

# Swim Meet 101

Your first swim meet can be a nerve-racking experience but it doesn't have to be! In fact, it should be a lot of fun. Get into a positive mindset and then try these strategies for maximizing the fun quotient of your first competitive experience.

## **The Day(s) Before the meet**

### **Check the Weather**

Our meets happen first thing in the morning on Saturdays. Bring extra towels since the temperature is usually a little cool at the beginning of the meet. Usually, the hot summer will descend on us by the middle of the meet. Make sure that you have sun screen! Many people bring shade structures for some relief.

The good news is that we rarely get inclement weather in the Denver area during the mornings in June and July. That being said, occasionally we get exceptions. Often times we will continue the meet in light, or intermittent rain. If the weather is too cold or too rainy, we might have to cancel the meet, but don't assume that the cancellation will happen.

### **Print Out a Meet Program (aka "Heat Sheet")**

We email the meet program to the entire team prior to the day of the meet. Go over the program as soon as you get it to familiarize yourself with who is swimming what events. Print it out and bring it with you to the meet. There might be some changes that happen the morning of the meet, but most of the program should be accurate. If you don't understand something in the program, or have questions, don't hesitate ask any of the many veteran swim parents.

### **Pack the Day/Night Before**

You will usually be leaving your house before 7:00AM for the meet. It's too stressful to get children out of bed, fed and dressed while trying to pack. You'll be much happier if the car is ready to go. The following is a list of some suggested things to pack:

- Extra towels - it's hard to have too many.
- Sunscreen
- Goggles - at least 2 per child since they get lost or broken sometimes.
- Swim caps - it doesn't hurt to have an extra, but not required.
- Water bottles
- Brimmed hats or visors
- Sunglasses
- Cash for concessions
- Meet program/heat sheet
- Sharpie
- Highlighter marker
- Pencil or pen
- Folding chairs - most pools have a limited supply of chairs.
- Shade structure - not required, but very nice to have

## **The Day of the meet**

### **Bring Some Entertainment**

There's a lot of sitting and waiting for your races at most meets. Bring a game (card games like Uno work well), some music with headphones, something to read, and some people you like to hang out with. For some athletes, the down time between races is the best part of swim meets!

### **Review the Meet Process with Athletes**

Soon after you get settled at the meet, talk to your athlete(s) about what to expect.

Watch and listen for the current heating range of event numbers. When your swimmer's event number comes up, get them to the heating area with their swim cap on and goggles in hand.

The athletes check in with the heating volunteers. Some pools are "carded meets", which means that they will be given a timing card with their name, event, heat and lane. Blue cards for boys, pink for girls, and green for relays.

The volunteers in heating will guide them to the correct chairs that lead to the correct lane.

They will move up through the ranks of benches and chairs until they get to the starting blocks for their race.

They should have their caps and goggles on by the time that they reach the last chair before the blocks.

If they have cards, they give the cards to the timers and stand behind the block.

The Deck Referee will blow the whistle several times in quick succession. This will mean "swimmers be alert. You will be getting on the blocks soon."

The Deck Referee will blow one long whistle. This will mean "swimmers climb on to the blocks." The starter will have control of the race at that point. NOTE: If the race is a backstroke event, they will get into the water instead of climbing onto the blocks. The Referee will blow the whistle once more when they are all in the water to let them know to grab onto the backstroke start bars and get ready to race.

The starter will speak into the microphone. He might give some additional instructions to the athletes.

When the Starter feels that all of the swimmers are ready, he/she will say "Take your mark."

The starter will sound the horn and the race begins.

Swimmers remain in the water at the end of the race. (except for 25 yard/meter events, relays and backstroke events)

Right after the next race begins, they need to get out of the water.

### **My Kid is in a Relay. What Does That Mean?**

There are two different types of relays and a swimmer may be on one or both.

- 1) The **Freestyle Relay** is comprised of four swimmers all swimming the freestyle stroke. These relays occur at the end of the meet.

- 2) The **Medley Relay** is also comprised of four swimmers with each one swimming one of the four types of strokes in this order: **backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle**. These relays occur toward the beginning of the meet right after the older kids 200 Freestyle.

### **Get to Know the H2Os**

The H2Os are our teenage helpers for the little kids. They will help you get your children through heating, and on to the blocks. They will also help you track down kids for you, so feel free to ask them.

### **Volunteer!**

The meets are much more enjoyable for parents when you have something to do.