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| Parent Handbook |
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**Introduction**

The Martinez Community Swim Team (MCST) is a family oriented, summer recreational swim team. Our goal is to provide young swimmers through the age of 18, an opportunity to swim in a competitive and fun team environment.

MCST is a member of the Twin County Swim League (TCSL). The other teams in our league are the Benicia Stingrays, the Crockett Crockett-iles, the Hercules Piranhas, Vista Diablo Dolphins, Pinole Seals, and the American Canyon Ahi Tuna. The league members of the TCSL strongly believe in its participants and their families to work and play together with good sportsmanship and to treat all players, coaches, referees and parents with respect. *Please see TCSL Code of Conduct in the MCST Registration Packet.*

The primary goal of the MCST coaching staff is for all of the kids participating to be safe in the water. The coaches want every swimmer to reach their full potential as a recreational competitive swimmer in a fun atmosphere. The coaches teach all competitive strokes: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle, along with the basic racing starts and turns for each. They also encourage goal setting and personal achievement.

MCST is governed by an elected board of volunteer parents. The Board meets once a month throughout the year. Please refer to the MCST website for the date/time and location of the current meeting. All parents may attend. Contact information for all Board members can be found on the MCST website.

The MCST Board positions are:

President

Vice-President

Treasurer

Secretary

Membership

Past President

**Team Membership**

Our team welcomes swimmers up to the age of 18 (as of June 15th). Membership is open to all families and is not limited to Martinez residents. Swimmers with no prior swim team experience must register by the second week of practice. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the Head Coach. All new swimmers will be evaluated at the end of two weeks to determine if the swim team is right for them. Swimmers joining our team must not have been a member of a U.S.S. team as of January 1st of the current year.

Our insurance requires that every swimmer has completed registration forms on file before swimmers can enter the water. Including, but not limited to, medical information and a signed medical release of liability.

## **Little Otters**

Our Little Otter Program is for swimmers ages 4 and 5 (as of June 15) who are not capable of swimming one length of a 25-yard pool. Exceptions can be made at the discretion of the Head Coach. The primary goal of the Little Otter program is to get young swimmers ready for swim team membership.

Enrollment in the Little Otter Program is limited. Little Otter swimmers must be “pool safe” and willing to participate in a group lesson atmosphere without the aid of a parent. Little Otters who can successfully complete one lap may be invited to participate in a swim meet. 4-5 year old Little Otter swimmers may request a refund of registration fees (minus $25 administrative fee) within one week of the official beginning day of practice if it is determined that the child is not ready or willing to participate in the program. There is no prorated registration to the Little Otter program, and no swimmers will be registered to begin after the second week of practice.

The coaches of the Little Otters are usually our experienced 15-18 year old swimmers, supervised by a senior member of the coaching staff. The ratio of coach to swimmers is about 5 to 1. Each Little Otter group is also accompanied by an assistant who is a swimmer in our 13-14 year old age group. The coaches and assistants are in the water with the swimmers and provide hands on instruction to each of the Little Otter participants.

The Little Otter program runs for 6 weeks with a two day holiday around the fourth of July. Please refer to the MCST Calendar located on the MCST website for details about practice times and days off.

# **Fees**

## **Registration Fee**

Registration fees are due in full at the time of registration. Please refer to the current year’s registration page for current fee schedule. The main items the registration fees cover are: coaches’ salaries, pool rental/use, and liability insurance.

Registration fees do not cover the cost of team outings, team suits, or equipment. All swimmers must provide their own swimsuit, goggles, and swim caps. Please see *Equipment* Section.

MCST requires that any returning family who has not fulfilled their financial obligation from a previous swim season must be cleared by the MCST President and Treasurer before rejoining.

## **Swimmer’s Challenge**

Swimmer’s Challenge is a mandatory, separate financial obligation that each swimmer is responsible for, not just per family. Each swimmer must raise a minimum of $100. Please see *Team Functions & Fundraising Events* section.

## **Little Otters**

Please refer to the current year’s registration page for the current registration schedule. The Swimmer’s Challenge fundraising event is not applicable to Little Otters

## **Non-Sufficient Funds (Returned) Checks**

All checks returned to MCST for non-sufficient funds will be subjected to a $25.00 returned check fee.

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# **Refunds**

## **Try-out period and refunds**

New swimmers (defined as any swimmer who has never been a member of MCST) are allowed to swim with the team on a try-out basis for 2 weeks. The coaching staff will evaluate all new swimmers during this period to determine if that swimmer meets the minimum level for swim team. Exceptions to this policy may be made by the coaching staff.

For new swimmers who voluntarily withdraw from the team, there will be no refunds made. If the coaching staff determines a swimmer is not ready to participate on the team, a refund will be granter, minus a $25 administrative fee. Registration fee refunds are not available for returning swimmers.

While evaluating a swimmer’s readiness to participate on the swim team, the head coach will consider many factors. Among these considerations, the swimmer must be safe in the water, including adequate swimming skills, and listening skills, as well as cooperating with instructors. Swimmers should be at least progressing toward the ability to swim a 25-yard lap across the pool (6 and Under and 7-8 swimmers), or 50 yards (swimmers 9 and older). The swimmer should be able to remain safe in the water without a coach at their side at all times. Please communicate with the head coach with specific questions or concerns about your swimmer’s ability. New swimmers who are determined to be not ready for swim team will be referred to local swim lesson programs to get ready for the next season of swim team.

## **Scholarships**

The MCST Board can award, at its discretion, a one-time per family partial (1/2 off registration fee) scholarship to any returning family who can clearly demonstrate a financial need. The need must be documented and presented to the MCST Board who will then vote whether or not to approve it.

**Communication**

MCST’s primary source of communication is the team’s website www.gototters.org. The website provides up to date information about schedule changes, information regarding upcoming meets and events, general information, Board meetings, and team sponsor information. It is also where job signups will take place. Each registered family will receive, via email, a username and password allowing that family access to the MCST website. Please do not expect to receive phone calls for practice or meet changes.

MCST also utilizes the REMIND app for quick mass communication via text message. In order to receive these text messages, please text “MCSTOT” to the number 81010.

# **Team Roster**

The team roster is available on the team website. Only current swim team members have access to the website. Therefore, only current team members have access to the team roster. All members have access to every current member’s name, email address, home address, and phone number. However, users only have access to their swimmer’s meet results.

Please note that the information contained within the team roster is for swim team use only. Please address any corrections with the Membership Director.

# **Family Files**

Each family will have a file folder marked with the swimmer’s last name. The Family Files are kept in file boxes at our pool during the season. Files are accessible on deck during practice and at home meets. These Family Files serve as our in-house mail system. Announcements, meet entry forms, ribbons, flyers, etc. will be distributed to our members using this system. Files should be checked on a daily basis. If your family has younger swimmers, please have a parent empty your folder. Flyers being distributed through the Family Files must have the prior approval of the MCST President or Head Coach.

**Parent Participation**

# **Parent Commitment**

Parent participation is crucial to the success of MCST. Each family is required to work a specific number of job assignments per season, typically 8-10, depending on overall team enrollment. The signup period for job assignments will be provided to parents via email. All jobs must be signed up for by June 1st or the family’s swimmers will not be entered into the swim meets. Signups are performed online via the MCST website. If you have any questions about job assignments, please contact the MCST Job Coordinator. Please refer to the Job Descriptions document on the website for detailed information about each job.

# **Meet Workers**

Meet workers must check in with the Job Coordinator at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start of a meet. Some workers may need to report to their assignments earlier than 15 minutes prior to the start of a swim meet. If you have job conflicts or childcare issues that will prevent you from working Saturday mornings or Wednesday evenings, please contact the Job Coordinator at the beginning of the season. Please do not sign up to work a meet that conflicts with your vacation time. After scheduling a work assignment it is imperative that you notify the Job Coordinator if you cannot work the meet. Your shift may be covered by any responsible person over the age of 15. If you (or your substitute) are a no-show for a work assignment you will be required to pay a $100.00 missed job assignment fee ($50 will be paid to the person who worked your job, and $50 will go into the MCST Scholarship fund).. Your swimmer will not be allowed to participate in practices or meets until the missed assignment fee is paid.

If you do not sign up for the required number of jobs, you will be assigned jobs to fulfill the requirement.

**Swim Meets**

At swim meets our entire team swims against another team, or teams depending on the type of swim meet. Swimmer participation in scheduled meets is strongly recommended. Swimmers who do not regularly attend practice may be excluded from a meet at the discretion of the coaching staff. The following are different types of swim meets in which MCST participates.

# **Dual Meets**

MCST participates in dual meets on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings during the season. Wednesday meets are held in the evening and typically run from 5p.m. to 8:30p.m. Saturday meets begin at 7:30a.m. and run until about 12:00noon. Start times are subject to change. The meet schedule can be found on the MCST website. Please check the website before each meet to verify warm up times and event information.

# **Invitational Meets**

MCST participates in several large Invitational Meets. Many swimmers have found that they swim their fastest times at these meets. Please consider the following Invitational meet(s) when planning vacations:

## **Devil Mountain Pentathlon**

This meet is held on a Saturday and/or Sunday in mid-July. Each swimmer swims 5 events in one day: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle, and the individual medley (50 yards freestyle for swimmers who are 6 and under). Only returning swimmers will be entered into this swim meet. At the Head Coach’s discretion, new swimmers may be invited to participate in this meet.

## **TCSL League Meet**

The TCSL League meet is our largest meet of the swim season. It is the championship meet at the end of the season in which MCST competes against all of the other teams in the league. Usually 95% of the team participates in this meet and most swimmers achieve their best times of the season. This event is a lot of fun for our swimmers and their families.

## **County Meet**

Those swimmers earning county times will be able to participate in the County Meet held in August.

# **Arrival & Team Warm Up**

Please arrive at all swim meets on time for team warm ups. Swimmers arriving at a meet more than 15 minutes into the team’s warm up period may not be allowed to participate in the meet. Late arrival to a meet because of an emergency or other special circumstance may be excused by the Head Coach. Please do not leave any meet before checking to see if your swimmer has been scheduled to swim in a relay event. Relay team rosters are posted in the team area at each meet.

# **Absence Policies**

All swimmers are automatically entered into all meets in which MCST participates. Swimmers are entered into the computer for meet events and that information is sent to the hosting team’s meet coordinator 2-3 weeks in advance of the meet. Due to scheduling, it is critical that you advise the Head Coach of vacation plans as far in advance as possible. For this purpose, there is a Vacation Binder located in the Family Files box. Please sign out of the meets you know you will be unable to attend as soon as possible.

# **Missed Meet Fees**

If a swimmer is not signed out of a meet in the Vacation Binder and does not show up for a meet, whatever monies were paid for that swimmer’s meet entry must be reimbursed to the team or a minimum of $20 per occurrence, whichever is higher. If your swimmer is ill and/or you have some other kind of emergency and cannot attend, parents need to contact the Head Coach as soon as possible.

**Practice Schedule**

Each age group practices at a particular time, please refer to the practice schedule posted on the team website.

# **Deck Policy**

Distractions, of any kind, are not helpful during swim practice. Parents are not allowed on the pool deck during practice. The pool deck is the cement area around the pool. Parents are welcome to observe their swimmer from the lawn or the picnic tables. Siblings may sit with parents on the grass or on the tables. Swimmers are not allowed to be on deck except during their practice. This policy is beneficial to our coaching staff and your swimmer. Our coaches want to have 100% of their attention on swimmers in the water.

Swimmers who are late may not be permitted to enter the water for practice.  Swimmers must arrive on time.

Our coaching staff welcomes your questions, comments, or concerns at the appropriate time. Feel free to call or email the Head Coach Keelan Kirshen.

We ask that all swimmers be picked up promptly after practice. The coaches cannot leave an unattended child at the pool.

# **Alcohol, Smoking & Pets**

Alcoholic beverages or beverages in glass containers are not allowed at any swim team function where swimmers are present. Smoking is not allowed within the vicinity of the pool or the enclosed area of the pool. Pets are not allowed within the enclosed area of the pool. These policies apply and are enforced at all pools within our league.

# **Equipment**

All swimmers must supply their own swimsuit, goggles, and towels. Goggles are required for all swimmers. Caps are required for all swimmers (male or female) with long hair. Older swimmers may be required to furnish additional equipment as deemed necessary.

A practice suit must be worn for all practice sessions to maintain elasticity and color of the team suit. Please mark all equipment with your swimmer’s name. Team suits are only to be used for the team pictures and swim meets. Swimmers may not wear their team suit to practice. Team suits must be worn to participate in swim meets.

**Team Functions & Fundraising Events**

MCST’s major fundraising events are the Swimmer’s Challenge and various family dining nights where our members dine at local restaurants and those restaurants in turn give MCST a percentage of the dining check.

# **Swimmer’s Challenge**

Swimmer’s Challenge is a mandatory fundraising event in which all swimmers(except Little Otters) swim as many laps as they can within their normal practice time. The minimum amount for each swimmer is $100, however, swimmers are encouraged to raise as much as they can based upon how many laps they think they will be able to swim. The monies collected are used to offset the daily MCST expenses.

# **Rigatoni Night**

It has been a long standing MCST tradition to share a meal before our League Championship Meet, affectionately known as “Rigatoni Night”. Rigatoni Night is a pasta dinner held the Friday evening prior to the League Meet. We enjoy a fun evening of special traditions including the swimmers arriving with crazy hair, basket raffle, and a compilation of funny video shorts. Immediately following the dinner and contests there is often other entertainment.

# **Team Pictures**

MCST’s team pictures will be taken by a professional photographer at the pool during practice time in June. All team swimmers must wear the current team suit to be included in the team photo. No shorts, t-shirts, hats, or sunglasses will be permitted. Individual portraits are also available and will be taken on a separate day. Order envelopes and information will be distributed via the Family Files. Little Otters are encouraged to participate in the team photo, however, they must wear their team shirt, which they will receive prior to picture day.

**Awards**

The MCST coaching staff strives to recognize the hard work of our swimmers. The coaching staff has several ways in which swimmers are rewarded for their outstanding work and attitude.

# **Ribbons**

Swimmers receive ribbons for their place achievements at each meet. Please be aware that each team has a different ribbon policy.

# **Swimmer of the Meet**

Our coaching staff selects several swimmers who were particularly successful at each meet. These swimmers typically made dramatic improvements in their event times or have contributed to points our team earned at a meet.

# **Swimmer of the Week**

Swimmer of the Week is typically awarded to swimmers who have excellent attendance and worked hard during the practice week.

# **Medal Board**

A medal board lists each swimmer on the team and makes note of every “medal time” swimmers have achieved. The medal board is updated regularly, however, it may not immediately reflect a swimmers progress.

# **Publicity**

MCST makes every effort to get the results of our meets to the Martinez News Gazette, the Martinez Record, and the MCST website along with pictures, if possible. If you do not wish to have your child(ren)’s name or picture in these publications please indicate this preference on the required Photo Release form that is contained in the Registration packet.

# **Awards Ceremony**

The MCST Awards Night is held at the end of the season. Each swimmer is presented with a medal that corresponds to the highest medal time achieved during the season. A certificate noting the swimmer’s best times in each stroke accompanies each medal. MCST awards a trophy in three categories: High Point Swimmer, Most Improved Swimmer, and the Coaches’ Award. MCST also highlights swimmers who have been with MCST for 5, 10, or 15 years.

 On the last day of their practice, swimmers participating in the Little Otters program are awarded a medal and a certificate to recognize their accomplishments. Typically, a potluck celebration is planned, including free play time at the pool, concluding with a short awards ceremony.

# **Pop Times**

As a reward and additional incentive, each time a swimmer “pops” (improves) their recorded swim time the swimmer is presented with a pop time certificate which they can exchange for a lollypop from the coaching staff. The pop time certificates are placed in the Family Files. Please notify the Head Coach if you don’t want your child to receive lollypops.