

Billings Aquatic Club

**SWIM TEAM
HANDBOOK**

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Welcome to the Stingrays

Whether you are a returning athlete or are new to the team, we hope you will find swimming with the Billings Aquatic Club a rewarding experience. This handbook is designed to be a reference for you and your family to get to know the club and to discover how you can best participate in it. We encourage all swimmers and their parents to take the time to read this information. It not only describes the team's driving philosophies and outlines many of our procedures, policies, and programs; but it also introduces you to the sport of competitive swimming. There's a lot to learn, but BAC's coaches, board members, and families are here to answer your questions. We want to help you make the most of your experience with the club. Please don't hesitate to reach out for more information.

Mission Statement

The Billings Aquatic Club provides a safe, positive, and affordable opportunity for children to participate in a competitive swimming environment. We strive to help them achieve their full potential as swimmers and grow together as contributing citizens of the greater community.

Team Philosophy

BAC is a competitive swim team offering year-round instruction, training, and competition opportunities for young people. However, the club's philosophy goes far beyond teaching basic swimming skills or preparing athletes to win races. Our professional coaches use scientific and individualized approaches to help every team member to reach his or her goals, while also encouraging the swimmers to become lifelong athletes and successful citizens. To this end, the following team objectives have been set forth:

1. To provide physical fitness, proper conditioning, development of self-esteem, and a positive self-image through participation in competitive swimming.
2. To provide an environment for self-improvement and goal achievement through hard work, dedication, self-discipline, and perseverance.
3. To promote honesty, integrity, good sportsmanship, and team loyalty through competition at all peer and ability levels.
4. To provide a quality instruction and training atmosphere, from a comprehensive learn-to-swim program to the level of state, regional, national, and collegiate quality swimmers.
5. To develop a family-oriented club with community involvement and support.
6. To participate in state, regional, and national swimming events as sponsored by USA Swimming and the United States Olympic Committee.

Competitive swimming is a very individual sport in which every swimmer progresses at his or her own rate. However, BAC believes strongly in the team concept. We believe every member contributes to the team as a whole, and that all members and their families should share in the triumphs and trials of all team swimmers. We strive to create an atmosphere of support that encourages the physical, emotional, and intellectual growth of all members. It is our goal to develop both great swimmers and confident young men and women who can be proud of themselves through a positive swimming experience.

Our coaches' philosophy can best be summed up in this simple equation:

Hard Work + Technique + Positive Atmosphere = Fast Swimmers

Training to swim competitively involves much more than simply diving into the pool and swimming laps. Our coaches strive to create a wide variety of skill/age-level-appropriate workout programs to keep swimmers engaged and enthusiastic about the sport. Keeping practices fresh and fun motivates young athletes to attend more often, enabling them to grow stronger and to improve their technique so that they may consistently reach their competitive goals.

History

The Billings Aquatic Club was officially formed in 1985. Since then it has grown to serve as many as 150 athletes in a single season. The team has brought home numerous state championship trophies, and individual BAC swimmers have held many state records. Swimmers from BAC regularly compete at regional and national swim meets, and many have gone on to swim for collegiate programs. Our head coach, Sean Marshall, has had his swimmers continue their swimming careers on athletic scholarships to various levels of collegiate swimming, including but not limited to the following colleges and universities: Arizona, Arizona State, Bucknell, Columbia, George Mason, George Washington, Harvard, LSU, New York University, Penn, PITT, Providence, Richmond, Salisbury, Tennessee, Texas, UMBC, Vanderbilt, William & Mary, and Yale.

Governance

BAC is a nonprofit club operated by unpaid volunteers and paid coaches. The club is supported by member dues, fundraising efforts, and sponsorships from around the local community. The club is governed by a board of directors elected by the membership. The board consists of an executive committee (president, vice president, secretary, treasurer) who oversee the day-to-day business of the club, as well as several at-large members who administrate various programs, functions, and events. The board meets monthly to make decisions regarding the club's business; upcoming meets and events; policies and procedures; and dues and fundraising. All parents are invited and encouraged to attend these meetings, usually held at the Rocky Mountain College Fortin Center. Meeting times and locations are announced at least one week in advance via the club's email contact list. Parents are especially encouraged to participate in the annual and semi-annual club meetings held on the first Tuesdays of May and December. Nomination and selection of new board members occurs during the annual club meeting in May. All parents are encouraged to consider volunteering to join BAC's board and/or one of the club's various committees.

The club's bylaws can be found on the club's website—www.billingsaquaticclub.com

Standing

The Billings Aquatic Club is a member of USA Swimming (USAS), the national governing body for the sport of swimming. USAS oversees the overall organization and operation of the sport within the country. It also selects the U.S. Olympic team and any other team that may officially represent the USA internationally. Its national headquarters is located at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado. All BAC swimmers are required to join the USAS as part of the registration process. All BAC meets, practices, and standards conform to USAS rules for the sport. More information about the national organization can be found at www.usaswimming.org.

Additionally, as a USAS member, BAC is a member of Montana Swimming, the local swimming committee (LSC). Montana Swimming coordinates competition among the clubs around the state, including the Short Course and Long Course State Championships and the Short Course B-C Championship meets. It also administrates various programs, camps, and events of benefit to all of the state's member swim clubs. More information can be found at www.mtswimming.com.

Venues

BAC does not currently operate its own facility but rents time and space at various pools around the Billings community. Our primary home is the Fortin Center Pool at Rocky Mountain College. The majority of the team's practices are held there, as are BAC's home meets. The team's record boards, trophy case, bulletin boards, and sponsorship banners are installed there. The club also regularly practices in the pools at MSU-B and Rose Park. The club has even used pools at private fitness centers. Practice times and locations are determined by the head coach and depend on a wide variety of factors, including the number of swimmers in a given group, school schedules, pool availability, weather, and demand. Locker room facilities with showers are available at all venues.

Scholarships

BAC is proud to support team swimmers with scholarships for college. These one-time cash scholarships are available to swimmers who are continuing their swimming career at the college level, or who are continuing to swim competitively at the club level during college. High school seniors must submit an application before the end of the Short Course season prior to their graduation. For more information about the scholarship program or to get an application, contact the club president (president@billingsaquaticclub.com) or treasurer (treasurer@billingsaquaticclub.com).

Recruitment

BAC always welcomes new members. Prospective swimmers must try out with the head age group coach. Tryouts are held prior to each season, but if there is interest, the coach may hold additional scheduled tryout sessions through the year. Individual tryouts may also be arranged throughout the year, especially for swimmers who have recently relocated to the Billings area and may be looking for a new team to call home.

At tryouts, the coach will direct the prospective swimmer in an age-appropriate demonstration of his or her skills, conditioning, and abilities. While there are no specific benchmarks for making the team, it is recommended at a minimum that a prospective swimmer be able to cross a 25-yard pool unaided without stopping, be able to demonstrate a basic understanding of how to perform all four competitive strokes, exhibit a willingness to respond to coaching, as well as an interest in and enthusiasm for the sport.

If you have questions or would like to schedule a tryout please contact the head age group coach, Jessica Knot.

Team Structure

BAC has three important member groups: athletes, coaches, and parents.

Athletes

In keeping with BAC's philosophy of providing a quality swimming program for individuals of all ages, abilities, and interest levels, the club offers a progressive range of professional instruction and training. The coaches, in consultation with each athlete's parents, will determine the level in which the athlete will participate. However, BAC coaches also evaluate swimmers on their skill and ability in order to place them in the workout programs that best suit their needs. Regular attendance is strongly encouraged at every level in order to achieve the maximum benefit from training as swimmers develop at different paces and some may need more time than others to do so.

JUNIOR STINGRAYS

6 years and older

This group is for swimmers who are just beginning with BAC and can perform freestyle and backstroke but may not yet be able to compete in breaststroke and butterfly. This group is designed to introduce young swimmers to the sport of competitive swimming. Coaches emphasize the fundamentals and technique of the four competitive strokes and do not focus on training at this level.

Practice schedule: 2-3 practices per week with meets at the discretion of the parent/guardian with coaches' recommendations.

BRONZE

6-12 years of age

This group is for swimmers who can properly perform the four competitive strokes and are ready to learn more advanced techniques. Swimmers will be working harder and will also focus on the wide spectrum of the competitive swimming events including the more technical individual medley races. The primary objective is individual improvement.

Schedule: 3-4 practices per week with encouragement to participate in at least one meet a season.

SILVER

9-13 years of age

Increased pool time for swimmers at this level results in better conditioning and endurance. Silver swimmers will also focus on technique, kicking, and endurance with longer and more challenging sets.

Schedule: 4-5 practices per week with encouragement to participate in all team meets.

GOLD

13 years of age and up

Swimmers at this level are provided a strong conditioning background that will prepare them to compete at higher levels of USAS. This group's workouts provide committed and motivated swimmers with the skills and conditioning needed to meet their goals for state, regional, sectional, and national competitions.

Schedule: 6+ practices per week including dryland workouts and morning practices with the encouragement to participate in all team meets.

Coaching Staff

Head Coach

The head coach is responsible for the quality and direction of coaching and instruction at all levels. He or she oversees all associate and assistant coaches, schedules practices, and otherwise leads the team. Although the head coach acts as the primary coach for the Gold group athletes, he or she also works regularly with swimmers at every level. The head coach also maintains open communication with all parents.

Head Age Group Coach

The head age group coach is responsible for the quality and direction of coaching and instruction of the Silver and Bronze groups and Junior Stingrays. He or she oversees all associate and assistant coaches. The head age group coach also assists the head coach with the Gold group athletes and training. He or she works regularly with swimmers at every level. The head age group coach maintains open communication with all parents.

Assistant Coaches

Assistant coaches are experienced coaches qualified to design and lead training for specific age groups under the general direction of the head coach. At practices, assistant coaches direct large numbers of swimmers, but they often work closely with individual swimmers. They also interact regularly with parents.

Parents

Parents and other family members are an integral part of the BAC team, on the deck and off. Whether just getting your swimmer to practices on time or serving an important role on the board, everything you can do benefits the club. All BAC families are encouraged to get involved beyond the minimum requirements. This handbook details many opportunities parents have to volunteer for the club. The only qualifications are a positive attitude and a willingness to help create a great experience for the athletes.

Club Communication

www.billingsaquaticclub.com

The team's website is designed to be the primary resource for all information about the club. Important announcements are made on its home page, and its numerous tabs will lead you to more detailed information, including practice schedules, event calendars, team records, forms, documents, club policies, volunteer opportunities, as well as a variety of links for continuing education about swimming.

Once you join the club, you can use the website to access and update your family's BAC account. And throughout each season you will use the site to register swimmers for meets, to sign up for volunteer opportunities, and to RSVP for team events.

If you have questions about how to use the website, feel free to contact the website administrator at admin@billingsaquaticclub.com. If you have more specific questions about your account or the registration process, contact the Registrar at duesreg@billingsaquaticclub.com. If you have questions about using the website to register swimmers for home or away meets, contact the Meet Registrar at meetsignup@billingsaquaticclub.com.

Email

Email announcements are sent out to the club weekly about upcoming team events, meets, board meetings, changes to practice schedules, volunteer opportunities, fundraising opportunities, and other information relevant to the club membership. When you join the club, your family will be added to the team's general email list. Use an email address that you check frequently. You can even provide multiple email addresses to ensure that everyone in your family is kept up to date.

Submissions to be included in this email can be sent to bacstingrays@gmail.com.

Email is an excellent way to communicate with coaches and board members for non-urgent inquiries. Please note that some BAC email addresses end with .com and others with .org:

- Head Coach: bacstingrays@gmail.com
- Head Age Group Coach: knotejes@gmail.com
- President: president@billingsaquaticclub.com
- Team registrar: duesreg@billingsaquaticclub.com
- Vice president: vp@billingsaquaticclub.com
- Treasurer: treasurer@billingsaquaticclub.com
- Secretary: secretary@billingsaquaticclub.org
- Head official: officials@billingsaquaticclub.org
- Fundraising coordinator: fundraising@billingsaquaticclub.com
- Volunteer coordinator: volunteer@billingsaquaticclub.org
- Meet registrar: meetsignup@billingsaquaticclub.com
- Website administrator: admin@billingsaquaticclub.com
- Meet manager: meetmanager@billingsaquaticclub.org
- Swim shop coordinator: swimshop@billingsaquaticclub.org
- Special projects coordinator: projects@billingsaquaticclub.org
- Hospitality coordinator: hosp-bssg@billingsaquaticclub.org

BAC Private Facebook Page

BAC maintains a private group page on Facebook for informal communication among the club. Swimmers and parents are all invited to join. Any important announcement made on the Facebook page is mirrored either on the website or by email, so you won't miss important announcements if you don't join. However, the page is an excellent place for club members to cheer on and congratulate swimmers, to exchange photos from team events, to trade equipment, or to ask general questions that are easily answerable by any member.

Group membership and all postings are moderated by the head coach in keeping with the club's electronic communications policy. To find the page, just search for Billings Aquatic Club on Facebook and ask to join.

BAC Fan Page Facebook Page

BAC maintains a Facebook Page for their fans and to market to potential members. All postings are moderated by the head age group coach in keeping with the mission and vision statement of BAC. You will find the team accomplishments on this page, along with special events happening such as fundraisers, tryouts, and Stroke Clinics.

To find the page, just search for Billings Aquatic Club Stingrays on Facebook. If you have had a great experience with BAC, please leave us a review!

BAC Instagram Account

BAC maintains an Instagram Account for their fans and to market to potential members. All postings are posted by the head age group coach in keeping with the mission and vision statement of BAC. You will find the team accomplishments on this page, along with special events happening such as fundraisers, tryouts, and Stroke Clinics.

To find the account, just search for BillingsAquaticClub on Instagram.

Registration and Dues

Every athlete must be fully registered (all forms completed, all dues and registration fees paid or payment plan established) before he or she will be allowed to get in the water. The only exception is for swimmers newly accepted to the club: There is a two-week grace period for new swimmers to practice with the team without registering while still being covered by the team's insurance. This allows time for new swimmers to acclimate and make sure the sport of swimming is a good fit before the family makes the commitment to join. However, for the swimmer to continue to be allowed to practice, the family must register by the end of those two weeks.

All registration is performed online through the team's website (www.billingsaquaticclub.com) via the TeamUnify system. However, certain forms, such as the Dues/Fundraising Agreement and the Liability/Medical Release, will need to be printed and submitted to the club's registrar with signatures. See Appendix A for detailed instructions on how to register.

As you complete your registration, your payment choices include credit card, debit card (Visa/MasterCard), or an automatic bank draft (ACH—Automated Clearing House). If automatic monthly dues and fee payments options are selected, funds will be withdrawn on the first of each month without a service charge for credit and debit card users and on the 18th of each month for ACH users. However, if a family elects to pay dues and fees manually, service charges may apply based on a percentage of the balance. If you are unable to pay by any of these methods, please contact the team registrar, who will work with families on a case-by-case basis.

Swimmers' dues are calculated depending on the group they are in, as determined by BAC coaches. This selection is based on the coaches' judgment of the swimmer's existing skills and experience. Please refer to the Dues Agreement for a current fee schedule. If for any reason dues are not paid on time, swimmers will not be allowed to participate in practice or in meets until the past-due amount is made current. Additionally, fundraising requirements must be met in order for swimmers to be eligible to participate at the State Championship Meet of the current season (excluding the Montana Senior Championship Meet).

All swimmers are required to pay a registration fee. This fee covers one team T-shirt, one team swim cap, and the USA Swimming registration fee. All swimmers are required to be members of USAS for liability insurance purposes and to compete in swim meets.

BAC currently offers two payment plans: paying for the entire year's dues in a lump sum, or a monthly payment plan. These options are made available as part of the registration process. A complete description of the payment plans and dues policies can be found on BAC's Dues and Fundraising Agreement, which is provided at registration and is available on the club's website.

Option 1: Annual lump sum

Dues are paid for the entire swim year (September-July) in full in a single payment, to include both Short Course season (fall/winter) and the Long Course season (spring/summer).

Option 2: Monthly installments

The first installment is due at registration, and the remaining amount is payable in installments as presented in the dues schedule in the Dues Agreement. Monthly payments can be suspended with notice to the registrar by the 25th of the preceding month; however, your swimmer will not be able to resume practices or compete in team meets during that month. Swimmers may return once monthly payments are resumed.

Multi-Swimmer Discount

Families with more than one swimmer are eligible for a dues discount of 10% (except for Jr Stingrays).

High School Swimmers

Senior BAC swimmers who are also members of their high school swim teams are encouraged to train with BAC during the high school season. They will be required to pay the GOLD group dues as shown in the dues schedule in the Dues Agreement. There is a fundraising requirement for these swimmers.

Returning College Swimmers

BAC supports its team members after they have entered college. Swimmers who were enrolled in BAC for their entire senior year in high school may return to swim with the team during the summer months. The swimmer must be enrolled in college and must pay dues at the GOLD group rates. No family volunteer time commitment or fundraising will be required for these swimmers.

For additional information regarding dues, fees, or swimmer registration, contact the BAC registrar at duesreg@billingsaquaticclub.com.

Terms and Conditions for Membership

1. BAC dues and the USA Swimming registration fee are not refundable and must be paid prior to the swimmer entering the water. Swimmers new to BAC may participate for a maximum of two weeks prior to payment of the registration fees.
2. If Swimmers are moved to another practice group during the season (only by agreement of the coaches and parents), the family will pay the dues for the practice group that the swimmer participates in for the following months.
3. Meet entry fees are paid in addition to the dues and must be paid in accordance with the entry timeline as communicated by BAC.
4. BAC can't run without the help of its parents. All families are expected to contribute their time and fundraising efforts to the team. Specific requirements are outlined in this handbook.
5. Parents and athletes agree to abide by the rules and regulations stated in the BAC Parent and Athlete Codes of Conduct.
6. Parents and athletes agree to abide by the rules and regulations stated in the USAS Athlete Protection Policy and Guidelines. You can find more information at www.usaswimming.org. See their Safe Sport pages.
7. BAC members may be photographed at team functions. Photos may be provided to the media or published in print or online for marketing and promotional purposes.
8. Each parent and athlete is responsible for reading and understanding the contents of this handbook, the code of conduct, and other team policies.

Family Assistance (BAC Swim Outreach Program)

In order to ensure that all children with an interest in the sport of swimming may participate, BAC can provide assistance to families who may be unable to meet their financial obligations to the club. Families seeking assistance must submit an application and required documentation for review by the board. Depending on the circumstances, families may still be responsible for a percentage of the dues and for certain fees. For more information about the BAC Swim Outreach Program or to get an application, contact the club president (president@billingsaquaticclub.com) or treasurer (treasurer@billingsaquaticclub.com).

Family Commitments

As a volunteer-run organization, BAC relies wholly on its members to make the club a success. As members, families are required to meet minimum thresholds for both fundraising and volunteering for the club. There are hundreds of hours of volunteer opportunities available every season, and most families easily and regularly exceed these requirements. The team organizes several programs throughout the year designed to make the fundraising commitment as easy as possible to reach. All the requirements are outlined here, and in the dues and fundraising agreement provided at registration and posted on the club's website. Please read the agreement carefully as you register.

Fundraising Requirements

The Billings Aquatic Club is a nonprofit organization, funded by member dues and fundraising. It is every member family's responsibility to help with fundraising each year. Each swimmer is responsible for raising a set amount of funds for both the short course and long course season, in addition to dues, to ensure that all members of the team are doing their fair share to help maintain the financial stability of the club. Numerous fundraising opportunities exist, and the club is always open to new fundraising ideas.

	Short Course (September - March)	Long Course (April – August)
Jr Stingrays	\$50	\$150
Bronze	\$250	\$150
Silver	\$300	\$150
Gold	\$350	\$150

*Applies to the oldest swimmer in the family & does not include any fundraising obligation for the Gold Group Training Trip.

Additional swimmers in the same family in Gold, Silver, and Bronze categories as follows:

2nd Swimmer additional: \$175

3rd Swimmer additional: \$100

4th Swimmer additional: \$75

For **Short Course (September-March)**, all fundraising requirements are due in full by March 15. If your swimmer is joining the team after December 1, the amount will be prorated.

Long Course Season (April-August) fundraising requirements are due in full by August 1st. If your swimmer is joining the team after June 1st, the amount will be prorated. If requirements are not met by August 1st your team account will be billed the amount remaining on your fundraising requirement and your swimmer will be unable to train or compete until that amount is paid as well as Pre-Register for the following season at the lower price break.

If a swimmer's fundraising requirement has not been met by the due date, then the member will pay BAC the remaining balance in full along with a \$25 late fee. Swimmers who do not pay the balance with the late fee will not be allowed to register for championship meets. Failure to fulfill the fundraising requirement may cause forfeiture of BAC membership.

Members can check their accrued fundraising balance at any time on the website. On the left hand side menu, click the "My Account" item, then click the "\$My Invoice/Payment" item. In the box that appears, select the "Fundraising" tab. Balances recorded in the database will be displayed.

For more information on fundraising, contact the fundraising coordinator at fundraising@billingsaquaticclub.com.

Fundraising Opportunities

Swim-A-Thon

Swim-A-Thon is an annual event designed to combine fundraising with the fun of swimming. Swimmers gather pledges from friends, family, or from people around the community who agree to donate a small amount of money per lap that the swimmer can complete during a special event at the pool. The pledge amount can vary from a few cents to a few dollars per lap or can be offered as a lump sum. Swimmers are incentivized by being able to earn prizes for raising certain amounts of money, completing high numbers of laps, or being entered in drawings for their general participation. The event, usually held in the fall, is like a party, with music and food, but with lots and lots of swimming. Swim-A-Thon has historically been one of BAC's most successful fundraisers, regularly funding equipment upgrades, such as the new scoreboard, and supporting other BAC programs. The USAS recommends Swim-A-Thon as a fundraiser and actively supports clubs around the country with materials and advice.

Scrip

A simple way to earn fundraising money is to participate in the Scrip program. Scrip is a yearlong program in which families purchase gift cards through a third-party provider subscribed to by the club (www.shopwithscrip.com). Gift cards are available for a wide variety of retailers and restaurants. These retailers have committed to donate a certain percentage of the purchase of the card back to the club. This percentage varies by retailer. This program doesn't cost anything out of pocket. If you purchase a \$25 gift card, you receive a \$25 gift card, which may be spent like cash at the store. Many cards can even be purchased on the go and spent in the store using only your smart phone through a mobile app provided by the Scrip program provider.

Another benefit of Scrip is that once you've met your fundraising requirement any additional money you earn through the Scrip program is yours to decide what to do with. It can be donated to the club, applied to your account to pay dues or fees, or returned to you by check. You will be asked to make your selection on the BAC Scrip program registration form. If you change your mind as to how you want the money applied, you will need to submit a new form.

In order to use Scrip, families must complete a Scrip program agreement form. To obtain a copy of this form, or to ask specific questions, contact the fundraising coordinator or the Scrip program coordinator.

A few simple ways to make the Scrip program work hard for you:

- **Plan large purchases:** If you intend to make any substantial purchases in the future (televisions, computers, appliances, hotel stays) many common retailers like Sears, Home Depot, Lowe's, and Best Buy have cards available. Buy the cards ahead of time, and then use them to make the purchases.
- **Incorporate regular purchases:** Do you buy groceries at the same one or two stores? Have a favorite restaurant? Chances are those retailers have cards available. You can be earning fundraising money throughout the year on your regular purchases.
- **Purchase cards on behalf of family or friends:** Since the cards work just like cash, they are easily transferable.
- **Give cards as gifts:** You were going to do it anyway. Why not support the club in the process?

Program Advertisements

At home meets, BAC publishes programs that are purchased by nearly every attending family. BAC families are invited to buy advertisements of various sizes to promote their family business or just to cheer on their swimmers. Ads may also be solicited from local businesses.

See for more details about program advertising, contact the fundraising coordinator at fundraising@billingsaquaticclub.com.

Corporate Sponsorship

Sponsorship is a great way for local businesses to show support for our team. Sponsorship is available at various levels and can be cash or in-kind donations. All sponsors receive a banner that hangs in the Rocky pool during all Team home swim meets. Sponsors also receive an entire year of advertisements in our swim programs. All BAC member families are encouraged to solicit sponsors from around the community. The amount donated by the sponsor can be counted toward your obligation for that year. For further details on corporate sponsorship contact the fundraising coordinator at fundraising@billingsaquaticclub.com.

Levels of Sponsorship

Gold	\$750	Company Banner displayed at all home swim meets, 1/2 page Ad in all meet programs, and primary sponsor logo on the website and the team T-shirt.
Silver	\$500	Company Banner displayed at all home swim meets, 1/2 page Ad in all meet programs, and primary sponsor logo on the team T-shirt.
Bronze	\$250	Company Banner displayed at all home swim meets and a 1/4 page Ad in all meet programs.

Other Opportunities

From time to time, BAC will provide other fundraising opportunities, such as raffles and product sales. And, of course, cash donations are always welcome. BAC is a 501(c)3 educational nonprofit and therefore may qualify for your employer’s donation matching program—check with your company’s human resources department.

The club is always looking for new ideas for fundraising. If you have any in mind, please don’t hesitate to contact the fundraising coordinator, the club president, or anyone on the board.

Volunteering

The club couldn’t run without the efforts of parents bringing their various skills and talents and generously offering their time. No experience is required, just enthusiasm and a willingness to make the club a great experience for all the athletes. To learn about available opportunities, to ask general questions about volunteering, or to find out how your special skills can be of benefit to the club, contact the volunteer coordinator at volunteer@billingsaquaticclub.org.

Volunteering Requirements

Every family is required to perform a minimum number of hours of volunteer service during each Short Course season and each Long Course season. The specific number of required hours is determined by the classification of the highest level swimmer in the family. Hours are tracked and recorded by the club’s volunteer coordinator based on official sign-ups on the website. However, hours served without official sign-ups can be reported directly to the volunteer coordinator.

Volunteer hours for short course must be completed by March 15. Long course hours must be completed by July 31. If, by those dates, a family has not fulfilled the minimum requirement, the remaining balance of the hours will be billed to the family at the equivalent rates for their swim group. Hours will be reset for each family at the beginning of each season.

	Minimum Short Course Hours	Minimum Long Course Hours	Equivalent Rate
Junior Stingrays	0	0	
Bronze	8	4	\$25
Silver	12	8	\$25
Gold	16	10	\$25

Any family member can contribute hours toward the volunteer requirement. Certain jobs can be filled by older swimmers, grandparents, siblings, extended family, or friends on your behalf. Simply sign your family up for the shift or job and indicate by name who will be filling the role so that their time can be credited to you.

Although BAC does charge families for unfulfilled volunteer hours, we do not count on this money to cover any part of the annual budget. We prefer to have your time.

Members can check their accrued volunteer hours at any time on the website. On the left-side menu, click the “My Account” item, and then click the “\$My Invoice/Payment” item. In the box that appears, select the “Service Hours” tab. Hours recorded in the database will be displayed.

Volunteer Opportunities

There are a wide variety of ways to serve the club. Whether you have only a few hours to spare or are ready to make a larger commitment, there's always something to do. Here are some of the most common opportunities:

Home Meets

BAC hosts several meets each year in order to give its swimmers an opportunity to earn official times without having to travel. Meets require many people to run smoothly, to comply with USAS rules, and to make sure we're good hosts for visiting teams. A few weeks prior to a home meet, a button marked "Job Signup" will appear next to the event listing on the BAC website home page. This button will take you to a list of positions, descriptions, dates, and times. Check the boxes for the shifts you want to do, click the "Signup" button with the green plus, and the system will reserve them for your account. You will be offered a dialog box where you can provide the name of the person who will be working the hours and a contact phone number.

Most of the jobs at meets can be performed by anyone and at most require only a few minutes of instruction on the deck. But some of the positions for meets require prior orientation or training in order to learn the equipment or to comply with USAS rules. But don't let that hold you back. Remember, the people doing those jobs now were once new parents, too.

Common positions to be filled at meets include: meet manager, assistant meet manager, safety marshal, announcer, awards, computer/console operator, concessions coordinator, concessions assistant, concessions attendant, head timer, timers, place judges, hospitality, set-up, tear-down, Swim Shop attendant, program sales, runner, and housekeeping.

If you want a specific job, it's best to sign up as early as possible. For questions about volunteering for home swim meets, contact BAC's meet manager at meetmanager@billingsaquaticclub.org or the volunteer coordinator at volunteer@billingsaquaticclub.org.

Officials

In order to officiate home meets and to support Montana Swimming, BAC needs people to volunteer to become officials for competitions. Officiating is a rewarding way to support the sport for all swimmers throughout the state. Without a proper number of officials at a meet, swimmers' times may not be counted by USAS as official, potentially prohibiting swimmers from qualifying from state championship meets; so officials serve a critical role. A club the size of BAC ideally should have anywhere from six to 12 certified officials able to serve at home meets and to help at team and championship meets.

To become an official, one has to watch a DVD, complete the USAS online training and testing program, train with other certified officials on deck for a requisite number of hours per stroke, and must feel confident they are ready to do the job during a meet. Officials must also become non-athlete members of USAS, but these dues are paid by the club.

Other benefits of becoming an official include: 1) Meals and other hospitality are provided for you by the host team while serving at home and away meets. 2) Travel expenses to away meets may be tax deductible—talk to the head official or your tax advisor.

If you are interested in performing this critical job, contact the head official at officials@billingsaquaticclub.org or the club president.

Logistics

Throughout the year, the club needs volunteers to help with operations. Jobs can include moving equipment, cleaning storage areas, repairing equipment, or transporting supplies. Announcements for these needs will be made by email or on the Facebook page.

Special Events

Throughout the year, BAC puts on events for members beyond practice and meets. These events include team awards banquets, holiday parties, championship poster parties, Swim-A-Thon, other fundraisers, and mini-camps. The club also supports other Montana Swimming events, including the Special Olympics and the Big Sky State Games. All these events require planning and support. Announcements will be made for these needs by email and the Facebook page.

To sign up for these jobs, go to the website home page. In the Events box, find the second tab next to the default “Swim Meet” tab. This second tab, “Team Functions,” will take you to a listing of upcoming team events that need volunteers, each with a “Job Signup” button.

Out-of-Town Meets

Most out-of-town meet hosts ask that visiting clubs provide a few volunteers to act as lane timers. Sign up for these shifts on-site on the day of the event, usually on a sheet at the announcer’s table. Any time spent timing on behalf of the club counts toward your volunteer requirement. Report these hours to the volunteer coordinator.

Board of Directors

Joining the board is one of the most valuable ways that a family can support the team. Board members not only help steer the club but also serve vital roles in its day-to-day operation. Besides the executive committee (the president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary), the at-large members coordinate many team functions, including dues and registration, hiring, fundraising, volunteers, hospitality, safety, meet management, and special projects. Anyone with swimmers who have made a commitment to the sport or anyone interested in helping to guide the current and future operation of the club is encouraged to consider joining the board. Board members are nominated and elected at the club’s annual meeting in May. For more information about volunteering for the board, contact the club president (president@billingsaquaticclub.com) or vice president (vp@billingsaquaticclub.com)

Meeting Attendance

Your family earns volunteer time for attending the monthly and semi-annual board meetings and committee meetings. Generally, attendance will be taken at board meetings, but if you participate in a committee meeting, you should report those hours to the volunteer coordinator.

Other Volunteer Opportunities

There are many other ongoing opportunities available:

- Swim Shop
- Meet registrar
- Scrip coordinator
- Social Committee

Periodically, various ad hoc committees will be assembled by the board to address certain issues or to plan events. Calls will be made for these volunteers via email or at board meetings.

If you are interested in any of these positions, or if you have any other ideas of how you could serve the club, contact the volunteer coordinator.

Behavior and Safety

General

Like any sport, swimming has certain inherent risks, but BAC is committed to providing a safe environment for all members. Swimmers are continually taught proper techniques to avoid injury and to minimize the risk of accidents. If an injury or incident does occur, the coaches must be notified immediately.

If you have specific questions about the club's safety practices, contact either the head coach or the board's safety coordinator. A general statement of the club's guiding principles regarding safety can be found on the club's website.

Lifeguards/Deck Safety

All BAC coaches are qualified and certified lifeguards and act as such during all BAC practices. All pool rules of the host venue apply to BAC swimmers and are enforced by the coaches. These include commonsense rules such as no horseplay, no running on the deck, no diving in shallow water, and keeping the deck clean. Racing starts from blocks can be dangerous. Coaches will not allow any swimmer to use the blocks until he or she has demonstrated the proper skills. Coaches monitor lane use during starts to prevent accidents.

Codes of Conduct

For Athletes

BAC expects all of its athletes to adhere to a high standard of behavior: to remain respectful of coaches, to be supportive of teammates, to display excellent sportsmanship, to show respect for our host venues and guest teams, and to act as good representatives of the club. Upon registration, every BAC athlete is required to sign the BAC Swimmer's Code of Conduct. This document outlines the club's expectations, details behavior that will not be tolerated, and describes the disciplinary process for athletes who fail to uphold the agreed standards. Copies of the Swimmer's Code of Conduct and BAC's Disciplinary Code and Procedures can be found on the club's website, or contact the head coach at bacstingrays@gmail.com.

For Parents

Likewise, BAC expects the parents of all swimmers to adhere to a similarly high standard of behavior: to remain respectful of coaches, to support other swimmers and their families, to contribute to the operation of the club through volunteering, to model excellent sportsmanship, to show respect for our host venues and guest teams, and to remember that they are as much representatives of the club as are the athletes. Upon registration, every BAC family is required to sign the BAC Parents and Members Code of Conduct. This document outlines the club's expectations and details behavior that will not be tolerated. A copy of the Parents and Members Code of Conduct can be found on the club's website, or contact the head coach at bacstingrays@gmail.com.

Grievance Procedure

On occasion, parents or swimmers may have concerns that require special attention by coaches or the BAC board. The following are the steps in which we request that you pursue these concerns:

1. A prearranged, off-the-pool-deck meeting with the swimmer's usual coach.
2. A prearranged, off-the-pool-deck meeting with the head coach.
3. If the issue involves the head coach directly, contact the BAC board president, and the issue will be examined by the executive committee.
4. If resolution has not been achieved in the previous steps, the issue will be brought to the full board of directors.

Athlete Protection

BAC, Montana Swimming, and USAS are dedicated to making sure that every swimmer has a positive experience in the sport. We desire to foster a safe environment by educating members on the tragic issue of abuse. To that end, the club participates fully in USAS's Safe Sport program. This program includes policies and guidelines for clubs, helps clubs with selection and screening of coaches, provides training and education, and sets out response and reporting procedures. The Club takes these reports seriously and will take action in accordance with USAS policies. More information about the Safe Sport program can be found at www.usaswimming.org.

Safe Sport for Parents

All parents are strongly encouraged to take the free online training offered by the USAS Safe Sport program specifically for parents and guardians. This short presentation will teach you how to recognize certain risk factors and what to do if you encounter them. The parent training can be accessed through the BAC website.

LSC: Montana Swimming

Club Code: BAC

Safe Sport for Athletes: 12 and older (and Parents)

All BAC athletes 12 and older are strongly encouraged to take the free online training offered by the USAS Safe Sport program specifically for athletes. This short presentation will teach you how to recognize certain risk factors and what to do if you encounter them. This program was designed for athletes 13 and older and should be shared with younger athletes only if the parent deems it appropriate. Parents should consider completing both the athlete and parent training so they know the message being shared and are able to open a dialog with their child. The athlete training can be accessed through the BAC website.

LSC: Montana Swimming

Club Code: BAC

Athlete Protection Training: Athletes 18 and older, Volunteers

All BAC athletes ages 18 and older, officials, coaches and volunteers are required to take USAS Athlete Protection Training Course. This presentation will teach you how to recognize certain risk factors and what to do if you encounter them. Athletes must pass the course to be eligible to participate in practices and meets once they turn 18.

Bullying

BAC recognizes that bullying is a problem for many young people but is committed to making swimming a positive experience for all participants. BAC believes that every athlete has a valuable contribution to make to the team. Coaches strive to model good behavior by being inclusive of all athletes and by promoting teamwork and cooperation. All swimmers are encouraged to support one another at all levels.

Athletes: In accordance with the Swimmer's Code of Conduct, bullying behavior will not be tolerated and may be grounds for disciplinary action. If you feel as if you are being bullied, please talk to your coach or parents right away. If you witness bullying behavior, step in to prevent and discourage it if you feel comfortable doing so, and talk to a coach or parent right away.

Parents: If you witness or learn of any bullying behavior, contact the head coach right away (bacstingrays@gmail.com).

Electronic Communication

BAC recognizes that many of our swimmers use electronic communication and social media as their primary method of communication. And while this kind of communication between athletes and coaches can be valuable, BAC also realizes that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

In accordance with the USAS Safe Sport program, BAC has adopted a policy to govern how coaches and other adult club members can communicate with athletes. A simple test can be applied to all such communication. It should be transparent (clear and direct, free of hidden meanings), accessible (a matter of record, open to and/or including the parents), and professional (appropriate in front of the intended recipient's parents, other coaches, the board, or other athletes.)

BAC's policy dictates specifically how coaches may interact with athletes on social media like Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and other similar sites, as well as by text, email, and phone. And it sets certain guidelines for athletes. The policy also provides a method for parents to opt their child out of such communication if they wish.

If you believe that the policy has been violated by any coach or team member, contact the president of the board immediately (president@billingsaquaticclub.com).

BAC's Electronic Communication Policy can be found on the club's website.

Uniforms and Equipment

Uniforms

BAC does not have a strict uniform requirement. However, in order to foster team spirit, swimmers are strongly encouraged to purchase a team suit and swim cap to wear at meets. Other branded team apparel, such as warm-ups, hoodies, and backpacks, can also help swimmers to feel like they're part of the team, but they are not required. All team apparel is available through BAC's Swim Shop and through the BAC Suit Store and Apparel Store links on the team's website (in partnership with Universal Athletics). BAC is sponsored by Speedo. All swimmers are encouraged to purchase Speedo competition suits, apparel, and gear. Hint: Grandparents and other family members are always looking for gift ideas. Why not BAC team gear?

Swim Shop

BAC's Swim Shop is a volunteer run store that provides team apparel and gear for BAC swimmers and manages our association with Universal Athletic. All proceeds from the Swim Shop benefit the club.

At the beginning of each season, the Swim Shop will be on hand at certain practices and events to take orders and to assist with sizing. The shop also carries a variety of regularly needed items such as practice suits, caps, and goggles. Items can be purchased throughout the season by contacting the Swim Shop coordinator. The Swim Shop is open at the venue during all home meets, where it also sells a variety of merchandise and souvenirs. Contact the Swim Shop at swimshop@billingsaquaticclub.org.

Equipment

Suits

Competition suits for all swimmers are generally made of a stretchy polyester and are free of frills, pockets, or other attachments. Boys most frequently wear "jammer"-style shorts, but Speedo-style suits can be worn. Girls' suits should be one piece and not fastened with spaghetti strings, ties, or adjustable straps. There's no need to purchase expensive "technical" suits unless your swimmer is going to be competing at a very high level, but families have often found that it's worth the extra money to buy chlorine-resistant swimwear. BAC is sponsored by Speedo. All swimmers are encouraged to purchase Speedo suits, apparel, and gear.

Note for parents of young swimmers: Junior Stingrays and very young swimmers who aren't yet ready to compete generally do not need competition-style suits for practice. However, loose-fitting, baggy, or frilly suits can make it more difficult for swimmers to perform the strokes properly.

Goggles

Competition-grade goggles are tight-fitting and streamlined. They should have two eye cups with rubbery seals, be connected by a plastic or rubber nose piece (often interchangeable for size), and have an adjustable head strap. One-piece lens goggles, goggles with foam seals, and snorkel-style face masks are not appropriate, as they may be dangerous to wear during the starts and turns performed by competitive swimmers. The Swim Shop carries a variety of sizes of appropriate goggles.

Some swimmers use the manufacturer-provided head straps; however, those straps are often tricky to adjust and are susceptible to breaking or tearing. Many swimmers prefer to change those straps out with an easily adjusted bungee strap. Bungee straps are very inexpensive, available from the Swim Shop, and can be reused with many pairs of goggles. Goggles will break with use, so it's a good idea to have a spare pair (or more) ready to go in a swim bag at all times.

Clear lenses work well for indoor practices and competitions, but swimmers may prefer shaded, mirrored, or polarized lenses for outdoor practices and meets.

It's a good idea to help young swimmers adjust their goggles to a comfortable but tight fit before they arrive on the deck for practice. And teach them how to make adjustments. Practices can be difficult with ill-fitting goggles, and coaches can't spend practice time adjusting swimmers' equipment.

Caps

Caps do not keep hair dry, but are used to make swimmers hydrodynamic (faster through the water), and to keep hair out of the swimmer's face. Caps can be worn over or under goggle straps. Some swimmers even prefer to wear two caps, with the goggle straps protected in between, as goggles can be dislodged during racing starts.

Swimmers with long hair will probably need to begin wearing swim caps from the beginning. Those with very short hair may prefer to begin without wearing a cap, but most competitive swimmers will eventually transition to wearing them regularly.

BAC recommends silicone caps. Latex caps can be used, but they are less durable, can grow sticky over time from exposure to pool chemicals, and are more "grabby" on hair. Lycra caps are not appropriate for use, as they will come loose during competitive starts and turns.

Caps for practice and logoed team caps for meets are available from the Swim Shop.

Other equipment

Developing swimmers may wish to purchase other swim gear for use in their workouts. Such gear includes kickboards, pull buoys, snorkels, drag suits, hand paddles, and flippers. (Attention: grandparents and other gift givers.) Coaches can advise swimmers on what gear might be appropriate.

Swimmers attending dry-land sessions (out-of-the-pool conditioning) and weight training will need appropriate footwear and attire. Standards for dry-land attire are similar to a typical middle school or high school gym class.

Practices

During regular seasons, BAC holds a variety of practices six days a week (Monday through Saturday) in order to give busy families flexibility to select practice days that work best for them. BAC practices are not mandatory. However, swimmers are strongly encouraged to attend at the frequency recommended for their group. If you cannot attend a practice for whatever reason, there's no need to call or check in with the coaches; practice will take place with whoever shows up at the pool. But regular attendance and participation equals a greater chance for improvement and success at meets.

When to Arrive

Swimmers should arrive in plenty of time to be dressed and ready to get in the water at the start of practice. Changing clothes on the deck is not allowed or appropriate, so leave adequate time for athletes to use the locker rooms as needed. Many swimmers come to practice already dressed in their suits under warm-ups, sweat pants, or pajama pants.

Because BAC shares pool facilities, practices are often held immediately after other organizations' programs (high school practices, water aerobics, open swims, and so on). Swimmers who arrive early to the venue must remain out of the water and out of the way of deck activity. (At the Rocky pool, this means remaining on or near the bleachers until practice officially begins.) Swimmers should not enter the water for any practice until instructed by a coach. Swimmers may also be asked to arrive a few minutes early for certain practices to help the coaches install lane lines or other equipment.

What to Bring

At a minimum, every swimmer should arrive to each practice with a swimsuit, goggles, a swim cap, a water bottle, a towel, and a bag to carry it all. Some commonly used non-personal items, like kickboards and pull buoys, are usually available on deck; however, some swimmers may prefer to bring their own. In general, swim bags may be left on deck near the pool, but it is recommended that swimmers not bring electronics or valuables, as BAC cannot guarantee the security of personal items. Suggestion: Keep a spare swim cap and set of goggles ready to go in your swim bag at all times. These items break frequently, and a practice can be difficult without them.

During Practice

Practices begin right on time. If you arrive late, you may miss warm-ups and instructions that will help you understand the goals of the workout. Every practice is a little different. It may look like just "swimming laps," but every workout is designed to help improve physical conditioning, develop skills, improve technique, and to build speed. Some practices may focus on a single stroke, or details like starts and turns, but most involve a combination of activities. At popular practice times, the pool can get crowded. Swimmers will share lanes and will be sorted into those lanes by the coaches in order to keep each lane moving smoothly and to avoid congestion. Coaches primarily provide group instruction during practices; however, they will coach individuals as needed.

After Practice

Swimmers must exit the water once practice has ended. After many practices, swimmers are expected to help put away equipment and to straighten up the pool deck. This may include rolling lane lines, taking down flags, putting away team equipment (like kickboards and pull buoys), and cleaning up after themselves. Changing clothes on the deck is not allowed or appropriate—use the locker rooms. Other practices and programs often occur immediately following BAC practices, so swimmers should be courteous and stay out of the way so those programs can begin on time.

For Parents

Parents are more than welcome to remain at the venue during practices. This is a great way to see how your child is progressing, to get to know other team families, and to learn about the sport. But unless there's an emergency, parents are encouraged to stand back and let coaches coach. Practice time is not the appropriate place to discuss individual concerns or to chat with the coaches.

Parents are also encouraged to let their children practice without interference. Parents of younger swimmers especially are often tempted to rush in to urge their child along, to enforce proper behavior, or even to correct a flaw in technique. It is important for swimmers to learn how to communicate with their coaches directly. It's equally important for coaches to get to know your swimmer's real abilities and personality.

Swim Meets

Swim meets are exciting, fun events. They're great moments for young athletes to spend time with friends, to cheer on their team, make memories, and to show off what they can do in the pool. They're what the sport is all about. They're noisy, nonstop, constantly moving, and—like they say at SeaWorld—if you're in the front rows you will get wet. But amid all the excitement, they can be one of the most confusing things for new swimmers and swim families to navigate.

This section will orient you to many of the details of swim meets in general but is by no means exhaustive. Coaches are a good resource to answer questions about the athletic events themselves. For information about registering for meets, contact either the head coach or head age group coach. Once you've indicated your intention to participate in a meet on the team's website, all event entries will be handled by the coaching staff; however, those entries are open for discussion with the coaches if you have specific concerns or your swimmer has specific goals.

Seasons

The swim year is divided into two seasons called Short Course and Long Course, referencing the pool size. Short Course takes place in fall and winter (September through March) and competitions are generally held at 25-yard or 25-meter indoor pools. Long Course takes place during spring and summer (April through July), and competitions are generally held at 50-meter and, often, outdoor pools.

Time Standards

Motivational time standards are set by USA Swimming in order to encourage swimmers to step their swimming up to the next level. They are a guide to mark progress from the very start of a swimmer's career to the highest levels. Standards are classified progressively by letter from B to BB to A, on to AAAA. The time standards are also used as qualifying thresholds for certain meets, including State Championships, although some upper-level meets may adopt their own qualifications.

The current USAS Age Group Standards and for information about how they are set and what they mean can be found at www.usaswimming.org under their "Times" heading.

Altitude Adjustments

Many times earned in Montana are eligible for adjustments for altitude when applied to qualify at meets outside the state. More information on this can be found at www.mtswimming.com under the "Meets" heading.

Meet Formats

Most regular season meets are open invitational meets in which any USAS member may register and swim events appropriate to his or her age. Meets feature races in all four strokes (backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and freestyle) at various competition lengths. The order of events is usually organized by age group and gender, but certain events (especially distance events) may be mixed. Events at invitationals are usually run only once, as a timed final, and placement is determined from those results.

At a prelim/final format meet, such as the State Championship, all competitors will swim the event once, usually in the morning. Then the fastest qualifiers return later in the day to compete again at finals to determine the winner of the event.

Other common meet formats include dual meets (two teams competing head to head) or pentathlons (all swimmers compete in the same five events).

Most meets are multiday events, often beginning Friday afternoons and running through Sunday evenings. Swimmers may enter as many events as allowed by the meet hosts, or as few as they need. Participants do not need to be in attendance for every day of a meet. Championship meets often run longer (Thursday through Sunday) than regular season meets and have stricter guidelines for attendance and participation. If you are unable to participate in an event for which you are registered at any meet, contact the coaches as soon as possible so they can inform the meet referee and the team can avoid penalties.

Team Meets/Travel

BAC hosts several home meets each year to provide its swimmers a chance to earn official times without having to travel. However, the club selects several out-of-town meets each season to be team meets. At least one BAC coach will be on deck at all team meets— or more, depending on the number of competitors. Common destinations include Bozeman, Hardin, Butte, Great Falls, Gillette, Powell, Missoula, and Rapid City. Participation in team meets is not mandatory but is encouraged, especially for older swimmers, in order to gain competition experience.

BAC does not arrange housing or transportation, nor does the club reserve room blocks at hotels. Each family is free to determine the accommodations that best suit its needs and schedule. Out-of-town meets often coincide with other athletic or local events, especially during the school year, and hotels/motels in some communities can fill up quickly. BAC recommends that families make arrangements as early as they are able in order to ensure they can find acceptable accommodations.

When budgeting for a team meet, it's good to look at the schedule and determine the number of nights your family wishes to stay. Most regular-season meets begin mid- to late-afternoons on Friday, and Saturday and Sunday events often begin as early as 7 a.m., so most families drive to the meet on Fridays. Families should also consider costs for food and fuel. To reduce costs, many families will carpool, choose hotels with breakfasts included, and pack their own food for the meet.

For specific advice on travel or to learn what to expect when traveling to a certain community, feel free to talk to any experienced swim family or to post a question on the BAC Facebook page.

Montana State Championship Meet

At the end of each season, the best swimmers from all of Montana's clubs compete at a prelim/finals format meet. Swimmers earn individual awards for specific events, and the team with the greatest point total is awarded the state championship. To qualify for the state meet, a swimmer must have a BB time in at least one event, and can then compete in any other event in which he or she has at least a B time.

B-C Championship Meet

Near the end of the Short Course season, Montana Swimming puts on a championship-style meet for swimmers who have not yet qualified for the State Championship meet. (The “B-C” references the B time standard and below.) This fun meet is intended to motivate young and novice swimmers who wish to reach the next level by giving them a taste of state-level competition. It may, depending on the LSC’s schedule, give swimmers one last chance to qualify for the state meet. Any swimmer with official times in any event qualifies to swim those events at the B-C meet, unless they’ve already qualified for State.

Sectionals/Zones

These are regional meets that take place after the state championships after Short Course (Sectionals) and Long Course (Zones). These are generally held at larger venues out of state, and athletes come from multiple states to compete. The time standards for these meets are usually very difficult, but athletes from BAC compete there regularly.

Nationals

Nationals and Junior Nationals are meets for the best of the best from around the country who meet very high qualifying standards. More information about these events can be found on the USA Swimming website.

How to Register for a Swim Meet

For home and regular-season team meets, all BAC swimmers register for meets through the team’s website. Upcoming events are listed in the Events box on the home page, and those open for registration include a button marked “Edit Commitment.” (Announcements for registration periods are made via email.) Clicking the “Edit Commitment” button will take you to a page where you can elect to attend or decline. You can also indicate which days of the event you are available and leave a note for the coach concerning what events your swimmer may (or may not) want to swim. Events are assigned by the head coach, but input from parents and swimmers is welcomed. There are strict deadlines for registering for any meet, so please pay attention to email notices.

Meet entries usually cost between \$15 and \$25 per swimmer depending on the meet, plus an additional “splash fee” of \$2 to \$3 per event entered. Meet fees may be paid by check (made out to BAC), or may be applied to your TeamUnify account for billing. Checks can be mailed to the meet registrar, or placed in the “Meet Registration” slot in the lock box located in BAC’s equipment cage located off the deck in the northwest corner of the Rocky pool.

BAC swimmers are welcome to compete at non-team meets anywhere in the state or country, but families must register on their own through the meet’s host club. Registration instructions and the meet contract may be posted on a host club’s website, but you may also wish to contact the host team’s registrar directly to ensure compliance with their registration process. All forms and fees must be sent directly to the host club per their instructions.

If you have any questions about meet registration, contact BAC’s meet registrar at meetsignup@billingsaquaticclub.com.

Welcome to a Swim Meet

What Swimmers Should Bring

- Team competition suit
- A spare suit in case of emergency
- Warm-ups or other cover-ups to stay warm between races
- Goggles-two pairs in case one breaks
- Swim caps- two in case one breaks
- Water bottle
- Towels (at least two are recommended, as they will get very wet through the day)
- Sets of dry clothes if desired, to change into after competition
- Swim bag to keep everything in

What a Family Should Consider Bringing

- Money for programs and concessions
- Pens/highlighters to mark up programs
- Permanent marker (fine point Sharpie) to mark swimmers with the events they are swimming
- Chairs, blankets, tents, bleacher chairs, and other camp items
- Food, snacks, drinks in coolers
- Books, games, and activities for swimmers and family members

Arriving/Settling In

A couple of days before a meet, the coach will announce the warm-up times for each day. BAC coaches' general rule of thumb is that all swimmers should be on deck, ready to swim, 15 minutes before that announced time. This means that families should plan on being at the venue about one half-hour early. If you've never been to a venue before, it's a good idea to arrive as early as possible, giving yourself plenty of time to find parking, to find your way into the venue, and to find a place to watch the meet.

Every venue is a little different, but most provide someplace for families to "camp" through the event. Space may be provided on the deck, in a separate room, on bleachers, or even outdoors. Swim meets can be long days. Families often bring a variety of items to help them get comfortable: Large blankets to spread on floors, folding camp chairs, tents or canopies for outdoor meets, or even folding cots are all useful if you're going to be there all weekend. Most venues will allow camps to be left overnight throughout the event, but some do not; listen for announcements or ask. Most venues will allow families to bring in coolers, food, and drinks. Do not count on being able to find power outlets; charge your devices before you arrive. Bring things for swimmers and family members to do during down time between races, especially for those siblings who aren't competing. BAC families will often gather their camps in one or more areas, giving swimmers a place to hang out together, and families a chance to visit. Don't be shy—come on over and join us.

Programs

One of the first things you'll do when you arrive at a meet is to purchase a program. They generally cost \$5 to \$10 and are sold either at the door, at the host team's Swim Shop, or at the concessions stand.

Programs are your guide to the meet. They include schedules and other details you'll need to know, but mostly they list every event and heat including the competitors' names. Bring a highlighter to mark your swimmer's events to make them easier to find among the many pages. If you have more than one swimmer, bring a different color highlighter for each. You'll also want a pen to note times, splits, and to make other notes if you wish.

Warm-ups

BAC swimmers should gather with the coaches on the deck 15 minutes before the start of warm-ups. Coaches can usually be found at a coaches' zone along one long edge of the pool, or behind the starting blocks. Before entering the pool, swimmers must wait for both an announcement from the officials that the pool is open and their coach's permission. Swimmers must get in the pool using a three-point entry (one hand on the deck until both feet are in the water) for warm-ups until lanes are formally cleared for practice starts. A coach will directly oversee practice starts. Warm-ups usually last from 20 to 30 minutes, and may be run in several sessions over an hour or so depending on the number of swimmers and teams entered in the meet.

After warm-ups, BAC swimmers will usually gather for a pep talk from the coach and team cheers. Cheers are a fun few moments for swimmers to get pumped up for the meet and to build team spirit.

Competition

Meets are organized by events and heats. Events are designated by the age and gender of the competitors, the length of the swim, and the stroke, for instance, Boys 10 & Under 100 Freestyle, Girls 13 & Older 200 Fly, Boys 11-12 50 Backstroke, or Girls 8 & Under 25 Breaststroke. Events are broken into multiple heats because of the limited number of lanes in a pool. Most pools have six or eight lanes. Heats for most events are seeded slowest to fastest based on each swimmer's personal best time in that given event. There are exceptions, especially with long-distance events, which are usually seeded fastest to slowest. Heats themselves are seeded with the fastest of the swimmers assigned to the inner lanes, alternating to the slowest in the outmost lanes.

Sometime in the morning, many parents will mark on their swimmers' arms, hands, or legs with the list of their events for the day. This will help your swimmer be aware of when it's time to swim, and it can serve to help him or her begin to take responsibility for getting to races without a reminder from you. These markings usually look like a chart of numbers with the headings of E, H, and L for event number, heat number, and lane assignment. Bring a fine-point permanent marker if you'd like to do this.

Swim referees like to get things started right on time and to keep the meet moving quickly. A few minutes before the start of competition, announcements will begin to be made for the first event. Every heat throughout the day is announced a minimum of three times over the venue's public address system—a "first call," a "second call," and a "final call" made consecutively during the prior heats. By the final call, each swimmer should be behind the assigned starting block, cap and goggles on, and waiting for the referee's signal to get on the blocks. If a referee finds that a swimmer is not in place, his or her name may only be called once or twice over the starter address system usually audible at the start end of the pool. Most referees give missing athletes only a few seconds to arrive before starting the heat. At most invitational meets, there is no penalty to the swimmer or team for missing a heat, except that you will not get to swim or receive a time. But at championships, there can be rather severe penalties for missing a race.

A few minutes before each race (before the “first call”), BAC swimmers are invited to come talk to their coach to get last-minute advice or encouragement. And after each race, they are encouraged to come again for individual comments and coaching.

Breaks may be announced periodically throughout the day, or the referee may prefer to continue nonstop. Even if the meet doesn’t stop, most swimmers will have anywhere from 15 minutes to several hours between swims, depending on their selected events.

Spectators

Venues provide spectator viewing areas in the form of bleachers or standing areas from which to watch your swimmer’s races. Do not count on being able to watch the races from your camping area. Certain areas of the deck may be closed to spectators and will be roped off or marked for swimmers, coaches, or officials only. BAC spectators should be good guests and respect all posted restrictions. While some meets and venues will allow spectators to watch from the immediate pool edge, others may have an entirely closed deck.

Rules and Disqualifications

Swimming is a technical sport, and each competitive stroke has its own set of standards. At some point in your swimmer’s experience, he or she will receive a disqualification (DQ)—and most likely several. Disqualification means that they have performed some part of the race or stroke incorrectly. DQs are very common, especially for the breaststroke and fly or technical races like individual medleys (IMs), and especially for young and novice swimmers. So reassure your swimmer that it’s all part of learning the sport. When an official notes an error, he or she will raise a hand to signal the referee and then fill out a DQ slip, indicating the swimmer and the nature of the infraction. Very often swimmers won’t realize that they’ve been disqualified until they learn it from their coach. Coaches are given a copy of the DQ slip by the officials immediately after the heat. Encourage your swimmer to discuss the DQ with the coach to learn how to improve for the future.

Swimming success is measured by time; therefore recording times is critical for meet referees. Most times are recorded with an electronic timing system in the form of touchpads located at the pool ends and a scoring computer. These systems are generally very accurate, but no system is perfect. (And young and novice swimmers often touch the pads incorrectly.) Because of that, referees use a variety of backups to ensure fair scoring. These include manual stop buttons (often called “pickles”), hand timers, and place judges. Times displayed on the scoreboards should not be considered final, as an error may have occurred. Official times and places will be posted following each event.

If you believe that an error has been made on the official times, or that a DQ was issued in error, please talk to a coach immediately. If the coach agrees, he or she can file a protest with the meet referee. If no BAC coach is present at a meet, a parent may locate the host meet manager for instructions on filing a protest.

Results

Official results are posted approximately 20 minutes after an event is completed. They will be posted somewhere at the venue, usually organized by age bracket and gender.

At most meets the results will also be uploaded immediately to the USAS and are accessible from your smartphone. There are two apps to choose from:

USAS *Deck Pass Mobile* is an app for iPhone and Android. It connects you to your results, rankings, IMX scores, and other information available from the USAS.

Meet Mobile from Active.com provides pre-race information like heat sheets, as well as up-to-the-minute results from meets all around the country. It allows you to track specific swimmers and is available from the Apple iPhone store and Google Play.

These apps are free to download, but there may be costs, in the form of in-app subscription purposes, for full access and functionality.

Food/Concessions/Merchandise

Most venues will allow families to bring their own food, but most also provide some sort of concessions onsite as a convenience for participants and spectators. These concessions might be limited to light snacks and drinks, but others may provide full meals or à la carte offerings like pizza or sandwiches. Most offer coffee and various baked goods in the mornings, and some healthy (and some less than healthy) snacks throughout the day. Most concessions stands, like those at BAC home meets, are run by the host club as a fundraiser.

Likewise, most host clubs will open a merchandise stall like BAC's Swim Shop, selling commonly needed swim gear, souvenirs, and other items. Many host clubs will also have a vendor onsite selling customizable souvenir T-shirts, sweatshirts, and other clothing marked to commemorate the event.

Awards

Some meets will award medals or ribbons for event winners. These will sometimes be given out at award ceremonies on the deck but more often will be given to the coaches for distribution at home. Many meets choose instead to give out a participation award to all swimmers. These might be T-shirts, water bottles, or some other bit of swag. These items may be given to the coaches for distribution or may be available for individual pickup at the announcer's table or Swim Shop. Listen for announcements.

Hotel Pools

When traveling, hotel pools can be a real draw for kids, especially for swimmers who love the water. It's obviously up to the parent whether to allow athletes to use them, but BAC coaches suggest using discretion, as it's important to be rested before competition. If you do allow swimmers to use the pools, consider limiting the time or keeping the activities low key. BAC coaches prefer strongly that swimmers do not use hot tubs during the weekend, as even a few minutes in one can seriously affect performance the following day.

Leaving a Meet

Swimmers are free to leave a meet as soon as they have finished their last scheduled race. They should confirm with their coach whether or not they've been placed in a relay (often the last events of a day). Most venues will allow camps to remain in place through the weekend (chairs, blankets, tents), but it's suggested that you take small items with you each evening. It's also wise to confirm warm-up times for the next morning before you leave the venue.

On the last day: You've brought a lot of gear, you've been camped out all weekend, and now it's time to go. It's good to double-check your area to make sure you haven't left anything behind. Double-check your swim bag to make sure you haven't left any gear in a locker room or on the deck. Most venues will have a lost and found either at the announcer's table or the Swim Shop. Also, clean up behind yourself, putting trash in receptacles and leaving the area as you found it.

At home meets, if able, BAC families should stay after the event to help clean the venue and tear down the equipment. This usually takes less than an hour, especially with lots of hands. The meet manager can direct you to what needs to be done.

And Finally...

Thank you for choosing BAC and the sport of swimming. We hope this handbook has been helpful. But please don't hesitate to ask for more information on any topic.

Besides learning to navigate the sport, one of the hardest parts of being a parent of a swimmer is letting go and letting the coaches be in charge. Your swimmer is in great hands. However, if you think the coaches need to know something about your child's personality or learning style, please feel free to contact them. Email or phone is often best, or if you'd like to meet face to face, you can make an appointment to meet before or after a practice. Our coaches are eager to provide a great and positive experience for your swimmer. All of us at BAC are happy that you've joined us. Welcome to the Stingrays.

How to complete the online registration process

1. To begin, navigate to www.billingsaquaticclub.com.
2. Click on Start Registration in the left-hand column.
3. Verify that you are starting the registration for the correct season. From this page, there is a link to a summary of team expectations and also a link to the Dues Schedule. When you are finished reviewing the documents, hit the Back button in your browser and proceed by clicking on the Register Now button.
4. You will be prompted to create or enter your TeamUnify user and password.
5. The next screen will show you the account information that includes the billing information, the guardian information, the insurance, and the emergency contact. Verify that all this information is correct to move to the next screen.
6. Select either a returning swimmer or add a new swimmer. Upon selecting a swimmer, you will be asked which Registration Group to register him or her into. The group you select will be determined by the level your swimmer is joining based on the head coach's assignment and then by which payment plan for that level you are choosing.
7. Once you have selected your returning swimmer or added the information for your new swimmer, you will need to process through the required forms. All forms can be printed out from the **PRINTER FRIENDLY VERSION** link. If you click on the alternate link, it may open up in the same browser window as your active registration form.

NOTE: Remember to click on the Back button when viewing the documents from the alternate link so that you can return to your registration window. If you close out of the window showing the document, you will close your registration session and lose your work.

8. To complete the registration process, make sure to agree to the online options, print out the forms so that you can sign and submit them, and verify that you have selected a payment option.

All forms need to be submitted to the registrar by mail or by placing them in the Dues box at the pool at Rocky Mountain College.

Please forward any questions regarding dues and registration to duesreg@billingsaquaticclub.com.