**Tosa Aquatic Club Parent Handbook**



**Go Swordfish!**

**Welcome to Tosa Aquatic Club!**

We’re delighted to have your swimmer as a member of the Tosa Aquatic Club. It’s a great place to develop fitness and swimming skills. More importantly, participating on an athletic team builds character, good sportsmanship and friendships that will last a lifetime. Our swimmers have fun too!

If you’re new to competitive swimming, you may have lots of questions about practices, meets and terminology that are unique to our sport. You’re probably also wondering how our team communicates, operates and involves parents. We hope this parent handbook will answer those questions. If not, the volunteer parent board of the Tosa Aquatic Club invites you to give any of us a call to talk over your questions or concerns. Many of our kids have been swimming with the team for years. The most recent board contact list is available online.

**Give us a call. We look forward to getting to know all of you!**

**Tosa Aquatic Club Mission Statement:**

To build lifelong skills, develop character, integrity, and pride in young

people through competitive swimming.

**WEBSITE: tosaswordfish.org**

**Parent Board**

The Tosa Aquatic Club Parent Board consists of four elected parent volunteers. We meet monthly to discuss the state of the team, upcoming social events and the budget and/or items that are needed. We always welcome board-meeting attendance from the general membership. Please don’t hesitate to get involved!

**Our Coaching Staff**

All Swordfish coaches must meet the high criteria set forth by USA Swimming. Each coach is a certified lifeguard and has completed the safety training for swim coaches course. In addition, they are first aid and CPR trained. Coaches must also pass exams that test the educational component of training young athletes. Exercise physiology, psychology, nutrition, physical development and rules and regulations of USA swimming are some of the topics the coaches are required to understand. All the above requirements must be kept up to date for a swim coach to remain in good standing with USA Swimming and the Tosa Aquatic Club.

Please refer to the Swordfish website for coaches’ bio information. Do not hesitate to contact the coaches with any questions you may have. The coaches are here to help you!

**Parental Involvement**

We cannot emphasize enough how important parental involvement is to the operation of the club. Our coaches are part-time employees whose responsibilities are to coach and nurture our swimmers. The coaches are in charge at practices and meets. Parents must fill in the gaps at all other times to keep things running smoothly.

Parents are responsible for the fund-raising efforts and the social outlets for the team. If you have any ideas, please contact one of the Board members and share it with us. We are always looking for fresh ideas to keep our swim team fun and exciting. We generally post job signups online for our intrasquad meets and social events (attached to the actual event advertisement). In this way, everyone can contribute to putting on these events for the entire Swordfish family. Watch your e-mail and visit our website for opportunities to volunteer. All the volunteer jobs are fun and a great opportunity to get to know other swim parents.

**Safety and Behavior**

The Swordfish Parent board and coaches want all Swordfish activities (practices, meets and social activities) to be safe for swimmers coaches, families, and spectators. To this end, we ask that all members follow the rules of the facility being used, listen to coaches, and follow directions.

Practice is not a time for fooling around. Swimming can be one of the safest sports available to youth. Yet, just one incident can turn it into a dangerous or deadly activity. Swimmers must act responsibly for their own safety and for the safety of others.

Disruptive behavior and not following protocol set forth by the coaches are detrimental to the swimmer and the team. Coaches receive the support of the Swordfish Parent Board in benching swimmers during practice. If swimmers are benched for the evening, they are not allowed to leave practice early. They must participate in any cleanup of equipment their group is responsible for, and they must stay until their group is dismissed.

The Tosa Aquatic Club has a zero-tolerance policy for bullying or harassment of any kind. The Wauwatosa Recreation Department reserves the right to terminate the membership of any individual whose behavior demonstrates bullying and/or harassment. If bullying is suspected, please contact any of the coaches or members of the parent board as soon as possible.

All Tosa Swordfish swimmers are expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship and act as appropriate ambassadors for the club. They should act as role models for other swimmers when wearing the Tosa Swordfish logo.

**Team Communication**

Communication between swimmers, coaches, parents and the parent board is essential for the smooth functioning of the team. Please note that because of the size of our club, we rely on an e-mail list and our website to communicate important information, including last minute changes regarding practices and meets. We also cover important topics in our monthly parent board meetings. Upcoming meeting notices will be posted on the website.

**It is very important that you give the parent board and the head coach the e-mail address you check most often. Please also let us know if there are any changes to your address.**

If you stop receiving email communication, please let the head coach know as soon as possible. Usually, weekly communication is sent by Sunday evening, unless otherwise indicated.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

***What strokes will my swimmer be swimming?***

All swimmers will perfect four basic strokes: freestyle (what our gym teacher called “front crawl”), backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly. Most of the time, you’ll hear the coaches and swimmers refer to the strokes as free, back, breast and fly. At swim meets, your swimmer may be asked to swim any of these strokes in individual events, or all four strokes in a single event called the Individual Medley, or IM. Swim meets generally include freestyle relays and medley relays, both of which require four swimmers on each relay team.

***What are the groups and what do they cover?***

All Tosa Swordfish are assigned to a group corresponding to their skill level. Please reference below chart, which is also located on the team website under Club Information – Practice Groups.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | Description/ Focus | Age Groups | Requirements for joining | Weekly Practice Requirements | Meet Requirements |
| **Iron** | Stroke introductions, body position, streamlining, kicking, swimming jargon | 7-12 | Unaided 25 front crawl, 25 backstroke, 25 flutter kick | 2-3 | Intrasquad meets and 1 USA  meet near the end of the  season |
| **Bronze** | Stroke intros continue, starts and turns, endurance, reading clocks | 7-12 | Nonstop 100 free, 50 backstroke, 25 breaststroke | 3 or more | At least 2 per season |
| **Silver** | Stroke refinement, training for endurance and speed | 8-12 | Nonstop 200 free, 100 IM, all turns | 3 or more | At least 3 per season |
| **Gold** | Stroke refinement, training for competition | 8-12 | Highly competitive, near or at 10U state qualifying times | 3 or more | Competes every 3-4 week |
| **Junior** | Stroke refinement, training for endurance and speed | 11-15 | Competency in all  competitive strokes | 3 or more | Competes every 3-4 weeks |
| **Junior+** | Stroke mastery and refinement, training competition, race strategy | 11-15 | Highly competitive, near or at 13-14 state qualifying times | 3 or more | Competes every 2-3 weeks  ~2 per month |
| **Senior** | Stroke maintenance and refinement, fitness and strength preparation for high school competition | 14 and older | Capable of training at a JV high school level | 3 or more | Competes every 3-4 weeks |
| **Senior+** | Stroke mastery and maintenance, year-round training for high level competition | 14 and older | Highly competitive, near or at 15+ state qualifying times | 4 or more | Competes every 2-3 weeks  ~2 per month |

***How often should my swimmer come to practice***?

We do recommend regular attendance at practice to build physical conditioning and allow adequate exposure to good swim technique. Swimmers should arrive on time and be in the water ready to practice.

Coaches plan their practices assuming that swimmers will be there throughout the week in order to cover all the skill necessary to become a strong competitive swimmer.

In general, swimmer should plan on attending practices 75% of the times offered. For Advanced Gold and Senior swimmers, this is the minimum attendance requirement to remain in the group.

***What should my swimmer bring to swim practice?***

At the beginning of each practice, your swimmer should be on deck and ready to go with their suit, goggles, cap and a water bottle (recommended).

Their swim bag should always contain:

* An extra towel
* An extra training suit
* Spare googles
* Spare swim cap
* Items for showering and clothes to go home in

You may see many of the older swimmers layering their suits. This is to create “drag” using an old, stretchy suit worn over their training suits to increase the amount of drag created in the water, thus building greater strength and endurance.

***What are the seasons for competitive swimming?***

Swimming is essentially a year-round sport. USA Swimming recognizes two seasons within each calendar year. The season beginning around Labor Day and ending mid-March is referred to as the “short course” swim season where practices are indoors and all meets are at 25-yard pools (i.e. “short course pool”).

The second season is the long course swim season, which generally begins in April and ends in early August. The long course season uses both indoor pools and Tosa Pool at Hoyt Park for practices. Meet events are recognized as “meter” swims. More advanced swimmers may practice twice a day (or, “two-a-days”) in the summer. Many meets during the summer season are held at 50-meter pools – or, “Olympic” pools.

***What is a USA Swimming Meet?***

By its very name, the purpose of competitive swimming is to compete and that means attending swim meets! Individuals seeking membership on Tosa Aquatic Club should understand that we are a competitive team. Swimmers should be willing to participate in meets.

For many new swimmers, taking the first step and going to their first competitive meet is a big undertaking. Or coaches understand this and are happy to share information about each meet and what meets may be good for beginners.

When you are notified of meets, you should read the meet announcement carefully and ask your child’s coach whether that meet would be appropriate for your swimmer. There are appropriate and inappropriate meets for all swimmers.

**NOTE**: If a swimmer is attending a meet, that swimmer must have a parent or guardian in attendance; it is not acceptable to drop off a swimmer at a meet and leave him or her unsupervised.

The Swordfish participate in the following types of meets:

* **Intrasquad meets**: a practice meet for Tosa swimmers in the iron, bronze and silver groups. Swimmers in advanced silver, gold, advanced gold and platinum groups sign up to help run the meet.
* **Invitation meets**: local teams compete against each other. Most are open to all TOSA swimmers but there are potential meets that require specific time standards.
* **Championship meets**: swimmers must qualify based on time standards; e.g. State Championship Meets, Zones, etc.

USA Swimming trained officials watch each swimmer to ensure that they are using correct technique and legal turns in each event. USA Swimming meets may last one to three days; you can choose to have your swimmer participate on one day or all three.

***All Tosa Swordfish are required to register with USA Swimming as part of their membership with Tosa Aquatic Club. This is an insurance mandate by our governing body, USA Swimming.***

The USA Swimming registration costs $70 per swimmer for a one-year membership, which allows your swimmer to compete in meets. Registration also entitles your swimmer to a one-year subscription to SPLASH, an entertaining swimming magazine published by USA Swimming.

***Fees are subject to change by USA Swimming without notice.***

***When can my child participate in a swim meet?***

When your swimmer’s coach feels your child is ready to compete and your swimmer is comfortable, we strongly encourage participation in meets. The meet schedule is posted online. This schedule breaks down which groups should attend which meets. Signups for individual meets are announced throughout the season (usually via email).

***Do swimmers compete against kids their own age?***

Events at meets are generally divided by gender and age categories. The five main age categories are:

* 8 & Under
* 9 & 10
* 11 & 12
* 13 & 14
* 15 & Over, sometimes called “Senior”.

***Does it cost anything to participate in a swim meet***?

Yes. Plan to spend about $25 for your swimmer to enter a USA Swim meet. Each swim club that hosts a USA meet sets fees for each event as well as a splash fee (meet entry fee). These fees range from $3.00 to $5.00 per event.

You can sign your swimmer up for meets on our website. Tosa Aquatic Club enters our team as a whole and pays the associated fees. An invoice will then be attached to your Team Unify account, reflecting the meet fees your swimmer has incurred. If your swimmer participates on a relay team, you will be charged one-quarter of the total relay fee (usually $10 - $12).

You must have a credit/debit card linked or keep money in your Team Unify account to cover the charges of the meet for which you register. Otherwise, TOSA will not be able to register you for future meets.

***How do I sign up for the swim meet?***

All meet sign-ups are through our website. For a detailed tutorial, please log into your account and go under “My account” à “My Tutorials”.

For the Meet Entry Tutorial, look for “Meet Signup 101”.

Here are the steps you need to complete for meet signup:

1. Commit to a meet you are interested in before the reservation deadline – which is usually before the start of the season or shortly after. Please complete the “Notes” section and let the coaches and meet coordinator know which days you will be participating in a how many events you wish to swim for ALL meets.
2. About 2-3 weeks before the meet you will receive an email letting you know the deadline to choose which events your swimmer wishes to participate. If you have any questions, please contact your swimmer’s coach.
3. If the events are not chosen by the due date and you have committed to the meet, the head coach will choose events and you will be responsible for the meet fees. (This is why the “notes” section is so important.)

***I signed up, but I can’t make the meet, what do I do now?***

If you find out that you cannot attend a meet a few weeks in advance (before entries are due), alert the head coach or meet coordinator as soon as possible. We can attempt to “sell” your swims to other swimmers on the team, that way you don’t lose money. We cannot guarantee that we will find another swimmer, however, we will do our best.

If an emergency arises the day of the meet and you are unable to attend, please inform a coach as soon as possible so that relay teams can be adjusted.

**Swimmers that do not swim in a meet they previously committed to will be charged $10 to their account to cover some of the lost costs.**

***How do I sign up my swimmer for a relay?***

Coaches sign swimmers up for relays. Relays consist of four swimmers of the same gender and age group. The coach will determine the swimmers for each relay, submit the entry form, and the club will pay the fee. When swimmers are chosen for relays, they need to plan to stay for the event.

Swimmers who do not stay for relays may be excluded from subsequent team relays. It is very difficult for the other swimmers when one leg of their relay doesn’t’ show or departs from the meet, leaving them unable to participate. Relays are offered in distances of 100, 200 and 400 yards and meters. USA Swimming teams will offer both freestyle relays and medley relays, in which each swimmer is assigned a stroke as his or her leg of the relay. Relays can be very exciting for both the swimmers and the spectators.

***It’s the day of the meet – Now what do I do?***

1. Find out where you’re going; the meet sheets are posted online.
2. Arrive at least 15 minute before the scheduled warm-up time.
3. Parents: Purchase a meet program, or “heat sheet”. Help your swimmer find their events and create their swim tattoo.
4. See “Event/Heat/Lane Stroke tattoo.”
5. Swimmers: find your coach on deck. Swimmers can bring robes, iPod, etc. to help them relax, but stay with your team on deck! Do not sit with your parents – especially with a wet suit!
6. Warm up with your team, dry off and get ready to race.

Swimmers are occasionally disqualified (DQ-ed) during their event. Reasons for a DQ range from false starts to performing strokes, turns or finishes incorrectly. DQs are judgments made by the USA Swimming officials. The official will explain to the coach the reason for the DQ. The coach will reinforce this judgment. Performing the skills of swimming in accordance with USA Swimming standards is part of the discipline process that makes swimming a character-building sport.

***What should parents bring to a swim meet?***

Wear comfortable clothes designed for very warm conditions. Some pools are downright steamy, so it’s not unusual to see swim parents wearing shorts in the middle of January.

Parents will want to bring:

* Money for admission (usually $8-$10 for admittance and a “heat sheet”
* A highlighter to highlight your swimmer’s events in the heat sheet
* Snacks or money to purchase snacks and meals
* Books, music and anything else you need to stay entertained for several hours

**A note about meet etiquette**

The spectators’ section for most pools can become very crowded! Please only bring essential items that can be stored under your legs or in a small area next to you on the bleachers.

* Leave large coats in the car. You won’t need them at the pool!
* It is OK to save a spot or two for other parents you KNOW plan to attend the meet on time.
* Saving large areas of the bleachers for other parents or extended family members that are not present at the start of the meet will become awkward – especially if other parents do not have a place to sit at all!
* Stadium seats can make things more comfortable for you, but they do reduce the amount of legroom.
* Wear your TOSA spirit wear and help our team be known for its excellent meet etiquette!

***What should my swimmer bring to a swim meet?***

Even with the steamy environment, swimmers can get cold sitting in a wet swimsuit between events. Keeping muscles warm and limber between events is very important.

Make sure your swimmer packs:

* Clothes to keep warm between events: sweatpants or PJ bottoms, sweatshirt and t-shirt.
* At least 2 towels
* An extra pair of goggles
* An extra swim cap
* A black Sharpie marker
* Dry clothes for the ride home (don’t forget underwear!)
* Healthy snacks, such as fruits and veggies, energy bars, pasta, as well as water or sports drinks (no carbonated beverages!)
* Books, games, music and anything else they need to stay entertained for several hours
* Pillow and sleeping bag to rest between events at full-day meets

\*\*\*\**Packing your swim bag the night before a meet goes a long way to reduce stress and anxiety the morning of the meet*.

***Are there team suits?***

No. Girls simply wear an all-black or all-red one-piece swimsuit and boys wear all-black jammers. These can be purchased through SwimOutlet.com. If you use the link through our website, our team will receive money back.

Because suits deteriorate so quickly from chlorine exposure, we recommend saving the competition suit for meets and special occasions.

All swimmers, girls and boys, are required to wear the TOSA swim caps available through our Apparel Coordinator and usually available for purchase at our intrasquad meets.

***Why does my swimmer have writing all over his/her leg?***

A typical swim meet can have 80 or more events, and several heats for reach event. In addition, there are usually 6 to 10 lanes in which to swim. It is each swimmer’s responsibility to get to the right event, in the right place and in the right order. Most swimmers find it helpful to create a grid on their leg (or arm) that indicates the event, heat, lane and stroke for each event in which they are swimming. This is called a “meet tattoo.”

***How do I know how my swimmer finished in each race?***

Because there are numerous heats for each event – and heats move very quickly – it may not be clear from the scoreboard in what place your swimmer finished. All USA meets post the results by gender and event in a prominent place (usually the hall outside the pool). They also post a message about how many ribbons will be awarded. At some large meets, ribbons are awarded to those finishing as low as 16th place.

There are also certain apps that can be used like Deck PassPlus and MeetMobile, but some do have a charge for using.

If your swimmer has been awarded a ribbon, it is your family’s responsibility to pick up the ribbon at the awards table by the end of the day (unless otherwise indicated in meet information sheets). Once your swimmer starts earning a lot of ribbons, the volunteers at the awards table will need to know the event number and lace for each ribbon your swimmer receives.

***What do the A-B-C- letters mean on the results sheets?***

Some meets categorize swimmers using time classifications that are established by USA Swimming, ranging from “C” (for novice swimmers) up to “AAAA” (the fastest swimmers in national and international level meets). These are also known as “Motivational Times.”

It is often that the ultimate goal of the athletes is to reach STATE-qualifying times. This is indeed a great accomplishment in a season, but should not be the only standard by which progress and success is gauged. Coaches are more concerned with whether or not the swimmer executes the race correctly – not just fast. To see the time standards and cutoffs, visit our website – look under the “For Athletes” tab.