

WHAT TO EXPECT AT A MEET:

NOTE:

This is general information that is not specific to any one meet, but can be useful for knowing, in general, what to expect at a swim meet.



MEET TIMES AND SCHEDULES:

Most swim meets are two and a half (2 ½) days long – Friday night, Saturday and Sunday. The Friday schedule usually begins between 4:00-6:00PM and has events for age groups 10 and under through senior in high school. Each meet schedule is different and is determined by the host team. The schedule for Saturday and Sunday has each age group either swimming in the morning or the afternoon. Expect a full morning or afternoon spent at the pool. For example, if your child's age group swims the morning session, plan on getting to the pool for warm-ups at approximately 7:00-8:00am and leaving when the session is over at noon-1:00pm, depending on the size of the meet.

ARRIVAL:

Be aware of the time you should arrive at the meet site. Please be on time. Allow yourself plenty of time if you are going to a pool you haven't been to before. The coach usually expects a swimmer at the pool 15 minutes before the scheduled start of warm-ups so that they can stretch as a team and go over some last-minute information the coach may have for them (such as relay assignments). When you arrive, find the team area and set up your gear there. You will have a chance to meet other parents from the team, as well as your child's friends.

CRASH AREA:

Swimmers usually spend their down time in a "crash area". This is usually a gym or another area near the pool. Bring a sleeping bag or blanket to throw down, as well as lawn chair(s) for a place to sit. Most meets have concessions but it is a good idea to bring extra snacks, water or sports drinks. The most important item is

LIQUID:

swimmers need to replace liquids. Do not drink dairy products before swimming – these can cause stomach cramps. Remember to pack games, books, music, cards, or other items to pass the time between events.

WARM-UP:

The team will participate in a warm-up together in preparation for the meet. The coach will direct this activity. The children should be on the deck and ready for warm-up (cap, suit, goggles on) by the announced warm-up time. At some meets there may be an early and late warm-up session. Sometimes the host will inform the coach of this ahead of time, and sometimes he does not find out until he gets to the meet. In either case, if your child is at the pool at the time the coach has indicated, he/she will be ready for either eventuality. Either before or after the warm-up the coaches will have a brief team meeting to go over any important information you and your child may need to know.

THE ACTUAL MEET:

Once the meet begins, an event will be called and the child will either report to the "Clerk of Course" or directly behind the starting blocks, ready to swim. The Clerk of Course (sometimes called the "bullpen") is a staging area where the swimmers are organized prior to being escorted to the blocks by volunteers helping with the meet. If a meet does not utilize a Clerk of Course, then the swimmer should go behind his/her block when his/her event is called.

The referee will blow a series of short whistles indicating that a new heat is going to be started. Next,

one long whistle will direct the swimmers in that heat to stand up on the block (or get in the pool for the backstroke events). The starter will say "Take your mark" and then beep a horn to start the race.

Once the race is over, the swimmer should politely ask the timer his/her time, and then report to the coach. The coach will review the race with the swimmer, pointing out where good things occurred, and perhaps offering hints and encouragement for future improvement. After the coach is finished talking with the swimmer, he/she can come and see you so you can congratulate them on a job well-done! The swimmer should then go back to the team area to rest and get ready for his/her next event.

HEAT SHEETS:

Each swimmer will be given an event sheet after warm-up, which shows what events your child will swim. It is a good idea to write the event number and stroke on your child's arm or leg as a reminder with a permanent marker. Most meets have "heat sheets" available to purchase. Heat sheets will specify heat and lane assignments for the entire meet. Psyche sheets are another form of a heat sheet that only shows the swimmers in each event, listed by entry time from fastest to slowest. You can estimate the heat assignment and the swimmer will get their lane assignments when checking in with the Clerk of the course. If heat and lane assignments are available, they should be included on your child's arm or leg.

DRESS:

Remember to dress accordingly – pool areas are usually hot and humid!! Crash areas may be cold for wet swimmers so don't forget a sweatshirt and/or extra towels.

EVENTS AND PREPERATION:

Swimmers should be ready to enter the pool at the time designated for warm-up, therefore they should arrive at the pool NO LATER THAN 15 minutes before that time – this will give them enough time to find the team in the "crash area" and get settled. Swimmers need to make sure that they have their suits, goggles, swim cap and towel before they leave home!! It is a good idea to have a back-up pair of goggles and a back-up swim cap.

It is a swimmer's responsibility to make sure they report to their event in time to swim. Some meets have a reporting area (Clerk of the Course) to put swimmers in event order, however, some meets simply have the swimmers report to their assigned lane/block. Make sure your swimmer is aware of their event(s). Experienced swimmers and parents will assist new swim families/swimmers – please do not be afraid to ask for assistance!!

Each swimmer is to report to the coach as soon as they have completed their event so the coach can give them feedback. If your child comes to you, remind them to see their coach first – THANKS!

LEAVING A MEET:

Do not leave the meet until you or your swimmer has checked with the coach about whether or not they are on relay. If a member of the relay leaves before the event, the other three team members will not be able to swim. Most relays are not announced or posted until the final phase of the session. Talk to the coach if you have questions.

LAST WORDS:

Remember at meets, swimmers are working not only to win races but also to get new "best times". A child can take 25th place and be thrilled because he/she got a faster time than before. A word of praise and support from family, other teammates and team families is a great way to reward and acknowledge their hard work.

Last but not least is expect to have FUN at a meet! It's exciting to be on a relay or to cheer on teammates. Sharing snacks, playing games, and building friendships are all part of the meet experience. Setting and achieving goals, as well as perfecting skills, is rewarding.

FOR PARENTS & SIBLINGS:

Bring your lawn chairs as seating in a pool facility can be limited. You can either crash with your swimmer in the crash area or sit in the bleachers in the stands. Be sure to bring the newspaper or a good book and games and snacks for the siblings.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS:

1. Let the coach be the coach and you be the parent. Your child needs to know that his/her worth to you is not tied to performance. The coach will handle critiquing the race. If you want to know what was discussed, one of the best ways to do so is to casually ask "So, what did coach have to say about your swim?" Perhaps you noticed something the coach did not point out to the swimmer; Be aware that the coach will choose what he feels is most important to mention at that time. He may not choose to point out some things, or he may choose to emphasize one thing over another. Receiving a different, perhaps conflicting, critique from the parent may confuse the swimmer or lessen the effectiveness of the coach's comments.
2. Be the swimmer's biggest fan. Swimming teaches a lot of life-skills, among them dealing effectively with success and with disappointment. If the swimmer knows that that win or lose, you are still on his/her side, then dealing with the highs and lows of the sport will come much more easily.
3. Relays are an important part the meet. Most of the events at a meet are individual in nature. Relays allow a child to come together with his/her peers in a "team" event. If a child is assigned to a relay, three other swimmers are counting on him/her to be able to compete. Please do not belittle this aspect of the sport by asking that your child be excused from swimming on a relay just to leave the meet earlier. This sends a very negative message about the importance of being on a team.
4. Meets cannot be run without volunteer parents. As you continue in the sport of swimming, you will come to recognize the many, many countless hours that parents volunteer to help make this sport something special for the children involved. At meets, parents man watches behind the lane, work the computers to tabulate results, and serve as officials. Most of the time, the host team tries to fill all these positions from within their own club, but many clubs (ours, included) have parents from the visiting teams also helping out. One of the best positions to see is that of a timer.