

**BRAEMAR
BLASTERS
SWIM TEAM**



Swim Team 101

Welcome to the Braemar Blasters!

Included in this handbook you will find information about our swim team, swim meets, and swimming in general.

PWSL

The Braemar Blasters Swim Team swims in the Prince William Swim League (PWSL). The PWSL was founded in 1972 to encourage the sport of swimming in Prince William County and follows USA Swimming rules.

There are currently 23 teams:

Ashland Stingrays
Ben Lomond Flying Ducks
Braemar Blasters
Bridlewood Bridlewaves
Brookside Hurricanes
Dale City Frogs
Dominion Valley Sharks
Kingsbrooke Sea Lions
Lake Manassas Blue Dolphins
Lake Ridge Lancers
Meadowbrook Woods Makos
Montclair Seahawks
Old Bridge Breakers
Piedmont Tsunamis
Ridgewood Barracudas
Stonewall Park Explosion
Sudley Seahorses
Urbanna Otters
Veteran's Park Marlins
Victory Lakes Piranhas
Virginia Oaks Sea Devils
Wellington Dolphins
Westridge Waves

Volunteers

Swim meets cannot happen without parent volunteers. The Braemar Blasters **require** that one parent from each family volunteer weekly. Sign-ups for volunteer positions are done when you register. If you have any questions about your position, ask the 'head'

person in your group or the Volunteer Coordinator.

If you will not be able to attend a particular swim meet, it is important that you contact your position's "head" person and/or the Volunteer Coordinator and let them know as soon as possible so they can schedule someone else to take your place.

Failure to complete your volunteer assignment may affect the events your child swims and/or your ability to register early for the following season. Again, a Swim Team cannot function without the support of parent volunteers.

The following volunteer positions are part of the Blasters team:

Referee-must go to training and have been a stroke and turn judge for at least one year	Relay Coordinators	Heat Ribbon distributor
Starter -must go to training	Announcer	Computer representative
Stroke and Turn judges-must go to training	Timers	Scorers
Runners	Marshals	Ribbon writers
Clerk of Course-must go to training	Concessions	Set Up
Banquet Committee	Clean Up	Merchandise Committee
Social Committee	Photographer	
Pep Rally Committee		
Sponsorship		

Swimming Basics

The pool is 25 meters in length, and most pools have six lanes. The type of swimming done in this league is called 'short course' swimming, as opposed to 'long course' that takes place in a 50 meter pool.

There are four recognized strokes- **freestyle**, **backstroke**, **breaststroke**, and **butterfly**. Each stroke has a set of standards that must be followed in order for the stroke to be considered legal.

In addition to the four strokes, there are other events:

The **Individual Medley** (IM) includes 25 meters of each stroke, in this order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle.

The **Medley Relay** includes, in this order: backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and freestyle. Swimmers 12 and under swim 25 meters per leg; 13 and over swim 50 meters per leg of the relay.

The **Freestyle Relay** is all freestyle. 12 and under swimmers do 25 meters per leg. Swimmers 13 and over do 50 meters per leg of the relay.

A swim team can enter an A, B, and a C relay team in a relay event. The 'A' relay team has the fastest time; the 'B' and 'C' relay teams would be the second and third fastest relays,

respectively. There are four swimmers per relay team. Relay team members are selected by the coaches, based on the individual times of the swimmers. The coach wants to arrange the swimmers so that they have the best relay combinations possible. Relays change throughout the season, and positions on a relay can change, too. A swimmer who usually swims the first leg might be moved to the third, if that makes for the fastest combination. Even though the 'A' relay might be the favorite to win, it's possible for the 'B' or 'C' relay teams to have a great swim and take first place.

Swimming is both a team and an individual sport. A swimmer should be concerned about how he or she places for the team, but should be just as focused on the improvements he/she made in each event. If you drop time, you are a winner!

Practices

Swimmers are expected to attend practices regularly. Swimming is a team sport, and it is important that the team practice together, under the guidance of the coach. It's also very important that relay teams get to practice together.

Swimmers should arrive at practice at least five minutes before practice starts so that they can be ready on time. All swimmers should have goggles and fins. Swimmers with long hair should wear caps. Swimmers should go directly to the coaches at practice and should wait for instructions.

Swimmers need to look at the coach when instructions are being given. They should not play around while at the wall. Safety is important and swimmers are not to push their teammates into the pool before, during, or after practice. Horseplay is not tolerated at the Braemar pool. Swimmers may be asked to leave if they can't display appropriate behavior.

Adult Supervision is required at all practices for children under the age of 13. If you are unable to be present, please make sure you have appointed an adult(over the age of 18) to be in charge. This is an HOA regulation that we must adhere to.

We ask that you remember that participation on the Braemar Blasters swim team does not give non-resident swimmers and their families blanket permission to use the pool facility. Only the non-resident swimmer is allowed access to the pool and only during their designated practice time. Non-resident swimmers should arrive at the pool no more than 10 minutes prior to their scheduled practice time. If you don't adhere to this policy, your membership on the team may be revoked.

Swimmers should drink water before, during, and after practice since they can get dehydrated even in the water.

Some practices may focus on one stroke while others may cover multiple strokes. The team has weekly **clinics** to focus on specific things like kicks, starts, turns, relays, etc.

Sometimes it may be for a specific age group. Clinics are optional to attend, but if your swimmer needs help in the area on which the clinic is focusing, it is a good idea to attend. The weekly newsletter will let you know in advance what will be practiced at the upcoming clinic.

If a swimmer will miss a meet, please make a note of that in the Team-Unify system and in the **team book** that is located in the team file box. The coach has to know if your swimmer won't be at a meet when organizing the individual events and relays. You should give at least a week's notice (or as soon as possible). Changes cannot be made past the Wednesday prior to the weekly meet. Each family has a folder in the above-mentioned file box. Please check it regularly for various updates, newsletters, and ribbons.

Occasionally swimmers have to miss consecutive practices because of vacations or camps. Be sure to let the coach know if this is going to happen, again, by using the team book.

It is important that parents do not approach the coaches during practice. If you need to talk to a coach, leave a message in the team book. Parents should not 'coach' their child from the side of the pool during practice or during a meet.

Social/Team Events

The Braemar Blasters sponsor quite a few social events throughout the swimming season. The point of these events is to emphasize that the swim season is not just about competition; it is also about having fun and making friends.

There are always **Pep Rallies** the Friday night before meets. Often these are potluck dinners. These dinners are a great way for your children to make friends and, just as importantly, it offers parents a chance to meet people, too! Pep Rallies often have a specific theme. Look for this information on the team website and in your folder.

In the past there have been other events like movie, bowling, or golf outings, to name a few. The team also sponsors annual events such as Teen Luau, Movie Night, and Family Fun Night that are open to the Braemar Community. It's up to you what you attend, but be sure to RSVP on time if a response is required. If you are a non-resident, you do have access to the pool during Swim Team Sponsored Community events (i.e. Movie Night, Family Fun Night and Twilight Family Swim)

The team has an annual **Swim-A-Lap** which is a fundraising event. The team selects a

community need/ charity for which we raise funds.

Team pictures are taken in July. Swimmers can take an individual picture, or you can have siblings who are on the team pose together, the entire team will have a group photo taken as well. You can purchase picture packages through the order forms that are distributed a week or so before picture day.

Usually the day after Divisionals, the Braemar Blasters have an **Awards Ceremony**. The team celebrates the season and trophies and honors are given out. Every swimmer will receive a participation trophy. Other trophies awarded are Most Improved, High Point Earner, and Coach's Award. Each of these categories of trophies is awarded to one girl and one boy from each age group.

Team Communication

Once the meets start, a weekly **newsletter** is distributed to each family through e-mail. This newsletter contains valuable information.

This newsletter will keep you up to date on upcoming events and clinics. The newsletter also has information about the upcoming meet (for example, directions to the away meet and what time you should arrive). Finally, the newsletter highlights the accomplishments from the last week. The newsletter is used to recognize swimmers and volunteers.

Email and Team-Unify are the primary forms of contact between the Board/coaches and the parents. Please check your email regularly and make sure your Blasters updates aren't going in your spam folder. You can also friend us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter (@BraemarBlasters).

As mentioned before, information will be placed in the family folders in the team box. The **team box** is usually located in the 'dining' area of the Iona Sound pool and at the Rob Roy pool during each practice. Check it frequently for important information.

www.braemarblasters.com

Bookmark this site! This is the team website and is full of great information. Among other things, you can find the league and team by-laws, information on upcoming meets and events, and the team records. Check it out!

Time Trials

Time trials are swum the week before the first meet. They give the coach an idea of

where each swimmer is, and they give the swimmer a valid time so he/she can be appropriately seeded in the first meet. Time trials are run just like a regular meet, though there are no maximum entry restrictions nor relay events. Parents are expected to volunteer at Time Trials just as they do for all other meets.

Swim Meets

Please check out the PWSL By-Laws on the team website for more details about meets. Swim meets are won by the strength of their swimmers, the placement of swimmers strategically in the meet, and by the number of swimmers each team brings to the meet. Swim meets are sometimes won/lost simply because one team had a few more swimmers missing than the other team. Attendance at swim meets is a vital component to doing well during the meets.

The coaches start preparing for Saturday's meet on **MONDAY MORNING**. It is essential that the coaches know prior to this if your swimmer will be absent from the meet. Obviously, emergencies happen. Each team has a limited number of allowed splashes, or entries, regardless of team size. With a team as large as ours, it is very important that we don't enter swimmers that won't be in attendance at the meet. Once the meet is entered on Thursday night, we are limited by league rules as to what changes we can make. **If an emergency occurs and a swimmer must scratch from an event he/she is scheduled to swim, that swimmer and/or parent must do so through one of the coaches.** Neither swimmers nor parents are able to scratch a swimmer from an event.

Swim meets start at 7:00 am. You have to arrive well before that because each team has warm-ups. You can expect to arrive at a meet (home or away) around 6:00 am. It can take time to travel to away meets. Make sure that your swimmers go to bed early the night before so they are well rested.

Swimmers must check in with the coach and relay coordinators when they get to the meet. This is especially important for swimmers who are swimming in a relay because if they aren't checked off as being there, they will get scratched (eliminated) from their relay. Swimmers may be told prior to the meet if they are part of a relay team but changes can be made the day of the meet so it is VERY IMPORTANT THAT ALL SWIMMERS CHECK IN WITH THEIR COACH AND, IF THEY ARE ASSIGNED TO A RELAY TEAM, WITH THE RELAY COORDINATOR!

What to bring to a meet:

1. Team suit, team cap, and team t-shirt
2. Goggles (plus an extra pair since they are easily lost or broken!)

3. A Sharpie marker to record event #'s on the kids' arms/hands (this helps the kids remember their events and what they are swimming)
4. Sweats and sweatshirt for those cool early mornings
5. Two or more towels
6. A folding chair per person, or something comfortable to sit on
7. A hat and plenty of sunscreen
8. Games such as cards, coloring books, or things that aren't very valuable
9. Lots of water and/or sports drinks
10. Healthy, low-sugar, snacks or money to buy healthy items at the concessions stand
11. Small bills or change to purchase a heat sheet

Stay hydrated during a meet! It is important that swimmers drink plenty of fluids during a meet. They aren't 'quenched' just because they are in the water! This goes for parents, too. Bring water and drink, drink, drink.

Swimmers are divided into **age groups** based on their age on June 1st:

- 8 and under
- 9-10
- 11-12
- 13-14
- 15-18

In the 8 and under category, swimmers who are 6 and under can compete for ribbons with other 6 and under swimmers.

Each swimmer can swim a maximum of three individual events plus two relays. Because each team is restricted as to the total number of splashes it is allowed, not every swimmer will swim the maximum number of events. The coaches will select the best events for each swimmer and will place the swimmers in relays according to their times at time trials, or their personal best times swam at the meets or other occasions when time splits may be taken by the coaches.

At a swim meet you have events and they are swum in the same order each time. Boys swim before girls; younger swimmers go before older swimmers.

The **events**, in order, are:

- 15-18 freestyle relay
- Medley relays (8 and under swim a mixed boy/girl relay, 12 and under swim a 100 meter relay, 13 and over swim a 200 meter relay)
- Freestyle (8 and under swim 25 meters, 9 and over swim 50 meters)
- 100 meter Individual medley
- Backstroke (same as Freestyle)
- Breaststroke (8 and under swim 25 meters, 9 and over swim 50 meters)
- Butterfly (10 and under swim 25 meters, 11 and over swim 50 meters)
- Freestyle relays (except for the 15-18 year olds who go at the beginning of the meet)

A **heat sheet** is sold at most meets and it lists all the events in order and the swimmers swimming that event. For example, if you look at *Event 15 Girls 11-12 50 SC (short course) meter Freestyle* you will see a numbered list of girls with their name, age, team, and best time. A swimmers personal best swim time is always used to 'seed' the swimmers (the personal best swim time, their "Seed Time" will remain the same for all meets until the swimmer beats their personal best time and then their "seed time" will change).

Heats are formed by the Clerk of Course. PWSL "deck seeds" all their swimmers. This means that swimmers are entered into an event, and then, the morning of the meet, the Clerk of Course manually creates the heats for the swimmers. The Clerk of Course begins with the slowest seed times, plus swimmers who have no time (NT), in to the first heats. The last heat in each event will have the fastest swimmers.

The winner of each heat, regardless of whether it is one of the first or last heats, gets an orange heat ribbon. This does not mean he/she has won the race, but it does mean the child has won the heat, which is very exciting for the swimmer. Once all the heats have been swum, all the times are entered and the event results are eventually posted. A swimmer from any heat can win the race since it's the fastest time that wins. Please remember that this is a parent volunteer run meet and the Clerk of Course does its best to fill all the heats in proper order.

Results are posted at each meet. It can take some time for events to get entered into the computer, but when that is done, they get printed and posted in a central location. You will be told where these results will be posted prior to our home meets. If you are at an away meet and want to see the results, a general rule of thumb is to look for a large group of people all crowded up in a small area; that's probably where the results are posted!

Sometimes a swimmer enters a race without having swum it before. This swimmer will be entered as a NT (no time) and will go in one of the first heats.

At a dual meet (meaning two teams competing) the top twelve finishers earn ribbons. PWSL has a rule that states: "The same team cannot score **points** for more than 6 places." This means that the seventh fastest swimmer on one team can earn a **ribbon**, but he/she might not earn points.

For relays, in a dual meet, the first place team earns 47 points and the second place team earns 32 points. The same team cannot earn both first and second place points. One team might get first and second place, and first and second place ribbons, but the opponent will get the second place points.

Meet results will be posted on the team website www.braemarblasters.com as soon as

they are available.

DQs

A 'DQ' stands for a disqualification. There are stroke and turn officials on deck evaluating each swimmer as they race. When they see a swimmer do something that is not part of the stroke standard, or if they have an illegal start, turn, or finish, it will get turned into the referee, who then turns it over to the scoring and computer team.

Parents are not to challenge the stroke and turn officials during a meet. They are impartial judges whose job is to help the swimmers improve. If you are not sure why your child was disqualified, contact the coach after the meet.

Please don't fret if your child gets a DQ. Getting a DQ can be part of the learning process and can happen to any swimmer, no matter how good they are. No one swimmer is "perfect" all the time. No swimmer should be condemned for getting one. It is very common, especially with the younger or newer swimmers.

Place Ribbons are put in to Family Folders at each Saturday meet. Not every swimmer gets a ribbon. As a swimmer develops skills and improves, he/she will start to receive ribbons. What is most important is that the swimmer is improving.

Along with Heat Ribbon and Place Ribbons there are also **Personal Best Ribbons**. A swimmer will be awarded a Personal Best Ribbon if he/she improves his/her previous best time by any amount. These ribbons will either be distributed at the next Pep Rally or put into the Family Folder.

At several different times throughout the season, PWSL posts the top swimmers/times to date in each event.

Divisionals

PWSL groups teams into a division of teams with similar strength. If you have a really strong season one summer, you will move up into a harder division. It's important that each team is challenged, and this is why this is done and why you don't swim the same teams at Divisionals each year.

Divisionals are the last meet of the season. This is often a tri meet (meaning three

teams) and therefore the scoring is a little different. More swimmers can earn points and ribbons at Divisionals. You can check the PWSL By-Laws on the Braemar Blasters website for details.

A swimmer must have a legal time in an event in order to swim it in the Divisional meet.

Right after the Divisional meet ends, PWSL takes the times from all the divisional meets and enters them into a database. This generates the **PWSL Cyber Meet** which is a league-wide 'virtual' meet and is based on all the kids' swim times achieved at the Divisional meet. Ribbons are given for the Cyber Meet winners through 24 places (this means that the swimmer placed in the top 24 of all swimmers in the PWSL (ie. Prince William County). It is a great accomplishment for a swimmer to place in the top 24 in this cyber meet.

Swim Meet Terminology

Age Groups – division of swimmers by age that determines the events in which they are eligible to participate. PWSL rules specify the following age groups: 8 & Under; 9-10; 11-12; 13-14; 15-18.

Deck - the area around the swimming pool reserved for swimmers, officials, and coaches

Competitive Strokes - the four competitive strokes are (1) freestyle, (2) backstroke, (3) breaststroke, and (4) butterfly. Events are held in all of the competitive strokes at varying distances depending on the age group of the swimmer.

Course - designated distance over which the competition is conducted. The standard is 25 Meters for summer league meets, 50 Meters for Olympic competition, and 25 Yards for regular year-round and college competition. PWSL courses are 25 Meters.

Event - any race or series of races in a given stroke and distance for a specific age group and sex. For example, the following are three different events: 1. Girls 8 & Under 25 meter freestyle; 2. Boys 8 & Under 25 meter freestyle; 3. Girls 9-10 50-meter breaststroke. (See also heats.)

False Start - When a swimmer leaves the starting block before the horn or gun. PWSL rules permit a swimmer one unintentional false start without disqualification. At the referee's discretion, a false start may be disallowed due to unusual circumstances.

Heats - the division of an event in which there are too many swimmers to compete at one time. For example, an event with thirty swimmers in a six-lane pool would require five heats.

Individual Medley (IM) – four laps of the pool swam in the following order: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle.

Lane - a specific area in which the swimmer is assigned to swim (lane 1, lane 2, etc.).

Lane Line - continuous floating markers attached to a line stretched from the starting end to the turning end for the purpose of separating each lane.

Lane Markings - guidelines at the bottom of the pool in the center of each lane, running from the starting end to the turning end.

Leg - (relay) the part of the relay event swum by one swimmer.

Manual Start - the start of a timing device by an individual in response to the same starting signal given to the swimmers.

Mark - (take your) the swimmer's starting position. PWSL rules require at least one foot at the front of the coping when a forward start is required.

Meet - the complete series of events between two or more teams. PWSL meets are conducted on Saturdays, competed between two and four teams, and usually completed in a single day.

Dual Competition (Dual Meet) - competition between two teams.

Tri Competition (Tri Meet) - competition between three teams.

Quad Competition (Quad Meet) - competition between four teams.

On Line - the swimmer's position immediately prior to taking their mark. PWSL rules specify, the swimmer must have both feet placed so their toes are at the back of the coping.

Referee - the official in charge of the meet. The referee is the final authority in all matters concerning the conduct of the meet.

Relay – A race consisting of four legs, each swum by one swimmer. Swimmers age thirteen and older swim two laps each. There are two types of relays: 1) Medley – each swimmer swims a different stroke. The order is backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle. 2) Freestyle – each swimmer swims a freestyle leg.

Seed - distribute the swimmers among the heats and lanes according to their times.

Seeding (Seeded On Deck) - swimmers are called to report to the clerk of course for their event. After scratches are determined, they are seeded in the proper heats.

Split Time - time from a start to some part of the distance within a longer event.

Stroke And Turn Judge - trained, certified swim officials, assigned by and working for the referee to judge swimmers' conformance with the rules for the event being swum. Nonconformance (a.k.a. disqualification or DQ) is reported to the referee. The swimmer is not disqualified until the referee accepts the stroke and turn judge's report.