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Ramona Swim Team

***Athlete and Parent Handbook***

**Welcome to Ramona Bulldog Swimming**.

When a young person becomes a member of the Ramona Swim Team, he/she learns the value of sportsmanship and teamwork. Aquatics programs provide physical, emotional and intellectual skills that will last a lifetime.

**VISION STATEMENT**

Ramona Swim Team will be a world-class swim team where

champions and success are inevitable.

# MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to build responsible healthy citizens of quality character

through an exceptional aquatic program.

We value hard work, superior effort, and dedication. We develop the character traits, technical skills and intense desire necessary for maximum realization of each individual's potential in a team environment. We do this by providing coaching in the following areas: swimming, nutrition, fitness, goal setting, and goal accomplishment.

Our team culture will teach skill acquisition, responsibility, accountability, & earned leadership opportunities for children in our community.

***Swim parents are wonderful when … they know “their lane”***

♦ They work a full day helping to time or officiate at a swim meet, and then want to know where the team party is!

♦ They cheer for athletes who are not their own children.

♦ They drive carpools that would make a NYC cab driver dizzy.

♦ They help set-up or break-down for events that they did not sign-up to help with.

♦ They ask their swimmer after the race “What did your coach say? – What do you think?”

♦ They say, “What’s your next event?” after their 10-year-old just got DQ’d.

♦ They understand that only the four fastest swimmers can be on the “A” relay team.

♦ They emphasize the importance of the “team” and cheering for teammates.

♦ They help new parents “learn the ropes” in a positive way.

♦ They promote team unity.

♦ They applaud everyone’s efforts and comfort those who need it.

♦ They realize that coaches are human and feel terrible when they make a mistake – just like they do.

♦ They know that there is nothing heavier than “great potential.”

♦ They realize that one single swim is not all that important; it’s the process that counts.

♦ They congratulate their child’s teammates for doing a best time because recognition by another adult is very important.

♦ They support their child’s swimming by supporting the organization that brings their child the opportunity to excel.

♦ **They understand coaches can’t communicate with parents before or during practices and schedule a meeting with the coach at THEIR convenience to discuss important issues and concerns.**

♦ They check the website frequently for information on meets and practices and they always read the weekly newsletter emails to know what’s happening and how they can help.

***Organization***

The Ramona Swim Team is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our operating funds are generated from membership dues, fundraising events, and sponsorship. These funds are primarily used for coaching costs, equipment, coaches’ travel expenses and pool water costs. The team budget revenues and expenses are carefully planned to keep dues as low as possible.  Parents may review the team budget and the team governing documents on our website: www.ramonaswimteam.com.

The Executive Board of Directors consists of the five members nominated and elected from our general membership. Elections are held every two years.

***Structure***

**Ramona Swim Team (RST)** is a member of **San Diego-Imperial Swimming** (**SI**). **San Diego-Imperial Swimming** is a **Local Swim Committee (LSC)** of **USA Swimming**. USA Swimming is divided into four **Zones**, Eastern, Southern, Central and Western. San Diego-Imperial Swimming is part of the Western Zone. **San Diego-Imperial Swimming (SI)** is one of the 59 **Local Swimming Committees** (LSC) of USA Swimming. Each LSC has its own set of operating bylaws. A House of Delegates with representation of athletes, coaches, members of the Board of Directors and clubs is responsible for managing the business affairs of each LSC.

***USA Swimming***

USA Swimming is the National Governing Body for competitive swimming in the United States. As the governing body, USA Swimming is responsible for the conduct and administration of swimming in the United States. The main office is located at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado. USA Swimming staff interact with 59 **Local Swimming Committees** (LSC), athletes, coaches and volunteers at all levels to provide a variety of services to over 220,000 registered athletes and over 2,900 swim clubs nationwide.

USA Swimming has the responsibility to formulate rules, implements policies and procedures, conducts national championships, distributes safety and sports medicine information, and insures the development of members clubs and age group swimmers. USA Swimming is responsible for the selection of USA National Teams, which compete at the Olympic and World Championships as well as other international competitions.

Each **Local Swimming Committee (LSC)** is responsible for administering USA Swimming activities in a defined geographical area.

## Coach Information and Background

You can find information on all our coaches, including contact information, background and experience on our website (www.ramonaswimteam.com)

***Coaching Staff Qualifications***

Nothing has a greater influence on the quality of children's sports than the excellence of the coach. The Ramona Swim Team coaching staff consists of professionally trained coaches. They, as member coaches in the American Swim Coaches Association and USA Swimming have access to the most comprehensive training and certification programs for coaches of any sport in the United States. Certified coaches in U.S. Swimming programs possess training and experience in the physiology and psychology of adolescent development. Our coaching staff provides the assurances that the time your children spend in our aquatic program will be quality time.

All of our coaches have completed the following certifications as required by USA Swimming: First Aid and CPR, Safety Training for Swim Coaches, Lifeguard Training, Athlete Protection Training, and Foundations of Coaching 101. Coaches who have been coaches longer than two years have also completed Foundations of Coaching 201 and Rules and Regulations for Coaches. Our coaches are also members of the American Swim Coaches Association and must complete at least one continuing education course per year. All coaches, staff, officials and board members have passed a criminal background check.

## Coaching Philosophy

To help you understand the team's’ philosophy and to make sure your personal values match ours, we have listed the behaviors our coaches will teach, value and reward. If you don’t agree with this philosophy we encourage you to discuss your participation on the team with the coaches prior to joining.

* Quality Counts - It’s not what you do, it’s how you do it.
* **The only way to improve performance is through hard work and consistent attendance.**
* Work on the right things with intensity to improve.
* Technique is more important than training without technique.
* Athletes must participate in all aspects of the team (fundraising, practices, meets, team special events).
* Coaches must communicate HONESTLY with athletes, that means being positive as well as critical of their performance so they can learn ways in which to improve performance and develop self-esteem.
* Athletes and parents must communicate HONESTLY and DIRECTLY with coaches in a timely manner.
* Gossip and disloyalty to the team will tear the team apart and will not be tolerated.
* Coaches will reward hard work, commitment, attendance, and listening by paying extra attention to those athletes.
* FUN is defined as improving and swimming fast or competing with intensity.

***Competition Philosophy***

We engage in a multi-level competition program that, like our training program, attempts to provide challenging, yet success-oriented, competitive situations for athletes of all ages and abilities. The following policies outline our philosophy:

* We emphasize competition with oneself. Winning ribbons, medals, or trophies is not our main goal. Even if the athlete finishes first but has swum poorly in comparison to his/her own past performances, he/she is encouraged to do better. The individual's improvement is our primary objective.
* Sportsmanlike behavior is of equal importance to improved performance. All the coaches teach athletes how to behave like a champion when the athlete has both a "good" and a "bad" competition. Respect for officials, congratulations to other competitors, encouragement to teammates, determined effort, and mature attitudes are examples of behaviors praised and rewarded by the coaching staff.
* An athlete is praised for improving his/her technique. It is the coach's job to offer constructive criticism of an athlete's performance. It is the parent's responsibility to provide love and encouragement that bolster the athlete's confidence along the way.
* Athletes are taught to set realistic, yet challenging, goals for competitions and to relate those goals to practice directing their training efforts.
* Our staff does not see the first-place person or team as the only winner. We'd rather look to see who behaves like a winner. There are certain characteristics of a winner, and every athlete and team, no matter where they place, has the opportunity to emulate those characteristics: concentration, listening skills, and working toward goals.
* Sports are not an end in itself, but a vehicle we use to teach children life skills and how to reach their potential. We use sport as organized play to demonstrate and measure one's abilities. Seen in that light, winning without learning is not our desired intention. In competition, the important measure is not who collected the most medals, or even who improved the most seconds. The real critical measure is who learned the most from the competitive experience.

***Team Groups and Levels***

The RST uses a "progressive" age group program designed to develop the child physically, mentally and emotionally in a systematic fashion. A well-defined, long-term approach of gradually increasing degrees of commitment is essential to reach peak performance levels during an athlete's physiological prime. The emphasis in the early stages of participation must be placed on developing technical skills and a love for the sport. In the later years, a more demanding physical and psychological challenge must be introduced to the training program. In this respect, "too much too soon" is more often the cause of failure to achieve maximum potential in senior level participation than in the reverse situation.

At each level, the goals and objectives are specific and directed toward meeting the needs of the athlete. The long-term goal of total excellence is always in mind. As each child is different, he/she will progress at his/her own rate. The coaching staff recognizes this fact by making team assignments based on an athlete's physical, mental, and emotional level of development.

The RST uses age appropriate as well as skill appropriate groupings. The RST believes it is more important to keep swimmers grouped by age than by ability. There may be times a very advanced swimmer is training with less advanced swimmers to keep them with swimmers of their own age. We have found this is a wonderful opportunity for that swimmer to develop leadership and other character skills that they would not have the opportunity to do if they were moved into a group with much older swimmers.

For detailed information on our groups and the requirements for participation within each group and our fees, please check our website. The most recent training schedules, dates, and times are also posted on our website.

***Swim Meet Fees***

There are additional fees to participate in swim meets. Fees are based on the type of meet and number of entries for the swimmer. The team pays the fees to the hosting team for participation. Once swim meet entries are finalized there are no refunds for any reason, the team has already paid the hosting team the fees and we would not receive the funds back.

Transportation can NOT be provided to meets. Parents are expected to assist by volunteering a portion of their time to either timing or officiating at meets (if you volunteered to be an official). If you can not attend a meet but your swimmer will be, you need to arrange to have another parent help with transportation and your timing assignment.

## Practice and attendance policies

The following guidelines are to inform parents and athletes of the coaches’ policies regarding practice. These policies are designed to provide the best possible practice environment for all.

1. Each training group has specific attendance requirements appropriate for the objectives of that group. As a general rule, the least possible interruption in the training schedule will produce the greatest amount of success. The team does, however, encourage younger athletes (under age 12) to participate in other activities in addition to swimming. The expectation level of the coaches to attend practices increases as athletes move to higher groups and commitment level.
2. For the athletes’ protection, they should arrive at the pool no earlier than 15 minutes prior to their workout time. They should also be picked up no later than 15 minutes after their practice is over. Repeated late pickups may result in fees assessed and a family being asked to leave the team. See Late Pickup Policy on the RST website under documents.
3. Athletes should be ready to swim five minutes prior to the start of their practice.
4. Athletes should notify coaches of a known absence prior to the date they will not be at practice.
5. Plan for your swimmer to stay the entire practice. The last part of practice is very often the most important. Usually, there are also announcements made at the end of each practice.
6. Occasionally, most of a practice group may be attending a meet, or practice may be canceled in which case you will be notified of a practice change or the cancellation.
7. While at the pool, the athletes are the responsibility of the coaching staff. During practice sessions, athletes are never to leave the pool area without coach's permission. Athletes will be partnered up with a same sex peer to use the restroom.
8. **Parents may observe practice but are encouraged to do so from a distance away from the edge of the pool. We ask parents not communicate with any athlete or coach during practice. Coaches must focus solely on the athletes during practice. This is to ensure we have full liability insurance coverage during practices as well as to ensure the athlete is focusing on the coach and not the parent during practice.**
9. Any swimmer who must leave the pool before practice (illness, not feeling well, forgot swimsuit, etc) is over must be picked up IMMEDIATELY. Swimmers are NOT allowed to sit on the deck during practice for any reason.
10. **Bathroom breaks during practice ARE an issue. Children that must use the bathroom during practice must do so by themselves. This leaves them unsupervised in an area that is open to the public. We do NOT feel comfortable letting children use the restroom unaccompanied but a coach is unable to leave the deck during a practice. Please encourage your child to use the bathroom only before practice and after practice and never to use the bathrooms alone.**

## Practice Bags

Athletes need to attend each practice with the required equipment and attitude. Athletes without proper equipment will not receive the full benefit from practice sessions. Encourage athletes to pack be responsible and pack their own bags. Each athlete should bring the following to every practice:

* **Water in a stainless steel or aluminum bottle -** Water will help reduce cramping and improve performance.
* **Practice swimsuit -** All swimsuits must completely cover the buttock and breasts for females and the buttocks for males. Swimsuits must be tight fitting and must be opaque (non-see through). You should plan to replace your practice suit every three months.
* **Caps for long hair -** Caps help reduce the negative effects of chemicals (apply conditioner and cap to hair prior to getting into pool). We do expect swimmers to be able to put on their own cap.
* **Goggles**
* **Towel and clothing appropriate for the weather-** It can quickly get cold in the evenings. Although the water is 82 degrees, once athletes get out of the water, they are exposed too much cooler temperatures in the evening. Athletes need the right clothes to change into after practice.
* **Short Fins for Jr. Bulldog and Bulldog Group swimmers -** Short fins are fantastic teaching aids and strength conditioners. By using fins, athletes can greatly increase leg strength, ankle strength and flexibility while learning correct technique.
* **Team Swimsuit, caps and T-shirts** - Team suits, caps and T-shirts help create a team environment and promote pride during competition. Athletes must wear all team apparel during competitions. We will provide every swimmer with a team cap.
* **Wetsuit** - some small children chose to wear wetsuits in the winter.
* **Bead Holder** – swimmers in the Pre-Team, Novice and Junior Bulldog teams will be receiving beads as incentives for performance. Please send them with something suitable to store them.

## Swim Meet Bag

Encourage athletes to pack be responsible and pack their own bags. Each athlete should bring the following to every MEET:

* **Water in a stainless steel or aluminum bottle -** Water will help reduce cramping and improve performance.
* **Goggles –** Please bring a primary and an extra pair of goggles (they do break)
* **Towel –** For meets you will need to bring one towel per event. Some swimmers also bring an extra for after warmup.
* **Team Swimsuit, caps and T-shirts** - Team suits, caps and T-shirts help create a team environment and promote pride during competition. Athletes must wear all team apparel during competitions.
* We will provide every swimmer with one latex team cap when they join.
* Silicone caps may be purchased once a season. You will receive an email when it is time to order them. Cost is $26 for two personalized caps.
* Additional latex caps can be purchased at meets from the coach at a cost of $5
* **Extra suit**
* **Sweatshirt and other warm clothes**
* **Shoes –** flipflops or sandals in summer and warm boots in winter.
* **Parka or warm jacket** – Team parkas can be ordered once a season.
* **Blanket**
* **Chairs**
* **Snacks**
* **Games/Entertainment**

***Communication***

**Web** –[www.ramonaswimteam.com](http://www.ramonaswimteam.com). Please check out the Information and Documents section for all of our policies, procedures, information on swim meets, time standards, equipment order forms and many other valuable parent information handouts.

**Facebook** – Ramona Swim Team RST @RSTBulldogs

**Old fashioned communication – face to face** – Please do not try to communicate with coaches before or during practice. They must be focused on the swimmers to ensure the safest environment possible. They usually make themselves available for 10 minutes to answer questions, provide information, etc. You may e-mail or text coaches to make an appointment to spend time discussing crucial information.

## PROBLEMS WITH THE COACH?

One of the traditional swim team communication gaps is that some parents seem to feel more comfortable in discussing their disagreements over coaching philosophy with other parents rather than taking them directly to the coach. Not only is the problem never resolved that way, but in fact this approach often results in new problems being created. This behavior will tear the team apart and should not be tolerated by ANY team member or parent. Listed below are some guidelines for a parent raising some difficult issues with a coach:

1. Try to keep foremost in your mind that you and the coach have the best interests of your child at heart. If you trust that the coach's goals match yours, even though his/her approach may be different, you are more likely to enjoy good rapport and a constructive dialogue.
2. Keep in mind that the coach must balance your perspective of what is best for your child with the needs of the team or a training group that can range in size from 10 - 60 members. On occasion, an individual child's interest may need to be subordinate to the interests of the group, but in the long run the benefits of membership in the group compensate for occasional short-term inconvenience.
3. If your child swims for an assistant coach always discuss the matter first with that coach, following the same guidelines and preconceptions noted above. If the assistant coach cannot satisfactorily resolve your concern, then ask that the lead coach join the dialogue as a third party.
4. If another parent uses you as a sounding board for complaints about the coach's performance or policies, listen empathetically, but encourage the other parent to speak directly to the coach. He/she is the only one who can resolve the problem.
5. If your problem can not be resolved with the coach, THEN go to the board president and ask for a meeting to resolve the issue.
6. **AT NO TIME SHOULD ANYONE OTHER THAN THE COACHES OR BOARD PRESIDENT BE TOLD OF PROBLEMS OR CONCERNS. PLEASE BE RESPECTFUL AND KEEP CONCERNS AND PROBLEMS CONFIDENTIAL AND WITH THE PARTIES INVOLVED.**

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***Recognition and Awards***

Leadership and achievement should be recognized and rewarded. KUDOS is a program that allows swimmers to track their own performance while earning points they can redeem for prizes. After each achievement, swimmers collect kudos in the form of colored beads. Beads are exchanged for prizes at the end of the season for a variety of swimming items.

Each bead represents the following amount:

White – 2 point Black – 1 point

Purple or Red – 5 points Silver - 15 points

Gold - 25 points Blue or Green- 50 points

Paw - 100 Points

Commitment - one black bead for each practice attended, one white for bringing and drinking from their water bottle

Dedication - Purple or Red beads for outstanding effort during practice.

Perseverance - Gold bead for making every interval of a tough set.

Leadership and Sportsmanship – Blue or Green bead for an outstanding display of leadership or sportsmanship above the normal expectation.

Performance – one purple or red bead for each best time achieved in a swim meet, one gold bead for each “A” time, one silver bead for each “B” time, one blue bead for qualifying for Junior Olympics, one Paw bead for swimmer of the meet.

*Swimmers are responsible for collecting and keeping the KUDOS in a safe place until the end of the season. Lost KUDOS will not be replaced.*