

Helpful information for New Swimmers and Parents

HOME SWIM MEETS

There are a few things which are helpful to know before attending a meet. This article primarily applies to our home meets but most of the items will apply to any meet.

Ideally, arrive at meets 10-15 minutes before warm-ups begin. There is a check-in table just inside the rotating door by the locker rooms. When you check in, you will be given a list of your child's events, a psych sheet for the meet, and you will sign up for your volunteer assignment.

A psych sheet, is a list of each event and all swimmers who have registered for that event. It does not tell you what heat and lane you swim in. These are posted later. At meets at other pools there is usually a fee for the psych sheet.

Timing assignments are made as you check in at the meet and are made on a first come basis. If you arrive late you will need to fill whatever positions are left.

After checking in, set up an area to 'hang out' at while at the meet. You may want to bring chairs, blankets, pillows, water or Gatorade, food, books, GameBoy etc. Most meets offer some type of concessions for your convenience. If younger children are coming to the meet, they will need something to do. Meets can be very long and boring for them. Make sure you have arranged for someone to watch them during your timing assignment. Some people like to make swim meets a family affair; others prefer to hire a baby sitter and not worry about little ones.

Swimmers should always check in with their coach so that the coach knows they have arrived at the meet.

When warming up for meets, make sure your swimmer knows to enter the water feet first. About 30 minutes into the warm up they will open a couple of lanes to practice starts.

The heat and lane assignments for each event will be posted before the event. They usually are posted by the equipment area at the end of the pool by the bleachers.

Before each event, your swimmer should check in with their coach and report their heat and lane assignment. After the event, swimmers should check in with the coach again to get feedback about their race. This is an important habit for swimmers to get into. The coaches cannot watch their race and help them if they don't know when they are swimming. Most swimmers like to cool down for a few minutes after a hard race. Each meet will have a warm-up and cool-down area.

During starts at any meet, flash photography is not permitted. The timing system uses a horn and a strobe light as a starting signal. A flash from a camera can confuse the swimmers and causes false starts resulting in disqualification. Photos may be taken any time after the start of a race. It is also important for spectators to be quiet during the start. When your swimmer is racing you can stand at the end or side of the pool and cheer. Make sure you stay behind the officials or move when they approach. Please stay away from the starting area as it interferes with the timers ability to see the strobe starting the race.

During the meet it is the swimmers responsibility to pay attention to what event is being swum. The psych sheet will help you know when it is getting close to your event. If you miss an event, you are automatically disqualified from the next event that you are

entered in. In major meets if you miss an event you may be disqualified from the entire meet. Younger swimmers will need help keeping track of the progress of the meet.

At the completion of your swimmers events *and your timing assignment*, you may leave the meet. You do not need to stay to the end of the meet unless you have the last shift timing. When leaving a meet, please clean up the area around you and throw all garbage away.

Hopefully these are a few tips to help meets run smoother and help your swimmer have the best experience possible.

TIMER TIPS

If you are timing the first shift of a meet, go to your assigned lane about 10 minutes before the meet should start. Make sure you are in the correct lane. At away meets, our team is assigned a particular lane to staff.

You will receive a clipboard, pencil and a stopwatch. Throughout the meet a runner will bring you a stack of papers, one paper per event. These papers are for recording your stop watch times. They have printed on them the event number and name and the names of the swimmers assigned to your lane. Some heats you will not have a swimmer in your lane.

At the start of each race a strobe light will flash and a horn sound. Start your stop watch by the strobe light. This is especially important if the starter is at the opposite end of the pool. Light travels faster than sound so always start your watch with the strobe not the horn. A head timer starts 2 extra stop watches for each race. If you were unable to start your watch at the correct time, raise your hand and the head timer will bring you a running watch.

As the swimmer in your lane approaches the wall for the final time, lean over slightly so you can clearly see when their hand touches the wall. Each timer needs to pick up the timing system button which is laying at the end of each lane (at some pools there will only be one). As the swimmer touches the wall stop the watch and press the button at the same time. Quickly write down the times from both watches. Then clear your watch and prepare for the start of the next heat. In some meets the starter will have the swimmers stay in the water until the next heat has begun.

At the end of each event, move the paper for that event to the side. A runner will come by and collect the paper with the recorded times.

It can be helpful if you check the name of the swimmer before they get on the blocks and make sure it matches with the name on your paper.

At long meets timers are often served drinks, snacks or even a meal. At our home meets when we are sharing timing shifts of 1 ½ to 2 hours we usually do not serve the timers.

If you have never timed before – relax. It really is easy and there are lots of others around you who can help answer any questions.

Timing is a great way to watch a meet! Front row seats and food! At some meets, the timers are the only parents allowed on the pool deck. Your swimmer will love having you right there.