

Seals Swimming

Team Handbook

MISSION STATEMENT:

“Providing the opportunity for young people to learn the skills and behaviors it takes to be successful as competitive swimmers, teammates and responsible citizens. ”

TEAM PHILOSOPHY

Our approach to the sport of swimming is simple. In order to develop fast and healthy swimmers it is imperative to focus on the development of stroke technique, turns, and starts for all groups from the most introductory to the most advanced. We believe that focusing on technique in addition to a strong work ethic is the best recipe for success in the sport of competitive swimming.

Westbrook Seals Team Handbook

COACH'S WELCOME

Dear Westbrook Seals Parents,
Welcome to the Westbrook Seals swim team, long considered to be a leader among competitive swim programs in Maine. Created in 1978 through the merger of the Portland Seals and the Westbrook Blue Fins, our team provides an innovative, top-quality, year-round swim program for the communities of the Greater Portland area. We strive to offer a complete program for all ages and abilities—from young, developmental swimmers to athletes with the talent and commitment to achieve success at the National level. The team competes in local, regional and national competition sanctioned by USA Swimming, Inc., the national governing body for amateur swimming in the United States.

The purpose of this handbook is to help guide swimmers and parents through frequently asked questions, policies and procedures. All swimmers and parents should read through the handbook and become familiar with its information.

I'm looking forward to a great swim season!

John Smith
Head Coach

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GOALS

1. To nurture the whole child at every age and, realizing that each one is different, allow young people to develop as far as their dreams, talents, and efforts take them.
2. To teach young people the process of achieving. To encourage them to dream, help them set worthy goals, promote a strong work ethic, provide support when they struggle, and inspire them to persevere until they succeed.
3. To provide a level of coaching that will lead to the development of world-class swimmers, should they so aspire, while at the same time allowing beginning swimmers to develop character, self-confidence, and the love for the sport in an atmosphere of caring and consideration.

4. To encourage parents to actively support both their child and the program as a whole, realizing that their personal investment is a key ingredient to a young person's success in any endeavor.

5. To provide the community and the swimming world with young people who are becoming the best they can be—as individuals, students, citizens, and athletes.

COACHING STAFF

Our coaching staff consists of professionally trained swim coaches. They, as member coaches in the American Swimming Coaches Association and USA Swimming, have access to the most comprehensive training and certification program for youth coaches of any sport in the United States. Certified coaches in U.S. Swimming programs possess training and experience in the physiology and psychology of adolescent development. Our coaching staff provides the assurances that the time your children spend in swimming will be quality and productive time. The Seals staff includes professionally trained and certified strength and conditioning specialists to help pursue our goal of keeping swimmers safe, flexible and strong.

Head Coach John Smith

John joined the Seals in the summer of 2005. Before the Seals he was Head Coach at the Lynchburg VA YMCA where he sent two swimmers to Sectionals and six swimmers to the YMCA Nationals. In 2001 John received the co-Coach of the Year Award from Western Albermarle High School in Virginia, eventually becoming Head Coach. Before that, John was the coach for the Charlottesville YMCA Aquatic Club where he had two top-16 age group swimmers.

In addition to coaching the Seals, John was the Head Coach of the Catherine McAuley Women's Swimming Team for five years. In 2007-2008 the McAuley Lions were Class B State Champions.

John's coaching philosophy focuses on technique. He strongly believes that you should learn to swim correctly before you learn to swim fast! To that end, John brings a very strong technical background to the team.

When John is not focusing on the Seals' swimming technique, he enjoys playing disc golf and stamp collecting.

Laura Lazenby

Laura Lazenby graduated from Washington College in 2011 with a degree in Sociology and Anthropology. Her competitive swimming career began at the early age of 7. She swam for the Westbrook Seals through high school and won 4 straight Class B Championships at Falmouth, as well as serving her high school swim team as captain in both her junior and senior years. In 2005, Laura placed first in

the Women's Division of the Peaks to Portland open water race, and in 2007, she placed second. In college, she placed 7th in the 400 IM and 13th in the 1650 during her conference meet in 2008. Due to injuries suffered a few months later, Laura was forced to end her college swimming career. However, her love for the sport remains strong and she hopes to continue open water swimming in the future.

A swimming instructor since age 15, Laura began coaching for the Seals during the summer of 2010. She enjoys working with children and is glad to have returned to the pool as a coach!

Keli Gillespie

Keli Gillespie started her 16 year swimming career here at the Westbrook Seals when she was 6 years old. She attended Falmouth High School, where she and her teammates won 4 consecutive state championships. Recently, Keli graduated from the University of New Hampshire where she studied English Literature. At UNH, Keli was a member of two record setting relay teams and was team Captain from 2009 to 2011. Her favorite event is the 100 freestyle. Keli is very excited about sharing her love of competitive swimming with younger athletes.

When Keli is not at the pool, she is a full-time teller at Casco Federal Credit Union in Westbrook. She enjoys reading, travelling and getting her nails done with Laura!

Brian Agro

Coach's Responsibilities

The coach's job is to supervise the entire competitive swim program. The Seals coaching staff is dedicated to providing a program for youngsters that will enable them to learn the value of striving to improve oneself--"to be the best you can be." Therefore, the coaches must be in total control in matters affecting training and competition.

The coaches are responsible for placing swimmers in practice groups. This decision is based on many factors. When it is in the best interest of a swimmer, he/ she will be placed in a more challenging training group by the coach. Swimmers who express interest in changing groups should inform their coach and will be allowed to train in one or more practices per week with the higher group at coach's discretion.

Sole responsibility for stroke instruction and the training regimen rests with the Seals coaching staff. Each group's practices are based on sound scientific principles and are geared to the specific goals of that group.

The coaching staff will make the final decision regarding the swim meets that the Seals swimmers attend and the events in which each swimmer is entered.

At meets, the coaching staff will conduct and supervise warm-up procedures for the team. After each race, the coaches will offer constructive criticism regarding the swimmers performance. (It is the parent's job to offer love and understanding regardless of their child's performance.) The building of a relay team is the sole responsibility of the coaching staff.

The coaches are constantly updating and improving the Seals program. It is the swimmers' and parents' responsibility to make the most out of the excellent opportunity this program provides for success in swimming.

Swimmer's Responsibilities

As a swimmers level of swimming ability increases so does his/her responsibility. The program is designed to encourage all swimmers to be Senior group bound. As swimmers strive towards this level, they make commitments that require great effort by all parties. A swimmer has responsibilities to the team, the coach, his/her parents, and most importantly to themselves. Swimmers need to prepare themselves mentally and physically for 100% effort each time they come to practice. Team members should eat properly and get sufficient rest. (See appendix "Nutrition") Swimmers will be required to bring specified training accessories (i.e., goggles, flippers, etc. – see below) to workouts. (Note: It is the swimmer's responsibility to make sure these items are properly adjusted and that spares are readily available. Equipment adjustment and repair will not be accepted as excuse to miss part of a training session.)

Seals Code Of Conduct

S - Supportive

E - Equal

A - Acceptance

L - Loyal

S - Strive for Excellence

The following beliefs and values constitute the SEALS Swimming Code of Conduct and should be followed by all SEALS team members and families:

S- Supportive

Seals Swimmers and parents are responsible for their own conduct, and should support the SEALS swim team as much as possible. This includes giving assistance when needed, be honest, and honor all commitments.

E- Equal

All swimmers are an equal part of the SEALS team. Show each other respect by using appropriate language, respect the property of others, and be courteous. Show proper lane etiquette to all swimmers during practices and meets.

A- Acceptance

Seals swimmers and parents should show acceptance to ALL members of the team, coaching staff, and parent volunteers. Treat all people fairly, how you would like to be treated.

L- Loyal

Being loyal to the team includes being RESPECTFUL to all! Respect the authority of the coaches, officials, parent volunteers, and others in leadership roles. Obey the rules established by the SEALS coaches, the SEALS Board of Directors, Maine Swimming, and USA swimming. Follow all guidelines on deck, while in the pool, and at all times in the locker rooms, both at the SEALS home pool and at away swim meets.

S- Strive for Excellence

Strive for your personal best and set goals for improvement. Encourage all SEALS teammates at practices and at swim meets. Accept responsibility for your actions. Be an exemplary representative of the SEALS swim team at all times.

Violation of the SEALS Swimming Code of Conduct shall result in disciplinary action that may include:

Dismissal from practice and immediate phone call and meeting between the SEALS head coach, swimmer, and swimmers parents to address the behavior before the swimmer may return to practicing with the team,

Loss of privileges including swim meet participation, traveling with the team to away meets, locker room usage, and use of team equipment,

Immediate suspension from the team for a period of time to be determined by the coaching staff and Board of Directors,

Immediate dismissal from the SEALS swimming program.

Swimmers are expected to adhere to the above SEALS Code of Conduct and should realize that failure to do so shall result in disciplinary action.

Parents' Code Of Conduct

We request that all parents follow these basic codes of conduct:

- 1) I agree to remain physically off the deck at all times unless requested there by a coach.
- 2) I will not make negative and / or disparaging comments to any swimmers, parents, officials, or
- 3) coaches of any team.
- 4) I will encourage my child to have a positive swimmer / coach relationship.
- 5) I will be supportive of swimmers of all abilities and encourage camaraderie and mutual respect among swimmers, parents, and coaches.
- 6) I will not express anger or voice concerns I may have while on the deck, during either practices or meets.
- 7) I will not interfere with my child's coach regarding the way he or she carries out race strategy, conducts practices, or coaches at meets.
- 8) I will notify my child's coach of any change in my child's monthly swim schedule through verbal and / or written (preferred) communication.
- 9) I will pay my swimmer(s) dues and fees on a timely basis each month.
- 10) I will volunteer time to the Seals organization in some way.
- 11) I will set an expectation for my swimmer(s) to treat other athletes, parents, officials and volunteers with respect and courtesy.

Social Networking Guidelines

This organization recognizes that many of its members, employee's, and volunteers, use social media such as texting, Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, etc., However, members use of social media could become a problem if it:

- A) Interferes with an employee's or member's performance
- B) Is used to harass, discriminate or bully
- C) Creates a hostile environment
- D) Divulges confidential information
- E) Harms the goodwill and reputation of the Seals Swimming organization

As a result, the "Seals Swimming" organization encourages all members to use social media within the following guidelines.

1. Do not post any comment or picture involving a member, employee or volunteer of the Seals organization without his or her express consent.
2. If any comment is posted about the Seals organization, it must clearly and conspicuously state the posting is in the poster's individual capacity and the views posted are the poster's alone and do not represent the views of the Seals organization.
3. Unless consent is given by a representative of the Seals Board of Directors, the use of the Seals logo or any organizational material may not be used.
4. All postings on social media must comply with our policies on confidentiality and disclosures of proprietary information.

5. Do not link to the Seals Swimming organization's website or post any related material on a social media site without written permission from a representative of the Seals Board of Directors.
6. Don't forget the poster is responsible for what is posted on social media. The poster can be sued by others within the organization that views social media comments as defamatory, harassing, libelous, or creating a hostile environment.
7. All organizational policies apply to use of social media conduct of its members and employees including but not limited to, policies related to "bullying", harassment, code of conduct and protecting confidential and/or proprietary information.
8. Violation of these guidelines may lead to discipline to be determined by the Seals Swimming Board of Directors.

Illness And Injury

Whenever possible, the coaching staff should be informed in of any current or past illness or injury, regardless of how serious or trivial it may be. Providing the coaching staff with accurate information will help both the swimmer and the coaches to modify the swimmer's practice in order to not aggravate the illness or injury. The coaching staff, like you, wants to help your swimmer return to peak swimming condition quickly and effectively. Failure to report injuries or illness could result in longer recovery time or further injury to the swimmer.

PRACTICE GROUPS

Schedule

The practice schedule is available on the website. Times may be adjusted slightly during the season, so please check the schedule on a regular basis. Announcements regarding last minute schedule changes, due to facility issues, inclement weather, etc. will be made via e-mail and an automated phone messaging system.

Pool training sessions are the most important aspect of competitive swimming. Consistent training is needed to progress through the classes of swimmers. Training schedules are designed to provide only slightly more time than is required for a swimmer. Therefore it is important that each swimmer attends as many practices as possible for their group in order to derive the full benefits of the program.

The Westbrook Seals program is progressive, and we view your swimmer's development as a "swimming career." Each skill we teach and each goal we reach is

meant to build on what was taught earlier in the season or achieved in previous levels in order to help your swimmer reach his/her long-term potential in swimming.

Green Group (6 participants minimum)

The Green Group is the first level that the Seals offer. Before joining the swimmer must be able to swim one length of the pool unassisted, on their stomach or back. The focus of the Green Group is to work on stroke technique, proper turns and dives, and to gradually build endurance. The age range is usually ages 5-8. There are two practices and a mentoring session available each week. Participation in meets is determined by the swimmers, coaches, and parents. Coaches' evaluation will dictate swimmers' placement into the White group.

White Group

The White Group is the second level that the Seals offer. The swimmer must have knowledge of all four strokes and be comfortable with swimming at least 8 lengths without assistance. In addition to fine tuning all four strokes, turns, and starts, the focus of the group is to introduce the swimmer to the training for the sport of swimming. The use of the pace clock and structured swim sets are introduced and used in the development of the swimmer. The age range is usually ages 7-10. There are four practices and a mentoring session available each week. Participation in Seals hosted meets is encouraged, and participation in other meets is determined by the swimmers, coaches, and parents. In order to move into the Blue Group, swimmers must demonstrate legal starts, turns & finishes and be legal in all 4 strokes & IM, proven in competition.

Blue Group

The Blue Group is the third level that the Seals offer. Swimmers must have working knowledge of how to use the pace clock and be comfortable in structured sets. The focus is primarily on technique and efficiency in the water. This group is used as a feeder group for younger swimmers transitioning into Gold Group I. The age range is usually ages 9-13. There are four practices plus a mentoring session available each week. Participation in Seals hosted meets is required, and participation in other meets is encouraged. In order to move up to Gold I, swimmers must be able to use a pace clock, be able to read sets from the board, be familiar with all stroke drills and coaches must agree they can handle the pressure of less technical training and more swimming.

Gold Group I

The Gold Group is the fourth level the Seals offer. This group is used as a feeder group for swimmers transitioning into Gold Group II. The age range is usually 10-14. Swimmers must be focused, determined and hardworking. Gold I members will do extensive work on technique and interval training and must be motivated to consistently improve. There are five practices plus a mentoring session available

each week. Four practices are recommended per week. Participation in specific meets is required, and participation in as many meets as possible is encouraged.

Gold Group II

The primary focus of this group is to prepare swimmers for the demanding training regimen of the Senior group. Swimmers must be focused, determined and hardworking. Swimmers will do extensive work on technique and interval training and must be motivated to consistently improve. The age range is usually 12-18. There are six practices available per week. Four practices are required per week. Participation in specific meets is required, and participation in as many meets as possible is encouraged. Dry land training is optional but recommended.

Senior Group

The Senior Group is the fifth and highest level that the Seals offer. This group is for highly focused Swimmer's whose focus is to reach the highest levels of swimming they can achieve. Though time is spent on technique, the focus of the Senior group is a highly aggressive training regimen. This group is for hardworking and highly educated swimmers. There are eight swim practices and three dry land training sessions available per week. Attendance at all practices is mandatory. Participation in meets is required. Higher level swimmers wishing to attend Championship meets or Sectionals must compete in 3 USA Swimming meets that season.

Swim Shape Group

The Swim Shape Group is a new group started in the Spring of 2011, geared toward school swimmers. This group aims to offer stroke instruction and technique training in a non-competitive environment. Between September and November, this is primarily a High School aged group, but, beginning in November, Middle School aged swimmers are encouraged to participate as they prepare for the Middle School swim season. The program meets twice a week for 1.5 hours each session. Swimmers may also participate in the Seals weekly mentoring sessions if desired. Participants are required to register with USA Swimming. Competing in meets is not required, but is an option, if desired.

Westbrook Seals Group Placement Philosophy

Group placement is based on many factors and a fair amount of coaching instinct. However, there is a big picture, team-wide philosophy that drives group placement decisions. We hope that communicating these ideas will allow for a better understanding of group placement decision making. Some of the most important factors driving group placement are the following:

- Commitment (practice attendance, meet participation, priority of the sport)
- Maturity (chronological age, physiological age, and emotional development)
- Training ability and technique.

Racing times are not a primary factor for group placement, although they may be an indirect factor as racing times translate to meet qualification and training needs.

The swimmer's group placement determines a floor, not a ceiling. And by that, we mean that each group has different standards for membership (the floor), but does not have upper limits of achievement (the ceiling). In no way does group placement communicate the coaches' belief about a swimmer's potential. A swimmer's group is not meant to be a predictor of future success, nor an indicator of his/her worth to the team or to the coaches. First and last, we view swimmers as outstanding young people, and the more we can do to remove inaccurate status labels from groups, the better.

Finding the appropriate group for each swimmer is the goal, and doing so is our challenge. As the swimmers grow physically and emotionally (often rapidly), their needs change. The more we think and talk in terms of appropriate group placement and the changing needs of swimmers, the healthier our team culture will be.

Also, we understand that group moves are not a small change in your lives as parents. Group moves often change schedules, which potentially affects other activities, car pools, team dues, coaches, and expectations. But just like going from middle school to high school, or from one level of math to the next, these moves can be looked upon as necessary steps along the way.

One final note on the athlete-coach relationship: at the Westbrook Seals, we believe that teaching each swimmer to take ownership of the sport is critical to self-development and success. A major part of that ownership is having a relationship with his/her coach that is built on trust and open communication. A

swimmer's face-to-face conversation with his or her coach can go a long way toward answering any questions a swimmer may have. As a parent, you play a major role in helping to develop this relationship by providing background information to the coach about your child, including medical conditions, past experiences, etc., which may be useful in knowing more about your child.

TRAINING SESSIONS

Equipment

There are a few things that all swimmers must have ON DECK for practice every day:

1. 2 swim suits –Swimmers generally wear two suits at practice. (usually 2 worn out racing suits or a specifically designed “drag suit” over another swim suit) Racing suits should not be worn to practice.
1. goggles (having an extra pair is encouraged)
3. swim cap (if needed)
4. water bottle
5. swim fins
6. hand paddles (Blue, Gold I, Gold II, Senior)
7. snorkel (Blue, Gold I, Gold II, Senior)
8. old sneakers to wear in the water (Blue, Gold I, Gold II, Senior)
9. any necessary medications (i.e. inhalers) in a labeled ziplock bag (Please alert coaches.)
10. A mesh gear bag, kickboard and pull buoy are all optional but useful items.

Practice Policies

The following guidelines are to inform parents and swimmers of the coaches’ policies regarding practice. These policies have been developed over many years and are designed to provide the best possible practice environment for all.

For Swimmers:

- 1) Swimmers are encouraged to support their teammates at practices as well as during competition. Working together is an important part of the “Seals Spirit”.
- 2) Westbrook Seals swimmers are expected at all times to follow the verbal directions of the coaching staff. At no time will disrespectful attitudes be tolerated.
- 3) Abusive language, lying, stealing, or vandalism will not be tolerated.
- 4) Each training group has specific attendance requirements appropriate for the objectives of that group. As a general rule, the least possible interruption in the training schedule will produce the greatest amount of success. The club does, however, encourage younger swimmers to participate in other activities in addition to swimming. The expectation of the coaches is that attendance in practices increases as swimmers move to higher groups. For Gold I, II and Senior Groups the coach must be notified before the swimmer misses a practice. If a swimmer misses a practice with out ample time to notify the coach, then he or she should bring a note to the next practice.
- 5) For the swimmers protection, they should arrive at the pool no earlier than 15 minutes prior to their workout time. They should also be picked up no later than 15 minutes after their practice is over. Swimmers should be on deck, ready to swim, 10 minutes prior to the start of their practice.

6) In case a swimmer is late for practice, it is our hope that the parents will send a note with the child explaining the reason for tardiness.

7) Swimmers should plan to stay for the entire practice. The last part of practice is very often the most important. Usually, there are also announcements made at the end of each practice. In the event that your child needs to be dismissed early from practice, a note from the parent for each dismissal is appreciated.

8) During practice sessions, swimmers are never to leave the pool area without coach's permission. If any swimmer needs to be dropped off early before swimming practice or to leave practice early, he/she must remain on the pool deck with the coaches until practice begins or he/she is picked up by a parent. The club has an obligation to act as guests while in the facility (both swimmers and parents). Every member of the club needs to do everything possible to respect this privilege. Any damages to the property may result in financial liability of the swimmers parents. Any damage may also result in the swimmer being asked to leave the team permanently.

9) Swimmers are to enter the building at the lobby doors on the back-side of the building and go directly to the pool area. A swimmer found in any other part of the building could damage our relationship with the city and the Pool Director.

For Parents:

Parents are encouraged to watch practice from the gallery. Here are some important guidelines to follow when observing practice.

1.) Young swimmers want parental approval more than anything in the world. For swimmers to learn as much as possible during practice, it is imperative that coaches have each swimmer's undivided attention. Please do not communicate with your swimmer during practice and do not compete with the coach for your swimmer's attention.

2.) We insist that parents do not interrupt the coaches on deck while they are coaching. If you need to communicate with a coach, please do so before or after practice (if they are not coaching another group). Scheduling an appointment with the coach is ideal.

3.) Our coaches spend a considerable amount of time planning weekly training sessions for each of their practice groups. Every training set or instructional drill has a purpose. One practice and/or practice set often builds on another during each week. If you have not watched all of the practice sessions, you may not understand the purpose of what the swimmers are doing on any given day.

4.) Please do not try and coach or advise your swimmer based on what you see (or think you don't see) him/her do during practice. Many times when teaching stroke skills, coaches ask their swimmers to do things that may not look correct or actually

might be illegal during competition. However, the drills have an important purpose in teaching skills. Swimming a one-arm butterfly stroke or using a flutter kick with breaststroke are examples of drills with a specific purpose.

Note: Please make sure siblings at the practice are safe, courteous, and well-behaved at all facilities. Also, please make sure the area is clean before leaving.

COMPETITION

Westbrook Seals Competition Philosophy

In preparing for your swimmer's meets, the following are some basic fundamentals of competition that Westbrook Seals coaches stress.

1. Each swimmer should compete with him/herself. It is more beneficial to improve one's time and/or technique than to win a ribbon or medal.
2. In addition to earning best times, the coaches praise swimmers for working on technique and/or racing strategies. Please note that it is possible that a swimmer won't improve his/her time when s/he tries something new (e.g., flip turns, technique, etc.). However, if a swimmer continues to try a new skill or technique, s/he will improve more in the long run.
3. The swimmers are taught to set realistic goals, and as they get older, they are taught to relate performance in practice to their goals times.
4. The coaching staff encourages age-group swimmers to swim every event they are eligible for. This helps to promote versatility since swimmers are continuously switching best events as they grow, mature, and change body shapes and sizes.
5. Sportsmanship is a MUST at The Westbrook Seals. We expect all swimmers, parents, and coaches to respect the officials, competitors, and the facilities we use. We also want swimmers to encourage and support their teammates.
6. It is important that each swimmer has a copy of his/her times. Keeping these times in a logbook helps the swimmer to see the progress s/he has made throughout the season and also from year to year.
7. SUCCESS = Improving one's own, best self.

How To Enter Swim Meets

Meet Schedules will be posted by season on the Seals website, www.sealsswimming.com. Seals swimmers are expected to participate in the meets assigned to their swim groups. As a swimmer progresses through the levels, the amount of emphasis on competition in meets is increased. Each level will have

requirements for participation. All swimmers are required to swim in the Seals home meets.

Meet entry can be accessed through your Club Assist portal on the team web site. Coaches choose the events for each swimmer. Meet entry fees will be billed to you.

What to Bring to a Meet

Note: Be sure to put your swimmer's name on all belongings and equipment!

1. Team swimsuit (plus one back-up suit if possible)
2. (2) team swim caps
3. (2) pairs of goggles
4. Westbrook Seals team t-shirts
5. (2) towels, minimum
6. Quiet games or books
7. Food—nutritious snacks (Refer to the Appendix, "Nutrition")
8. Water bottle
9. an old blanket or sleeping bag (outdoor meets only)

Swim Meet Policies and Procedures

1. The week before the meet, check the entries for your swimmer, which will be posted on the bulletin board or emailed by your swimmer's coach. If there are any problems with your swimmer's entries, let your swimmer's coach know as soon as possible.

2. Arrive at the pool ten to fifteen minutes prior to the scheduled warm-up time, and locate the Westbrook Seals team area where all team members sit. The meet warm-up time is listed in the meet information, which can be found on the Westbrook Seals website under "Meet Information".

3. Warm-ups are always conducted by the Westbrook Seals coaching staff. **It is very important for all swimmers to warm-up with the team.** Swimmers' bodies are just like cars on a cold day—they need to get the engine going and warmed-up before they can go all out in a race.

4. All Westbrook Seals swimmers are required to wear the Westbrook Seals team cap and team suit (a navy blue suit is an acceptable substitute). High-end racing suits such as Fastskins are allowed at championship meets only, or as otherwise authorized by the coaches. Swimmers also are asked to wear their team t-shirts. Be proud to wear your navy and yellow! Your personal appearance shall be neat

and appropriate at all times. All other team apparel is optional. However, wearing the complete team uniform promotes team unity and pride.

5. Each swimmer is responsible for knowing which events s/he is swimming and for being on time to swim his/her event. It is a good idea to check in with the coach before going up to the blocks.

6. At the conclusion of each race, the swimmer should ask the lane timers for the stopwatch time. Swimmers are expected to go immediately to their coach. The coach discusses the race with each swimmer individually and gives positive comments concerning splits, stroke technique, and race strategy.

7. Electronic timing is used at most meets. Generally, the official time is the one recorded in the computer when the swimmer touches the touch pad. This time appears on the scoreboard. However, if a swimmer misses the touch pad, or if there is a mechanical failure, various back-up times may be used. The timing and score keeping personnel analyze all times to determine the official times, which are then posted as final results.

8. NOTE: According to USA Swimming rules, parents are not allowed in the immediate competition venue unless they are serving in an official capacity. Similarly, all questions concerning meet results, an officiating call, or the conduct of a meet should be referred to the Westbrook Seals coaching staff. They, in turn, will pursue the matter through the proper channels.

9. In between races, swimmers are asked to rest and stay warm. All energy should be stored up and used in competition. If swimmers must eat, a light, nutritious snack is recommended.

10. In prelim and final meets, all swimmers who qualify to compete in the finals are expected to participate in the finals. All team members are strongly encouraged to return to the finals sessions to support the team and take advantage of the opportunity to learn from watching the finals. At times, alternate and relay positions open up that need to be filled.

11. It is very important that parents and/or swimmers check with the coaching staff prior to leaving the swim meet, making certain that their swimmer has not been placed on a relay.

12. No swimmer shall attend a meet unless accompanied by a parent or a chaperone arranged for by the swimmer's parents

13. Team members and parents are expected to display proper respect and sportsmanship toward coaches, officials, meet administrators, and fellow competitors.

14. As a matter of team pride and courtesy to the meet host, swimmers are expected to leave the Westbrook Seals team area in a neat and clean condition at the conclusion of each session of the meet.

Team Travel Policies

The Seals may travel as a team to some meets and everyone is expected to behave in an exemplary manner. The reputation of the Seals, as well as the other athletes with you, is dependant on your behavior.

Swimmers will agree to follow the rules about practice and meet behavior in the team handbook.

The coaching staff holds the final word on any rules, regulations, or disciplinary action.

1.) The consumption or purchase of alcohol, smoking or chewing tobacco, or use of any other illegal drug or substance of any kind will not be allowed. In addition, any team member found or suspected to be in the presence of others (regardless of team affiliation) partaking in any of the above activities will be subject to the same punishments and probable expulsion from the Seals.

2.) At no time will male and female athletes be in the same room together with the door closed. This applies to Seals members or members of any other team.

3.) Swimmers are expected to be quiet and respect the rights of teammates and other hotel guests during evening hours and during rest time between prelims and finals.

4.) Swimmers are to refrain from inappropriate physical contact.

5.) No team member may be out of their room after the assigned bedtime. Permission must be obtained from the coach/chaperone to leave the room past this time.

6.) Rooms and travel vehicles are to be treated with respect and kept neat. Belongings should be kept together and all trash deposited appropriately. Any damages or thievery incurred at a motel will be at the expense of the swimmers assigned to that room, and further disciplinary action will be taken.

7.) All telephone and incidental room charges must be paid prior to curfew on the final night of the trip.

8.) All team members will be polite in restaurants. Leave a 15% tip. If there has been a problem with the service, see the coach.

9.) All swimmers and chaperones traveling with the team must attend all team functions and are expected to know all travel/meeting schedules and strictly adhere to them. Coaches will establish warm-up times and other trip-related timetables as needed. Being prompt and on time is essential.

10.) All swimmers are expected to remain with the team at all times during a trip. Swimmers are not to leave the pool, the hotel, restaurant, or any other place at which the team has gathered without the permission of a coach or chaperone.

11.) When traveling by car or van, swimmers must wear seat belts and remain seated at all times.

PARENTAL SUPPORT

Support Your Swimmer!

As parents, you have created the environment in which your children are growing up. Your children are products of the values you have taught them, the structure you have provided for them, and the examples you have set for them. Human nature, however, is such that parents might lose some of their ability to remain detached and objective in matters concerning their children's athletics. The following guidelines will help you keep your children's development in the proper perspective and help your children reach their full potential as athletes.

It is the coach's job to offer constructive criticism of a swimmer's performance. We want your swimmer to relate to his or her coach as soon as possible concerning swimming matters. This relationship between coach and swimmer produces best results. When parents interfere with opinions as to how the swimmer should swim or train, it causes considerable, and oftentimes insurmountable, confusion as to whose advice the swimmer should follow. If you have a problem, concern, or complaint, please contact the coach.

It is the parent's role to provide love, recognition, and encouragement necessary to help a young athlete feel positive about him/herself. Be the person that your swimmer can look to for constant, positive reinforcement. This will help your child get the most out of each practice, which in turn gives him/her the confidence to perform well in competition.

Strive to provide your swimmer with the basic opportunities s/he needs to have a positive swimming experience. Make sure your swimmer regularly attends practice and swim meets. Encourage good diet and sleeping habits.

A parent's attitude often dictates those of the swimmer. A swimmer might not be consciously aware of what is taking place, while subconsciously absorbing powerful messages about a parent's desires and feelings. For example, be enthusiastic about taking your swimmer to practices, helping at swim meets, and participating in team activities. Please don't look at these functions as chores.

Every individual learns at a different rate and responds differently to the various methods of skill presentation. Some swimmers take more time to learn; this requires patience on the part of the coach and the parent, both of whom must remember that the swimmer's ultimate swimming potential may be as great or greater than that of a faster learner. Avoid comparing the skill, courage, determination, attitude, performance, or improvement of your swimmer to other swimmers. Swimmers mature physiologically and psychologically at different ages; the weakest swimmer in a practice group this year could be leading practices in the future.

Not every time: Even the very best swimmer will have meets where they do not do their best times. These plateaus are a normal part of swimming. Over the course of a season times should improve. Please be supportive of these "poor" meets. The older swimmers may have only two or three meets a year for which they will be rested and tapered. It is important to know, especially for the younger swimmers, that performance can be negatively affected by pressure. We try to make the meets fun and exciting and lessen the amount of pressure being put on the swimmer. The coaches can control the environment on the pool deck, but before and after the meet it is important to be nothing but supportive no matter the result of the swims.

Teach them to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be "out there trying," to be working to improve his/her swimming skills and attitudes. Help him/her to develop the feel for competing, for trying hard, for having fun.

Try not to re-live your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure. You lost as well as won. You were frightened, you backed off at times, you were not always heroic. Don't pressure your child because of your pride. Athletic children need their parents so you must not withdraw. Just remember there is a thinking, feeling, sensitive free spirit out there in that uniform who needs a lot of understanding, especially when his world turns bad. If he/she is comfortable with you – win or lose – he/she is on their way to maximum achievement and enjoyment.

Always remember that children tend to exaggerate, both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before over-reacting.

Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. Some of us can climb mountains, and are afraid to fight. Some of us will fight, but turn to

jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain areas. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear, but a means of doing something in spite of fear of discomfort.

The etymology of the word “competition” goes back to the Latin words “com” and “petere,” which mean “together to strive.” It is important to teach young swimmers to compete with, not against others, and to use competition to help them strive to be their own best self.

The greatest contribution you can make to your swimmer's progress is to be a loving, supportive parent.

Support Your Westbrook Seals Program!

Important: Know and understand the Westbrook Seals philosophy. Keep in mind that we champion a long-term approach regarding each swimmer's participation in the program.

Strive to stay informed. This is crucial. Glance at the bulletin boards, check the website, watch practice periodically, and communicate with the coach. Indirect involvement with the program sends a powerful message to your swimmer regarding your interest in his/her activity.

Remember: Involved Parents = A Successful Program! Volunteers are needed in nearly every aspect of the Westbrook Seals program. Your gift of time is a great way to have fun, make new friends, and contribute to your swimmer's team. Seals Swimming has a reputation within the state and throughout New England of hosting very successful and fun swim meets. A very large portion of our operating budget is generated from the club hosting at least two meets. One of the commitments expected of you when you join the Seals is to help work our own swim meets. We usually host a meet in January, May and one again in July, plus the Sebago Challenge in August. Every family is expected to provide volunteer support at these meets. We also need parents to help manage the day-to-day operations of the team. Such volunteer opportunities may include joining a committee or serving a term as a member of the Board of Directors.

Use our open lines of communication. When you have a specific question or concern regarding your swimmer, go directly to your swimmer's coach. Most questions are answered quickly at this level.

If you need additional help, please consult the Head Coach, then your Group Parent Representative. The final link in the chain of communication is the President of the Board of Directors.

Help with fundraising. To ensure the financial stability of the team, it is imperative that all team members and their families be involved in the fundraisers the team has set up. Dues and income from meets cover only a portion of the cost of running the team.

COMMUNICATION

General team announcements and information are distributed via the Seal's web page (www.sealsswimming.org) and via the team email list. Last minute announcements i.e., storm cancellations, pool closures, meet warm-up changes will be distributed through the teams automated telephone messaging system. Any changes to practice times will be sent out as soon as they are determined. The upstairs bulletin boards are used to display upcoming meet information and volunteer sign-ups for Seals hosted meets.

Communication between the coaches, parents, and swimmers is valued and encouraged. If a parent would like to talk to a coach, anytime before and after practice is permitted. **The time during swim practice is dedicated to the swimmers.** The best way to connect with the coaching staff is to call or email and set up an appointment.

One of the traditional swim team communication gaps is that some parents seem to feel more comfortable in discussing their disagreements over coaching philosophy with other parents rather than taking them directly to the coach. Not only is the problem never resolved that way, but in fact this approach often results in new problems being created. Listed below are guidelines for a parent raising some difficult issues with a coach:

- 1) Try to keep foremost in your mind that you and the coach have the best interests of your child at heart. If you trust that the coach's goals match yours, even though his/her approach may be different, you are more likely to enjoy a good rapport and a constructive dialog.

- 2) Keep in mind that the coach must balance your perspective of what is best for your child with the needs of the team or a training group that can range in size from

20-90 members. On occasion, an individual child's interest may need to be subordinate to the interests of the group, but in the long run the benefits of membership in the group compensate for occasional short term inconvenience.

3) If your child swims for an assistant coach, always discuss the matter first with that coach, following the same guidelines and preconceptions noted above. If the assistant coach cannot satisfactorily resolve your concern, then ask that the head coach join the dialog as a third party.

4) If another parent uses you as a sounding board for complaints about the coach's performance or policies, listen empathetically, but encourage the other parent to speak directly to the coach. He/she is the only one who can resolve the problem. Direct feedback or discussion with the coach is so much better than hearing it third hand.

5.) Confidential Concerns may be raised anonymously by leaving suggestions and/or comments in the suggestion/comment box located near the Seals Office. The suggestions/comments are reviewed by the entire board at the next board meeting.

6.) You can also consult your Group Parent Representative if you have a question or concern. If they don't know the answer, they will direct you to someone who does. The final link in the chain of communication is the Board of Directors.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (BOD)

The Seals Board of Directors is made up of five to nine parent volunteers. The BOD is responsible for the administrative functions of the team. Their responsibilities include budget planning, meet administration, fund-raising, and other business functions that will benefit the management of the team. Each member of the BOD has duties integral to the management of the team. This information is captured within the team's By-Laws. You may request a copy from a Member of the Board.

Each board member is also assisted by standing committees composed of parents from the Club.

FEE STRUCTURE

The Westbrook Seals Dues Structure is posted on the website.

SWIMMING BASICS

USA Swimming

As the National Governing Body for the sport, USA Swimming is charged with the responsibility to formulate rules, conduct national championships, disseminate safety and sports medicine information, select competitors to represent this country in international competition, and insure the development of its member clubs and age group swimmers. Participants in the Westbrook Seals competitive swim programs must be members of this organization. Membership, which is renewed in the fall of each year, provides limited, co-benefit accident and liability insurance for swimmers participating in supervised workouts and swim meets. USA Swimming website: <http://usaswimming.org>

Maine Swimming

Maine Swimming Inc. is the governing body for competitive swimming in the state of Maine. MSI is overseen by a Board of Directors that is responsible for rules and procedures that are specific to competitive swimming in Maine.

Age Groups

There are seven different age group classifications recognized by United State : 8-Under, 10-Under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18, and Senior. The Senior classification includes any age registered swimmer who has achieved the prescribed qualifying time for the event. Not all age group classifications are offered at every swim meet. The swimmers age on the first day of a meet will govern the swimmers age for the entire meet.

Time Standards

USA Swimming has established motivational time standards for Age Group Swimmers. Time standards can be used as tools to help set goals and as a way to determine the type of meet in which a swimmer may participate. Current standards may be found at www.usaswimming.org on the menu bar under "Times".

Within each age-group there are different nationally recognized levels of achievement based on times. All swimmers begin as "C" swimmers. As they improve, they advance from "C", to "BB", "B", "A", "AA", "AAA", and ultimately "AAAA". The times required for each ability level are published each year by United States Swimming. This permits fair, yet challenging, competition on all levels. In some cases, a swimmer may be in a different class in each stroke. An example: a "C" breaststroke time, a "B" freestyle time, and a "AA" backstroke time.

Some swim meets set certain qualification standards. In order to swim in a certain classification, a swimmer must have achieved the qualifying time for that particular classification.

Swim Meet Seasons

The swim year is divided into two seasons. The winter, or "short course", season runs from mid-September to mid-March. The meets are held in a 25-yard pool. The summer, or "long course", season runs from early April to mid-August. Meets are generally held outside in 50 meter pools (Olympic size).

Why is it important for my swimmer to continue with the Westbrook Seals through the summer?

The Westbrook Seals program is a year-round swim team and is progressive in nature. We view your swimmer's development as a "swimming career." Each skill we teach is meant to build on what was taught earlier in the season in order to help your swimmer reach his/her long-term potential in swimming. Swimming during the summer helps young swimmers continue to build on the skills they have worked so hard to obtain from September to April. In addition to technique, swimmers continue to build their aerobic/conditioning base during the summer months. Also, during the summer, older swimmers have more time to train. We encourage them to take advantage of every opportunity possible to swim and improve.

Explain the differences between the short-course and long-course season.

The short-course season usually runs from September through March. Most of the meets during these months are conducted in 25-yard pools. The long-course season begins in April and runs through July or August, depending on the championship meet dates. Long-course competitions are conducted in 50-meter pools. Maine does not have any 50 meter pools, so we travel to New Hampshire (usually Dover) or Canada for long course competition.

The United States is the only country in the world to swim in 25-yard pools. Swimming in 50-meter pools is the best opportunity to compare our swimmers to the world. All world records are given in meters, and international competitions, such as the Olympics, are conducted in long-course pools.

How do we compare our swimmer's times from short course to long course?

It is best not to try to compare or convert times from short course to long course. Each swimmer is different, and many factors play a part in the difference between a short-course and a long-course time—factors such as the type of stroke, speed of turns, and level of conditioning. Typically, the long-course times will be slower than short-course times because 50 meters is longer than 50 yards.

How many long-course meets should we try to attend?

There are not many opportunities for long-course meets. Try to take advantage of each meet that your swimmer is qualified to attend. Since the strategy for long-course races is different than short-course races, it takes time and practice to learn how to swim a race using long-course strategies.

When is the best time during the swimming year to plan a family vacation?

We encourage families to take vacation after the championship meets. If your swimmer has worked hard all year, for them to fully take advantage of their hard training, it is best not to interrupt their season with a week off.

SWIM MEETS:

TYPES OR LEVELS OF SWIM MEETS

- 1) Developmental Meets-These meets generally do not have any qualification time standards. Most of the time these meets offer each one of the competitive strokes in the two distances offered for each group. Each swimmer is usually allowed to enter from 3-5 events per day.
- 2) Qualification Meets-These meets have some type of qualification time standard(s) that a swimmer must meet in order to enter the meet. Our state swimming body is Maine Swimming, Inc.
- 3) State Open Championships-At the end of each short course (winter) and long course (summer) season, a State Championship meet is sanctioned by Maine Swimming Inc., the governing body of swimming in the state of Maine. Maine swimming sets the qualifying time standards for these championship meets.
- 4) Zone Championships -After the state championships are held in the summer, a swimmer may qualify to participate in the Eastern Zone Championships by swimming a national "AAA" time. This is an all-star meet where swimmers compete as a member of the Maine Zone team competing against other states from the Northeast.
- 5) Speedo Sectional Championships-The country is split up into anywhere between Two-four sections, depending on the season. The swimmer must qualify to participate. The standards vary from year to year. The qualifications are slower than Junior Nationals but faster than Zone cuts (AAA).
- 6) Speedo/USS Junior National Championships-One of the highest levels of achievement Seal swimmers strive for is the participation in the Junior National Championships. United States Swimming sponsors an eastern United States Junior National meet and a western United States Junior National Meet each season. Seal swimmers meeting qualifying time standards for this meet travel to different locations throughout the eastern half of the United States to compete against the best 18-Under swimmers in the nation.

7) Phillips 66/USS National Championships (Senior Nationals)-Other than the Olympic Trials and the World Championship Trials, each of which is held every four years, the highest level of competition for our senior swimmers is the USS National Championships. As with the Junior Nationals, Seal swimmers meeting the national qualifying time standards travel to various cities throughout the U.S. to compete against America's best swimmers. Swimmers can qualify for national teams that represent the U.S. in international competition by their performances at Senior Nationals.

APPENDIX

GLOSSARY OF COMMON SWIMMING TERMS

Age Group Swim Meet: All USA Swimming registered swimmers, typically 14 years of age and under, who have met the qualifying time standard for a specific

event(s) are eligible to participate in their age category. Age on the first day of competition shall govern the entire meet.

IM (Individual Medley): A race done by an individual swimmer, which consists of one leg of each of the competitive strokes – butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and any other stroke (generally freestyle), in that order.

Finals (Championship or Consolation): The session of a meet where the meet winner is determined. It is generally swum in the evening. Finalists are determined by the fastest swimmers in the preliminary rounds, which are generally swum earlier in the day.

Maine Swimming, Inc.: The name of the Local Swimming Committee (LSC), charged by USA Swimming to govern competitive swimming in the state of Maine.

Heat Sheet: A listing of all swimmers by event number, heat, and lane assignments in the meet. These are available for purchase at the meet. Funds go toward offsetting the costs of running a meet.

Long Course: A type of competitive pool, which measures 50 meters in length. The standard size for all international competition and all world record swimming is the 50-meter course. Typically, meets conducted from the end of April through August are swum Long Course.

Prelims (Preliminaries): In certain meets, Prelims are the qualifying rounds held for each event to determine the finalists.

Psych Sheet: A ranking by seeding times for all the swimmers entered in each race of a meet, sometimes used at meets in place of a heat sheet.

Referee: The USA Swimming official who has the authority over all other officials at the meet. He or she makes all final decisions and sees to the efficient running of the meet.

SEAL: The official abbreviation for the Westbrook Seals for use on heat sheets.

Seeding Times: The time a swimmer uses to enter a meet. This time, which is written on the entry card, determines one's heat and lane in the particular event.

Short Course: A type of competitive pool, which measures 25 yards or 25 meters in length. Typically, meets conducted from October through the end of March are swum Short Course.

Split: A "per lap" time that coaches often record for teaching the concept of pacing. For instance, a swimmer's time for each 25-yard leg of a 100-yard event is his or her split.

Starter: The USA Swimming official at the meet who is responsible for starting each heat and call the next heat to the blocks.

Splash magazine: A monthly magazine with articles and stores about competitive swimming, as well as some regional and all national meet results.

Stroke Judge: A certified USA Swimming official who determines the legality of swimmers' strokes and disqualifies those who do not conform to USA Swimming rules.

Time Standards: Certain qualifying times, which have been set up annually by USA Swimming for all events in all levels of meets to ensure that all competitors are reasonably of the same ability in their respective meets. The swimmer's goals should be betterment of his or her time, progressing from the "B" standard to the Nationals.

Touch Pad: The part of an electronic timing system that rests in the water at the finishing end of each lane. Swimmer's times are electronically recorded when the pad is touched.

Unattached: The status a swimmer receives when changing from one USA Swimming club to another. A swimmer must be "unattached" for 120 days from his or her last competition with the previous USA SWIMMING club. During this time, the swimmer may compete individually (but not in relays) without representing any club.

USA Swimming: The governing body for all amateur swimming in the United States. The National Headquarters is located in Colorado Springs, Colorado.
www.usaswimming.org/

USA Swimming # (ID): The personal registration of each athlete member in USA Swimming. The formula for deriving a swimmer's USA Swimming # is the following:

Birth Date (6 digit format MMDDYY), first three letters of the first name, middle initial, and first four letters of the last name.

For example: John A. Smith was born September 1, 1959.

His USA Swimming # is the following: 090159johasmit

NUTRITION

Everything you do influences your performance, but your food choices have the most effect due to the long term and short term benefits. A proper diet, including proper selection of foods, will help your training and performance while also achieving a healthy lifestyle once you stop competing.

To help ensure a balanced diet, remember that there are no magical nutrition remedies. So forget the fads and eat a variety of wholesome foods from the four food groups--milk, meat, fruits & vegetables, and grains. Foods in these groups provide protein, fat carbohydrate, fiber and all the necessary vitamins and minerals.

After heredity and training, nutrition plays the largest role in the quality of a swimmer's performance. Most every person involved in competitive swimming knows that nutrition is important. Following are some keys terms and helpful guidelines that will aide in better performance in the pool.

Fast Facts to Remember

*Consuming excess protein will not build muscle faster. A normal diet gives you plenty of protein.

*Energy for specific events is provided by foods eaten several days before competition, not in the minutes just before the race.

*Drinking adequate water is vital to nutrition and performance. This is especially so in hot, humid environments.

*Pre-competition meals should be low in fat and high in carbohydrates.

*Most fast-food menus provide the exact opposite of the above.

*Foods that are mainly carbohydrates take the least time to digest and leave the stomach, making them ideal pre-competition choices

Suggestions for Healthy Eating

Lots of Carbohydrates

A swimmer gets most of their energy from their body breaking down food that is rich in this. A carbohydrate is like a wick on a candle. It burns slowly for long lasting energy to give you the power to perform at long meets or practices. You should eat as much as possible daily, but always eat a lot more a week before a

meet. Don't wait until the night or day before the meet. **Examples: potatoes, pizza, spaghetti or pasta, pancakes, bread and cereal.**

Have protein every day

Protein is important to a swimmer's body to build all the cells. As you grow you build new cells and having protein in your meal make those cells stronger.

Examples: chicken, turkey, milk

Fats are important, but don't over do them!

Fats are used by the body for energy. The difference between them and carbohydrates is that they take a whole lot longer to be broken down for us to use, so they sit there and end up making swimmers get fat. **Remember, fat gets in fast when you're hungry, but takes its time leaving!!!** Fat is also very heavy. If you feel heavy you swim slower and it makes it harder to sprint. **Examples: Fast food hamburgers, french fries and potato chips**

Drink lots of water

Just remember that you need water to swim and your body needs water too. It is very important to keep your body full of fluids while you work out. So drink a big glass before practice, during practice, and after practice. You do sweat while you swim! Sports drinks are also good at any time, but don't stop drinking water.

Vitamins and minerals are important

If you eat a good balanced diet, it should always include lots of fruits and vegetables. They are loaded with the power of vitamins and minerals that add extra energy the body need to perform to its best. Milk also has lots of vitamins and minerals the body uses to build strength so you can last through that 100 butterfly.

Eating and Competition

***The Week Leading up to the Meet**

Ensure a high-carbohydrate eating plan.

Include more rice and pasta: they have more carbohydrate than potato.
Include nutritious carbohydrate-based between-meal snacks (see list below).
As your training will be tapered pre-event, you won't need to eat more!
Eating the right balance of increased carbohydrate and less fat is the key.

***The Pre-Event Meal**

Eat this meal about 2-3 hours before competition (approximately 2-3 hours before warm-up).

This meal should top-up your blood sugar levels after the night's rest.

The meal does not have to be large, but should fill you up for the next few hours. High-carbohydrate foods are the best options: e.g., bread, cereals, fruit, pasta, rice, etc.

Ensure that the meal is low fat, this speeds up digestion.

Eat breakfast before you get to the pool, this leaves time for the carbo fuel to get in!

Have a drink to optimize hydration: try sports drink, juice, or best of all, WATER! Avoid the caffeine in cola drinks, coffee, chocolate, and tea - it is dehydrating.

If you feel too nervous to eat, try a liquid meal (see later in this article).

Practice with your pre-event meal prior to THE BIG MEET to fine tune this eating strategy

***After the Warm-Up - Recover for the Heats**

After the warm-up, replace fluids immediately (have your drink bottle at pool side, and drain it).

Sports drinks have their benefits as they replace fluids and carbohydrate simultaneously, but make sure they're not sweet like Kool-Aid if you're mixing your own.

If there is less than 1 hour between races, just keep to fluid replacement.

If there is more than 1 hour between the warm-up and your first heat, try to eat a little.

The best approach is to eat a little and often during the day.

Eating too much at once can make you feel heavy and lethargic.

***Drinking and Eating**

In longer breaks of at least 90 minutes, have something to eat.

In shorter breaks, use a sports drink or water to replace fluids.

The indoor pool environment is humid and dehydrating, so DRINK, DRINK, DRINK! Adequate fluids are essential all day to keep your blood and energy pumping.

If there is a longer break (a few hours) through the day, use it to eat a bit more.

Take your own high performance foods and drinks with you (don't rely on the canteen).

A cold pack and thermos helps to keep foods and drinks cold, which aids in absorption.

Record your food and fluid intake to keep count of when you last ate and drank.

To monitor hydration check that your urine output is regular and "looks clear."

Monitoring body-weight change over the day is another way to check hydration.

In general, crackers are bad! - they tend to be high in fat and salt, which makes you retain water

***Top-Up Snacks Between Events (1-2 hour breaks)**

Snack fruits (small cans of fruit) or canned baby fruits.

Bananas.

Fruit that is peeled and cut up (easier to eat this way).

Plain bread rolls (white bread may be less heavy) - try pita bread!

Fruit buns (e.g., hot cross buns) or raisin bread.

Rice cakes (you can top them with honey, jam, or banana).

Rice pudding or bread pudding (use reduced-fat milk).
Instant noodles (varieties that do not contain oil or the flavor packet).
Jam or honey sandwiches (NOT with peanut butter)
Plain boiled pasta with a little tomato sauce.
Low-fat breakfast or plain (non-chocolate-covered granola bar)
Fruit fingers (see baby food selection at supermarket).
Plain crackers (not high-fat types).
Low-fat puddings or jello.
Small amount of reduced-fat yogurts.
PowerGel (or imitations)
PowerBars (or imitations)

***Longer Breaks or After the Competition**

Sandwiches with low-fat fillings (avoid butter and tuna- or egg- "salad" as the "salad" is mostly high-fat mayonnaise).
Pasta or rice with tomato pasta sauce (a little chicken or very lean meat in sauce is okay).
Probably the most important thing to remember is that while you need to eat some food, ***you will swim better being a little hungry than a little full.*** So drink lots, eat a little, and you should be well on your way to swimming success.
Have something to drink and eat immediately after your last swim.
Avoid the "fast food" chains on the way home - their high fat foods will delay recovery.
Have some high-carb food prepared so you can eat as soon as you arrive home.
If possible take a thermos with a meal inside so you can eat even earlier.
Check your body weight to ensure you are rehydrated.
The worst thing you can do is wait a couple of hours, then stop at McDonald's or KFC or the like, and fill up on whatever they're serving - very low in carbohydrates, and much too high in fat and salt!