swimmers who swim in the morning session of the same meet, need to eat big in the early afternoon, before warm ups for finals, and again after finals. We have seen many swimmers crash and burn for not eating right and not enough during these championship meet formats! Plan ahead and remember that you may have found time to eat something filling from the concession stand or run out during warm ups, but your swimmer has just had "filler food" all day and needs a meal. Albeit a fast one.

SLEEP:

Rest and more rest during the "big" meets. Get to bed early. During the big important "taper" meets, swimmers should rest before, between, and after each session. No mall walking, shopping, or hiking. No race car driving or late movies . . . **REST**. The in season meets are the time for these social diversions, just remember that it will have an adverse effect and usually the swimmers that pay attention to the details on the "little things" perform the best over the course of the weekend. It is a trade off and you must recognize it.

TIMES:

Tired times, unshaved times, best times to date, ahead of last year's time, and then "TAPERED" times. Younger swimmers will improve as their skills improve and as they get stronger and bigger. Older swimmers and swimmers who have learned most of their skills and habits, swim faster when they are rested or tapered - once or twice a season. Many early meets we do not want fast! We want to see the skills that we have been asking them to focus on in practice show up at a meet in a racing situation. Therefore, it is important that your swimmer's expectations match the coaches' instructions. This is also important when you watch practices. Do not encourage your swimmer to go faster at practice. Sometimes that is very counter productive. Let the coaches push them at both practices and at meets.

What we want the swimmers to focus on is to be ahead of last year's times at this time of the season. Example: compare times from last year's meet in October with this year's meet in October, and March with March. They should be ahead of last year's "tired times." Not rested times. Why go to meets to swim slow times? Meets are the measuring stick of what we are working on and trying to achieve at practice. They show us the areas that we need to work on mechanically and what type of practices we need to focus on, conditionally and physically. It helps the swimmer to learn how to swim races, learn strategies, work on new skills and practice their mental skills. In other words - a practice meet.

MENTAL PREP:

Some swimmers need to learn to psyche themselves up and others need to learn to calm themselves. It is an individual thing and they should be learning as they go along about what method works best for each of them. Think back about how they acted before good swims and before bad swims and compare the behavior and the results. This should help them see what works for them. Let them set their goals without your input. They need to be **THEIR** goals and they need to be free to set their expectations and their commitment levels. Once they set their goals they need to discuss them with their coach, going over the commitment level that it will take to reach those goals - if they are attainable, what it takes to meet them, and if they are not then what adjustments they need to make. These too, need to be practiced at every meet.