

# HOW A SWIM MEET WORKS

(Adapted from excerpt from USA Swimming's Sample Club Handbook)

Swim meets are a great family experience! They're a place where the whole family can spend time together. Listed below are some very in-depth guidelines geared to help you through your first couple of swim meets. It may seem a little overwhelming, but we tried to be as specific and as detailed as we possibly could.

## **Before the Meet Starts**

1. Arrive at the pool at least 15 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins. This time will be listed in the meet information handed out to everyone, posted on the meets bulletin board, and in the weekly E-News.
2. Upon arrival, find a place to put your swimmer's blankets, swim bags and/or chairs. This can be done in the gym at Exerfit when the meet is at Crawfish Aquatics. At away meets the team sits in one place together (team area), so look for some familiar faces.
3. Your swimmer now gets his/her cap and goggles and reports to the pool and/or coach for warm-up instructions. It is very important for all swimmers to warm-up **with the team**. A swimmer's body is just like a car on a cold day-he/she needs to get the engine going and warmed-up before he/she can go all out. Length of warm-up may vary based on different ages and ability levels. For example, a 6 & Under swimmer may only need to arrive 15 minutes before the start of the meet. The lane assignments for each team will be posted at the pool or just ask your child's coach.
4. **Warm-up is a time for swimmers and coaches only.** Parents should drop child off and report to spectator area. Your child will be supervised by a coach at all times during the warm-up period.
5. After warm-up, your swimmer will go back to the area where his/her team is sitting and wait there until his first event is called. This is a good time to make sure he/she goes to the bathroom if necessary, gets a drink, or just gets settled in.
6. The meet will usually start about 10-15 minutes after warm-ups are over.
7. All questions concerning meet results, an officiating call, or the conduct of a meet should be referred to a coach and he or she will pursue the matter through the proper channels. Officials should not be approached by a parent at any time.

## Meet Starts

1. It is important for swimmers to know what event numbers he/she is swimming. He/she may swim right away after warm-up or they may have to wait a while. An event number is assigned to each event and designates the order of events during the meet session.
2. Purchase a Heat Sheet. When the team entry is sent in, each swimmer and his/her previous best time (up to the date that the entry was submitted) in that event is listed. If the swimmer is swimming an event for the first time, he/she will be entered as a "no-time" or "NT". A "no-time" swimmer will most likely swim in one of the first heats of the event. A Heat sheet will be available before the start of the meet that lists the actual heat and lane a swimmer will be competing in.
3. There are two types of events swimmers can swim:

### Individual events

Once a swimmer is entered in a meet, he/she is assigned a heat number and lane number by the meet host for each event in which the swimmer is entered. It is the swimmer and parent's responsibility for the swimmer to be in the proper heat and lane at the appropriate time. The coaches will do their best to assist new and young swimmers.

### Relay events

Relays are an important part of every meet. Relays are team competitions requiring four swimmers from each team in an age group to compete and are some of the most exciting races in a meet. Relays score double points and important for the position in the team scores. **All swimmers should check with the coaches before leaving a meet to determine their relay status.** Crawfish Aquatics seeks to put the fastest relays together and the coaches select swimmers for relays based on the meet and past performance.

4. Write or have the swimmers write each event-number, heat, and lane on his or her hand in ink by using a heat sheet. This should be done just prior to the meet. This helps him/her remember what events he/she is swimming and what event number to listen or watch for.
5. Here is a sample page of a heat sheet:

#### Event 1 Girls 8 & Under 25 Yard Freestyle

Lane	Name	Age	Team	Seed Time
<b>Heat 1 of 3 Timed Finals</b>				
3	Abbott, Maddie J	6	Unat-Crawfish-LA	NT
4	Presedo, Natalie A	7	Crawfish Aquatics-LA	NT
5	Ray, Chaney P	7	Crawfish Aquatics-LA	NT
<b>Heat 2 of 3 Timed Finals</b>				
1	Hayes, Abigail E	8	Crawfish Aquatics-LA	NT
2	Jackson, Mason E	8	Crawfish Aquatics-LA	NT
3	Jones, Angelica J	5	Crawfish Aquatics-LA	37.77

5. Before your child swims he/she should see his/her coach. This is a time for the coaches and **only the coaches** to remind the swimmer of a few things before he/she swims. Parents are not supporting the coach or helping the child by attempting to instruct/remind swimmers. Meets are a time for swimmers to react to training/coaching and not a time for changing stroke techniques etc.
6. Generally, girls events are odd-numbered and boys events are even-numbered. Example: "Event #26, 10-Under Boys, 50 freestyle"
7. Most meets are computerized. There are generally two ways a swimmer gets to his/her lane:
  - a. A swimmer usually reports directly to his/her lane for competition a number of heats before he/she actually swims. Your child should report to his/her lane at least 4 heats prior to his/her heat.
  - b. In some meets, a swimmer's event number will be called, usually over the loudspeaker, and he/she will be asked to report to the "clerk of course". Swimmers should report with his/her cap and goggle. Example: "Event #26, 10-Under Boys, 50 freestyle, report to Clerk of Course."
  - c. The Clerk of Course is typically used only at 8 and Under Meets or meets with large number of 8 and Under swimmers and will line up all the swimmers and take them down to the pool in correct order.
8. The swimmer swims his or her race.

### **How does my child get his/her time?**

His/her time should appear on the scoreboard. The pad located in the water on the wall is the primary timing system. It is linked directly to the scoreboard. This is the system most commonly used. If there is a discrepancy in the primary system, the buttons used by the timers will be used to determine the time of the race. Thirdly, stopwatches also used by the timers will be the next backup system. All times are checked by the meet director and meet volunteers in the booth. **No time is official until it is posted.** Times are posted somewhere in the facility. At Crawfish Aquatics results are posted in the hallway located behind the scoreboard.

### **What if my child's lane time shows up as zeros or no time at all?**

A: Sometimes swimmers miss the touch pad. If this is the case the scoreboard will show either an incorrect time or no time. The meet officials will check the button times and the watch times and the swimmer's official time will be posted later as an official time.

### **After Your Child Swims**

- a. Depending on the coach's instructions, the swimmer may be asked to do some recovery swimming if a "warm down" pool or lanes are available.

- b. The swimmer should then go immediately to his or her coach. The coach will discuss the swim with each swimmer. Some coaches may wish to talk with the swimmer before her recovery swim.
- c. Generally, the coach follows these guidelines when discussing swims: Positive comments or praise, suggestions for improvement, and then more positive comments.

### **Things you, as a parent, can do after each swim:**

- a. Tell him/her how great he/she did! The coaching staff will be sure to discuss stroke technique with him. You need to tell him how proud you are and what a great job he did.
- b. Take him back to the team area and relax.
- c. This is another good time to check out the bathrooms, get a drink or something light to eat.
- d. The swimmer now waits until his next event is called and starts the procedure again.

When a swimmer has completed all of his events he and his parents get to go home, however Crawfish Aquatics considers meets to be a TEAM event and the coaches encourage swimmers to stay until that session is completed (8 and unders are the exception!). **Make sure to check with the coach before leaving to make sure your swimmer is not included on a relay.**

Awards are often gathered for a team and given to the coach at the end of the meet. The coach will give the awards to the swimmers at a later time. Results will be posted following the meet on the Meets Bulletin Board and also linked to the team website.

### **What Happens If Your Child has a Disappointing Swim?**

If your child has a poor race and comes out of it feeling badly, talk about the good things. Don't talk about the negative things and don't keep talking about the race. Drop it and get your child to focus on the next race or something enjoyable coming up after the meet! Limit the "post mortems!"

If your child comes up to you and says, "That was a bad race, don't tell me it wasn't," there is nothing wrong with a swimmer negatively evaluating a race. The important thing is for the child not to dwell on it. You should move the swimmer on to something good. "All right, you have had a bad race. How do you think you can do better next time?" Immediately start talking about the positive things.

## What To Take To The Meet

1. Most important: Swim Suit, Team Cap--and goggles (if your swimmer uses them).
2. Towels-Realize your swimmer will be there awhile, so pack at least two.
3. Something to sit on. Oftentimes the swimmer area may be located in a gym.  
Example: sleeping bag, old blanket, or anything that will be comfortable to sit on.  
The swimmers will be spending a lot of time on it.
4. Team T-shirts: Each swimmer may want to bring two because they can get wet and soggy. Sweatshirt during the colder months.
5. Games: travel games, coloring books, books, anything to pass the time.
6. Food: Each swimmer is usually allowed to bring a small cooler. It is better to bring snacks. They usually have snack bars at the meet, but the lines are long and most of the time they only sell junk food. Suggestions for items to bring:
  - a. Drinks: water, fruit juice, Gatorade
  - b. Snacks: granola bars, fruits, yogurt, cereal, sandwiches

Once you have attended one or two meets this will all become very routine. Please do not hesitate to ask any other parent for help or information!

These meets are a lot of fun for the swimmers! He/she gets to visit with his/her friends, play games, and meet kids from other teams. He/she also gets to "race" and see how much he/she has improved from all the hard work he/she has put in at practice.

## Special Parent's Note

The pool area is usually very warm. Therefore, you need to make sure you dress appropriately. Nothing is worse than being hot at a swim meet. It makes the time pass very slowly! At Crawfish Aquatics parents can sit in the CAP Elite gym area to stay cool and take advantage of the bleacher seating or floor space for towels and chairs. Better yet, become an official and get involved! You get to be close to the action and take the focus off of your own child!

## MEET FEES

All swimmers are encouraged to participate in each swim meet offered. In Louisiana, meet fees are \$2.50 per event plus a \$4.00 swimmer surcharge. There is also a \$2.00 charge per relay swim. Meet fees may be higher for out-of-state meets. Entry Fees totals will be sent out with the weekly E-News the Monday following the meet. For accounts set up on automated draft these fees will be automatically debited and the posting date will be announced in the weekly E-News. **All other accounts must pay meet entry fees within one week following each meet.** This can be paid at the parent information booth or mailed to Crawfish Aquatics. Meet escrow accounts can also be set up by paying in \$50 increments per child.