



## Portage Aquatic Club HANDBOOK

### **Introduction:**

Welcome to the Portage Aquatic Club! The Portage Aquatic Club is a coach owned swimming club supported by a 501(c)(3) non-profit boosters organization called Portage Swimming. The purpose of the boosters is to support the Portage Aquatic Club and enhance the sport of swimming at the Portage Aquatic Club. Portage Aquatic Club is a registered USA Swimming club. USA swimming is the national governing body for amateur swimming in this country. All members of the Portage Aquatic Club, including our coaches, are requested to be registered as members of USA Swimming. Although registration is not required, no swimmer shall compete at ANY USA meets without a USA swimming registration.

### **Coaching Staff:**

**Ty Parker:** Head Coach [parkertyk@gmail.com](mailto:parkertyk@gmail.com)

**Dawid Tatarczyk:** Head Age Group Coach

**Agata Zalewska:** Volunteer Head Developmental Coach

**William Givans:** Developmental Coach

**Elizabeth Mitchell:** Developmental Coach

**Lexi Ambbs:** Head Developmental Coach

**Alyssa Riker:** Developmental Coach

### **Portage Aquatic Club Mission:**

The mission of the Portage Aquatic Club is to foster a culture of hard workers and high achievers both in the pool and in our community.

### **Portage Aquatic Club Vision:**

We want to build a swimming community that recognizes the value of club swimming and its impact on the community.

## **Our Most Important Goals:**

**1. Our coaches will provide the best structured learning system for our swimmers.**

Swimmers will advance through our program with a technique first training philosophy. Coaches will use a spiraled teaching curriculum and training program.

**2. Our culture will focus on hard work.**

Swimmers will learn to work hard at listening and giving their best effort at each and every practice. As a swimmer advances in the program, they will begin to focus more on the training aspects of the sport and the amount of practice time required to improve will increase.

**3. Swimmers will be excellent athletes and students.**

The swimmers will learn how to budget their time with schoolwork, homework and life activities in order to **attend all practices** and also excel in their academics. This will lead to athletes that are prepared for all of life's activities.

## **Practice Policy**

Training sessions are the most important aspect of competitive swimming. Training is the most significant way to make continued improvements in the sport. Therefore, it is important that each swimmer attend as many practices as possible in order to maximize their talents and receive the full benefits of the program. Pool availability is our most expensive and limiting factor for practicing, so please try to take full advantage of our pool time. Every attempt by the Head Coach is made to try to have practices at appropriate times for swimmers. The age of the swimmers is considered prior to the seasonal scheduling but sometimes limited access to pools interferes with the scheduling process. Spring and summer sessions tend to be the most troublesome.

## **Swimmer Practice Responsibilities**

Swimmers must come to practice ready to participate. Competitive style swimming suits, (no two piece swimming suits or cut-off shorts), goggles and caps if swimmers have longer hair are required. Additional gear may be required (kickboard, pull buoy, fins, paddles, etc.). The coaches will notify each swimmer as to what gear is needed at the various levels. Please make sure the gear is in working order and labeled with the swimmer's name. Our team is a Speedo sponsored team. All gear should be purchased as Speedo via our website.

Swimmers should arrive at the pool no earlier or later than 15 minutes prior to their practice time. While parents are NOT encouraged to stay at the pool during practice time, they must be back at the pool to pick up their swimmer when practice ends. Swimmers must be out of the locker room within 15 minutes after practice has ended. **Parents are encouraged to leave the pool area while their child practices.**

Parents have proven to be a disruption at practices. Please avoid eye contact, gesturing or communicating with your child while they are at practice. Siblings that are in the bleachers need to be seated and quiet or they will be asked to go into the hallway. Climbing on the railings and bleachers is prohibited during practice times.

Swimmers should plan to stay for the entire practice. Please notify your coach prior to the start of practice if you need to leave early. The coaching staff feels that as a courtesy to the coach to please communicate all absences and tardies to practice prior to the practice. The coaches feel it is their responsibility to take care of the swimmers during their allotted time at practice and knowing where they are is very important. Vacations will factor into the end of season meets. Swimmers that miss a stretch of days for vacation may be asked not to compete at meets due to the possibility of getting injured.

All swimmers should use the bathroom **before** practice begins. Too many interruptions during practice causes disruption for the rest of the swimmers in the pool. Swimmers are expected to finish a set prior to getting out to use the restroom.

Swimmers are encouraged to bring water to practice, but are discouraged to drink it during a set. Between sets, swimmers may get a drink and use the restroom. However, if the swimmer misses the directions for the set, they are to ask another swimmer to repeat it to them.

### **Parent Responsibilities**

As the parent of a competitive swimmer, your main responsibility is to provide a caring and supportive environment for your swimmer. This support will encourage your swimmer to feel good about his or her interest in competitive swimming.

1. Make sure your swimmer is at practice on time so they have the opportunity for improvement.
2. Drop off and pick up your swimmer on time.
3. Turn in meet information and make meet payments on or before the due date.
4. Review the weekly updates and check the website frequently so you are aware of schedule changes, upcoming meets and other activities.
5. Be prepared to help with Club activities!
6. Listen to the coaches as they can provide guidance when parents are unsure.
7. DO NOT COACH YOUR SWIMMER!!
8. Ask questions.

### **Parent and Swimmer Information Communication:**

The Portage Aquatic Club has developed several ways to communicate with parents and swimmers. The website, [www.portageaquaticclub.com](http://www.portageaquaticclub.com), contains the vast majority and most up-to-date Club information. This website is also used to sign up for meets, team social events and team fundraising events. Once a swimmer registers with the Club and USA Swimming, the swimming family will receive a log-in name and password to access all of the information on the website. The "Parent Portal" link on the website will take parents to the meet and event registration page.

A newsletter is also distributed via email and is posted on the website on an as-needed basis. This is an important, up-to-date source of information for the coming week.

**Swimmer Mailboxes:** swimmers will have their own mailboxes at the pool and are encouraged to check them daily. Typically, meet awards will be found in the mailboxes. However, some families have communicated with other families by leaving notes in the mailboxes as well. Please check your mailbox frequently!

Coaches and integral contacts can also be contacted via links on the website. You will find the communications person, the billing administrator, the collections administrator, and the apparel person. Please contact the appropriate person with regards to the program.

### **Empowering Your Child to Speak:**

There are several advantages to having your children, rather than you, speak directly to the coach. Our coaching staff is more open to suggestions from swimmers rather than from parents. The biggest plus is that this can be an empowering experience for children, even if they don't get the message across as they intend to. Mustering the courage to talk to the coach can be a great life lesson. Your children may gain important experiences about communicating with adults and in the power structure of school or in future jobs. Talking to the coach on their own will provide valuable tools in the future.

### **When You Need to Intervene:**

You would only have your children take up an issue with their coaches if you believe the coaches are basically well-meaning people trying to do the right thing. Some coaches do not always put their swimmers interests first. If the coach is abusive to swimmers, **you must intervene**. Youth sports has no place for a coach who verbally or physically intimidates athletes. You would never allow a teacher to bully or humiliate a student, and you must not allow it from a coach, even one who often gets a pass due to coaching success. Unless your children are too young to understand what is going on, talk with them before acting to intervene. If a child is against the idea, but you believe the situation demands that you intervene, say, "I understand that you don't want me to talk with your coach, but I believe that this is so important that I have to do it." Questions regarding meet entries and events should be discussed swimmer to coach. The older the swimmer, the more interaction between swimmer and coach is expected.

### **Parent approaching the Coach:**

If you are angry about a certain situation, gain control of yourself and know exactly what you want to say. Typically the 24 hour rule should take effect. Pick a time and place where only the coach can hear you—not during a game or practice, and not where you might be overheard (in the stands or in the parking lot), which could make the coach more defensive. You may need to write and even rehearse what you want to say until it sounds the way you want. Be prepared to support your assertions with specific examples. Then listen carefully to what the coach says in reply. Even though intervening feels

uncomfortable, remember you are not just standing up for your child, but also for all of the other children that are on the team, or who might swim for this coach in future seasons. Emails have proven to be misunderstood. An adult face to face conversation is much more appropriate.

### **Illness or Injury**

If a swimmer is ill or has an injury, please notify your coach via email or call your coach. Swimmers will be expected to participate FULLY at practice unless otherwise directed by a doctor. Full participation is always the policy and sometimes injuries cause a disruption to the flow of practice. Please let the coach know if there is an injury and what the doctors limitations are. Sometimes limitations can not be accommodated by the coach, so the coach may just ask the swimmer not to participate until they are well enough to practice fully.

### **Code of Conduct**

Parents and swimmers must sign and abide by the Portage Aquatic Club's Code of Conduct. Please be sure to review the document with your child before signing it, understanding that there are clear consequences for violations. Please see appendix for Code of Conduct form.

### **USA Swimming Registration**

Each Portage Aquatic Club swimmer **must** be registered with USA Swimming **in order to compete at USA meets**. USA swimming registration is **HIGHLY ENCOURAGED** for all members, but is not mandatory. It also provides both liability and secondary medical insurance coverage for each swimmer. The membership period runs from January 1st to December 31st each year. If you begin your membership after September 1st, however, it will continue until December 31st of the following year.

USA Swimming registration forms can be found on our website and at [miswim.org](http://miswim.org)., they can also be found at the back of this document. Completed registration forms and payment are due prior to joining the Club.

Seasonal applications are also accepted. A seasonal application would be purchased after the Fall season. A reduced rate is available by applying for a seasonal membership during the spring or summer season only.

### **FEES EXPLAINED**

#### **Meet Competition Fee:**

This fee includes covering the costs involved with coaches' time, travel and lodging expenses at swimming meets. The below costs are for the fall/winter (Short Course) swim season and the Spring/Summer (long course) fees. Once a swimmer is signed up the fees will be applied and there will be no refunds. Even if the swimmer does not attend.

#### **Portage Community Enrichment - Monthly Dues/Tuition:**

PAC uses Portage Public Schools facilities and pools. Monthly dues cover the cost to use Portage Public Schools facilities as well as help support coaching practices (not meets). The below dues are for the fall/winter (Short Course) swim season. All monthly dues/tuition is paid directly to Portage Community Enrichment.

#### **Meet Entry/Event Fees:**

The meet host typically charges each swimmer for their entry into the meet, their individual entries (how many swims they perform), and for their participation on relays. Event fees are \$5 per event at USA

Swim Sanctioned Meets. So, for example, if a swimmer has 3 events at a meet and each event is \$5, the Meet Entry Fee charged will be \$15. SWMSL meets have no entry fee, just a competition fee. .

**Sectional Meet/Junior National/Nationals/Futures/Olympic Trials** - \$100 meet coaching fee will apply. Please contact the coach to inquire on the fee structure.

**Admin Fee:** Is used to pay for our website and accounting fees: It costs \$6000 annually for administrative fees/year.  $\$6000/135$  (# of swimmers on PAC) = \$45 administrative fee to be paid online.

<b>SWIM GROUPS</b>	<b>USA Registration</b>	<b>Monthly PCEC, tuition</b>	<b>Swim meet Coaching Admin/Fee. Swimmers that plan to compete</b>	<b>Meet Entry Fees</b>
<b>Jr. Team</b>	\$78	\$60/month	Admin fee yearly= \$45 USA Meets= \$15/meet SWMSL Meets=\$10/meet Prelim Finals meets=\$20/meet	*see above
<b>Croc Orange</b>	\$78	\$70/month	Admin fee yearly= \$45 USA Meets= \$15/meet SWMSL Meets=\$10/meet Prelim Finals meets=\$20/meet	*see above
<b>Croc Green</b>	\$78	5 swims \$85/month Less than 5 Swims \$80/month	Admin fee yearly= \$45 USA Meets= \$15/meet SWMSL Meets=\$10/meet Prelim Finals meets=\$20/meet	*see above
<b>Croc Black</b>	\$78	5+ swims \$100/Month Less than 5 \$80/month	Admin fee yearly= \$45 USA Meets= \$15/meet SWMSL Meets=\$10/meet Prelim Finals meets=\$20/meet	*see above
<b>Senior</b>	\$78	6+ swims \$115/month 5 swims \$100/Month Less than 5 \$85/Month	Admin fee yearly= \$45 USA Meets= \$15/meet SWMSL Meets=\$10/meet Prelim Finals meets=\$20/meet	*see above

Dryland

10 Under \$32/Month

Middle School \$50/Month

High School \$50/Month

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:**

Financial assistance is available to athlete members of Portage Aquatic Club who face hardship and who are in good standing with the club. Financial assistance can be requested through the Booster's Program. The intent of this program is to provide financial aid to those swimmers who consistently demonstrate a sincere commitment to maximizing their swimming potential.

This scholarship program is administered by the Portage Swimming Boosters Executive Board. The board's financial committee (President, Vice President & Treasurer) will review the applications, and make a recommendation to the board for a vote. Other than the finance committee, all information will be held in confidence with the exception of coach(es) consulted for a swimmer recommendation. Consideration for scholarship appropriations is based on financial need, availability of funds, coach's recommendation, and the approval of the board. Due to the limited availability of funds, we encourage families to apply early; consideration will be on a first come/first served basis in addition to the other criteria listed. Receipt of scholarship for one season **does not guarantee** a scholarship for another season.

Applications will be seasonal; short course (Sept-June) & long course (June-July) and re-application is required for each season. Applications will be accepted starting August 1 for short course, and April 15 for long course. Aid maybe adjusted during the season based upon changes in need if funds are still available. Application must be submitted to the Boosters no later than 30 days after the start of the season that the Scholarship/Grant is to be used.

Please refer to the PAC Handbook for additional information on Financial Assistance.

### **Financial Aid may cover:**

Up to but not to exceed 50% of the PCEC fees not covered by other scholarship awards (Jim Christy, etc.)

### **Financial Aid does not cover:**

- USA Swimming Fees, Coaching Fees or PAC Yearly Administration Fees (There are USA fee scholarships available via USA Swimming. (There is a box that can be checked when you register with PAC on the website.)
- Meet Entry Fees
- Equipment or Attire/Apparel
- Additional Clinics or Programs

- Social Activities Related to the Club

**Family Commitment Required for Financial Aid:**

- Submit a completed application with supporting documents
- Meet or exceed “volunteer” hours as required by PAC
- All balances due must be paid in full and accounts must be in good standing with PCEC and PAC by the end of the current *session* (not year). (Future scholarships will not be awarded if there are outstanding balances due.)
- Have an active email account or other consistent way to receive communications
- Swimmer (with help of family) to meet or exceed practice attendance requirements for their PAC practice group.

**The board reserves the right to revoke the scholarship at any time due to:**

- Violations of conduct by the swimmer or parent(s) based on USA Swimming Code of Conduct
- Any of the above requirements are not fulfilled

**APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

Swimmer/s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Practice Group/s: \_\_\_\_\_

Swimmer/s Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Father/Legal Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother/Legal Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Address (if different from Father): \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Who is the financially responsible party/ies regarding swimmer's participation in PAC? \_\_\_\_\_

Number of dependents in the home under 18: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Adults in household: \_\_\_\_\_

Does the swimmer qualify for free or reduced school lunch? \_\_\_\_\_

Total amount/s awarded: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe hardship circumstances that led you to apply for the scholarship?

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## MEET SCHEDULE

DATE	NAME OF MEET	LOCATION	MEET TYPE	GROUPS
10/13	MMA Pentathlon	Mason Michigan	USA	All Groups can attend
10/27/2018	Harper Creek	Battle Creek Mi	SWMSL	All Groups can attend
11/3	NASA	Middlebury Indiana	USA	All USA Registered Athletes
11/10	Lakeview Quad	Battle Creek Mi.	SWMSL	All Groups can attend
11/30/2018	Winter Washout	East Grand Rapids Mi.	USA	All USA Registered Athletes
12/1	Bridgman Tri Meet	Bridgeman Mi.	SWMSL	All Groups can attend
1/5	Jenison ?	Jenison Mi	USA	All USA Registered Athletes
1/5/2018	Mid States All Star	Indianapolis IN.	USA	All 14 U swimmers with AAA
1/12	Plainwell Tri Meet	Plainwell Mi.	SWMSL	All Groups can attend
1/19	Croc Rock Meet	Kalamazoo Mi.	USA	at all patrons asked to work and
1/26	St. Joe tri meet	St. Joeseph Mi.	SWMSL	All Groups Can attend
2/2	Swimathon	West Middle School	NON Compete	Fundraiser
2/8	Michigan Open	Rochester Hills Michigan	USA	MUST HAVE QUALIFYING TIMES
2/9	10 under SWMSL Championships	Allegan Mi.	SWMSL	All swimmers 10 and under
02/16/2019	11 and over SWMSL Championships	South Haven Mi.	SWMSL	All 11 and over Swimmers
3/1	Junior Olympics	East Grand Rapids Mi.	USA	All USA swimmers with qualifying times
03/10/2019	12 AND UNDER STATE MEET	TBA	USA MEET	ALL SWIMMERS WITH QUALIFYING TIMES
03/21/2019	13 AND OVER STATE MEET	TBA	USA	ALL SWIMMERS WITH QUALIFYING TIMES
03/28/2019	SECTIONALS	Indianapolis IN.	USA	ALL SWIMMERS WITH QUALIFYING TIMES
	Qualifying meets			
	Fundraiser			

## **USA Swimming**

PAC athletes **should** register for USA swimming for a number of reasons, including:

- attaining appropriate developmental swim experiences
- attending structured, professionally recognized, and organized swim meets that are tracked on the State and national level;
- to increase the level of competition of all swimmers through the structure of a worldwide accepted swim organization (USA Swimming).

The PAC program is made up of swimmers of all ages. As always, PAC's goal is to help swimmers realize their full potential in the sport of swimming, whether that be local success, state or national level. In general, our USA swimmers are trying to reach a higher level and feel that the added time and commitment are valuable. The PAC USA program allows for swimmers of all abilities and age groups to compete in a wide range of events that they might otherwise not find at league level swim meets.

**Swimmers will not be allowed to compete at any USA meets if they are not USA registered.**

### **USA Meets**

The PAC winter season consists of “short course” meets held in 25 yard pools. The fall/winter season runs from September through March. Summer USA meets are “long course” and held in 50-meter pools. Most USA meets consist of several sessions. They usually begin with a Friday session, followed by two sessions each on Saturday and Sunday. Spring/Summer season runs from April through July. Typically August is an “off” period. A swimmer may choose to attend one or more sessions appropriate for his/her age group. Swimmers are free to choose which events they want to swim within the guidelines of each particular meet. Keep in mind that the Head Coach has the ultimate say in which events a swimmer may and may not swim. Each swimmer is required to pay the fee set by the hosting club for each event, typically \$5 per event plus a Michigan surcharge of \$1.00 per swimmer. Swimmers do not need to enter for relays – the Head Coach decides who will swim in the relays. Relays are an honor and are picked on merit, training practices and strategy, by the coach.

### **USA Age Group Classifications**

At the meets, swimmers are grouped by age, gender, and swimming ability. The age groups usually used in Michigan are 8 & under, 10 & under, 11-12, 13-14, and 15-18. Other groupings sometimes used in Michigan Swimming meets are “mini meets” for 8 & under swimmers, and “own-age meets” in which swimmers compete in single-year age groups. Some meets offer “open” events for swimmers of any age who have achieved the relevant time standard. Open events usually are offered to accommodate the needs of high school and post-high school swimmers.

### **USA Swimming Time Standards**

In order to facilitate the management of swim meets, Michigan Swimming classifies swimmers into three ability levels labeled AA/Q1, A/Q2, and B/Q3. The levels are defined by the time standards (see appendices), where Q1/AA is the fastest group, Q2/A the next fastest, etc. For example, in a “B” meet, all of the swimmers in a given event will have achieved times equal to or better than the B time standard, but slower than the A time standard. The time standards used in Michigan Swimming meets are unique

to Michigan and are not related to the national motivational times. Michigan Swimming time standards may be adjusted from year-to-year to reflect the anticipated number of swimmers in each ability level.

### **PAC USA Meet Entry Policy**

Swimmers can register to attend USA meets at the Portage Aquatic Club website using the “Parent Portal” tab on the Website. The Meet packet is available on the event tab. It will give you all of the pertinent information. Please adhere to the meet dates, times, and entry deadlines. If you have any questions regarding USA meets, registrations, and/or fees, please contact coach Parker. Once a swimmer is registered for the meet and the entries are sent, parents will be responsible for paying. The parent will have to pay the entry fees regardless of a change in plans. The meet packets clearly state, that once the entries are received, the team must pay all of the fees to the host team..

**NO NEW ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE DEADLINE.** Any entries after the deadline must be discussed with the Head Coach and entered as a deck entry where permitted.

Please note, that it is the responsibility of the parent to review meet entries and notify the Head Coach of any errors or omissions. Only contact the Head Coach with specific coaching questions and not billing questions. All billing questions need to be addressed through the team’s billing coordinator. Any discrepancies must be immediately reported to the PAC Coach within 24 hours of the meet entries posting. PAC will send out an invoice approximately 2 weeks prior to each USA meet. Each parent will be invoiced a dollar amount based on the number of meet entries in which their swimmer is registered. Entry fees will include individual events, relays, and the Michigan Swimming surcharges. Entries must be paid in full prior to the USA meet invoiced. If payments are not received prior to the USA Meet PAC reserves the right to charge a per swimmer \$10.00 late fee and will withhold future USA meet registrations..

STATE, ZONE, SECTIONAL, or NATIONAL LEVEL SWIMMERS: Swimmers and parents MUST let the Coach know all events that their swimmer is interested in ENTERING at the high level meets. Typically, any new cuts for these meets should be discussed with the coach so that the coach can plan accordingly. The Coach will enter the swimmer in those events. If there are other events that the coach would like to enter the athlete in, the Coach will add those events to the entry. It is advisable that the swimmer communicate with the Coach as to what events he/she is qualified in and the Coach will advise the swimmer. It is not always in the best interest of the swimmer to enter events for which they qualify and in which they are seeded the highest. Remember that it may be better for the swimmers athletic development to swim events that he/she trained for. As always the coach has final discretion in choosing all events.

### **SOUTHWESTERN MICHIGAN AGE GROUP SWIM LEAGUE**

#### **RULES**

1. The league shall have an organized meeting on the 1st Monday in May for the summer season and the 2nd Monday in September for the winter season. Any new team membership to the league will be voted on at these meetings.

2. All meets shall run according to the rules published by the National Federation of State High School Association(Swimming & Diving), including relays and its adopted changes. FALSE START RULE: 10&U- one false start. 11&O- no false starts.
3. AGE GROUP CUT OFF DATES: Winter: Nov. 30. Summer: May 31. The age the swimmer is, on or before these dates, will be the “age group” he/she competes in.
4. Age groups for winter is 8 & U, 9-10,11-12 &13-14. 15 & over can compete, but they can't score. Summer season will be 8&Under 9-10,11-12,13-14,15 and over..
5. Each swimmer is limited to 4 events, one of which must be a relay. Swimmers are able to swim 2 ind.- 2 relays or 3 ind. 1 relay.
6. Teams may have unlimited entries for both relay & individual events.
7. 8&U relays may be mixed boys and girls and will be listed as one event. All other events are boys or girls.
8. Swimmers may swim up an age group. They may swim up in a relay then swim their real age the rest of the meet. If a swimmer swims up in an individual event, the swimmer must swim up the entire meet.
9. Swimmers are ineligible the first winter season after graduation from high school.
10. 8&U will not be allowed to dive start in the shallow end. Shallow end starts will be with an underwater push off only.
11. Dual meet entries will be determined by host team. Hy-Tek or cards.
12. Scoring dual meets will be the option of attending clubs. The visiting team(s) will receive a copy of the score sheet including all names, times, and places.
13. Ribbons will be awarded at dual meets by the host team for 1st to 6th place or 1 st -8 th depending on pool size. Awards will be available to the coaches at the end of the competition.
14. All teams are asked to make a concentrated effort to have registered officials at all meets.
15. LEAGUE OFFICIATING: The 8 & under group will be officiated with some leniency. 1 major stroke flaw per event ie. scissors kick for breaststroke. 1 hand touches & relay jumps will not be allowed in the 8 & under. The remainder of the age groups will be officiated strictly by the rule book. When a disqualification occurs the official will make a note on a card & the DQ card will be delivered to the coach. No age group coach will be allowed to officiate during the season in which they coach. TWO OFFICIALS will be used at the LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIPS.
16. SCORING: Will be consistent with H.S. Federation scoring: If using a six lane pool a six lane scoring method will be used. If using an eight lane pool an eight lane scoring method will be used. Six lane scoring: Individual events- 6-4-3-2-1, Relays 8-4-2. Eight lane scoring Ind. 8-6-5-4-3-2-1, Relays 10-5-3. LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SCORING: 16 places (note that the 15-18 age group does not score in the winter champion meet).
17. The League meet shall be held by the second weekend in February for the winter season, and by the last weekend of July for the summer season.

18. League entry deadline: five (5) days prior to the day of competition by 5:00 p.m. Entries not received by 5:00 p.m. will have a 24 hour grace period for injury and or sickness.

19. Swimmers must swim in at least one meet hosted by a league member to be eligible to swim in the league championships.

20. League meet finances; admissions to the League meets will be divided between the hosting club and League as follows: expenses associated with running the meet (officials, heat sheets, etc-items must be itemized with costs) will be deducted from the total admissions; the remainder of admissions will then be divided between the hosting Club and the League, with each receiving an equal share. The League will use these funds to pay for awards and any other League expenses. The concessions will be run by the host team and all proceeds will remain with host club. Admission for the championship will be \$4 per adult, school-age children no charge. One heat sheet per family will be included with the admission.

21. The League Championship 10 & U order of events will begin with the 9-10 girls and boys 200 medley relay and followed by the 8 & U mixed medley. Events 5-34 will remain the same.

22. If a team intends to miss a season, the team must notify their intent in writing at the seasonal coaches meeting. If the team does not notify the league, they must then re-apply for league membership.

23. New teams wishing to enter the league must make an application to any member club by April 15th for the summer season and Sept. 1 for the winter season. The application will be considered by the membership at the next semi-annual organizational meeting

24. League championship scoring to 16 th place. Championship awards:

Individual: 1 st -3 rd place medals, 4 th -16 th ribbons.

Relays: 1 st – 3 rd place medals, 4 th -16 th ribbons.

Over-all & Runner up trophies. Trophy for each age group boy/girl combined winners 8 & under, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, and 15-older (summer only for 15-older).

Trinkets for 8 & under best times. 10 and under heat winners will receive a trinket.

**Revised: March 28, 2018-Plainwell**

### **Financial Assistance**

Financial assistance is available to athlete members of PAC who face hardship and who are in good standing with the club. Financial assistance can be requested through the booster's program. The intent of this program is to provide financial aid to those swimmers who consistently demonstrate a sincere commitment to maximizing their swimming potential. Funds are awarded by the PAC Boosters on a first-come/first-served basis and by the sole decision of the Boosters committee.

Application for funds should be made by the swimmer or parent to the PAC Board of Directors. The Board will use the following criteria in awarding Funds:

- Financial need

- Swimmer must fully participate in team practices, swim meets, other events and activities, including Fair Share hours.
- Parents must complete Volunteer Hours. Expectation is that at least 1 shift at all home meets will be worked.
- Families must participate in the PAC Swim-A-Thon fundraiser.
- Sincere interest in and commitment to competitive swimming
- Coach recommendation.
- Attendance and Participation at Practice. Scholarship/Grant recipients are expected to regularly participate in weekly practice sessions.
- Swimmers must qualify for free and reduced lunch at school.

Application must be submitted to the Boosters no later than 30 days after the start of the season that the Scholarship/Grant is to be used. The Scholarship/Grants are limited to the availability of funds, and are awarded on a first come, first served basis. A renewal application must be completed for each swimmer, each season. No swimmers fees will be completely eliminated. Each family must submit a letter to the Boosters Club stating how much financial assistance is requested (as a % of fees or a dollar amount), how the parent(s) have contributed to the team in the past and how much and in what fashion the parents plan to volunteer for the team during the current year, and acknowledgement of the practice attendance policy determined by each swimmer's coach.

**Additional Swimming Resources:** USA Swimming and Michigan Swimming have websites that contain useful information for parents. The Michigan Swimming website, [www.miswim.org](http://www.miswim.org) has information about qualification times for various championship meets, a database for all swimmers' times in the state of Michigan, and other local swimming information. The USA Swimming website, [www.usaswimming.org](http://www.usaswimming.org), has information more at the national levels, but has parent resource information and article links that may be helpful to parents.

### **PAC Volunteering Program**

The Portage Aquatic Club is supported primarily by volunteers. To ensure the success of the club and its mission and vision, every family must participate. At the time of registration, **every family is required to volunteer a certain number of hours during the season.**

### **PAC Family Volunteer Hours:**

**High school Sr. Crocs - 10 Hours**

**Non High school Sr. Crocs 20 Hours**

**Crocs - 20 Hours**

**Jr. Crocs - 10 Hours**

**Opt out option \$160**

### **PAC —Volunteering Program Guidelines**

1. All PAC families are required to complete volunteering hours by volunteering at PAC swim meets and other activities as illustrated in the attached program chart. Families may choose from various activities (see PAC Volunteer Opportunity List) to accumulate hours. Each

volunteering activity has a corresponding number of hours which will be tracked and totaled throughout the program period.

2. Families are required to work the entire scheduled sessions for which they signed up to receive credit for that session. Example: if you have signed up to work a session as a meet timer, you are responsible for timing the entire scheduled session, as determined by the meet director. If you must be relieved of timing, it is your responsibility to find someone to take over your position and fulfill your commitment. Please do not ask to leave after your child's last race if you have not finished the entire session—partial credit will not be given. You must fulfill your entire session to earn the corresponding hours.

3. A penalty of \$20/hour will be assessed for failure to show up for an activity to which you committed. For instance, if you signed up to work in concessions for a 2-hour session and you fail to show up, you will be assessed \$40 and will earn no hours for that session. This fee is capped at \$100.

4. A family's volunteer commitment may be fulfilled by any member of the family or a family friend. Some positions have minimum age requirements and/or training requirements

5. Only the number of positions offered online for a meet may be staffed to fulfill your required commitment. Example: if only 3 positions are needed to run the concession stand for a meet session, then only the 3 families who signed up for those slots will get credit for working. A fourth person cannot help out the day of the meet and obtain credit for working the concession stand if the three allotted slots are already filled, unless the meet director or away meet coordinator determines that a need exists.

6. The PAC volunteer Participation Program will run from September 1 through July 31 (short-course season through long-course season).

7. A family's level of commitment is based upon the swimmer that has the most requirements. I.e. if you have a HS swimmer and a Croc Green swimmer, the higher of the two is croc Green, so you would be required to cover the croc green hours.

8. A family's level of commitment will stay the same during the duration of the program (September 1 - July 31) based upon the most senior swimmer's group assignment at the beginning of the program, regardless of whether the child is moved up to a more advanced group. Example: if your child begins the year swimming in Jr. Croc team and during the program period is moved up to the Croc team, your Volunteer commitment in terms of hours remains at the Jr. Croc level throughout the year.

9. The PAC Volunteer program is automated so that families are able to sign up for activities online and track their volunteer activity and progress.

10. Families who join PAC after the start of the swimming year (September) will have 2 volunteer hours per month absent removed off the total Volunteer commitment as set forth in the program for their most senior swimmer.

- Reminder: Volunteer commitment set forth in the program targets the most senior swimmer in a family to set the Volunteer commitment level.

11. The PAC Board or coach reserve the right to remove any participant from a slot for which they have signed up in a swim meet, if that participant has already fulfilled their fair share requirement and it is deemed necessary to open that position to allow other members to be able to fulfill their volunteer requirement. If a participant needs to be removed from a signed-up slot, the volunteer will be notified prior to the start of the meet. Other instances where a participant may be removed include, but are not limited to, cases where the participant is not of the proper age and/or not adequately trained to fill that position.

12. The PAC Board, coach and volunteer administrator reserve the right to review and adjust the hour system as necessary. Additional volunteer opportunities may be offered and/or approved throughout the program period.

13. The PAC Board and volunteer administrator will individually review and make final judgment in cases of exception to the volunteer Participation Program.

### **PAC Participation Opportunities List**

Job sign-up is done through the website. For most jobs, no prior experience is necessary! A sampling of job descriptions is below:

#### **1credit**

- x Attend a parent meeting organized by the coaches or the board president
- x National Anthem (swimmer sing or play)
- x Be a swim parent mentor to a new swim family

#### **2 - 4 credits**

X Each meet activity is as designated by the Meet Director, approximately a 2 to 4 hour block.

- x Timer
- x Runner
- x Concession Worker
- x Hospitality Worker
- x Shopping before the Meet
- x Meet Set up (1 or 2 hour job)
- x Meet tear down (1 or 2 hour job)
- x Announcer
- x Admissions, Program and Heat Sheet Sales
- x Credentials, Athlete and Volunteer Check In
- x Safety Marshall
- x Apparel Sales
- x Head Timer
- x Running the Hospitality Cart

- x Posting Results and Preparing Awards
- x Printing Heat Sheets
- X Help with Banquet(s) – hour value of jobs will vary and will be designated by the Banquet Chair.
- x Training to run the results computer during an AM or PM session
- x Training to run the timing console during an AM or PM session

**4 hours**

- x Running Results Computer for an AM or PM Session
- x Running the timing console for an AM or PM Session

**15 hours**

- x Hospitality/Banquet Chair
- x Swim-A-Thon Chair

**25 hours**

- x Meet Director
- x Board Positions
- x Fair Share Program Administrator

**Fundraiser**

- x Hours will be determined by the Event Coordinator for each fundraising event.

**Create your own hours**

- x Earn 5 hours for each \$100 of corporate/private sponsorship raised for the Portage Aquatic Club (does not include Swim-A-Thon sponsorship).

There are also many other jobs during the season that come up, so watch the weekly newsletter and website for your opportunity to help out!

**PAC Volunteer Participation Program Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. Why does PAC need this program?**

- a. PAC is an organization that can only succeed with the support and participation of parents.
- b. PAC needs participation from members in order to adequately staff the PAC hosted swim meets—there are hundreds of participation sign-up slots that need to be filled over the course of a swim year to staff the PAC meets alone! This does not include all of the other activities that the club depends upon the parents to help make successful such as the Swim-a-Thon, team parents, committee heads, etc...
- c. This program is the foundation for equal participation from all PAC families....everyone does their *fair share!*

**2. Do other swim clubs/sport activities require parent participation like PAC does?**

Yes, many other swim clubs and other organizations require parent participation. Many swim clubs, especially smaller ones, ask for both volunteer time as well as a financial obligation that must be paid outright or earned through fundraising such as selling candy, magazines, etc... The Volunteer program at PAC requires a minimum level of participation from families, but allows them to avoid any financial assessments as long as they have fulfilled their fair share requirements. These volunteer activities can be easily fulfilled at swim meets where your child will be swimming anyway. Families also have the opportunity to be rewarded for doing more than their fair share by qualifying for our awards.

**3. How many events will I have to attend to satisfy my volunteer requirements?**

That will be up to you. There are a variety of opportunities for earning points. See the PAC Volunteer Opportunity List for a list of activities and their corresponding point values. There is no reason to rush to get all your points for the year. There are opportunities for earning points throughout the year. Use the chart stating the number of points required at each assessment (found in the Volunteer Program Guidelines) to guide you as to when you need to accrue your points. The more involved you become, the greater your child's swimming experience will be.

**4. Do I personally have to work at all of the required sessions?**

No! That is the beauty of this program. You have the flexibility to enlist the aid of friends or family members to work on your behalf. Be sure that when your friend/family member signs in to work, that they indicate that they are working on your behalf.

A few examples:

X Ask a fellow PAC member to trade working a required session for you in exchange for car pooling their kids.

x Invite a friend or grandparent to a front row seat at a meet where they can time.

**5. I have 3 swimmers on PAC in different swim groups. Do I have to participate more than someone who only has one swimmer?**

Your level of participation is based only upon your most senior swimmer's team. For example: If you have one swimmer in Jr. Crocs, one in Crocs and one Sr. Crocs, then you are only required to meet the fair share requirements listed for your Sr. Crocs team swimmer. A major benefit of the volunteer program is that the level of participation is equalized across the entire PAC membership.

**6. My child is a beginning swimmer in the Green Jr. Cross team. Don't you think that asking this much participation is too much for parents new to swimming?**

Even if a family has no prior swim meet experience, getting involved right away is the best way to show support for your child's activity, learn how a swim meet works, and meet other swim team parents. The nature of the sport of swimming that you have chosen for your child requires a lot of parent involvement and participation. Swim teams cannot be run successfully without the parents.

**7. Why such large assessments for non-fulfillment of the required fair share activities?**

*We actually do not want your money; we want and need your time!* It is vital that we are able to adequately staff all of our PAC hosted events—we can only do that with your participation! The amount of the assessments were set to be proportionate with the decrease in the number of families that we have had step forward to participate in staffing meets and other team activities.

**8. You say you want my time and not my money—then why the need for any assessments at all?**

We do want your time—***we need your participation***—in order to bring in revenue from swim meets and fundraisers. This revenue is necessary to the PAC budget. We encourage all swimmers to compete in our meets. It is a team activity that is fun and it is a great way to gauge a swimmer's progress. Even if a swimmer chooses not to swim in our meet, families can help out with the running of the meet. Meets **REQUIRE** a huge number of volunteers. If a family does not participate, then they cost every other member of the team lost revenue. It is only fair that those families who fail to participate help replace that lost revenue—therefore the need for assessments.

**9. How does participating at swim meets really save me money?**

The monies that are generated from hosting swim meets are a significant fundraising opportunity. Without these monies, monthly dues would have to be raised significantly to cover expenses, ie. equipment needs, activities for our swimmers, etc. Higher dues may mean that some families are essentially “priced out” of the sport of swimming. Also, hosting more swim meets at home means that PAC families save money by reducing the amount they have to pay for coaches out of town expenses such as hotels, gas and food. However, in order to make these home meets successful, we need parent participation through the fair share participation program.

**10. What if I want to help out by doing more than just my volunteer requirements?**

Go for it! We love and need the help to successfully run all of our swim meets and other activities throughout the year such as Swim-a-Thon, heading up committees, etc... The Volunteer Participation program becomes more of a volunteer recognition program once you have fulfilled your fair share! We will reward your efforts with awards based on your point accumulation.

**11. What if I help out with something at PAC that is not currently listed as a job that qualifies for points?**

There are endless ways to help at PAC and we would like to continue to add point opportunities to our list. All participation opportunities will add to your point total to qualify you for awards. If you would like to receive credit for an activity not listed, please email the Volunteer leader and tell us what you did or would like to do. We will review it, and hopefully credit you with points.

We will request that you fill out a Volunteer Credit form for review and point approval. If this is an activity that is ongoing and one that other PAC members could also do in the future, we will add it to our list!

**12. I have signed up to time at a swim meet, but I know I won't be able to stay and time for the entire session. If I leave early, do I still get credit for working that session?**

Families are required to work the entire scheduled session as determined by the meet director for which they signed up in order to receive credit for that session. Timers are needed for the entire swim meet. If you have to leave early, it is your responsibility to find someone else to take over your position and fulfill your commitment. Your relief timer will not earn any points, only you, the family who signed up for the position, will receive credit. Partial credit will not be given, so please participate for the entire session for which you signed up.

**13. Can I choose to have any extra points earned above my "Volunteer" roll over to the next year?**

No, all "Volunteer" points will apply to the current year only. Everyone will start with a clean slate each year on September 1.

**14. My daughter wanted to work a session at the concession stand at an upcoming swim meet, but when I went online to sign her up, all of the slots for that position were already filled. Can she just show up and work the concession stand anyway and still earn points?**

Only the number of positions offered online for each swim meet activity may be staffed for point fulfillment. If all positions offered for concession stand are already filled, then your daughter will not be able to just show up and work to earn points. Please look over the other available swim meet positions listed online that your daughter can help out with, such as timing, runner, heat sheet sales, etc... and sign her up in an open slot.

**15. I am willing to fill in for a vacant slot at a swim meet, such as a timing position or any other position, if somebody does not show up to work. How do I do this?**

In an effort to make the process as fair and as easy as possible, we have instituted a procedure for filling vacant positions the day of the meet, particularly timer positions.

**Additionally:**

1. Anyone who is interested working in any open participation slots the day of a meet please put your name on the alternate list located at the participation check-in table as you enter the meet.

2. All volunteer participants are required to check in at the participation check-in table as you enter the meet. Please note the required time that you are to report for your position--timer positions are to check in 30 minutes before the start of the meet, all other positions are to check in at least 15 minutes prior to the start of your session. You will need to be at your work area at least 5 minutes prior to the beginning of your session. If you are not there, you will be replaced by the first available alternate from the current day's alternate list.

3. The participation check-in person will take the current list of timers to the timers' area so that we can do a "roll call" to ensure that all timers are present. This will take place approximately ten minutes before the scheduled start of the meet. If any timer is not present at the time of this "roll call", (regardless of whether they have already checked-in), then they will be immediately replaced by the **first available alternate** on the list. The timer who was replaced will not receive volunteer credit for that session. The alternate who fills in will receive credit and will need to fill out a fair share credit form so their work session can be accurately credited for fair share points. The participation check-in person will assist in making sure that this form is filled out and turned in.

4. Alternates who are truly interested in replacing vacant timer slots at the time of the above "roll call" should also be standing near the timers' meeting location so that they are **available** and easily accessible for filling in for open positions.

5. Any other open participation slots that occur the day of the meet, such as concessions, hospitality, etc... will also be filled from the list of alternates.

**16. I did not sign up previously to work at the swim meet, but while I was sitting on deck, I was approached and asked to time for an entire session—I guess someone did not show up to work their slot. Do I receive fair share credit for timing?**

Absolutely! Even though you did not sign up previously and your name was not on our participation check-in list, you can still receive volunteer credit. Simply ensure that the meet director for PAC home meets or coordinator for other PAC activities knows about the job you've done and it will be entered into the system.

**18. Can I transfer my extra volunteer points to another family?**

No, Volunteer points are non-transferrable.

**19. What if I have other questions about the Volunteer Participation Program?**

Please contact the volunteer committee administrator.

## Meet Information

### **Before the Meet Starts**

\* Reminder that after a swimmer is registered for a meet and the meet entries have closed, the entry fee MUST be paid. The host team will not refund the entry fees after the entries have been sent.

- Arrive at the pool at least 15 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins.
- The time will be listed in the **meet information packet** on the first page located under the desired meet.
- Find the check-in location. Usually, this is found right when you walk into the meet facility or close to the locker rooms.
- Usually one will need to highlight the swimmer's name on the sign-in sheets. Do not scribble on this sheet or underline your swimmers name, a highlighter must be used.
- If this is not done, the swimmer will not be allowed to swim in the meet.
- Check-in is required so that the people running the meet know who is actually at the meet.
- Check-in closes approximately 10-15 minutes after warm-up starts. Check the meet packet for details.
- After you "checked in," write or have the swimmers write each event-number on his or her hand in permanent ink. This helps him/her remember what events he/she is swimming and what event number to listen or watch for.
- Once you check in, send your swimmer to the locker room and have them go out onto the pool deck and look for some familiar faces. Find the PAC swimmers and coaches, they always sit together, usually by our banner.
- Your swimmer now gets his/her cap and goggles and reports to the pool and/or coach for warm-up instructions. It is very important for **all swimmers to warm-up with the team**. A swimmer's body is just like a car on a cold day-he/she needs to get the engine going and warmed-up before he/she can go all out.
- After warm-up, your swimmer will go back to the area where his/her team is sitting and wait there until his first event is called. This is a good time to make sure he/she goes to the bathroom if necessary, gets a drink, or just gets settled in. You may want to pack healthy and nutritious snacks for your swimmer to snack on during the meet. Also make sure to pack a water bottle.
- The meet will usually start about 10-15 minutes after warm-ups are over.
- According to USA Swimming rules (due to insurance purposes), parents are not allowed on deck or in the locker room 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 a coach. He or she in turn, will pursue the matter through the proper channels.
- A psyche sheet is usually available for sale in the lobby or concession area of the pool. It lists all swimmers in each event in order of "seed time". When the team entry is sent in, each swimmer and his/her previous best time (up to the date that the entry was submitted) in that event is listed. If the swimmer is swimming an event for the first time, he/she will be entered as a "no-time" or "NT". A "no-time" swimmer will most likely swim in one of the first heats of the event. A heat sheet may be available close to the start of the meet that lists the actual heat and lane a swimmer will be competing in.

### **At The Meet**

- It is important for any swimmer to know what event numbers he/she is swimming (again, why they should have the numbers on their hand). He/she may swim right away after warm-up or they may have to wait awhile.
- Most meets are electronically entered and results are typically available via the app Meet Mobile.
- A swimmer usually reports directly to his/her lane for competition a number of heats before he/she actually swims. Check with your swimmer's coach for specific instructions.
- Swimmers should report with his/her cap and goggle.
- The swimmer swims his or her race.
- After each swim:
  - He/she is to ask the timers (people behind the blocks at each lane) his/her time.
  - The swimmer should then go immediately to his or her coach. The coach will discuss the swim with each swimmer.
- Things you, as a parent, can do after each swim:
  - You probably will not speak with your swimmers after their swims. However, if you do, tell him/her how great they did! The coaching staff will be sure to discuss stroke technique with him/her. You need to tell him how proud you are and what a great job he/ she did.
  - Tell him/her to go back to the team area and relax.
  - This is another good time to check out the bathrooms, get a drink or something light To eat.
- The swimmer now waits until his next event is called and starts the procedure again.
- Results are usually posted somewhere in the facility. Awards are often gathered for a team and given to the coach at the end of the meet. The awards will be put into the swimmer's mailbox at his/her pool.

### **We believe in Long-Term athletic development:**

First, long-term athletic development does not push kids to be results driven at a young age. It is about developing at an appropriate training program that will be for the greater good of the athlete. Long-Term Athletic Development is about devising a program that provides optimal training, competition and recovery throughout an athlete's career, particularly focused on the growth and development years of young swimmers. If a long term approach is not put in place there is likely to be a plateau in performance, when growth and development slows or has finished. This will actually cause swimmers to get worse. When this occurs, the results of the short-term training cannot be reversed. This is why we will not lift weights at a young age, we will not sprint train at a young age, but will work primarily on technique and aerobic conditioning (building a young athlete's engine). When an athlete's aerobic pattern is interrupted with these advanced stimuli during growth and development ages (maturation), there will more than likely be a period of incredible results, however sustaining those results will be hard to accomplish if the swimmer doesn't have an aerobic training base and a sustained plan.

### **Why Long-Term athletic development?**

- LTAD will establish a clear training path for the swimmers
- It will help identify any missing pieces in the pathway

- It provides a planning tool, based on scientific research, for the coaches to follow and a guide for swimmers and parents to follow
- It plans for optimal performance when optimal performance is necessary

### **What we hope to address in the model:**

- Young athletes that are under-trained, and over competing (less competition, more practice)
- Adult competition pushed on younger kids ( age and training appropriate meets)
- Adult training used for pre-pubescent kids
- Training that focuses on outcome (winning) rather than processes (optimal training)
- Getting swimmers in the optimal training zone for their biological age and not their chronological age
- Best coaches working with the developmental groups
- Not specializing in an event or a stroke at too young an age

### **Progression:**

Swimming is a “technique limited” sport. If an athlete does not have proper technique, his or her ultimate potential in the sport will be limited. Our goal is to provide swimmers a foundation of skills that can be applied to a science based and time proven progressive training plan that will move swimmers in the direction of being the best that they can be.

PAC has developed a progressive drilling system that teaches a “part to whole” stroke sequencing model. Our teaching philosophy is to spiral the learning throughout the weeks to provide a repetitive pattern that will eventually lead to mastery. Patience by the coaching staff, swimmers and parents are expected until mastery is met. Some athletes will progress faster than others. Progression in sport is similar to progression in other things, not everyone will pick things up as fast as others and we must provide the structure to support that.

Most other teams prescribe to a “Darwinian” approach to swimming, where they expect their swimmers to adapt to the training, without much guided learning or no curriculum to teach the swimmers the proper techniques. While that will work for the very best swimmers, we feel that it is more important to keep all swimmers in the sport and not weed them out with poor technique and frustration. In the Darwinian systems you will hear parents taking their children to private lessons to get special help outside of the program. With our program, you should not need special tutoring and it is our philosophy that most private instructors do not have the expertise that our staff does. Our learning is fun our team is fun and our training progression is the best!

We believe that ALL athletes can have success in swimming. The definition of success is to work hard, pay attention, and eventually commit to swimming.

### **Coaching philosophy:**

My coaching philosophy was derived from a simple philosophical concept called Teleological ethics. Teleological ethics is based on the following: is what I am doing helping or hurting people? Every decision that I make is intended to help my athletes be better people and become better swimmers. From the Teleological approach, I made a simple strategy for athletes, parents and coaches to follow called the 4 T’s... Trust, Teach, Train, and Triumph. I believe in leading athletes by setting good moral standards based on the four T’s.

Great coaches are never satisfied and are continually looking for ways to be better coaches and get better results. Coaching swimming requires technical expertise, anatomical knowledge, kinesthetic proficiency, psychological skills, and physiological expertise. Swim coaching is an art and a science. I became a coach to teach the passion that I have developed over my years of being a swimmer and being a coach. My bachelor's degree was in Education with a major in science with an emphasis on physiology. I received a Master's Degree in Coaching with an emphasis in Sport Science from Ohio University in 2015. My coaching mantra comes primarily from the poor experiences I had as a swimmer at a young age, mixed with the positive experience that I had as a collegiate swimmer.

My coaching journey began well before I was actually a coach. At the end of my 7th grade school year, my mom asked me if I would be interested in joining a local swim club for the summer. I unwittingly agreed to join because I knew that it meant free access to a recreational swimming pool all summer long. I clearly remember those first painful days of practice as though it had happened only yesterday. The coach would bark out instructions and training sets with the expectation that everyone understood his lingo. There was no explanation regarding even the basics of what he was saying, such as: What a "25 yard swim" was, how to share the lanes with several other kids without crashing, or even basic stroke technique for the four fundamentally different strokes. Thus, I was completely lost in the beginning. I wanted to quit that first day, but for some reason I didn't. Despite all the chaos of those early days, as the weeks went on, I can remember practice gradually getting more understandable and easier to navigate. Eventually, I began to figure out how to swim the other strokes and to really enjoy my experience. Notice I said, "Figure out". At practice, there was no teaching, and there was little regard for who I was or what it meant to be on the team. There simply was, no coach to swimmer interaction. Little did I know at that time, but these early experiences would not only lead to a passion for something that has shaped my entire career, but would also significantly influence my coaching philosophy.

Becoming a coach was not on the radar until I swam in college. I swam Varsity, 4 years in High School and did swim club during the off seasons. I am a member of the school record holding 400 freestyle relays and was briefly the Varsity record holder in the 100-yard butterfly at my high school. After High School, I walked on to the swimming team at Eastern Michigan University. In one season of swimming collegiately, my career focus changed from business, to teaching and coaching. In one season, I improved twenty seconds in the 500 and became a 200 butterflyer. It taught me that high level swimming is not only dependent on an individual athlete's drive and determination, but that it is a combination of what an athlete wants (his or her drive) in combination with great coaching. One season of college swimming helped define what I wanted to do with my life. I recognized that my potential as an athlete had not been tapped while in High School or club swimming and I finally figured out why. I realized that I could have been so much better if only I had a professional coach that understood all of the different aspects of being a great athlete. I became a high school biology teacher and a swim coach both in club and for high school.

After 25+ years of coaching, I have come to realize that not everyone has the same definition of what a coach does. Great coaching, to many people, is only about whether or not the coach wins all the time, how many athletes swim on the team, or if the athletes are getting trophies and awards. Some people think that it's... "Who has the best athletes" at that time. To others, it's more about whether or not the coach provides a healthy exercise to do. To me, coaching is about teaching life's lessons through sport and the trials and tribulations of improving and times of struggle. As important as it is to win and have an exercise routine, a great coach will teach their athletes about doing their personal best and providing strategies for overcoming obstacles when outcomes don't work out as anticipated. Great coaches will teach athletes the following... it is not about blaming others or circumstances, but accepting results, it's not about running from failures, but stepping up, and most importantly it's not about quitting but understanding how to be better the next time. From my years of coaching experience, I have learned that the best swimmers are the swimmers that listen the best, work the hardest, sacrifice the most, and TRUST in the program. The best swimmers follow the team expectations the closest. The biggest failures have been those that do not.

**Trust** is a hard thing for many people. As a coach, facing many critics (usually parents) who question what you do, how you do it, where you do it, and why you do as a coach is a commonality. Teaching trust in oneself is important. Trustworthiness, defined as someone who, demonstrates integrity and honesty, someone who keeps promises, and is loyal. Trust goes two ways in coaching. Coaches need to be trustworthy and so do athletes and parents. I believe everyone should follow the following: Trustworthiness is earned by honoring rules, not cheating, and by not lying or being deceptive. Along with that, coaches and parents must communicate clearly. I firmly believe these traits are important not only for coaches, but are also important for athletes and parents to know. My philosophy is that if your coach is not addressing all of the swimmers needs, there is something wrong with the coach. If there is a master coach and coaching staff, there is no need for special help from private instructors. From my experience, most private instructors either do not have enough experience teaching or coaching or have differing training philosophies on how to teach athletes the correct way to do their strokes. It is my philosophy that parents teach their swimmers how to ask questions about the things they would like help with. There are no shortcuts in swimming. It is a cumulative and comprehensive process that takes time. Time means years. Trust, means having patience. A good swimming program will need 4-8 years to develop swimmers to their highest level. When other coaches philosophies and programs get involved, results can be negatively affected. When other variables are added to the process, it is out of the hands of the coach and the program to fix.

**Teaching:** My philosophy when coaching athletes is simple, teach first, train a little and then train a lot later. Swimmers need to be proficient before they begin to accumulate a large amount of swimming yards. Otherwise, they are limited in their growth potential in the sport. As a coach, I feel it is important to understand that there are countless ways to learn swimming technique. On the teams I have coached, swimmers will first learn to embrace technique. As Hammermeister (2010) said, coaches should devise techniques to address each of the three different learning styles. There are visual learners, those who need to see it done, auditory learners, those who need to hear it and kinesthetic learners, those who need to try it. It is my philosophy that each of the strokes be broken down into their elemental parts and put together from part strokes, to whole strokes. We teach swimmers a part to whole model of instruction. We then spiral back to the stroke, over and over again to ensure that the strokes are being done correctly. Once the swimmers are proficient in the whole stroke, we do short bursts of perfect technique. As time goes by, we add more and more distance to the stroke. This is when training comes in.

The third T, in my coaching philosophy is **training**. Training cannot occur until an athlete has learned, with some proficiency, each of the strokes. My philosophy is to set up a program so that swimmers can progress slowly with the final outcome of fast swimming the ultimate goal. Even with proficiency, the swimmers in the past that have wanted to push too early have peaked at an early age, especially female swimmers. For males that push too early, they end up quitting the sport. There is an in depth decision process that needs to be addressed when it comes to maturity and the advancement of swimmers into conditioning programs. Both physical and psychological maturity levels for kids are variables that ultimately help in the decision of whether or not the athlete should be moved up in training groups. Using training models from scientists all over the world, my goal is to continually evolve my training philosophy so that all swimmers can be successful, as they get older. I have coached both male and female swimmers that have won the 50 freestyle, 100 free, 200 free, 500 free, 800 free, 1500 free, 100 fly, 100 back, 200 back, 100 breast, 200 breast, and 200 fly at the State level and placed at Sectionals and Junior Nationals. Swimmers in this program have finished ranked in the top ten in the country for their age group. My training philosophy is to train all kids at all strokes and distances and get them to their highest level of performance at the time when they will see the most benefit, i.e. before they go to college. When a swimmer reaches a certain level of maturity, they can begin to specialize in events that they have the greatest potential.

The last T in my coaching philosophy is **Triumph**. Triumph as defined by the Oxford dictionary as “1. a great victory or achievement: 2. The state of being victorious or successful: 3. Joy or satisfaction resulting from a success or victory: 4. A highly successful example of something”. To me, personal

triumph is what occurs when an athlete gets everything that he or she desires from the sport. It is not a matter of winning; triumph is knowing that you have done your personal best to become the best you can be.

Finally, I fully believe that coaches must have good moral values, help athletes set goals and be able to touch the lives of those who may or may not know that they are being affected by the coach. It is essential for coaches to be inclusive and not divisive. I love coaching and teaching swimming and all of the different aspects of being a coach and leader in the sport of swimming. I am a teacher, that's why I coach.

**Training philosophy reasoning:**

Over the last 20 + years, we have experimented with all of the different forms of training and have implemented all of the “NEW FAD” training models at different ages. Each of these models have pros and cons. However, the tried and true method of training is a periodization model that includes high volume low intensity work sprinkled with race pace and faster than race pace work. As an athlete matures, we do more specific training to prepare for race specific events. See our group descriptions for details.

I have worked with many very successful coaches that have swimmers competing at the highest levels in the sport. Those with patience and a willingness to commit to the program have had enormous success. Aerobic training will comprise 70-90% of all of the training from puberty until maturity. Whenever aerobic training has been ignored, it has lead to disaster. Why? In the short term, swimmers that ignore aerobic training volumes below 50,000-70,000 yards per week have had very great **short term** success, but have struggled in the long-term. Distance per stroke training almost in slow motion provides a rhythm to the stroke or similar to a track athlete practicing their stride. Slower aerobic training creates a swimming gate. Perfect technique at aerobic speed **MUST** be the base of all training. There is approximately a two year window where this type of training must be nearly exclusive in order to set up long-term success. During this period, swimming results are **NOT** as important as the training process itself. Swimmers will improve, but mostly in terms of training. Learning how to train is the most important part of this two year period. For girls it is typically between the ages of 11-15yrs and for boys it is 12-16yrs. Biological age is not an exact science for all athletes, but is the average age of the window of opportunity. The table below is a visual of swim participation theory at the senior level:

Type of Commitment	Involvement level	Dream Zone	Achievement level
AGE	15-20 years and older	15-20 years old	15-20 years old
Hours of Training	8-10 hours of swimming/Week	10-17 hours of training/Week, including dryland	17-24 hours of swim training/Week, not including dryland

Results	Swimmers improve not due to swimming but because of physical maturation. "Feel good practices" never tired. Social group.	Swimmers train hard enough that they feel tired, but not enough to make significant improvements.	High Skill level, Championship level performance goals
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Typical Weekly Volume of yardage	25,000 yrds	35,000-45,000 yrds	58,000-70,000 yrds
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We feel that motivation, commitment and attitude are 3 main characteristics that generate quality swimmers and quality people in society. Those 3 factors are not about being excited for a short period of time prior to a championship meet. From the very first workout of the year, the attitude, commitment, and enthusiasm of the coach and athlete must be apparent on a daily basis.

### **Rest and Recovery:**

"There is no such thing as over-training, only under-eating and under sleeping"- Peter Paul (1987). Many swim coaches have uttered these words. Understanding how athletes recover is important to the success and growth of athletes in any sport. Unlike many other sports, senior level swimmers have extreme physical demands on their bodies. From morning practices, to dry land and to afternoon practices, all of these physical stressors significantly affect athletes. There are several factors that influence rest and growth in sport. Proper periodization, monitoring of fatigue, sleep, outside stress, and proper nutrition all play roles in a coach's program design. Each factor impacts an athlete's ability to recover effectively. The purpose of this section is to provide a guide to promote recovery in our swim training program.

Stress is not equal for all athletes because not all athletes are created equally. Some swimmers require lots of rest, while others require minimal rest in order to recover. Size of athlete plays a major role in the recovery of athletes. Smaller athletes recover faster than larger athletes, girls faster than boys. Our program is based on mini-cycles and macro-cycles that change in frequency, volume, and intensity. Being FULLY committed to this plan will provide the athletes with the very best training program. This plan also factors in minor and major competitions and should be tailored to the needs of each of the swimmers. Properly planned cycles mixed with hard training and purposeful rest will lead to growth in swimming. Coaches that train their athletes around the ability to recover, will have better success than those that forge forward with work and do not consider recovery factors, (Bompa, & Haff, 2009).

Swim training is a combination of different types of energy workloads planned into periods. All factors of energy system training should be addressed throughout a clearly defined amount of time. As Issurin (2010) stated, coaches should have a periodization plan that includes both micro-cycles of time and macro-cycles of time with scheduled high workloads and rest periods. As part of that plan, the annual cycle or yearly cycle is the longer cycle of development. The yearly period of time is called a macro-cycle. Weekly and or monthly cycles are considered micro-cycles. Coaches should have a plan that includes recording and keep track of the development of their athletes throughout these cycles. The plan should be progressively more challenging so that the athlete continues to advance. The training program should also allot for athletes to rest and recover so that there can seasonal improvements in performance.

Stress in sport can be due to the actual physical workload of a periodization plan or it can be from outside sources such as schoolwork, social media, lack of sleep, jobs, or relationship issues. Rountree (2011), states that being aware of your stressors and managing those stressors can help with recovery. Managing schoolwork with consistent planning can keep many of these outside stressors at bay. Kennedy, Tamminen, & Holt (2013) found that school, work and lack of sleep all had negative influence on swimmers fatigue level.

One way to monitor fatigue in an athlete is to get an orthostatic heart rate variance number. An orthostatic heart rate variance is the difference between resting heart rate while lying down, compared to resting heart rate while standing. To perform the Orthostatic Heart Rate Test it is simple, the swimmer will need 2 things, a stopwatch (cell phone) and the ability to monitor heart rate. To conduct the test, the athlete will rest lying down for at least 15 minutes. The athlete will record his or her pulse rate (bpm) while lying down, this is considered resting heart rate value R1. The athlete will record this value. After the value is recorded, the athlete will stand up. After 15 seconds of standing, the athlete will record the his or her pulse rate (bpm) again. This value is considered the resting heart rate 2 or R2 value. To determine the orthostatic rate, the athlete will figure the difference between R1 and R2 values. If the difference between R1 and R2 is greater than 15 to 20 beats then it is probable that the athlete has not recovered from the previous days training. Other implications could be that the athlete is under other stress or is beginning to get ill. If the value is larger than 20, the coach/athlete should consider making an adjustment to the training in order to allow the athlete to rest or recover from the stress that they are under.

Bompa et al. (2009) states that, Assessing an athletes state of training could also be as simple as asking a question, “on a scale of 1-10, how do you feel today?” with 1 being completely awful and 10 being completely great. A simple assessment like this is something that a coach can do to begin the analysis of his or her athlete’s mental state in accordance to their attitude. Bompa et al. (2009) also claims that the easiest way to assess an athletes stress or workload is for the athlete to keep a workout log, this would include a part that keeps track of the workload and fatigue levels of the athlete.

Sometimes coaches misdiagnose needed rest and overtraining occurs. Overtraining as described by Baechle and Earle (2008) as, “burnout, chronic overwork, physical overstrain and over fatigue” (p. 114). According to Baechle and Earle (2008), there are three stress factors that can affect athletes that may lead to burnout. Those stressors include, “excessive frequency, volume, or intensity”, which leads to, “fatigue, illness, or injury” (p. 114). Kellmann (2010) also states that the following factors affect the fatigue and recovery levels of athletes, general stress, emotional stress, social stress, conflicts/pressure, fatigue, and lack of energy. Kennta, & Hassinen, (1998), state that the following are indicators that an athlete is over-trained. The athlete may have, “Poorer performance, severe fatigue, muscle soreness, overuse injuries, reduced appetite, disturbed sleep patterns, mood disturbances, immune system deficits, and concentration difficulties”, p. 2. According to Kellmann (2010), recovery should parallel the stress loads of an athlete training plan, and recovery time is independent for individual athletes. Recovery can be passive, active or proactive.

Coaches and athletes should work jointly to manage recovery in order to keep the athlete healthy. As specified by Bompa, & Haff (2009), the most common form of passive recovery is sleep. The recommendation is that athletes get between **9 and 10 hours** of sleep each night. If an athlete isn’t recovering appropriately, addition sleep can be prescribed for the athlete. Bompa et al. (2010) also believes that short naps can aid in passive recovery. The recommendation is that if an athlete still isn’t recovering, that he/she take short naps, no longer than 30 minutes in successive days to try to catch their bodies up.

An active recovery technique could be low-end aerobic activity. Bompa et al. (2009) suggests that recovery activities should be performed at 50% of VO<sub>2</sub> max. The lower aerobic recovery work is intended to allow for muscle glycogen resynthesize. To restore muscles with the energy they need and to repair muscles in the matter that they need to be repaired, proper nutrition mixed with active recovery is important. After intense swimming sessions, a follow up of low-end aerobic activity is critical for active recovery.

With all of the information on rest and recovery, my plan as the head coach of Portage Aquatic Club is to introduce the following educational and monitoring techniques for the athletes on the team. Our first measure will be to set up a sleep quantity and quality scale. The survey will ask two simple questions about sleep.

How many hours of sleep did you get last night?

On a scale of 1-5, what was your sleep quality, (5 being the best)?

The information from this questionnaire will provide an acute guide as to where each of the athletes is on their sleep for the day. In order to generate a final score, I will take the product of the 2 numbers. If an athletes "sleep score" is fewer than 21, we will monitor their performance at practice. If an athlete is consistently scoring lower than 22 on the sleep survey, an intervention may need to take place. An athlete could achieve a sleep score greater than 21 in numerous ways. For example: The most common or conventional - 7 to 8 hours / 3 for quality. This would be a score of 21. Other combinations that will achieve a score of 21 that is not as common -

11 hours / 2 quality = 22

5 hours / 5 quality = 25

6 hours / 4 quality=24

Other recovery measures include massage, thermotherapy, cryotherapy, and contrast therapy, (Bompa et al. 2009). Rountree (2011) suggests that massage helps an athlete psychologically and it can help them reach a state of relaxation similar to meditation. Massage seems to lower blood pressure, and helps with a sense of well-being. Thermotherapy as described by Bompa (2009), is a series of heat applied muscular techniques that is intended to increase the blood flow to all areas of the body by dilating blood vessels to limit the restriction of blood flow to the extremities. Forms of thermotherapy include sauna, whirlpool, hot packs and steam baths. The theory behind heat-induced therapy is that it will help eliminate cellular waste faster, and increase nutrition to cells.

### **Team Structure and Descriptions:**

The Portage Aquatic Club strives to provide an environment that helps each child reach his or her highest potential in the sport of swimming. Swimming must not focus so much on today but should focus on the long-term progression of each swimmer. In other words, we want to provide each child with an opportunity to succeed at the highest level possible and if done correctly will be when the athlete is 17-20 years of age. It is our goal is to provide swimmers with the foundation for success in swimming, as well as in personal and professional life. As a result, the Portage Aquatic Club age group training program is designed to cover a period of about 8 to 10 years and is divided into 3 main stages.

1. Basic introductory swimming and swimming instruction (drills/drill progression) – **Jr. Team**
2. Basic training (Fitness/strength/drills progression) – **Croc Teams Orange, Green, Black**
3. Progressive (build-up) training, maintenance training, up to specific event training – **Sr. Team**

Despite this general outline, any level swimmer can 'plugin' to the training program at any point in his or her swimming career. The following are typical processes for group placement.

### **Group placement depends on the following four factors:**

**1. Age/Sex:** Biological and chronological age play big parts in group placement. We also consider if a child is emotionally, physically and psychologically prepared to swim and train in a particular group. Even if a swimmer is fast at swimming meets, he/she may not be prepared for the workload of a particular training group. Social considerations are also taken into account so that a child does not feel out of place or has difficulty making friends. Female swimmers tend to progress faster than males and they tend to be more physically and emotionally mature for higher training groups. Careful examination of swimmers and their emotional and physical well-being will be considered when choosing groups for athletes.

**2. Background:** Some basic questions about swimmer's background have to be asked. For example, how much experience has the swimmer had? Does the swimmer possess the proper swimming/athletic background in order to swim in a particular group even if a child has fast times in certain events? It may be harmful for a particular swimmer to be placed in a group where the volume (i.e. yardage) is more than they've ever experienced. This may increase the risk of injury and or burnout in the sport. Each level of the team will provide a significant change in the amount and intensity of swimming that is required. Therefore, each swimmer's background plays an important part in the placement process. Page 4

**3. Skill:** Having the proper swimming skills is necessary to be placed within a given group. If a child has not mastered the general skills necessary to move up into the next group, it is more difficult to progress through the next level of requirements. These include general technique, drills, pacing, race strategy, yardage etc. Skills need to be mastered before moving up to the next level. The point here is to make sure that the next coach does not have to spend time teaching the skills over again and taking time away from the rest of the training group. If swimmers do not meet the training criteria listed for a particular group, they will be placed into a group more suited for their skills.

**4. Work ability:** Work ability or work ethic of the swimmer is one of the greatest considerations when placing swimmers in a training group. When evaluating work ability, the coaching staff is asking some basic questions. Can a swimmer make the training prerequisites? Is the swimmer able to commit to all of the practice requirements? What are his/her work habits during workouts? How committed has the swimmer been to the current level? **HOW WELL DOES THE SWIMMER LISTEN TO DIRECTIONS AND FOLLOW THROUGH?** Work ability is examined over extended period of time. Given our commitment to excellence work ability is a very important factor in our decision making process.

\*\*It is important to understand that final decisions about group placements are made by the Head Coach and the rest of the coaching staff.

### **The Portage Aquatic Club Training Groups, team definitions:**

The Portage Aquatic Club's training groups are designed to develop swimmer's competitiveness and character both in and out of the pool. The process begins with Junior team, Orange team, Green team, Black team and Senior Crocs Level Competitive Programs and potentially a National level Team. It is important to remember that anything introduced in a previous group will be carried forward and

expanded upon at the next level. The long-term development of the swimmer is kept in mind. This progression is outlined briefly as follows.

### **PAC Training Groups:**

#### **Junior team (7&8 year old and NEWER 9-12 yr. old swimmers)**

This is the beginning level for all swimmers that are getting started in the sport. This program would also be appropriate for swimmers who would like to learn more about swimming and trying developmental meets to gain a better understanding before moving to the more competitive side of swimming. Much of the focus in this group will be on learning proper technique in Freestyle and Backstroke. This program will incorporate local Southwest Michigan Swim league Meets and other developmental, very fun and low-key swimming competitions. The goal is to provide both swimmers and their parents an opportunity to gain a better understanding of swimming before doing the higher level USA Swimming meets. It will also gauge their child's success/progress and interest in swimming.

#### **The following are the general aspects of focus for the Junior Croc group:**

Swimmers MUST be able to swim one length of the pool freestyle with face in the water and one length of the pool backstroke before joining this team.

**Mental development:** Swimmers will learn to enjoy the water and belonging to a team. Swimmers will also be expected to pay attention to the coaches and follow directions.

**Commitment:** If swimmers join the Jr. team, they will have 2-3 practices per week. All practices will be either 30 minutes (in the winter) and 45 minutes (in the summer). There is no amount of commitment required. However, greater attendance generally leads to better mastery of the required skills. A new skill is generally learned each night, so coming to practice will help acquire the skills much quicker and a swimmer may miss something that we work on, on a day that they aren't at practice.

**Skill Development:** All swimmers will learn streamlining, each of the four competitive strokes, underwater kicking (dolphin), forward and backward starts, grab and track starts, flip turns, and general endurance. Swimming technique will be expanded. Relay exchanges, relay races, team races, and improvement of endurance will also be a focus.

**Skill Goals:** Swimmers will be placed on this team if they are new to the sport or if they have not achieved the following:

**(5-11 year olds):** Swim at a swim meet, 100 yards' freestyle with flip turns and swim 100 yards' backstroke with proper count into the walls from the flags. Once a swimmer can do 4 lengths freestyle with a start and flip turns and can also do 4 lengths backstroke with a start and turns, they can advance to the Orange team.

**Croc Orange team (7-13 year olds):** To be placed on Orange, swimmers should be able to perform 4 lengths of the pool freestyle with flip turns and swim 4 lengths of the pool backstroke with proper count into the walls from the flags in the backstroke. This group is designed for kids that are interested in being on a swimming team but only want to commit to 3 practices a week.

**Skill Goals to advance to the Croc Green level:** At a meet, croc orange swimmers should be able to swim a 100 freestyle with flip turns, a 100 backstroke with flip turns, a legal 50 breast with pull outs, a legal 50 fly, and a legal 100 IM. Swimmers will do competition race starts and championship finishes. Swimmers in this group must complete IMR event list before moving to the CROC group.

**What is IMR? IM READY (IMR):** The first step in the IMX Challenge is IM Ready (or IMR). To get "IM Ready," swimmers compete in a series of five events at shorter distances. Listed below is the line-up by age groups. 10 & Under: 100 Free, 50 Back, 50 Breast, 50 Fly, 100 IM (SC) or 200 IM (LC) 11 and 12-year olds: 200 Free, 50 Back, 50 Breast, 50 Fly, 100 IM (SC) or 200 IM (LC)

**Crocs: Green (Ages 8-14) Black (Ages 11-15):**

This group covers basic swimming endurance, swimming speed change, and aerobic development. Swimming technique is expanded. These swimmers are expected to have learned all four racing strokes and are now aimed at increasing both technical work and training skills. IM training and advancement is developed. IMR events at meets and advancement to IMX events are the focus. Swimmers in this group are building to get an IMX score. Swimmers will commit to at least 4 practices per week.

**IM XTREME (IMX):** The next step is IM Xtreme (IMX). The IMX ranking includes a series of five or six events at longer distances. Once you've completed the IMX program, you can find out where your IMX score ranks nationally, within your zone, within your LSC rank and on your club. 10-year olds: 200 Free, 100 Back, 100 Breast, 100 Fly, 200 IM 11-year olds; 12-year olds: 400 Free (LC) or 500 Free (SC), 100 Back, 100 Breast, 100 Fly, 200 IM 13-15-year olds: 400 Free (LC) or 500 Free (SC), 200 Back, 200 Breast, 200 Fly, 200 IM, 400 IM.

**Mental development:** Leadership skills and team building become the focus in this stage of training. Swimmers will concentrate on improving their discipline related to the sport of swimming, the importance of reading a pace clock, doing warm-up and warm-down, and positive pre-race behavior and readiness. Responsibility of bringing the correct nutrition and hydration to meets. Keeping meet area tidy and helping other new swimmers with meet prep is the focus. Generally speaking, swimmers will learn how to act as professional swimmers.

**Commitment:** Croc Green should practice a minimum of four practices a week and Croc Black should practice a minimum of 5 practices a week. As the swimmers progress through the years, they should work toward being at practice consistently 5 to 6 times per week. Each practice will be between 1 hour, to 1 hour 30 minutes for croc green and 1 hour and 45 minutes to 2 hours for croc black. The general rule for croc black is 11-12 year olds: 5-6 swimming practices a week; 13-14 year olds: 6-7 swimming practices per week. All swimmers should consider doing the optional dryland program. Croc black swimmers are learning how to transition to the Senior team.

**Skill Development:** Relay exchanges, tracking workout times, relay races, team races, and improvement of endurance, reading the pace clock and aerobic fitness.

**Training Criteria:**

Croc Green team swimmers should work toward completing 6 x 100 free @ 2:00 with turns; 6 x 100 IM @ 2:30 with legal turns. In order to qualify for Croc Black, team members should be able to complete 6 x 100 free at 1:45 and 6 x 100 IM @ 2:00.

**Skill Development:** All swimmers will learn streamlining, each of the four competitive strokes, underwater kicking (dolphin), forward and backward starts, grab and track starts, flip turns, general endurance, flexibility, and agility. Swimming technique will be expanded as swimmers progress from green to black. Relay exchanges, relay races, team races, and improvement of endurance will also be a focus.

**Training Goals:** Croc Green: Freestyle, 6 x 100 @ 1:45; Kick 10 x 50 @ 1 minute; 6 x 100 IM @ 2:00 with legal turns. (to move to Black) Croc Black: Freestyle, 10X100 @1:20; Kick, 10 x 100 @ 1:45 seconds  
Croc Black team will do endurance training, speed work, negative split work, resistance work (i.e. chutes or buckets), hypoxic training, basic swimming speed, specific muscular endurance, basic swimming endurance, beginning of specialization; varied paces over longer distances. Dryland is optional, but important part swimmer's training especially 13-14-year-old swimmers. Swimmers will either commit to do dryland or not do dryland. If swimmers commit, the dryland will be 3 times per week during the winter and 2x's per week in the summer. The dryland will consist of circuit training, medicine ball work, core body exercises, flexibility, agility, and other activities aimed at improving swimmers' athleticism and most importantly prevention of injuries.

### **Senior Team:**

There is only one senior team. Swimmers will need to be in 8th grade or higher to join the Sr. Team. If a swimmer is in 8th grade, they must have 3 State qualifying times to join the Sr. Team as an 8th grader. All other swimmers will be admitted to the Senior team when they enter High School (if they want to). Senior swimmers have the option of swimming at less than 5, 5 practices, or 6 or more practices per week.

Depending on an athlete's goals, commitment will be what the swimmer AND the coach decide is appropriate for the goals that the swimmer has. Because dryland is considered a separate workout, swimmers that commit to 5 practices a week should only count the swimming practices as part of the 5. Dryland workouts will also be provided for all senior swimmers if desired by the swimmer. Newer senior level swimmers may have the option of doing Croc Black or Croc Green for a season to get some additional technique work prior to joining the senior group.

We feel that there are three types of senior level swimmers. Those that are "Involved", those in the "dream zone" and those that are at "achievement" level. Involved swimmers are interested in having fun, coming to practice when they want and are focused on numerous activities that are more important than swimming to them. There is nothing wrong with that. The Dream Zone swimmers are the most frustrating group, they dream of greatness, but only commit to just enough swimming to make them tired, but not enough to push them forward. Dream zone swimmers bodies have matured and they need to decide to either stay in the dream zone or commit to the Achievement level, so they can improve. The truly committed athlete (Achievement level) will find reasons to be at practice and never find excuses to miss practice, they embrace training and make training fun, even when it is hard. We believe that swimmers should begin considering their level of commitment (girls 13-14) years of age, and boys 14-15 years of age).

**Selecting the proper training program and group for new/returning parents:** Coaches must evaluate each child for group placement. Initial group placement is usually age based/trainability based. It is also important to consider the swimmer's swimming background and skill level. In most cases a swimmer's background and skill level will not supersede an age-based group placement. Swimmers may move between groups throughout the season based on the coach's discretion. Initial placement is based on current background and coach's discretion. Parents and swimmers should determine what their short- and long-term goals are and with the coaches' assistance determine if the coaches group placement fits the swimmer's goals. Based on the selected training program and group, parents must be committed to assist their swimmer to meet group- specific goals as listed above making sure to be as committed as the group level expects. Vacations and trips should be discussed with the coach prior to the season so that there are no surprises during the training season.

**Decisions on moving a swimmer from one group to the next:** Coaches will evaluate each athlete's training progression during each season (November, March, and August) using criteria based upon age, skill and background (see previous explanation). Coaches will offer their opinion when appropriate regarding group and program changes. Athletes and parents must discuss potential group and program changes with coaches and will seek permission in order to move their child. Parents cannot move their child to another group without a coach's consent. If a child moves into a group and does not possess the skills necessary for that group, the child will have a difficult time developing those skills and will more than likely hold up the group at practice. Swimmers may choose to do a group at or below the coach's recommendation.

## **NUTRITION**

Eating correctly is very important for success in the pool. Everything swimmers do influence their performance, but food choices have the most effect. A proper diet, including proper selection of foods will help his/her training and performance while also achieving a healthy lifestyle once the swimmer stops competing. Parents should be aware that an athlete in the midst of training could eat an incredible amount of food and not gain weight except for muscle (lean) weight. Before competition swimmers should be especially careful to eat enough balanced meals. Do not eat protein such as red meat hours before a meet. It stays in the stomach and will make the swimmer swim slower. It is important that the athlete learns and understands the basics of nutrition so that they can gain the most from their efforts in the pool. To help ensure a balanced diet, the swimmer should select a variety of wholesome foods from the four food groups—milk, meat, fruit & vegetables, and grains. Foods in these groups provide protein, fat, carbohydrate, fiber and all the necessary vitamins and minerals. Your ideal diet should include the following percentage of calories: Carbohydrate 50-60%, Fat 20-30%, Protein 14-18%. This section on nutrition is designed to help the swimmer better understand good nutrition and to provide a guideline for ideal food choices.

For muscle repair, athletes need to ingest protein. The protein source should include essential amino acids. It is suggested that athletes take in 20-25 grams of proteins soon after exercise, (Burke, & Muijika, 2014). This source can be of any variety of high quality protein, including milk, whey, or meat. According to Shaw, Boyd, Burke, & Koivisto (2014), the protein intake should occur in intervals throughout the day and not at one or two large meals.

In addition to food, athletes need to hydrate. When athletes perspire, they lose water. Swimmers lose more water than most people recognize. Water loss in swimming, isn't easy to monitor because water loss happens in water while the swimmer is swimming. As stated by Burke, & Muijika (2014), rehydration of athletes must occur to replenish, "A volume of fluid equivalent to 125%–150% ... to compensate for losses and ensure that fluid balance is achieved over the first 4–6 hr. of recovery" p.430. Drinking water prior and during a workout will help with keeping fluid levels where they need to be.

Within sports, there are four major periods that nutrition will impact:

1. **During Training** - Training represents the period in which athletes spend most of their time. This category represents the most critical period and a diet high in carbohydrates is important. A high carbohydrate diet is the best way to replenish the calories burned off during training. By being conscious of this and by taking high carbohydrate foods or drink in the first 30 minutes following a workout, you can minimize depletion of energy stores.
2. **Pre-event Nutrition** – The major purpose of the pre-event diet is to ensure sufficient energy and fluid for the athlete. Two to three days before competition, a high carbohydrate diet with plenty of fluids should be emphasized. The pre-event meal should include a light, high carbohydrate meal three to four hours before the event.
3. **Nutrition During Competition** – Provided that good nutrition practices were followed during training, middle distance and sprint events will not be limited by nutrition-related factors. During a three to four day competition, make sure the swimmer consumes plenty of fluids and each meal should include high carbohydrate, low fat selections.
4. **Nutrition After Competition** – High intensity work will deplete the muscle's energy supplies. Carbohydrate intake after competition allows energy stores to be maintained.

### **Food Choices**

The best food choices include a well balanced, mixed diet with choices from each of the four food groups. You can get all the nutrients you need by selecting a variety of foods in the recommended serving size from each of the following food groups:

#### **Food Group Selections Servings**

##### **MILK**

Milk, Cheese, Yogurt, Cottage Cheese, Ice Cream  
(Vitamins & Protein)

4 or More

##### **MEAT**

Meat, Fish, Poultry, Eggs, Beans, Peas, Nuts  
(Minerals & Protein)

2 or More

##### **FRUIT & VEGETABLES**

Fresh, Frozen, Canned, Dried and Juiced Fruits and Vegetables  
(Vitamins & Carbohydrates)

8 or More

##### **GRAIN**

Cereals, Breads, Rolls, Pasta, Muffins, Pancakes  
(Carbohydrates & Fat)

8 or More

OTHERS

Cakes, Cookies, Pies, Candy, Soft Drinks, Chips  
(Carbohydrates & Fat)

ONLY if you need additional calories AFTER selections from above

### Fast Food Nutrition

“Fast Food” restaurants play an important role in the diets of athletes on the go. These restaurants can provide a viable source of good nutrition—but the choice is yours and selection is critical. Here are some guidelines to make wiser choices:

1. Menu adjectives – Fat content must be watched when selecting menu items. If you see any of the following words, try to make another selection: Fried, Crispy, Breaded, Scampi Style, Creamed, Buttery, Au Gratin, Gravy. Good Selection adjectives include: Marinara, Steamed, Boiled, Broiled, Tomato Sauce, In its Own Juice, Poached, Charbroiled.

2. Restaurant Choices – Depending on the restaurant, here are some tips when selecting foods.

**Mexican** – Choose pot beans instead of refried beans, and chicken or bean burritos and tostados. Ask for baked, soft tortillas instead of deep fried shells, salsa is fine, but watch your chip intake.

**Italian** – Pasta with marinara sauce is good but watch alfredo sauces. Pizza, plain or with vegetables is a good choice. Bread is good (watch the butter). Low-fat Italian ices are better than rich dessert choices.

**Chinese** – Stir-fried and steamed dishes like chicken & vegetables and rice are good choices. Minimize fried egg roll intake or avoid all together.

**Burger places** – Salad bars are great but watch the dressing. Look for grilled burgers; hold the mayonnaise and go light on the cheese. Watch your french fry intake (select a baked potato with a little butter if you can) and go easy on the milk shakes.

**Breakfast Cafes** – Always ask for butter on the side of pancakes, toast, muffins, etc. Select fresh fruity, juices and whole-grain breads and muffins.

### Fast Food Choices

Listed on this page is a partial list of fast foods and their calorie & fat content. When selecting, it would be better to go with a low fat choice.

Calories Fat(gm) Calories Fat

#### Breakfast, Chicken

Juice 80 0

Scrambled Eggs 180 13

Ham, Cheese, Mushroom

Drumstick 117 5

Omelet 290 20

Chicken Sandwich 320 10

Egg McMuffin 340 20

Chicken nuggets 6300 23

French Toast 400 20

Chicken Salad Sandwich 386  
20

Sausage with Biscuit 467 35

Chicken Club Sandwich 620

35

English Muffin/butter 186 5

#### Burgers, Desserts

Hamburger 262 15

Soft Serve Cone 185 5

Cheeseburger 318 20

Strawberry Sundae 320 10

Quarter Pound Burger 427  
25

Carmel Sundae 361 10

Quarter Pound Burger  
w/cheese 525 35

Frosty (12oz) 400 15

Big Mac 570 40

Cherry Pie 260 15

Whopper with Cheese 760  
50

**Fish, Pizza** (3 slices of 12  
inch pizza)

Fish Sandwich 450 30

Cheese Pizza 510 8

Seaford Platter 471 35

Pepperoni 430 17

#### Potatoes Mexican

Taco 179 6

Potato Plain, baked 215 0  
Beefy Tostado 291 15  
Regular Fires 220 15  
Bean Burrito 343 15

Baked, Cheese & Taco Salad  
390 20  
Broccoli 541 25  
Baked with cheese 590 40

**Milk & Milk shakes**  
2% Milk 120 5  
Whole Milk 150 10  
Milk shake 350 10

## **Nutrition Do's & Don'ts**

### **Breakfast**

**Do** eat hot cereals like oatmeal or oat bran.

**Do Not** eat sausage, ham or bacon more than once or twice weekly.

**Do** Select whole-grain or high fiber cold cereals, breads, and muffins. **Do Not** choose fast food breakfast sandwiches or fat-laden croissants everyday.

**Do** Choose fruit, including fresh, canned, or fruit juices. Drink hot beverages such as hot chocolate and hot apple cider.

**Do Not** eat doughnuts or pastries daily or skip breakfast.

### **Lunch**

**Do** Pack a lunch when possible.

**Do Not** eat fast-food meals too frequently. Choose a hamburger over hot dogs.

**Do** Choose whole-grain breads, lean meats, like turkey over salami.

**Do Not** overuse condiments like mayonnaise and salad dressings.

**Do** choose a baked potato over French fries .

**Do Not** skip lunch. Eat pasta as much as you like, but choose tomato sauces rather than cream sauces.

**Do** try pizza without fatty meat toppings. Eat hearty soups and stews

### **Dinner**

**Do** eat pasta dishes. Choose pizza with vegetable and lean meat toppings

**Do Not** eat high-fat meals like hot dogs or sausages. Try Chinese food with rice and fresh vegetables.

**Do** select fish often. Broiled or poached is best. Trim visible fat from meats and remove skin from poultry. Eat as much bread as you like. Choose fruit or jell-o for dessert.

## **Glossary of Terms for Swimming**

**A meet** - swim meet which requires swimmers to have previously achieved an "A" time standard in the event they wish to enter.

**A/B meet** - swim meet which requires that the swimmer have an "A" or "B" time in the event they wish to enter.

**A/B/C meet** - swim meet open to any level of swimmer.

**Age Group** - swimmers compete in age groups of 8 & Under, 9-10 (or 10 & Under) 11-12, 13-14, 15-18.

**Anchor** - the final swimmer in a relay.

**Age Group**- division of swimmers according to age. Refers to club swimming. The National Age group division are 10 and under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18, and open.

**Backstroke**- One of the four competitive racing strokes, basically any style of swimming on your back. Backstroke is swum as the first stroke in the medley relay and second in the Individual Medley (IM).

**Backstroke flags**- Pennants that are suspended over the width of each end of the pool, exactly 5 yards from the wall. They are used by swimmers to judge their proximity to the wall before they turn or finish.

**Blocks**- the starting platforms located behind each lane. Some pools have blocks at the deeper end of the pool, and some pools have blocks at both ends. Blocks may be permanent or removable.

**Breaststroke**- One of the four competitive racing strokes. The stroke is swum with a frog like kick and an underwater pull and recovery. It must be swum in consecutive strokes. (Pull then kicks or kick then pull). Breaststroke is swum as the second stroke of the Medley Relay and the third stroke in the Individual Medley.

**Butterfly**- One of the four competitive strokes. Butterfly (nicknamed fly) is swum as the third stroke in the Medley Relay and the first stroke in the Individual Medley. (IM). Butterfly is swum with a two-arm recovery over the water and proceeded and ended with a dolphin kick.

**Championship Finals**- the top 6 swimmers in a Prelim/Finals meet who, after the prelims are competed, qualify as the top six to compete at the Finals. The fastest heats of the finals when multiple heats are held.

**Circle Swimming** - swimmers stay on the right of the black line when swimming in a lane effectively swimming up and back in a circle. This allows more swimmers in a lane.

**Circle Seeding**- a method of placing swimmers when they are participating in a prelims/final event. The fastest 18-24 swimmers are seeded in the last three heats, with the fastest swimmers being in the inside lanes. Therefore, the fastest three times, one of each will swim in the middle lane in each of the last three heats.

**Coach**- the most knowing individual on the pool deck.

**Consolation**- (finals) competition for the fastest of those who failed to qualify for the finals.

**Course**- designated distance over which the competition is conducted.

**Cuts**- to make a cut means to make a particular time standard. Current time standards will be posted at the training facility.

**Deck Entry** - a meet where entries are accepted at the meet, usually at the start of the session. Deck entries usually have higher entry fees, and some meets do not allow any deck entries.

**Disqualification** (D-Q)- when a swimmer has broken one of the swimming rules, pertaining to stroke, start, turn or any other aspect of the race.

**Drag**- The resistance of the body moving through the water. It is recommended that the swimmers increase their natural resistance by adding at least one extra suit at practice. Sometimes tights are worn.

**Drill** - a portion, or part of a stroke, which works on a specific part of the stroke and to perfect swimming technique.

**Dryland Training** - training done out of the water that may aid or enhance swimmer's performance. This usually includes stretching, calisthenics or a Body weight program.

**Dual Meet Competition**- competition between two meets.

**Electronic timing**- a timing system that usually has touch pads in the water that are used to stop the timing system. Various cables and hook-ups are connected to a computer that prints out the results of each race. Most are connected to a scoreboard that displays swimmers' times.

**Event**- A race or stroke over a given distance. AN event equals one preliminary with its final, or one timed final.

**Exhibition Swim**- any swim that only the TIME the swimmer swims is considered on the record. No points will be awarded to the swimmer's team in competition, nor will medals or ribbons be received by the swimmer.

**False Start**- . Not a true start. Moving in any way forward before the official start

**Final**- any single race, which determines final places and times in an event.

**Finals**- the concluding session of each day of the meet in which the final race of each event is swum.

**Finish** -the final phase of the race or touching the wall at the end of the race. Flags - backstroke flags placed 5 yards or 5 meters from the end of the pool.

**Freestyle**- One of the four competitive strokes freestyle (nicknamed free) is swum as the fourth and final stroke in both the Medley Relay and the Individual Medley.

**Goal** - a specific time or achievement a swimmer sets and strives for. Can be short- or long-term.

**Gun lap/Bell lap**- the loud bang or ringing of a bell in the Distance freestyle to warn the swimmer that she has two lengths and 5 yards/Meters to go.

**Heat Ribbon** - ribbon given to the first finisher in each heat.

**Heat Sheets** - the swim meet program that includes information such as the name of the events, heats, lanes, swimmers, and seed times.

**Heats**- a division of an event in which there are too many swimmers to compete at one time.

**IM**- Individual Medley. A swimming event using all four competitive strokes on consecutive lengths of the race. The order must be: Butterfly, backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle. An equal distance will be swum for each stroke.

**Interval**- A specific elapsed time for swimming or rest during swim practice.

**Jump**- An illegal false start done by the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, or 4<sup>th</sup> member of a relay team. The swimmer on the block breaks contact with the block before the swimmer in the water touches the wall.

**Lane**- the specific area in which the swimmer is assigned to swim (i.e., lane one, lane two, etc.

**Lane Line**- continuous floating markers attached to a line stretched from the starting end to the turning end for the purpose of separating each lane.

**Lane Markings**- the guidelines on the bottom of the pool and in the center of the lanes running from the starting end to the turning end.

**Lap Counter**- the large numbered cards (or person turning the cards) used during the 500-yard freestyle. Counting is done from the end opposite the starting end. The numbers on the cards are odd numbers only with the final lap being designated by a bright orange card.

**Leg** - the part of a relay event that is swum by a single team member

**Legal** - a race or stroke swim according to the current USA rules.

**Log Book** - a book in which swimmers record their time achieved at any given meet or time trial.

**Long Course Season** - Begins in April and ends in August. Competitions are held in a 50 meter pool.

**Manual Start**- the start of any timing device by an individual if this start is initiated in response to the same starting signal given to the swimmer.

**Mark**- starting position

**Medley Relay** - a group of four swimmers each swimming different strokes in an event, the order of the strokes are as follows: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, and Freestyle.

**No Time (NT)** - seed time is entered as "No Time" if a swimmer has never swum an event before.

**Official** - a pool deck judge at sanctioned competitions who enforces USA rules. There are stroke and turn judges, administrative officials, starters, timers and referees.

**Pace Clock**- the large clock with highly visible numbers and second hands, positioned where the swimmers can see them easily. They help swimmers with finding the correct send off time or interval.

**Preliminary**- session of the meet in which the heats are held.

**Psyche Sheet** - a ranking by seeding times of all the swimmers entered in each race of a meet sometimes used at meets in place of a heat sheet.

**Pull Buoy** - styrofoam devices put between the legs to isolate the use of arms and keep legs afloat in pulling exercises.

**Qualifier Meet** - Any meet that requires times either faster than a certain time or slower than a certain time. Examples include: District Meet, Junior Olympics, States, Zones, Sectionals, Junior Nationals, Futures, Speedo Championship series, the Olympics.

**Recall rope**- a rope across the width of the racing pool for the purpose of stopping swimmers who were not aware of a false start. The rope is dropped into the water to stop them during a false start.

**Relay** - an event in which four swimmers compete together as a team to achieve one time.

**Referee** - the official who has the authority over a final decisions and sees that the meet is run efficiently.

**Sanction-** a permit issued by an LSC to conduct an event or meet.

**Scratch-** (from an event) withdraws entry from competition.

**Seed-** to distribute the swimmers among the required number of heats and/or lanes, according to their submitted or preliminary times.

**Seeding-** pre-seeded heats- swimmers are arranged in heats in events according to submitted times and heat sheets are prepared prior to the day of competition.

**Shave down-** the last meet of a swimmers season, shaving of legs, backs arms and heads are used to cut time and perform at the highest level.

**Short Course** - a 25-yard or 25-meter pool. This season begins in September and ends officially with the league, state, sectional, and national meets in March and April.

**Sickness-** never heard of it.

**Split**- a portion of an event, shorter than the total distance that is timed. Most frequently used to help with training and swimmer awareness.

**Split Time**- time record from official start to completion of an initial distance within a longer event.

**Starter** - the official at a meet who is responsible for starting each heat and calling the next heat to the blocks.

**Starting Blocks** - The starting platforms at the end of each lane.

**Streamline** - the position used to gain maximum distance during a start and/or push off from the wall. The swimmer's body is as tight as it can be forming a pencil-like position with the hands forming the point.

**Stroke Judge** - a certified official, who determines the legality of a swimmer's stroke and disqualifies any swimmer who does not conform to USA rules.

**Submitted Time**- those filed with an entry, as having been preciously achieved.

**Swim off**- in a prelims/final type competition, a race will occur after the scheduled event to break a tie. The only circumstance that warrants a swim-off is to determine which swimmer makes a finals or and alternate, otherwise a tie is allowed.

**Taper**- the phase of training designed to have swimmers at their peak physiological and psychological best for championship meets. It involves many different aspects that could include... a gradual reduction in intensity of training, taking place over the last 2-4 weeks of the season depending on the individual. Absolutely, all swimmers should know that this is the most important time of the season.

**Timed Finals**- competition in which only heats are swum and final placing are determined by the times performed in the heats.

**Time of Record**- official time achieved in an event.

**Time Standard**- the cut-off time for an event in a meet.

**Time Trial**- an event or series of events where swimmers may achieve or better a required time standard.

**Timer**- the volunteers standing behind the starting block at the finish end of the pool who are responsible for getting backup stopwatch times for each event and activation the backup timing system.

**Warm Down** - used by a swimmer to rid the body of excess lactic acid generated during a race or workout.

**Warm Up** - used by the swimmer, prior to the main workout set or race, to get muscles loose and warm prior to competing.

A really Good Read for reflection:

A Few Suggestions on How to be a Better Swimming Parent  
By Micheal Brooks,

**PLEASE TAKE TIME TO READ.**

**First and foremost, as a parent of two children that swim, being a former competitive swimmer and as the coach, when I read the following article, I really thought it was beneficial.**

**WE all want what is best for the swimmers and youngsters that swim for our team.** That is sometimes hard for coaches to understand. That is also sometimes hard for parents to understand. Much of the historical tension between coaches and parents can be avoided if we agree on two

golden rules: first, let's cut each other some slack and not jump on and over-react to the first unsubstantiated third-hand rumor that comes down the pike. And second, let's communicate, often, and not just when we may have a problem. Rule of thumb: if you are heated about something, wait a day and contact me. I will use the same restraint.

## **TEACHING VALUES**

**YOU are key to your child's swimming.** A parent's attitude toward swimming, the program, the coach, and his/her child's participation, is key towards the child's attitude and success really in any sport. The young swimmer takes cues from his/her parent. If the parent shows by word, deed, facial expression, etc., that he does not value swimming, that he doesn't appreciate having to drive to practice or sit in the stands during meets, that "it's not going to matter" if the child skips practice, that morning practices are just "optional" and that the child would be better off with the extra sleep, then the chances are very good that the child will lack commitment, have little success and lose interest in swimming. Support your child's interest in swimming by being positively interested and supporting the youngster in all ways possible.

**ALLOW your swimmer to be resilient.** Failure, and facing that failure, doesn't cause kids to melt. Failure isn't such an evil thing that parents should try to shield their kids from it. Allow them to fail, then teach them to get up off the canvas and try harder to succeed the next time. If parents are continually sheltering their swimmers from the storm, cushioning every fall, making excuses for them, finding someone else to blame, the children never learn anything. Even worse, they never learn that they are responsible both for their failures and for their successes. Allow them to stand on their own, and you will be helping them immeasurably down the road.

**MOLEHILLS really are molehills.** At times I may appear unsympathetic or even harsh because I won't let kids stop for "emergencies": for leaking goggles, for kids passing them, for side-aches, for stretching, for repeated bathroom breaks, etc. I may even have to walk away from frustrating situations. Many kids think that the slightest obstacle is an overwhelming reason to stop and should be listened to and followed as the voice of God. I think not. I am trying to teach focus. When a swimmer is in the middle of a set, the only thing in life that matters or is worthy of attention is the set. Little "bothers" are to be overcome or ignored. And once a swimmer gets in the habit of overcoming these "little bothers," he/she finds that they aren't so overwhelmingly important after all. If we are continually stopping for "emergencies," we will never get anything done. If a study session is continually interrupted for sharpening pencils, then getting a better notepad, then getting a drink of water, then taking a little break when a favorite song comes on the radio, then answering the telephone, almost miraculously the math assignment doesn't get completed.

**DON'T worry, be happy???** I don't want a swimmer crying or doing cartwheels after an awful performance. It's okay for them to be upset about, disappointed with, even angry about having done poorly. Feeling lousy for a few minutes won't kill them, it won't forever damage their self-esteem, and if they are thinking correctly it will motivate them to try harder and do better the next time. I want to teach them standards of good and bad performance, so that when they really do well, they will feel appropriately pleased. If they are simply showered with praise willy nilly, they never know the difference. Praise is not something that is given lightly for doing what is expected. Praise usually happens when athletes do things that push them to their limits.

**It is perfectly OK TEACH them to dream big** – a world of infinite possibilities. If you try to temper your child's dreams, if you teach her to settle for the ordinary, you may indeed save her from many a heartache and many a failure. But you also rob her of the opportunity of achieving great things, and the opportunity to plumb her depths and realize her potential. Winning big means failing many times along the way. Each failure hurts, but these temporary setbacks create the strength for the final push. Instead of having children avoid failure by never taking risks, teach them how to think correctly about failing: risk-taking and failure are necessary for improvement, development, motivation, feedback, and long-term success.

**WHAT success is.** Only one swimmer can win the race. Often in the younger age groups, the winner will be the one who has bloomed early, not necessarily the swimmer with the most talent or the most potential to succeed in senior swimming. It is expected that every parent wants his child to succeed, wants his child to have a good and learning and valuable experience with swimming. Every child can succeed – only make sure you define success correctly: being the very best you can be, striving for improvement in every aspect of swimming. That leads to lasting success. And lasting enjoyment.

**DON'T reward success by bribery.** “Bribing” your swimmer to perform well by promising presents, money, special meals, etc. for meeting various standards is highly discouraged. While bribery may work in the short run – the swimmer may indeed swim fast this afternoon – the long term consequences are never good. You have to keep upping the ante, and you must ask yourself: why does my swimmer want to swim fast? What is really motivating him? Is this good? What is a twelve year old going to do with a new car?

**FUN, fun, fun.** If “fun” means mindless entertainment and sensory bombardment, then wasting hours playing Nintendo is loads of fun, and swimming is by definition “not fun.” If “fun” means working hard and challenging yourself, taking pride in accomplishing difficult goals, and discovering talents you didn't know you had, then swimming is fun and Nintendo by definition is “not fun.” The meaning of fun is very much an open question for children, and one where parents and coaches have much influence over their charges. Are we building a nation of energized achievers or lifeless couch potatoes?

**WORK, work, work.** Persistence and work ethic are the most important qualities leading to success in swimming and everything else. And if a work ethic is not created and cultivated when a swimmer is young, it very likely it will never appear. It is so rare as not to be an option that a kid who is a slacker from ages seven to fourteen will suddenly change his spots and become a hard worker. Love for and pride in hard work **MUST** be inculcated early on, and again parents and coaches have much influence in creating this attitude.

**NO little league parents.** Kids sometimes make mistakes at meets. If your child is disqualified at a meet, don't complain, don't whine, don't make excuses. Your child's DQ is not a reflection of the quality of your parenting. The official is not blind, he does not have a vendetta against your child or your family or your team, and he is not incompetent. In fact, he has a much better vantage on your child's race than you do, and he is looking on dispassionately. You are sitting up in the stands where you can't see precisely, and you are paying attention to everything except the exact angle of your child's left foot as he kicks in breaststroke. If a DQ is questionable, as sometimes is the case, the coach – and not the parent – will take the proper steps. And even then, DQ's are almost never overturned, so don't get your hopes up. By the by, most DQ's aren't surprises to the coach. If a swimmer rehearses an illegal turn forty thousand times in training despite a coach's teaching and reteaching, it is an illegal habit that will likely show up under the stress of a race. As Joe Paterno said, "Practice good to play good."

**BURNOUT is way over-rated.** So many times parents and kids will say, "I don't want to commit to swimming because I don't want to get burned out." But for every one case of "burnout" caused by a swimmer's spending too much time in the water and working too hard, we will see a hundred cases of "pre-emptive burnout": in order not to be burned out, the swimmer only comes to practice when she feels like it, doesn't work out very hard, skips team meets with regularity, and generally makes no commitment to the program or to the sport. Not surprisingly, the swimmer swims slow, makes little to no improvement, and sees her formerly slower competitors whiz right by her. Then we wonder why she "just can't get jazzed about swimming."

**Sitting on the fence and remaining lukewarm on principle has nothing to recommend it. Discipline and commitment are good things, not things we should downplay, hide, apologize for, or (worst of all) stop demanding because it may be unpopular. If you want to enjoy swimming even more, commit more of yourself and swim fast! You do not become excited about an activity you don't do well at. HOME and pool must dovetail.** Traits of discipline, respect, high expectations, and commitment at home directly relate to the child's characteristics at practices and meets. This is yet another area where family support is crucial to the success of the swimmer. Parents should review, carefully, the Credo and other formative memos about the values the team espouses. **If the current at home is flowing in the opposite direction from the current at the pool, there will be big problems. If a family does not buy into the program, they will be very unhappy here.**

## **A JOURNEY OF A MILLION MILES**

**THE patience of Job.** Your swimmer's career in the program is a long haul, with many peaks and valleys. Usually, the new parent and swimmer come to the sport with little experience, so the first sign of a problem looks like the Grand Canyon, impossible to get across, and the first sign of success looks like Mount Everest – we're on top of the world. It's best not to get too worked up. You will see this again, over and over.

**TAKING the long view.** The training that will make an eight year old the area's fastest 25 freestyler is not the training that will benefit that swimmer most in the long run. Making decisions now that will benefit the swimmer over the long haul of a swimming career calls for prudence, and it means sacrificing some speed now for huge gains later. Now we make them beautiful in the water, now we make them fit, now we teach them to expect great things, and later we make them superfast. Our destination is not two weeks down the road, but several years.

**McDONALDS v. Michelin Three-Star.** The fast food mentality, the attitude that "I want it NOW!" (even if it tastes like cardboard) is anathema to what we are about. Think of the swimming program, and your swimmer's career in the program, as a fine meal in the very best French restaurant: more courses than you can count (phases and seasons), served in a very particular order (developmentally determined), each patiently savored (the cumulative effects of years' worth of daily training), completed by dessert and coffee (Nationals). We are not in search of a quick Big Mac. We want the best, and we are willing to wait.

## **HOW KIDS WORK**

**KIDS are inconsistent.** There is nothing that any coach or parent can do to change that. A ten-year old swimmer who knows better will in the pressure of a meet do a flip-turn on breaststroke. Another young swimmer will take twenty seconds off her best time in a race this week, and next week add it all back, with interest. One week it will seem that the butterfly is mastered, and the next week that we've never even been introduced to the stroke. A senior swimmer will take ten seconds off her best time one race, then an hour later add ten seconds in her next race. It's enough to make your hair turn grey. Learn to expect it and even to enjoy it.

**SO you thought she was a backstroker.** Age groupers change favorite or "best" strokes approximately every other day. A stroke will "click" suddenly, and then later just as suddenly unclick. There is no explanation for this phenomenon. A stroke the child hated becomes her favorite by virtue of her having done well at yesterday's meet. These are good arguments for having kids swim all four strokes in practice and meets, and for not allowing early specialization.

**NO cookie-cutter swimmers.** Kids learn at different rates and in different ways. One swimmer

picks up the breaststroke kick in a day; it takes another swimmer a year to master the same skill. If you pay close attention, you could probably write a treatise on motor learning after watching just one practice of novice swimmers. Be careful of comparing your swimmer to others, and especially be careful of comparing your swimmer to others in her listening skills. **Never, never, never measure the continuing success of your child by his performance against a particular competitor, who is likely to be on a completely different biological timetable from your child.** Doing so makes you either despondent or arrogant.

**WHY doesn't he look like Ryan Lochte?** Little kids are not strong enough or coordinated enough for their strokes to look like the senior swimmers, no matter how many drills they do or how many repeats. And parents shouldn't stress about a little thing that a swimmer struggles with for a time, such as a proper breaststroke kick. Kids seem to get these things when they are ready, and not until. We are winning the game if they steadily improve their motor control, steadily improve their aerobic conditioning, and steadily improve their attitudes. They will look like Ryan soon enough.

**HOW they do versus what they do.** Especially at younger ages, how fast a child swims and how well he places in a meet will have little significance for how that swimmer will do as a senior. Many national caliber athletes were not at all noteworthy as ten year olds. Competition times and places often tell you not about the amount of swimming talent a child has, but about how early a developer he is. **What is truly important in determining future swimming success is what happens everyday in practice: Is he developing skills and technique? Is he internalizing the attitudes of a champion, paying attention and following directions? Is he gradually building an aerobic base and training for their future success as a swimmer?** The work done is cumulatively, with every practice adding a grain of sand to what will eventually become a mountain.

**TIMES are the least of our worries.** Many young swimmers freak out when they swim, especially at meets when they race. But you learn technique at a young age and control it best at slow speeds. Don't rush, take it slow, and get it perfect before you try to go fast. Even in meets, for the little ones I am much more interested in how they get down the pool than in how fast they do. Technique and tactics are more important than the numbers on the watch; if the technique and tactics are improving steadily, the time on the watch will improve steadily, too, and without our obsessing over it.

**BUT he swam faster in practice!?!?** Younger kids are routinely swimming as fast in practice as they do in meets. From one perspective, this makes no sense. Why should a swimmer do better on the last repeat of 10 x 400 on short rest, after having swum 3600 meters at descending pace, than she does when all she has to do is get up and race one rested 400? She swims faster when she's tired? Sometimes, yes. After all, in training she is well warmed up, her body has run

through the spectrum and swam faster and faster, so her aerobic systems are working at full steam and her stroke rhythm is perfect and grooved, and she is energized from racing her teammates and shooting after concrete goals without the pressure she often feels in meets. Practice is much less threatening than meets. **NOT even Ted Williams batted a thousand. No one improves every time out.** Don't expect best times every swim; if you do, you will frustrate yourself to death in less than a season, and you will put so much pressure on your swimmer that she will quit the sport early. You would think that if a swimmer goes to practice, works hard, and has good coaching and a good program, then constant improvement would be inevitable. Wrong. So much more goes into swimming than just swimming.

**THE Rubber band effect.** It would be easier for the swimmer, his parents, and his coach if improvements were made slowly and gradually, if all involved could count on hard work in practice producing corresponding improvements in competition every month. This "ideal", however, is so rare as to be nonexistent. Often improvements are made in leaps, not baby steps. Improvement happens by fits and starts, mostly because improvement results as much from psychology as from physiology. It is harder this way, because less predictable. Further, swimmers and their parents tend to become a bit discouraged during the short "plateaus" when the improvements that the child is making are not obvious; then, when the rubber band has snapped and the swimmer makes a long awaited breakthrough, they expect the nearly vertical improvement curve to continue, which it will not do.

**THERE is a lot more to swimming than just swimming.** This will become especially apparent as the swimmer gets older, say around puberty. But even for the young kids, inconsistency is the rule. What's going on in a swimmer's head can either dovetail with the training or completely counteract the hours and hours in the pool. Again, if a swimmer has been staying up late, not allowing her body to recover from training, or if she's been forsaking her mother's nutritious meals for Big Macs, fries, and shakes, that swimmer's "hidden training" will counteract what she's been doing in the water. Again, if a swimmer is in the dumps and can't see straight after breaking up with his girlfriend, the best coach and the best program in the world will not save today's race.

**TERMINAL strokes and "coachability".** Often young swimmers, especially "successful" younger swimmers who are very strong for their age, have terminal strokes – i.e., strokes that are inefficient dead-ends, strokes that will not allow for much if any improvement, strokes that consist of bulling through the water and not getting much for the huge outpouring of effort and energy. For kids with terminal strokes, it is time to throw away the stopwatch, slow down, and learn to swim all over again. Often this adjustment period is characterized by slower times, which is difficult for the swimmer and for the parents. Difficult, but necessary, because this one step backwards will allow for ten steps forward soon enough.

Note that for the stroke improvement to be made, the swimmer (and parent, supporting the coach's decision) must be **coachable**: they must trust that the coach is knowledgeable and thinking of the swimmer's best interests, and they must be willing to trust that the changes that feel awful at first (because the swimmer's body is used to doing things a certain way, that way

feels comfortable, and any other way is going to be resisted) will help him be a better swimmer. This coachability, this trust, is unfortunately rare. Most kids choose not to change horses in the middle of the stream, and both the horse and rider drown. Terminal strokers are soon caught by swimmers who are smaller but more efficient.

**BIGGER is better??** The subject of early and late bloomers is a sensitive one, but nonetheless very important for parents to understand. Early and late bloomers each have “virtues” and “challenges.” To begin with **early developers**. They get bigger and stronger earlier than the other kids, which means they are more likely to win their races. That early success is the virtue. However, because they can often win without having to work on their technique or train very hard, often they do not develop a solid work ethic, and often their technique is poor as they bull through the water. Note that from the child’s immediate perspective, NOT working hard and NOT working on technique is a rational choice. After all, “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”: what he has done has obviously been working, since he has been highly successful, so why should he listen to the coach tell him that he needs to work harder or change his stroke? He beats all the other kids who listen to the coach, work harder, and change their strokes! So our pragmatist reaches the ages of thirteen to fifteen and suddenly the other kids whom he used to destroy in meets are catching up to him and even passing him. The size and strength advantage that he had relied on has deserted him, and he has no technique or work ethic to fall back on. He is not long for the sport: many early bloomers quit when their easy successes dry up. We avoid this future problem by not allowing the early bloomers to bask in the temporary limelight, but training them for their long run benefit, and educating them about how they should judge their own performances both in meets and in practices. On to the **late bloomers**. They are smaller and weaker than the others, so they get crushed in swimming meets. If the coach, swimmer, and parent emphasize places and winning, then there is little chance that this late bloomer will stay in the sport. This, too, is rational: “Why should I keep swimming? I’m obviously lousy, even though I’m working my guts out and doing everything the coach asks. I’m still getting killed! Coach is a bozo and I’m just not meant to be a swimmer.” That is the obvious downside. However, if the coach and parents can help the swimmer find enough rewards from swimming, for instance improvement, meeting personal challenges, friendships, etc., to stick it out through the lean years, and if she relies on technique and hard work to overcome the temporary physical deficit, then she is in the driver’s seat in a few years. It is usually the case that the late bloomers end up bigger and stronger than the others – it just takes them longer to get there. And the qualities in the water and in their heads serve them well in senior swimming. Note well: it is almost impossible to tell how talented your swimmer is, or how much potential your swimmer has for swimming, by looking at 10 & Under meet results. Races will often just tell you who is bigger and stronger, and that probably won’t last.

**PUBERTY complicates everything.** You would think that because they are getting bigger and

presumably stronger, your swimmers would be getting faster. Yes, and no. Whether fair or not, in the end puberty is highly beneficial to almost all boys, but with girls can be more ambiguous. Boys lose fat and gain muscle, getting bigger and stronger; girls, too, gain in height and strength, but they also add fat deposits. With proper nutrition (that does not mean starvation diets or eating disorders) and proper training (lots and lots of aerobic work, consistently), these questionable changes can be kept to a minimum, with no long-term harmful effects. In the short run, during puberty kids are growing, but they are growing unevenly. Arms and legs and torsos don't have the same proportions as they did last week, either of strength or length, so coordination can go haywire. Strokes may fall apart, or come and go. Also, various psychological changes are affecting swimming and everything else. Interests change and priorities are re-ordered. All these changes can cause the child's athletic performances to stagnate. It can be a highly frustrating time for all involved. Fortunately, it doesn't last long, and the swimmer emerges from a chrysalis a beautiful (and fast and strong) butterfly.

**THE perils of getting older.** Aging up is sometimes traumatic. Formerly very good ten year olds become mediocre 11 & 12's overnight. And often, the better they were in the younger age group, and the higher their expectations of success, the more traumatic the change is for them, because the more their "perceived competence" has suddenly nose-dived as they now race against bigger and stronger and faster competition. They are bonsais racing sequoia trees, and the standards of judgement have ratcheted up dramatically. The fastest kids are much faster than they are, to the point that they think they cannot compete, so they figure, "Why try? Working hard isn't going to get me far, anyway. I may as well wait until my 'good year.'" Often we see a tremendous jump upwards in practice intensity as swimmers approach their last meet in an age group (they want to go out with a bang), then a tremendous plummeting in that intensity as they become just one of the pack. This is in despite of the coach's discussing the matter with the swimmer. **A Special Note about Swimmers New to the PAC Program.** When they first join our program, no kids are hard workers. This sounds harsh, but it is true nonetheless. Compared with all other local swimming programs, we swim longer and harder and have much higher expectations. Swimmers have never really had to work very hard before, relatively, so they don't know what it's like. What used to be strenuous is now defined as easy swimming. Swimmers have never really had high goals before, relatively, so they don't know how to make them or how to bring them about. What used to be fast isn't any longer, and their new teammates are talking about strange things called "Triple A" and "Quad A's". It takes several months for a swimmer's body and mind to adapt to the new demands and new expectations. Often the initial shock to the system is difficult, but it is made superable by extra support and encouragement from parent and coach. And then they bloom. Many parents have remarked to me on the changes that the program has wrought in their children: we have a new child who is ready to take on the world, who is confident in his abilities, and who has new and much higher expectations of himself.

**SUPPORT, NOT PRESSURE**

**THE Rock of Gibraltar.** As they succeed then fail then succeed again, kids will ride emotional roller-coasters. One of your most important functions as a swimming parent is to provide emotional support during the tough times, of which there will be many. Let them know that they are still loved, no matter how poorly they think they swam. And don't let them get cocky when they win.

**DON'T coach your kids.** If the swimmer is hearing one story from his coach and another from his parent, we have one confused swimmer. A swimmer and Parent must have trust in his coach and in the program, and he will not if his parents are implicitly telling him that they know best. **If you have concerns about the coaching or the coaching advice, talk to the coach directly. If in the end you feel that you cannot support the coach or the program, your best course is to find a team whose coach you trust. Your swimmer has a coach; she needs you to be a parent.**

**THE next Micheal Phelps??** No matter how good your swimmer seems to be as a ten year old, don't get your hopes too high. Don't expect an Olympian (you are allowed to hope for an Olympian), and don't judge his every move (or swim) by Olympian standards. **In order to make it to the Olympics so many things over such a comparatively long time have to go right, so many decisions have to be made "correctly" (and can only be seen to be correct with hindsight), and so much plain good luck is required, that the odds are heavy against it. Further, many kids are physically talented, but few have the mental talent: the poise, drive, and persistence to develop the gifts they are given.** How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice. As psychologist Howard Gruber, who has made a life-work out of studying great achievers, has argued, the difference between the very good and the truly great isn't talent but much harder and consistent work.

**IN praise of famous kids?** Don't puff up a 10-year old, or we will end up with a monster on our hands. Don't get too impressed, don't praise too highly – leave room for when they get a lot better. No matter how fast a child swims, it is still a child swimming, and the level of accomplishment is very low compared to how high she will reach five or ten years from now. **Don't treat him like a superstar, because the more you treat him like a superstar, the less likely he will become one.** Pampered kids aren't tough. Similarly, be careful not to brag about your swimmer to other parents. No one likes to hear continuous talk about someone else's kid, and if your swimmer is really good, it will be apparent to everyone without your having to tell them. Dale Carnegie said, "Talk about them, not about me." Translate this into: "Talk about their swimmer, not about mine."

**EVERY Soviet victory is a victory for Soviet socialist ideology?** How your child swam in the 50 fly ten minutes ago is no reflection of your value as a person or as a parent. A first place ribbon does not validate your parenting techniques, or the quality of your genes. Alternately, a slow swim should not bring into question a family's commitment, financial and otherwise, to a child's swimming. Swimming is hard enough for a child without having to carry around her parents' self-esteem on her shoulders when she races. Also remember that what goes around

comes around. The better you allow yourself to feel about a victory now, the worse a loss will feel next meet, or the next event. **JEKYLL and Hyde.** Coaches often undergo miraculous transformations. It is always interesting to watch parents' changing attitudes and behavior towards the coach when their children are "succeeding" or "failing." When the child swims well, the coach is a good chap and everyone's happy. When the child bombs, the coach is an Untouchable who should not be looked in the eye. Sometimes this change occurs in the space of half an hour. Precious few parents treat me the same no matter how their children perform. There are some and I appreciate YOU!!!

**PROBLEMS, POTENTIAL AND KINETIC UNEQUAL Justice for all?** Sometimes parents ask, "Why don't you treat the kids equally, with one standard for all?" For the same reason that most parents don't treat their own children exactly the same: because kids have different capabilities, personalities, and motivations, and what works for one child doesn't work for all. Second, because with talent comes responsibility. When a very fast swimmer, whom the others look up to and follow, messes around in practice, he drags the whole group down with him. This will not be tolerated. Higher expectations accompanying talent should be taken as a compliment. **THE wisdom of Solomon.** Coaches make many decisions. You won't agree with them all. For instance, relays. As a general rule, every parent thinks his child should be on the "A" relay. But only four swimmers can be on the relay team. The coaches will choose the four kids whom they think will do the best job today. That is not always the four with the top four "best times." Sometimes it includes a swimmer who has been very impressive in practices, or someone who is on fire at this meet, or someone who hasn't swum the event in a meet in a while and so hasn't officially made a fast time but who has let the coaches know by practice performance and otherwise that he deserves to be in the relay. **Trust the coaches to act in what they consider the best interests of the team as a whole, and understand that this sometimes conflicts with what you see as the best interests of your child at this moment.**

**MEDDLING isn't coaching.** A lot of coaches, especially younger ones, will "overcoach" as a rule, especially at meets. "Overcoaches" are in the kids' faces all the time, giving them twenty thousand instructions before they race, timing them incessantly during the warm-ups of a championship meet, controlling every little thing. Many parents are impressed by this show of active coaching. However, overcoaching is destructive, at practice and at meets. At practice, swimmers need instruction – that is agreed. But they also need to be allowed to try things, to find out what works and what doesn't, to watch other swimmers, with perhaps a few leading questions from the coach. You don't teach an infant how to walk; he watches you, he tries it, he falls, he falls again and again, and in no time he is charging around the house making mischief. And when you get to a meet, the general rule should be, the less said the better. In a stressful environment, the more information you try to force into a kid's head at the last minute, the more likely you are to jam his circuits entirely (similar to "cramming" for an exam in school). He will

head to the blocks not knowing which way is up. If a coach has been doing the job in practice, the swimmer will know how to swim his race before he gets to the meet. A couple of cues or reminders, and only a couple, and the swimmer can hop on the blocks without his mind cluttered by overcoaching.

**TALK to the coach.** Communicate your concerns about the program or your child's progress within it with the coach, not with your child. Never complain about a coach to a child. The last thing a ten year-old needs is to be caught in the middle between two adult authority figures. Further, when you have a problem or concern, please do not head to other parents to complain, head to the coach to discuss. There is nothing guaranteed to destroy a program faster, and to send good (even great) coaches running for the door quicker, than a group of parents sitting together every day in the stands comparing notes about the things they don't like.

**SEMPER fidelis.** Don't criticize the team to outsiders, don't criticize the coach to outsiders, don't criticize other parents to outsiders, don't criticize your own swimmers to outsiders, don't criticize others' swimmers to outsiders. If you can't find anything good to say, don't say anything at all.

**LEAVE this campsite cleaner than you found it.** Before you complain about any component of the program, ask yourself: what am I doing, positively and actively, to help the team function better?

**DON'T try to be a swimming expert.** With the internet rage, the amount of really bad information available at the click of a mouse is overwhelming. And not being a coach, not being immersed in the sport twenty-four hours a day, not having much historical perspective on technique and training, and generally not knowing where the website you just stumbled onto fits in the jigsaw puzzle of the sport, you are in no position to judge what you find critically.

**THERE are no "age group parents" and "senior parents."** There are only swimming parents. Once a portion of the team's parents begins to think of itself as having a different interest from that of the group as a whole, the team has begun to rip itself apart. The rose bud is not distinct from the rose in full flowering; they are the same things at different stages of development, with identical interests.

**KEEP me in the loop.** It happens quite frequently that I cannot understand why a swimmer is responding to the training as he is. It seems to make no sense, if we assume that the only variables are the ones that I am in control of in training. Why is he so tired? Why is he so inconsistent? It is easy to forget that everything happening in the swimmer's life during the twenty-one hours a day when he is away from the pool affects his swimming as much or more than the three hours of training when I am ostensibly in charge. Let me know if there are problems at home or at school that will affect your swimmer's training and racing performance.

You don't need to give me all the details, but in order to coach your swimmer individually, I have to know what is happening individually.

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

**SWIMMING is a mystery.** Most of the time only God really knows why a swimmer did so well or so poorly. Coaches can point to the easy answers, superficial indices (stroke count, stroke rate, splits, etc.), which are probably more often effects than they are causes. Who can explain why a swimmer whose workouts have been horrid and who hasn't gotten much sleep, will come alive at a meet and set the water on fire? Why a swimmer whose workouts have been wonderful and who has been doing everything right, will come to a meet and look like death warmed over? Or why a swimmer who has been a rock for years will come mentally unglued at the big meet? Sometimes hard work isn't rewarded with good performances. Sometimes lazing around and skipping practices is. This is hard for coaches, swimmers, and parents to accept. Not everything in life makes sense, and not everything in life is fair. It doesn't take a reflective coach very long to figure out that he isn't in total control here. Ponder the Greek tragedies.

**A work in progress.** These recommendations/suggestions may sound set in stone. But my thinking on most of these subjects is evolving, since these subjects are complicated and since kids are, too. These are topics that we should all consider as open to discussion. Being a good coach is just as difficult as being a good parent, and it involves thinking through and judging correctly about the same issues. Most parents are confused at least part of the time about whether or not they are doing the right things with their kids. And most coaches are equally uncertain about whether the methods that worked for one swimmer will work with another.

**This was taken from  
Michael Brooks**