

Swim Meets 101

Swim meets can be an exciting experience! However, it can also be somewhat confusing and overwhelming for new swimmers. Here is some information to help you and your swimmer successfully navigate the meet season.

Meet Entry Procedure: Meet entries are completed online through the BISC website. Go to www.bainbridgebluefins.com to find BISC's Team Unify page. Here is a step-by-step guide to sign your swimmer up for a swim meet.

1. Log on to your account
2. Click on the "Meet/Events" tab on the website to see a list of upcoming meets in the season. (This will also show additional information about the events, including the sanctioned meet announcement which provides the location, rules, and order of events at the meet. If qualifying times are necessary, it will be stated here.)
3. Find the event you would like to attend and click on Attend/Decline which appears immediately below the event date or click on the event name and then click the Attend/Decline button in the right-hand corner. (If it is very early, the meet information may not yet be available online)
4. Under the "Member Name" column click on your swimmer.
5. In the "Declaration" box, click on:
 - "Yes, please sign [swimmer name] up for this event." (A drop-down menu of events will appear). OR
 - "No, thanks, [swimmer name] will not attend this event."
6. Choose the events your swimmer wishes to enter. If qualifying times are required, your swimmer must have achieved that time for the event selection to be available. Please be aware of any event limitations listed in the sanction, (e.g. limit of 3 swims per day or no NT's (events without a previous time) allowed, etc.) PLEASE NOTE: If you have questions about which event is right for your child, please ask your coach. In addition, the Coach may change the events if he/she feels it is appropriate.
7. In the "Notes" box enter any special request or information e.g.: Will only be swimming on Saturday; my swimmer really would like to swim X event if possible, etc.
8. Then click on "Save Changes".

*Please note: Only the coach can assign swimmers to relay teams, this is not available to members. However, it is helpful to indicate in the "Notes" section if your swimmer is available to swim on a relay at a particular meet.

Once your swimmer is committed and wishes to make changes:

- If the meet deadline has not passed and events have not yet been approved, you may go online and un-commit your swimmer: click on event title, then the Edit Commitment button. PLEASE bring this to the coach's attention, as she/he may have already been planning relays with your child as an integral part, so would need to adjust those entries as well.
- If the deadline has passed or the events have been approved, contact the coach to see if it is possible to make changes. Note: In this circumstance, you are committed to the meet and will be billed whether you attend the meet or not. When you commit, the coach may enter relays based on your swimmer's attendance, simply not attending a meet may mean a lost relay opportunity for teammates as well as an unnecessary expenditure for the team.

Preparing For a Swim Meet - Help your child to feel prepared for a meet experience. Make sure your swimmer gets plenty of sleep the night before a meet and eats a healthy meal before arriving. Please note, BISC coaches request that swimmers do not bring or use electronic devices on the deck at swim meets, as the focus should be on preparing for the swimmer's next event and cheering for their teammates. Swimmers will need to bring the following items to a meet:

- two towels
- meet suit (an Arena team suit or other jammers, typically blue)
- two sets of goggles
- two team caps (can be ordered from head coach)
- healthy snacks
- water bottle, filled
- team apparel (t-shirts, sweats, hats, parka)
- appropriate shoes

Meet Announcements – Please take the time to read the meet announcement prior to registering a swimmer for a meet. The meet announcement is a document that corresponds with each meet and can be found under the 'Meet/Events' tab on the BISC website. The announcement provides essential information about the meet including where the pool is located, when warm up begins, how many events each swimmer can enter, qualifying times, whether bonus events or time trials are offered, in addition to other details or rules for the meet.

Meet Mobile App - Consider downloading the "Meet Mobile" application on your smart phone. This will allow you to review heat sheets and see results of all events for your swimmer (and friends), right from your phone. There is a nominal subscription fee for Meet Mobile.

Short Course & Long Course Meets: The swim year is divided into short course and long course seasons. During short course season (September – March), swimmers will race in a 25-yard pool, often in Kitsap and KING counties. BISC will typically have almost all these meets identified at the beginning of the season. Long course season begins in April and continues through the end of July. During this season, swimmers will race in a 50-meter (Olympic size) pool. Many long course meets are held at the King County Aquatic Center (KCAC) in Federal Way. Because there are fewer 50M aquatic facilities, it is very competitive for swim clubs to be accepted into these meets. During long course season, each swim club is assigned a priority order for a meet and many times, acceptance into these meets is uncertain. As a result, the BISC long course meet calendar will be confirmed as the season progresses. In addition, BISC will sometimes only have a few days' notice to submit entries for a long course meet, so it's important to indicate your commitment for long course meets on the BISC website so coaches will know if your swimmer plans to attend and would like to have entries submitted for a long course meet.

Time Standards: Goals are always important for swimmers and help young athletes strive to improve. We encourage you and your swimmer to familiarize yourself with various time standards which are posted on the BISC, PNS and USA Swimming websites. (Please see the 'Times and Recognition' tab on the BISC website). These time standards are a great way to set goals for any event and see how your swimmer improves over time.

- PNS Progressions begin as "Silver Times" then progress to Gold, Champs, Regionals and beyond. These time standards are an excellent way for your swimmer to set tangible goals over

the course of the season and achieve a Champs time, for example, to compete at the PNS Championship meet.

- USA Swimming Motivational Time Standards are a set of times or “cuts” associated with every event in each age group, starting with “B” times, then progressing to BB, A, AA, AAA and AAAA times. Swimmers can set goals to achieve a certain number of “A” times in various events, for example, throughout the course of the season.
- USA Swimming Power Points Every swim listed in the USA Swimming times database includes a Power Point value. This point system allows for comparison of the quality of performances across strokes, distances, and events, as well as between age groups. The power point scale ranges from 1 to 1100 points. The higher the points, the stronger the swimmer is in that event. These points are used to rank swimmers and to calculate USA Swimming’s IM Ready and IMX scores which is a composite of all four strokes and an individual medley event. (Note: The All-Star team selection is also based on these power points).

Qualifying Meets: Some meets have qualifying times for swimmers to enter. For example, the Age Group Invitational (AGI) meet requires swimmers to have “Gold Times” in each event to enter. The PNS short course (December) and long course (July/August) Championship meets require “Champs” times to enter a specific event. You will be able to determine whether a meet has qualifying times by reading the meet announcement which will be posted on the BISC website. In addition, you will be able to see whether your swimmer qualifies for a specific event when you register a swimmer on Team Unify. Typically, a swimmer will need to achieve the qualifying time about two weeks prior to the meet. Please note, there are both short course and long course qualifying times for almost all championship meets. So, for example, if a swimmer has a qualifying short course time, he or she will be eligible to swim that event even if the championship meet is a long course meet (i.e. If the swimmer has a qualifying 50 yard Freestyle time, he or she does not also need to have a qualifying 50 meter long course time, even if the meet is a long course meet).

Championship Meets: Each swimmer should plan to attend at least one championship meet at the end of short course season and another at the end of long course season. These meets are especially important for BISC, as the club can accumulate points in relation to other swim clubs attending the meet (and perhaps even win a trophy!) The more swimmers who attend these championship meets, the more points for BISC, so please take the championship schedule into account when booking vacations. In addition, coaches request that swimmers attend these meets to swim on relay teams since relays are worth double the points of individual events and boost BISC’s team standings in the overall meet.

There is a championship meet for every swimmer at every level.

- **Divisional** - This is a championship meet without qualifying times, so a good starting point for a championship meet format. However, swimmers 11 and older with Champs or Regionals times in an event will “de-qualify” and be ineligible to swim that same event at Divisional. Also, 11 and older swimmers will swim in a preliminary swim / finals swim format at this meet.
- **Champs** – The PNS Championship – or “Champs” - at KCAC meet requires swimmers to make at least one qualifying time to participate. Champs times will be posted on the PNS website each season. Swimmers at this meet will race against the fastest swimmers from across PNS. There is both a short course (December) and a long course (July or August) “Champs” meet.
- **Regionals** – Regionals times are more difficult for swimmers to attain than Champs times, as they are even faster. Swimmers at the Northwest Regionals Championship meet will race against the fastest swimmers from PNS as well as LSC in the neighboring states: Washington, Hawaii,

Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Wyoming. Regionals is a short course meet held in late March at KCAC.

- **Sectionals** – This is a very competitive swim meet offered twice each year in both a short course (March) and long course (July) format. For many swimmers, this is their first open age group meet, meaning there is a single qualifying time (rather than a time specified for a particular age group) to enter the meet. It's especially challenging for younger swimmers to make these times, as many Sectional swimmers are adults.
- **National Swim Meets** – Highly competitive swimmers can aspire to compete at championship meets which are semi-national and national meets as they continue to develop. These meets include Futures, Junior Nationals and Olympic Trials.

Surviving Your First Swim Meet

1. Arrive at least 15 minutes before warm-ups. (Warm up schedules will be sent out via email by the coaches typically the Wednesday before a meet).
2. Find a location to set up your area for the duration of the meet.
3. Send your swimmer to the coach for warm-ups a little before the warm-up start time with everything they need.
4. Go buy a program, usually found at the host team's swim shop or concessions.
5. Have a seat and highlight all your swimmer's events in the program.
6. When your younger (10&under swimmer) returns from warm-ups, it's time to dry them off and write the day's events on their arm or leg with a Sharpie. If your swimmer has been to a few meets encourage them to learn to do this on their own.
 - I. Write: Event #, Heat #, and Lane #, and the race (for example: 1-2-4 50 free). This system works great for the swimmer to keep track of their events and for race officials to help them if they get confused at the blocks.
 - II. We teach our younger swimmers to think when, where, and what in terms of their event. When is that Event # and the Heat #, helping swimmers to understand that they need to be aware of when they are swimming. Then we talk about where. Where is their swim taking place? This correlates to their lane number, and finally What. What event is the swimmer swimming?
7. Once the meet starts, keep track of what event is in the pool by listening to the announcer and checking the event board.
 - I. 10&under swimmer should check in with their coach 15 minutes before their race for a brief pep talk.
 - II. Older swimmers have what coaches call a 23-minute rule. If a swimmer does not know this rule then they are not considered an older swimmer.
 - III. **BE CAREFUL WITH THE 25-YARD and 50-YARD RACES—THEY GO REAL FAST!**
 - IV. 8 and under swimmers and new 10 and under swimmers will have a coach near the blocks to help them.
 - V. All swimmers must hear their last piece of advice from the coach and their first piece of feedback from the coach. We call this our 3-minute check in and check out rule.
8. Enjoy the race and cheer your swimmer on, but no coaching – that is for the coaches to do!
9. Remind your swimmer check in with their coach again directly after their event for feedback if they forget to.
10. If your swimmer is having a hard time, get them to talk to the coach. If this is ineffective, hear what they have to say and then say, "what are you going to do about it?" Then if they give an answer say, "well now you've got a plan." If they don't give an answer then say, "Well maybe your coach can help you out with that." The best thing you can do is listen and nod in these post- race situations.
11. About mid-meet have your swimmer check with their coach to see if he/she is in a relay. Relays are generally run at the end of the day and assigned by the coaches. **NEVER leave a meet without checking on relays!**
12. Be prepared mentally for a long, noisy weekend. Bring something good books to read or something enjoyable to do.