



## Swim Team Survival Guide

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### **WELCOME TO UPPER COUNTY!**

*On behalf of the Upper County Dolphins Swim Team, we'd like to welcome you to our Team. Summer swim team can be one of the most exciting, exhilarating and, yes, exhausting, activities that your family can experience together. Swim team is truly a family affair, as there's much more to it than swimming laps. This handbook is meant to introduce you to all that goes on between the meets and behind the scenes.*

Every swimmer's parent has experienced that first day of swim practice or that first swim meet where they wonder "why am I here and what's going on?" We've all been there before and will be glad to enlighten you in your quest to understand the world of Summer Swimming. Although this pamphlet is explicitly written for use by parents of new Upper County Dolphins swimmers, the fundamentals are true for any area swim team. It will (hopefully) provide some information, which will help you understand what is happening while your child swims. Please remember that the only stupid question is the one, which is unasked. Your Team Reps, Coaches and fellow swim parents all want you to understand and enjoy our summer swim program. Again, welcome to the Upper County Dolphins Swim Team. We're glad to have you with us!!!!

### About the Swim Team

**Having fun is the most important thing we can do.** Most of the kids don't care if we're in a top division or a bottom division. We'd all like to be division champions, which usually means going undefeated, but only one team out of five can usually claim this honor. Personal development is what is most important and for a swimmer that means improving your times. We believe that by establishing a healthy environment that encourages the kids to do their best recognizes their contributions and having fun for the entire family, that we will have met our goals.

We've all taken our kids to soccer, baseball or other sports and probably stood by as two or three parents ran the team. **Swimming isn't like that.** You can't run a swim program without parental help. In fact, it takes over 50 parents to time, officiate and score a typical swim meet, and that doesn't include pool set up and tear down or running the snack bar or non-swimming team activities.

Swimming is unique in that there's a place on the team for anyone eighteen or younger who can swim across the pool without assistance. How many other sports have kids five years old to eighteen years old and their parents on the same team participating in the same competition? It's wonderful!

### Expectations

Although swimming is considered an individual sport, our summer league is structured with an emphasis on the team. Any team is only as good as the people on it therefore our expectations are simple:

1. Have fun!!!
2. Do your best- it's a lot more important than being the best.

3. Pay attention to the coaches: With over 100 swimmers, disruptions aren't fair to the other swimmers.

4. Keep your commitments: We're planning on you being available for all swim meets unless you tell us you're not available.

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### **Important Basic Stuff**

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#### **Practices**

Practice makes progress, especially where swimming is concerned. For this season, swimmers are encouraged to attend practice on a regular basis. Practice times are posted in two main places; on the website and in the handbook. Swimmers should come to practice regularly and be prepared to do their best. A minimum of three practices per week is suggested.

Please have your child arrive early so that they are ready to dive in at the practice start time. Swimmers are also expected to behave in a positive manner during practice and be respectful of all coaches. Please know that disruptive or rude behavior at practice will not be tolerated and the coaches have the right to remove swimmers from practice.

#### **Communication**

Communication is very important on the swim team. We have set up a Google Group and if you are not already receiving emails from us, please assume you are not in the group. The email group is used to provide timely updates of information to the whole swim team. You can join this group by following a link on the main page of our website or email any rep. The team provides communication in the form of emails, notices thru the family folders and on the Website. If you have additional, questions or concerns please contact one of the Team Reps.

#### **Swimmer Apparel**

Every 1-2 years Upper County selects a new team swimsuit, which is available for purchase by team members. A team suit is highly recommended, but optional. Most swimmers enjoy wearing the team suit at meets and for the team picture. Team suits can be ordered at registration, or you can purchase directly from the vendor. Swimmers should wear a swimsuit that will be comfortable for racing. There is a culture shock for some boys going from the jockey shorts coverage to the coverage of "jammers". Usually, when they realize that this type of suit is good for racing and everyone else is wearing one, their opposition breaks down. Note that when buying a swimsuit do not buy it "big" for growth. Just remember you are trying to swim fast and the more loose material dragging through the water is just slowing your child down. To keep your team suit in good shape for the swim meets, you should also consider buying at least one practice suit for your swimmer.

### **Accessories for the well dressed swimmer**

Every swimmer needs a towel, the bigger and thicker is better. Other accessories you should consider are goggles, a sweat suit (for cool days), a swim cap (especially for girls with long hair), a hat or other sun protection, and a bag to carry everything.

### **Schedule & Event List**

Go to the swim team website [www.uppercountydolphins.com](http://www.uppercountydolphins.com) and look at our calendar. All the meets and social events are posted.

### **Team Reps and Coaches**

The people you'll run into the most in your swim team dealings are the Team Reps and the Coaches. The Team Reps are volunteer parents who were new to swimming at one time just like you are today. It's a job that is impossible to do successfully without help from a great many parents. The Coaches are directly hired by Montgomery County, but they work closely with the Team Reps, and are responsible for the swimming portion of the swim team program.

### **MCSL**

The Montgomery County Swim League (MCSL) is a recreational summer swim league composed of public and private swim clubs from Montgomery County, Maryland. The MCSL sponsors competitive swimming and other activities among the swimming pools and organizations in Montgomery County, Maryland. The goals of the program include helping young people establish a love for the sport of swimming, advanced aquatic skills, teamwork, and the principles of good sportsmanship.

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## **Swim Meets**

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There are four basic meets you will encounter as a parent: time trial, dual meets, relay carnivals and divisional championship meets.

### **Time Trials**

The Time Trials are held early in the seasons and are warm-up meet for the swimmers, coaches and parents. All swimmers are allowed to swim each event, per age group, so that the coaches have their current times. Place ribbons are not given and no score is kept for this meet. The meet is run similar to a regular dual meet with Officials and Timers (all done by parent volunteers).

## Dual Meets

Dual meets are when our team swims against one other team. All Dual meets are swum in 25 meter (M) pools and include a total of 46 individuals and 4 relays. Events receive points based on their finish in each event, as follows: 1st-6 points, 2nd-4 points, 3rd-3 points, 4th-2 points, 5th- 1 point.

There are two categories of dual meets:

- **Saturday "A" MEETS**
- **Wednesday night "B" MEETS**

"A" Meets are sanctioned by the Montgomery County Swim League (MCSL) and held under rules found in the MCSL Handbook

## Relay Carnivals

Relay Carnivals include all teams from the division and include a variety of relay events. There is a Relay Carnival for both our "A" and "B" leagues. The coaches determine who will swim in the "A" Relay Carnival, while swimmers will sign up for the "B" Relay Carnival as they would for a regular "B" Meet. Coaches will determine the relay teams for the "B" Relay Carnival based on who signs up to participate in the meet.

## Divisionals

At the end of the swimming season, all teams from the A League compete in the Division Championship Meet or Divisionals. The top two boys and the top two girls from each age group for each event shall be eligible to swim in Divisionals. In order to compete, a swimmer must have swum in at least one MCSL dual ("A") meet. The coach will have discretion to select swimmers for events in this meet.

## *Who Swims What?*

These meets are to see who can score the most points. There can be multiple heats per event (and will be for the younger age groups) so that everyone can swim each meet. Each team is assigned even or odd lanes for the meet. Who swims an event may seem to be a mystery. However, after the first meet both teams know the other's swimmers times and we try to position our swimmers to optimize our points and win.

## *Disqualifications (DQs) and False Starts*

A swimmer will be disqualified (or DQ'd) if he/she does not follow the rules of the stroke or false starts.

## ***Seeding***

In Saturday meets, the home team has odd lanes 1, 3, and 5 while the visiting team has even lanes 2, 4, and 6. The fastest swimmers swim in lanes 3 and 4, the next fastest in lanes 1 and 2, and the next fastest in lanes 5 and 6. Swimmers are seeded based upon their fastest times attained in prior competition. Lane 1 is always on the right side as you stand facing the pool at the starting end.

### **Who Are All These People Running the Meet?**

Your first swim meet can be a bewildering experience as you encounter a vast horde of adults doing different jobs. We hope that everyone will feel comfortable becoming involved with the team. Most parents find that the more involved they become, the more they enjoy the swim team experience. The amount of parent participation is another thing that sets the sport apart from others. If you're not sure how to become involved, ask one of our team reps listed below. We welcome your help so don't wait for us to ask for it! MCSL requires that certain meet personnel wear shirts marking their position.

### **Clerk of the Course**

The Clerk of the Course is the "gatekeeper" for all swimmers in our meets. The people who perform this function get the swimmers to the right lanes for the correct race. You can't run a race without swimmers and the clerk of the course makes sure the right swimmer gets to the right place at the right time. When you arrive at a swim meet, each swimmer **must** check in with the Clerk of the Course. Later they will go back to the Clerk of the Course to pick up their swim meet event card for each race (an announcement will be made).

### **Referee**

The Referee is the chief official for each swim meet. He or she is responsible for the conduct of the meets and is the final authority on the interpretation and enforcement of all swimming rules.

### **Starter**

The Starter is responsible for insuring that all swimmers are given a fair and equitable start. After the event is announced, the Starter sounds one long blast as a signal for swimmers to get into position for the start or to jump feet first into the water for a backstroke event. When the Referee sees that all the swimmers are ready, he extends his arm pointing towards the starter. The starter will instruct the swimmers to "Take your mark". After all swimmers are ready and still, the starter will start the race, using a electronic starting system. A race can be recalled for a false start or if it was a bad start by the starter (i.e. not all the swimmers were

ready) or for a safety reason. This is done using a recall signal on the starting system (you'll know it when you hear it).

### **Stroke and Turn Judges**

Once the race has started, the Stroke & Turn Judges are responsible for insuring that all swimmers obey all the rules for the stroke that they are swimming. These people are typically at the ends of the pool. If a Stroke and Turn Judge sees a violation of the rules, he raises his hand to signify that an infraction has occurred. A Disqualification is recorded on a swimmers entry card as "DQ" and the infraction type. The meet Referee is the only person that can overturn a "DQ" based on rule interpretation or procedure deviation.

### **Timers**

The timers are the most important people to every swimmer. They are the people who determine each swimmer's official time for each race. Being a timer is a good entry-level position for new parents to help out. Some parents have been timers for years and wouldn't want to see a swim meet from any other viewpoint. If you can start and stop a stopwatch, you can be a timer. We'll even provide the stopwatch. Timers start their watches on the strobe light from the starting system and stop their watches when the swimmer touches the wall. There are several timers per lane and all times are recorded. The Head Timer from each team is available with spare watch incase a Timer misses a start or their watch malfunctions.

### **Coaches**

During the meet, the Coaches primary responsibility is to encourage and praise the swimmers and to make sure that they get to the Clerk of the Course in time to swim.

### **Other Very Important People**

It would be impossible to host a swim meet without a number of people in other very important positions. These people run and organize the volunteer efforts, create and maintain the website, edit emails, set up the pool and sell concessions. They also announce the results, run social activities, maintain the team area and do other jobs that need to be done. We need the help of *every* family in order to have a successful swim season which is why we have every family volunteer for 5 jobs during the season.

### **What is a DQ?**

A DQ (short for disqualification) is any violation of the rules observed by any appropriate official. Below are some of the common reasons for DQ's:

*Freestyle:* Failure to touch the wall at the turning end of the pool  
Walking on the bottom or pulling on the lane lines

Exiting the pool before swimming the specified distance

*Backstroke:* Past vertical towards the breast at any time except during a flip turn leaving the wall after a turn past vertical towards the breast

Improper flip turn (older swimmers)

*Breaststroke:* Incorrect kick, such as a Scissors kick or Flutter kick

Non-Simultaneous two hand touch or one hand touch at turn or finish

Toes not pointed outward during the propulsive part of the kick

More than one stroke underwater with arms fully extended at start or turn

Arm recovery past waist except on first stroke after start or turn

Head didn't break surface by conclusion of second arm pull underwater after a start or turn

*Butterfly:* Non-Simultaneous or one handed wall touch at the turn or finish

Non-Simultaneous leg movement during kicks

Arms don't break water surface during recovery (judged at the elbows)

Non Simultaneous arm movement during recovery

*Relay Races:* A swimmer leaves the deck before the previous swimmer touches the wall or deck

*False Start:* A swimmer starts the race early (more details below)

### **How will I know a DQ occurred?**

Unlike football, we don't blow a whistle and announce to the world that a rules violation occurred. When a Stroke and Turn Judge observes a violation, he raises his hand to signify that he has observed a violation then writes it up on the swimmer's entry card.

<h3><b>We Just Want to Have Fun</b></h3>
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At UCD, we like to win, but it isn't our reason for being. Some of the things we do to have fun are:

### **Pep Rallies**

A Pep Rally is held on Thursday or Friday nights before each Home meet. The time, theme, and cost (if any) will be posted in the swim team newsletter and on the website.

### **Ribbons**

Ribbons are given to swimmers in individual events for the 1st 6 places with duplicates for ties in "A" meets. Ribbons are given in individual events for the 1st 10 places in "B" meets.

Traditionally, the team meets for lunch (at family's expense) following "A" meets at a designated place following away meets or under the Pavilion for home meets. "B" meet ribbons will be given out the Thursday morning end of practices.



## **Heat Winner Ribbons**

Heat winner are awarded to the winner of each swim heat. Heat ribbons are normally presented immediately following the race.

## **Personal Best Ribbons**

The goal of all swimmers in every event should be to drop time, regardless of what place they may finish. That is why the team recognizes every top time that a swimmer achieves with a Top Time ribbon. These are pretty rainbow colored ribbons that all swimmers enjoy receiving.

## **End-of-Season Banquet**

Trophies are presented at our end of season Team Banquet. This is also a time for us to enjoy other swim team awards and view an end of the year slide show- don't miss it!!

## **What's Mandatory?**

While we hope you will participate in all the social activities, they are all optional. Similarly, the purchase of team suits and other team clothing items is optional. Volunteering on your child's team is mandatory and that you honor your commitments and **have fun!**

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## **Frequently Asked Questions!**

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**One thing to remember is that everyone started out new to swim team - we all had to learn the ropes....  
so ask questions....LOTS OF QUESTIONS!**

### **Why would I want my child to participate?**

It's fun. It's great exercise. It builds confidence. It's a great way for your child to meet other kids in the community and it's a great way for you to meet other parents.

### **Can I join the swim team even if I am not a member of the pool?**

Yes. Membership at Upper County Pool is not required to be on swim team.

### **What are the age requirements for swim team members?**

Swim team is open to swimmers from 4-18 years of age as long as the swimmer is able to swim 25 yards (the length of the pool).

**If I have a suggestion, compliment, or complaint, to whom should I address it?**

Constructive criticism is always welcome and should be addressed to the Swim Team Reps.

**I see that there are different age groups for the swimmers. How does that work?**

The age groups are 8 & under, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, 15-18. Every other year your child will have an "up" year when they are the oldest in their age group and a "down" year when they are the youngest in their age group. The system generally works well.

**My child attends a summer day camp. Can s/he still participate?**

Probably, because there are evening practices, take time to ask a coach tonight for their advice.

**How can I best help the team?**

Support your child by bringing them to practice, preparing them for the meet and cheering for them and the team at the meets. Volunteer to help out at a swim meet or with other swim team duties. It's an all volunteer effort and there is always something more that can be done. Consider becoming a stroke & turn judge, starter or referee. The officiating is all volunteer and it always helps to have more people trained to step in when others have scheduling conflicts for a meet. **You may also enjoy the meet more when you know the rules well.**

**What is the family fee verses the county registration fee?**

The county registration fees go directly to the county to pay for the coaches' salaries, rental of the pool for after hour practices, pep rally's and meets. The registration fee also pays the Montgomery County Swim League fees. It does not pay for all of our swim team's other expenses. Some of our other expenses include ribbons, trophies, banquet facility rental, gifts for coaches and other special recipients, and occasionally swimming equipment upgrades/replacements.

**What is our swim team budget?**

The budget from last year is available for your review. We are a county team and our operating budget is set up in a differently than private or community pools. We rely heavily on the family fee and revenue generated from concessions sold at home meets. If you have additional questions please ask our team treasurer. They can be contacted through the treasures folder in the team box or through their email address.

### **Practice Questions**

**Do we practice in the rain? Even in heavy rain?**

This question always ranks number one and the answer is YES! Rain is water and when you're swimming, you're in the water anyway, so wet is wet - right? The only ones who get "rain wet" during rainy practices are the coaches. Parents usually seek cover. The only time a practice is called on account of rain is during a thunderstorm. This also means that meets, too, are held in the rain. And they have been during some pretty rainy days. In these situations everyone gets wet!!

**Do we practice if the weather is chilly?**

Practice is still on in chilly weather. If the water temperature falls below 70° F then the coaches will have swimmers doing land exercises such as stretching and running.

**Coaching Questions****How do I let the coaches know if we are going to be gone and unable to attend a meet?**

There are several ways to contact a coach. The website has the coaches email addresses, or you can put a written note in the coach's folder in the team box or talk with them between practices. Please do not distract the coaches during practices or meets.

**How can I best help the coach help my child?**

Bring them to practices regularly, prepared and on time. Be supportive and let them enjoy the sport. Let the coach do the coaching.

**Swim Meet Questions****What strokes do the swimmers use in competition?**

Freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly.

**Is it necessary to stay with my child during the entire meet?**

YES! Meets can seem chaotic to the uninitiated, and swimmers under 12 must be supervised by a responsible adult. Parents are also expected to help run the meets.

**What is a "heat"?**

An event may be divided into multiple "heats." Usually a dual meet will only have one heat in each event with 2 to 8 swimmers depending on the number of swimmers and the size of the pool. The championship meets with multiple teams often have multiple heats of each event to accommodate the large number of swimmers.

**Where can I learn more about DQ's?**

If you'd like to learn more, see your team handbook or go online to the [www.mcsl.org](http://www.mcsl.org) site.

**It is raining outside - the meet is cancelled right?**

Meets are held rain or shine, so bring your umbrella, etc. Meet officials will postpone or cancel the meet in the event of thunder or lightning for safety reasons, but please do not make your own assumptions. When in doubt, show up at the meet!

**Who do we call to find out if a practice or a meet is cancelled?**

If you really have questions about a practice, call a parent rep - their numbers can be found on the website and in the team handbook.

**What should swimmers keep in their swim bags?**

Their bathing suit, towel and goggles are essential. At least *two pair of goggles is highly recommended*. Many a time goggle straps or nosepieces have broken during a meet. Not to mention being misplaced. For girls especially, bathing caps are essential to keep the hair under control. Since summer mornings and evenings can be chilly, especially after getting out of a cold pool, sweat pants, sweat shirt or T-shirts are also good items to pack. Healthful snacks, water, and boredom busters to pass the time between events are also good to have in your swim bag.