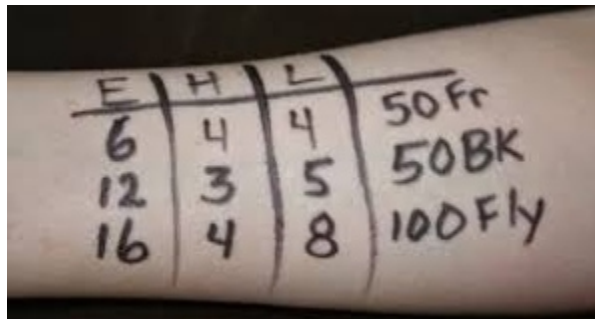


A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SWIM MEETS

Planning for the Meet:

1. Bring cash. You may be charged admission as a spectator (usually under \$5 per head); you may not. It depends on the meet. Most meets also sell "heat sheets", which are a kind of program for the swim meet. More on that later. It can be helpful to purchase one, especially for your first meet, so you can decide whether or not it's useful to you for future meets.
2. Bring a pen to write times on the heat sheet and a highlighter. More on what to do with the pen and highlighter later.
3. Spectator seating is usually in bleachers. If you want or need some cushioning or back support, you'll want to plan to bring yourself a stadium seat.
4. Don't plan for your swimmer to sit with you. Swimmers belong with their teams.
5. Don't plan on going over to where the team is sitting to visit with your swimmer. Only coaches, timers, officials, and swimmers are allowed "on deck" at meets.
6. If you want to take pictures, keep in mind that the flash from cameras interferes with the timing equipment, so flash photography is not permitted at starts.
7. Swimmers need to stay hydrated and fed during meets. Pack protein and high quality carbs. Those bodies are working hard. Water bottles are necessary.
8. You may be walking on wet tile floors; wear shoes that will help keep you surefooted. Keep that in mind for your swimmer, too.
9. It can get pretty warm and humid at meets. Wearing layers is a good idea. Even better! Wear layers in our team's colors, yellow and black! Go ZAGS! Your swimmer needs to have warm clothes to wear between their swim events, too. Don't forget a towel or two!
10. Be prepared for down time between events. If you have children who need to be entertained, you may wish to have sleeping bags or blankets for them to sit on out in the hallway, behind the bleachers, etc. Plan for needing more entertainment than you think.
11. Swimmers don't have heat sheets, so how do they keep track of what events they are swimming in? By writing on themselves, of course. Each swimmer will need to have a grid on either their arm or leg showing the event number, the heat number, the lane number, and the stroke/distance. See below. An event sheet will be sent out before the meet. **If possible, please show up to the meet with the event name and number already written with Sharpie on your swimmer's arm or leg.** This will save coaches a lot of time because we will only have to fill out the heat and lane.
12. Let the coach know if you can't make the meet after you've signed up.



Getting Ready for the Meet to Start

1. Be on time. The coach will send out an email a couple of days before the meet with warm-up times. Please plan to arrive 15-minutes before the scheduled warm-up time. This is so your swimmer will have time to mark their events, find a place for their bag, and get ready to get in the water. The coach will decide if the swimmers will be swimming the entire warm-up period or for a shorter time; whatever the decision by the coach, swimmers should be available to swim when warm-ups begin.
2. Most invitational meets (not dual meets) are generally divided into morning and afternoon sessions. Morning start times are much more dependable than afternoon start times. Afternoon starts often depend on when the morning session wraps up. Be prepared to be flexible if your swimmer is participating in the afternoon session. Also be prepared to be a bit flexible about when the morning session ends... sometimes things can run late.
3. OK, back to that heat sheet and the highlighter. Heat sheets list the individual swim events, the participants names, the heat, what lane each swimmer will occupy, and if the swimmer has a history of swimming that event, what his/her previous best time swimming in that event was. To keep track of when your kid is swimming, going through the heat sheet and highlighting each of your swimmer's events can be useful.

During the Meet:

1. Record the time your swimmer achieves in each of the events they swim on the heat sheet. Your swimmer can use this information to assess their performance in the meet. The scoreboard will show lane number and time. There is also a mobile app (Meet Mobile) which records all meet results. You can search by swimmer name to view all past meets and events.
2. Be prepared for hearing that your swimmer has "DQ'd" or disqualified. The people you see walking around the pool with clipboards wearing white shirts and navy bottoms are swim meet officials. One of their jobs is to make sure the swimmers follow the rules, such as swimmers only are to use dolphin kicks during butterfly events, that the swimmers actually use the correct stroke (i.e. no freestyle during a breast stroke event); the proper turns are performed at the end of the pool, etc. When a swimmer is disqualified, this means the swimmer is not eligible for an award in that event, and their time is not recorded. Usually an official will tell them when they get out of the water and try to explain what happened. Hearing that they have DQ'd can be really tough news, especially for a new swimmer. However, this is very common! Almost every competitive swimmer will get DQ'd at some point in their swim career. Coaches will remind all swimmers that this is a chance to learn what we need to work on in practice.
3. Do cheer on your swimmer and their teammates! Your swimmer probably can't hear you, but a high-energy crowd keeps the team's energy pumping, which is a good thing. Remember, swimmers need to be able to hear at the start though, so shhh at the start, then go ahead and show them your support!
4. At each meet, there are different awards structures. All finishers above a certain place may receive ribbons; those in the top may get medals.