

Corvallis Aquatic Team – Attending Your First Meet

Help! This is my child's first meet! What do we do?

Most of us have been in your situation, and other CAT parents are always willing to help. In addition, here are a few tips about attending your first meet:

- Make sure your swimmer has at least the following items in his or her swim bag: suit, goggles, team cap (if you don't have one, they will be available at the meet), towel (it's nice to have 2 – one for during the meet and a dry one for after), shirt/shorts/sweats to wear over suit in between races, a water bottle, and a healthy high carb snack. For longer meets your swimmer might also want an activity to do between races (book, cards, electronic game, etc.), a chair or blanket, and more snacks!
- Parents - unless you plan on sitting in the balcony at Osborn where it is air conditioned, you might want to dress lightly, as it is very warm on deck. Leave the heavy sweaters at home! You may also want to bring a chair for yourself and a "sharpie" marker (see below.)
- Try to arrive at the pool a few minutes early so your swimmer can be on deck ready to swim at warm up time. If your swimmer will miss part of warm up, please notify the coach ahead of time.
- Many younger swimmers prefer to sit at the meet with their families - it is up to them whether they want to sit with the other swimmers or with you. At Osborn, parents can sit on deck in the bleachers or in chairs, or in the balcony. You might want to coordinate with your child ahead of time to let them know where you will be sitting in case they want to join you. In any case, make sure they take their bag (with meet clothes, meet towel, snack, water bottle) out on deck with them rather than leaving it in the locker room.
- Once on deck, your swimmer should leave their bag where they will be sitting, put on cap and goggles, and find their coach to receive warm up instructions. Parents should not go into the competition area unless volunteering as a timer (see below.)
- Swim meets are organized by event, heat, and lane. The event is the age group, length, stroke of the race – ie 8 & under 25 yard freestyle. If there are more than 8 swimmers in an event, the event will be separated into heats. Within each heat the swimmers have a lane assignment (at Osborn, Lanes 1-8.) The listing of all of this information is called a "heat sheet", and will be posted at the meet both on deck and in the balcony for parent reference. It's often easier to look up which heat and lane your child is in for each event if you come to the meet with the event numbers – you can find this in the area where you signed up for the meet on the website.
- Most of the younger swimmers write their events with sharpie or ballpoint pen on their hand or arm in a grid (see below). The coaches or other swimmers can assist with this, but parents can help their child with it as well. Example:

E	H	L	
3	2	8	50 fr
7	1	3	50 ba
9	1	5	50 br

- Bull Pen – the bull pen is for 8 & under swimmers and the volunteers there will line them up for their races and make sure they get to the blocks. Listen for announcements of when the swimmers should report to the bull pen for each event. 9 & older swimmers should report directly to the blocks. If they need assistance knowing what to do, please have them ask a coach.
- Swimmers should get in the habit of checking in with their coach before they report to the blocks or go to the bull pen for each race. ALL swimmers should see their coach after each swim for feedback about the race. Please help your child with this so that they know they should stop at the coaches' table before they return to where they are sitting.
- There will be an announcer who will announce each event and heat before it starts. The information will also be listed on the scoreboard (although note that the scoreboard does not change to the new heat's information until after the race starts.) Each race is started by an official who will blow one long whistle, signifying that the swimmers get up on the blocks (or beside the blocks if they are not yet comfortable diving off the blocks.) The starter then says "Take your mark" and the swimmer will get into starting position, then an electronic horn will signify the start of the race. Swimmers' names, lane, time, and place are all on the scoreboard. **Important!!!** One of the "rules" of swim meets is that there is no flash photography at the start of each race. The flash is a distraction for the swimmers and/or cause interference for the timers. You are welcome to use a flash at any other time.
- Which brings us to....timing! In each lane, there will be two volunteer timers needed – so sixteen overall. This is something that is expected of us when we travel to other pools to swim in meets, as well as when we have smaller meets at home. (At the five large fundraising meets where Osborn CAT parents do their required volunteer hours, parents from visiting teams will serve as timers.) Timing is easy, fun, and you're right down in the action of the meet. We understand that sometimes parents are unable to help because they are the only adult from their family at the meet and they have younger children with them. But if this is not the case for you, please consider volunteering as a timer and learning to do this very important job.
- There is a multitude of information available online about the sport of swimming. USA Swimming has a "[Swimming 101](#)" page which you may find especially helpful.
- Welcome to the wonderful world of swim meets! Please ask me or any CAT parent if you have any questions I may have missed. rhondasoule@gmail.com