

Good morning!

What a fantastic meet we had as a whole this weekend at the Blizzard Bowl. Be sure to check your folders for ribbons this week, we had quite a haul. We also had a bunch of new state & JO cuts. You can find results, cut times, my review of the meet etc on the new website that just launched MMAHurricanes.com. You can also use the site to get your child registered for sessions and for meets! This is going to make the whole process a lot easier for our parent volunteers and for our entire club. Thank you so much to Todd Marsh for making this happen!

JO, Q2, States, Districts, Q3: these are all terms I'm sure you've been hearing either from your swimmer or from a coach. Hopefully I can help explain what's going on with these cuts & meets. The cuts & standards are in place to help motivate kids to improve and strive to be better at the sport. Goals of making certain cuts can be great motivators and can be great fun. We've had kids that were nowhere near certain time standards that set goals and achieved them through a lot of hard work & dedication. For a coach, there is nothing like seeing the delight in a kid's face after attaining one of these goals. As coaches we use cuts as motivators but we don't dwell on them and make kids think less of themselves if they don't make them.

I'll use my son Kellen as my example as I explain each level and meet to be as clear as possible because there is a lot of jargon. Kellen is 9 & falls in the Boys 10u category. The breakup is as follows: boys & girls 10 & under, boys and girls 11-12, boys and girls 13-14 & boys and girls 15 & over.

Qualifying 3 (Q3) - This is any time that is not a Qualifying 2 (Q2) time aka Junior Olympic (JO) cut swim in a sanctioned USA meet. The Blizzard Bowl was a sanctioned USA meet. As are our Speedster Meets and most weekend meets. Our weekday dual meets with Spartan are **not** sanctioned USA meets, meaning the times or cuts made do not count toward cuts etc. My son Kellen has all Q3 times. He went 57.07 this weekend in the 50 Breast. He will be attending the district meet February 22-23 at Lakeview High School in Battle Creek.

Let's say he swims great but falls short of JO cuts in all events which is very common and nothing to be ashamed of. His "championship season" is over. He will keep practicing for the rest of the season and working hard but he will not be attending JO's or states.

Qualifying 2 (Q2) - These times are your Junior Olympic times or "JO" as commonly referred to. The three levels in USA swimming are Districts, Junior Olympics & States. This is the first statewide meet with cuts for the kids. Using Kellen's 50 Breast example of 57.07 you can calculate how close he is to making one of these JO/Q2 standards. Kellen would need to match or exceed a time of 48.09 for the 50 Breast to swim at the Junior Olympic meet on March 1-2 at East Grand Rapids High School. Let's say Kellen attends the District meet and swims a time of 47.99 in the 50 Breast. He has now qualified to swim at the Junior Olympic meet the next week in that event. If that's the one cut he makes, that's the one swim he swims at JO's.

Let's say he falls just short of a Q1/State time. His 'championship season' is over but he can keep attending practice and work toward achieving goals for the Spring, Summer & beyond.

Qualifying 1 (Q1)/States - These are your state qualifying times. When someone says "State Cut" they are referring to these times. Let's say after Kellen has a great district meet he has a great JO meet and he achieves the 10u Boys Q1 time of 43.69 in the 50 Breaststroke. Kellen has just qualified to swim that event at the 12 & under State Meet at Oakland University on March 8-9. He can swim up to 3 events per day at the State Meet and only the events for which he has state qualifying times. The 13 & over State meet will be held on March 14-16 at Zeeland High School.

One other small piece that goes along with the Junior Olympic, District & State meets. For this I'll use Emily Fenneuff's daughter Lisette as my example. You cannot swim events at meets in which you have exceeded the time standards. For example Lisette has a JO cut in the 50 Freestyle. She cannot swim that event at Districts. She must swim that at JO's to try to make states. Lisette also has Q1 State cuts in all 3

Breaststroke events (50, 100, 200). She cannot swim those events at JOs. There is no cap at states. This is to keep the level of meet restricted to those trying to make the next step. It really is a great rule that allows each level of kid to have their big meet to get excited about without having the same 'usual suspects' kids up there dominating everything.

What are ABC Standards? - These times show up on the meet program every now & then and are national standards set forth by USA Swimming as benchmark times or goal setting standards. Occasionally we will be at a weekend meet where they will use these times as cut offs. Two weeks ago in Indianapolis we took a small group of swimmers to see if we would like to bring more next year. There were 1,600 kids at the meet so the organizers decided to make the cutoff a 'B' time. B & A standards are not Junior Olympic or State cuts but they are a good measuring stick to see how your child is progressing. When a meet is referred to as an 'ABC meet' this is what they are referring to and basically means anyone can enter.

ABC times are also used to put the kids in divisions at USA meets. This weekend at the Blizzard Bowl they used divisions. For example my son Kellen came into the meet with a C time in the 50 Breast. That means he was only competing against the other kids in his age group with C times coming in. He placed 6th in the C Division. If he achieved a B level swim at Blizzard Bowl, then next meet he would compete against other B Division kids in that event. Same with if he then achieved an A division swim at the next meet.

Beyond States - I won't go into great detail but there are regional and national meets beyond the State meet that have cuts as well. When your child approaches those times or meets those standards we will contact you. There is a Zone meet for 12u kids and a Sectional meet for 13u. In addition there is a Junior National meet and every year a Senior National meet that every four years is called 'Olympic Trials'.

I hope this helps clear up any questions you may have. Feel free to email me if you have questions, comments or concerns.

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