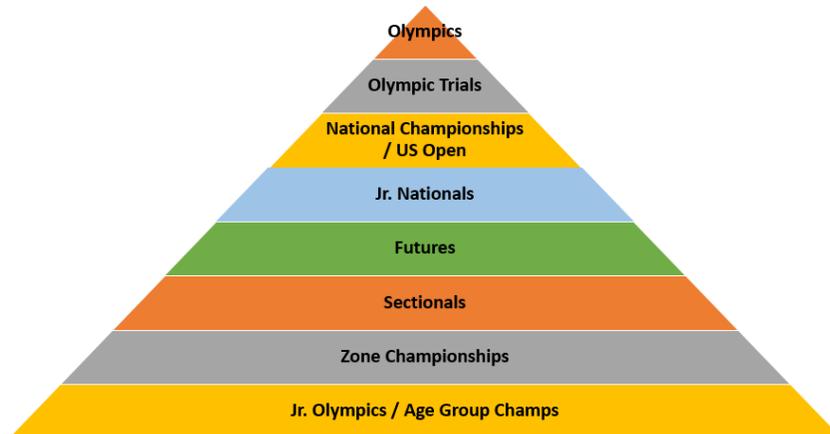


PATH TO SUCCESS: UNDERSTANDING THE BIG MEETS

What are Sectionals? Futures? Junior Nationals? This path begins at the Junior Olympics (JOs), progresses to Zones and Sectionals, and then moves onto the “national” stage at Futures Championships, then Junior Nationals, National Nationships/US Open, and culminates with the Olympic Trials. These meets progressively get harder to get into (cuts get faster) as the meets get closer to Olympic Trials. Here’s more:



First, a Word About LSCs

USA Swimming, the governing body for the sport of swimming in the United States, divides the country into 59 regional governing bodies called Local Swimming Committees (LSCs); our LSC is NJ Swimming and includes most clubs in NJ (southern NJ clubs belong to the Middle Atlantic LSC). Each LSC holds a championship “invitational” meet twice a year (at the end of the winter Short Course season and then again at the end of the summer Long Course season) for its age group (younger) and senior (older) swimmers.

NJ Swimming Championships

NJ Swimming holds championship invitational meets at the end of the winter and summer seasons. Age-group and Senior Championships are divided into different meets, including separate Silver/Bronze meets for both 12 and Unders and 13 and Overs; Junior Olympics (JOs) Championships for 14 and Unders; and Senior Championships for 15 and Overs.

Zones & Sectionals

To understand Zones and Sectionals, know that USA Swimming divides the 59 LSCs into four zones: Eastern, Central, Southern and Western. NJ Swimming is part of Eastern Zones. Like each LSC, each zone holds championship invitational meets at the end of the winter and summer seasons for select age group and senior swimmers for LSCs within that zone.

“Zones” are the zonal championship meets for age group swimmers, and “Sectionals” are the zonal championship meets for senior swimmers. At Zones, each LSC compiles a team of its fastest age group swimmers to compete against other LSCs in the same zone, and these swimmers compete under the name of their LSC (not their clubs). At Sectionals, however, swimmers generally compete under their own club’s name.

Although each zone generally holds only one Zones meet for age group swimmers at the end of each winter and summer season, the Eastern Zone hosts one Winter Zones meet (which has been in Webster, New York since 2009), and three separate Sectionals meets: a long course Sectionals in Richmond, Virginia for the LSCs in the southern half of the zone; a similar long course Sectionals in Buffalo, New York for the LSCs in the zone's northern half (us); and a short course Sectionals in Ithaca, New York.



Futures

“Futures Championships” provides swimmers with a stepping stone between Sectionals and Junior Nationals. Futures are open-age meets not limited to 18 & unders. There are separate meets for each Zone. The meet is a Long Course meet usually held in August.

Junior Nationals

Junior Nationals are split into two meets: a winter short-course meet in December, and a summer long-course one in August. There are separate winter and summer meets on both the east and west coasts. Athletes must be 18 or under on the first day of the meet in order to participate.

National Championships/US Open

The National Championships/US Open is exactly what the name implies. There is only 1 National Championship meet at the conclusion of each season across the country. This meet is generally used to determine the US National Team for various international level meets each year, but is not used to determine the US Olympic Team. Currently, there are 2 National Championships each year, but the Spring Championships have traditionally been of a significantly lower level of competition than the Summer Championships. This is because the Spring Championships are so close to NCAA Championships and the fact that Spring Championships are rarely used as a selection meet for national teams.



PO BOX 304, SUSSEX, NJ 07461
EMAIL NJBARRACUDAS@GMAIL.COM
PHONE/FAX (973)702-7585

Olympic Trials

Olympic Trials are held once every 4 years. Since this meet offers such a coveted prize (a spot on the US Olympic Team) it never fails to attract the absolute fastest in the sport of swimming in the United States. Because of this, the entry time standards are even faster than the National Championships. Unlike all other US Swimming meets, United States citizenship is required to compete at this meet since only United States citizens are allowed to represent the United States at the Olympics. The Olympic Trials are also under unique requirements made by the USOC.

All of these meets are really fast and only a small percentage of swimmers ever qualify, so they all are pretty prestigious. Best of luck to all swimmers on their journey...

Current Time Standards can be found on [our website](#), on [NJ Swimming's](#)

