

How to Attend a Swim Meet

By John Leonard

A lot of “things” go into having a successful and happy swim meet experience. This article explores a number of those “things”.

Pre-Meet Things to Cover:

1. Coach tells team and parents where, when meet is.
2. Coach tells team what events they are entered in.
3. Parents make sure: (if a 12 and under swimmer....a 13 and over should do this “on their own”, it’s an important part of maturing.)
 - A) Swimmer is on time for warm-up. (10 minutes BEFORE asked to be there.)
 - B) Swimmer has eaten a good breakfast before meet.
 - C) Swimmer has all appropriate gear, suit, two pairs of goggles, warm-ups if weather appropriate. Extra towels if needed.
 - D) Swimmer has an appropriate snack food and water or Gatorade.
 - E) Parents resist the urge to tell the child how to swim. Parents parent, coaches coach.
 - F) The idea of a swim meet is FUN and a learning experience. It’s not warfare with ten year olds. Act like it!
4. Coaches – have spoken with the athletes (days, or weeks, depending on age of athletes,) on what they expect of each athlete in each event. (set-up the swims!)

At the Meet:

1. Find a seat in the team area. Be respectful of others’ space.
2. Athlete finds coach and learns the warm-up procedure.
3. Athlete warms up WELL and completely. (parents, CRUCIAL that the child be “on time for warm-ups.” Coaches will focus on those there “on time”...hard to play “catch-up” with the swimmers who come late....)
4. Athletes come to see the coaches prior to EACH event...5-10 minutes before the swim. They get reminders of what the purpose and goals of that swim are.
5. Athletes go swim fast! Focus on themselves. Focus on improvement and demonstrating all they have learned in practice.
6. Athletes COME BACK to see the coach and **get the vital analysis of the swim AFTER the event...immediately...first stop.** Get feedback on the goal/process. Get told how to swim faster next time. Always. Always faster next time.

7. Athletes go warm-down as instructed by Coach, assuming a warm-down pool is available.
8. Athletes return to team area. Chat with friends. Chat with parents if in the same area.
9. Parents REFRAIN from critiquing swims....if you can't restrain yourself, just ask , "what did your coach have to say?". If you get no response or a fractional response, maybe the child didn't focus on hearing the critique...in which case, AFTER the meet, a conversation between coach and parent is in order.
10. Repeat above for each swim.
11. Cheer for your child. Better yet, cheer for your child's friend. (his parents will cheer for your child. As parents, we all get a little "carried away" cheering for our own kids, and it mostly embarrasses them. Chill. Your child will love you cheering for his friend.

Post meet:

1. Thank the coach, head home, feed the child and make sure they have lots of fluids to drink. Refuel as quickly as possible post meet.
2. Coach evaluates swims, charts best times, does both subjective and objective analysis of results.
3. Next day, Coach and athletes sit down and "download" the meet....appropriate questions would include?
 - A) What was your best swim? Why?
 - B) What was your poorest swim? Why?
 - C) What did you learn from this meet and how will you apply that in practice?
 - D) Parents contact coach with any comments, questions they may have. A day or so after the meet so the emotions and fatigue levels of all concerned are ameliorated.

Short hints for:

- 1) Parents.
 - A) Don't coach. Parent.
 - B) Don't go bonkers at officials (don't even address them at all.) They are volunteers, nice people, and the coach will question anything that needs questioning.
 - C) Let the coach, coach during the meet. Ask questions after the meet. Days after the meet if possible. The Coach is INCREDIBLY busy at the meet....and is emotional about the "good things and bad things" just like you are. Not a good time for a reasonable conversation. (Usually.)
 - D) Let the child have the experience. Don't hold their hand. If they need help, ask a TEAMMATE, (not you) to help them. That's what teammates are for.

E) Parent comforts – bring a lawn chair. Something to read or do. Swim meets are pretty boring all the time your child isn't swimming. Keep yourself hydrated. Passed out parents do worry their children.

2) Swimmers

A) Take personal responsibility for everything. Your warm-up, your swims, your warm-downs, drinking water, eating, keeping track of your goggles and clothes...the whole deal. Learn to be "adult".

B) No drama queens or kings. It's not all about you. Focus on taking care of yourself and then 2nd, helping others. Lots of people are more nervous than you are and need your cool help.

C) Pay attention. Get to the blocks on time. Organize your relay. Know your events. Don't miss any. Coaches don't like it and parents don't like paying for events you don't bother to swim.

D) Strive to RACE, Strive for Best Times, Strive to be swimming technically correctly. And Enjoy It All.

E) If it's a good result, act like you've been there before. If it's a poor result, learn from it while demonstrating maturity and good sportsmanship.

Swim meets are wonderful life-lesson teaching events. Enjoy them!

The Day After
By Guy Edson, ASCA Staff

Workout on the day after a swim meet is critically important to attend. Why is it so important?

1. It's an opportunity for the coach to recognize the good performers in front of all the swimmers.
2. It's an opportunity to review the team's progress toward seasonal goals.
3. It's an opportunity to immediately address weaknesses observed at the meet with individuals as well as the team and to respond with drills, teaching, or appropriate training.
4. It's necessary in order to stay on the training plan. Depending on the time in the season, resting from a practice is counterproductive to swimming fast later in the season.
5. It's an opportunity to directly and deliberately face being tired and to perform regardless – an awesome life lesson.

Unfortunately, an occasional parent will make a coaching decision that their child can take the day off to rest. We need the support of parents to get their children to practice on the day after or risk their child losing the above benefits.

Swim Meet Basics for Parents

Ideas to help you and your child be better prepared and “happier” at Swim Meets

By John Leonard, ASCA Director

- 1. Be on time. On time means at least 15 minutes before warm-up begins.**
2. Know the seating arrangements. Bring folding chairs to most outdoor pools. Bring drinks and snacks as appropriate. Sit with your child if that's the team “thing.” Sit in the stands if that's the way the team does it. Let the swimmers be with the swimmers. They don't want to be with you in most cases. They want to be with their friends.
3. Encourage your child to get immediately to the coach for warm-up. (See following article about warm-up.)
4. Be a parent. Help them keep track of heats, events, etc. But remember that the main idea is to teach them to handle the environment of a swim meet themselves. This helps them “grow up.” It's never too early....
5. Cheer for other people's children on the team. Don't embarrass your own by standing behind their blocks screaming. Let other parents scream for your child.
6. Let the coach coach. Unless you're the coach. Then let someone else coach your child. So you can parent.
7. Sometimes a child will “miss an event”. This happens, it's a learning experience. Don't freak out. Don't handhold them to the next event. Expect responsibility. If they can't handle it, maybe they are too young to be there. Let them rely on teammates for help.
8. Sometimes a swimmer will false start and DQ a relay. Similarly, it's a learning experience. Don't freak out. The appropriate response by the swimmer to their teammates? “Sorry guys.” Everyone does it. Everyone needs to forgive. See, “Everyone Does It.” Reread that. Twice.
9. Sometimes a swimmer DQ's for swimming an event incorrectly. Do not address the official. Ask the coach what they did wrong. Make sure the swimmer understands how to do it correctly. End of story. It IS NOT a big deal. Learn from it.
10. The child should have a goal for every swim. Sometimes a time, sometimes a technique. Ask what their goal is. Don't help set it. That's for the coach and swimmer.
11. The coach will likely speak to your child before and after the event. The “before” is to remind them of their goals and needs, and the “after” is to review the successes and weak spots of the swim. Great feedback is great coaching.
12. Make sure they drink in hot weather. Drink in all weather. Water, Gatorade, etc. NO SUGAR. NO CANDY. NO SUGAR, NO CANDY.
13. If you have questions, ask the Coach. Try to do it when the Coach is not doing 12 other things. Get real answers. Asking another parent may not get you the right answer.
14. Comparing your child to others is not healthy. Compare them to where they were a year ago, and what is reasonable for them to strive towards over the next year.

15. When the meet is over, the meet is over. Forget it on the way home. Help the swimmer remember the lessons for the next time, but don't dwell on the meet. Meet over....move on...next!

16. Most coaches will say "it's not about winning, it's about improvement." Know what is being improved, and measure it and help your child focus on the process and not "just" the result. What does it take to go faster?

17. Keep it light. Have a sense of humor. An age group swim meet, taken at face value, is a pretty silly thing.....don't overplay the "importance" of it ...it's just an opportunity to test what you've been learning in practice. We repeat experiences that are enjoyable and avoid experiences that are not.

And now, to the concept of WARM-UP. What is Warm-up?

Warm-up is what happens before a competition. Its purpose is several:

PHYSICAL:

1. Literally warm and lubricate the muscles for "action".
2. Increase the heart rate in preparation for race action.
3. Getting in touch with your feel for the water and ability to swim the strokes correctly.

And MENTAL:

1. Get into focus. We're at a swim meet to compete.
2. Get rid of distractions.
3. Focus on process and good technical swimming.
4. Prepare to Race.

Most warm-ups at most meets are crowded and appear chaotic. Typically the coach will put all swimmers in one or two lanes, together.

Warm-ups can vary from Senior Swimmers who take an hour or more, to eight and unders, who can warm-up in 20 minutes in some cases. In every case, it's important to be ON TIME. This allows time for the physical and the mental work to be done. The coach will commonly hold a short meeting to make sure all swimmers are accounted for, organized, know their events, and get last minute reminders.

Being LATE to warm-up means your child will be inadequately prepared for their competition. Not a good thing. You ask them and the coach asks them, to work hard to learn in practice every day. Then the day of the meet, you do things incorrectly. What does that teach the child?

Be On Time, Do Things Correctly. Have a Great Meet!