

THE PARENT'S HANDBOOK

(Or How to Survive Competitive Swimming)

The purpose of this modest publication is to prepare parents of children who are members of, or are considering joining, the Chippewa Valley YMCA for the complexities and promises of the world of competitive swimming. We hope that you will find the time to read this handbook in its entirety, for it is an established fact that the positive influence of a swimmer's parents is essential for success. There are virtually no swimmers who have been successful without supportive parents.

From the beginning, you should know that your child's involvement with the Swim Team will necessitate your assuming certain responsibilities and will require a substantial investment of both your time and money. But the amount of this investment, when compared to the benefits to your child, will, in the long run, seem small.

However, as a "Swimming Parent," you will not only have responsibilities, you will have opportunities—opportunities to really "get to know" your child in pressure situations; opportunities to praise and applaud his/her achievements; and even more importantly, opportunities to help him/her deal with their non-achievements—to redirect them—to learn from them—and, in the end, to gain from them. In today's fast-paced society, there are far too few chances for parents to interact with their children on this kind of basic level. Just these opportunities alone will make your career in swimming worthwhile.

WHY YOU SHOULD BE GLAD YOUR CHILD PICKED SWIMMING

Sports are supposed to be good for kids. In theory, a sport should build strong bodies, not tear them down. It should promote sportsmanship, self-discipline and perseverance. Unfortunately, not all sports live up to these ideals. Swimming, however, does quite well.

According to many authors of articles on sports for children, the fact that swimming uniquely develops the cardiovascular systems to the maximum makes it an ideal sport for children, since an efficient cardiovascular system is a key to long-life health. This is in addition to the fact that children run so little risk of injury in swimming. (Swimming is rated as a "most desirable" sport on insurance company premiums.)

Swimming is a sport in the true sense of the word. It is a pursuit of a striving for excellence. Its very nature demands self-discipline and great sense of purpose. This striving for excellence is what the ancient Greeks revered as being that which brings out the finest qualities in mankind. And, supposedly, the development of these qualities is the reason for a sports curriculum in the schools. Swimmers learn early the relationship between hard work and results. **SWIMMING MAKES SENSE!**

WELCOME FROM THE COACHES

The coaches of the Chippewa Valley YMCA Piranha's Swim Team would like to welcome all the swimmers and parents to the 2009-2010 swim season. Whether you're a returning family or a new family just starting with us, this handbook should contain most of the information that you will need to be prepared for a great season.

We've tried to answer some frequently asked questions and to provide the knowledge that is necessary to actively participate on the Piranha Swim Team. As other questions and information come up throughout the season, we will get details to you as soon as possible. But please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions that you may have. We're looking forward to another exciting season and we wish all swimmers the best of luck!

Coaches for YMCA Swim Team are Cathy Krula, Molly Krula, Amy Hutchinson, Holli Sande, Patrick Finley, Becca Morness and Marissa Imhoff.

PHILOSOPHY

The primary purpose of the Chippewa Valley YMCA is to promote the spiritual, mental and physical well-being of all persons. The YMCA's involvement in sports has been one means of teaching Christian ideals, values and behaviors in based on this purpose. Sports in the YMCA has never been an end in itself, but rather a vehicle for achieving a much more global purpose: values education.

Values education is an integral part of the National YMCA Program. The values of fair play are strongly emphasized along with respect for oneself, for the opponent, and for the official game rules. All of these fair-play values contribute to an attitude towards sports which keeps winning in perspective, that is, only one goal among other important goals.

We believe that children can benefit greatly from participation in competitive swimming. In swimming they learn to practice healthy lifestyles. Spiritually, mentally and physically.

GOALS

- 1. To have all swimmers participate and have fun. Concern for sports involvement is at the broad participation level rather than fine tuning the elite athlete. The most highly skilled and least skilled swimmers will be given equal attention.**
- 2. Develop self-confidence and self-respect.**

3. To learn the basic strokes, refinement of those strokes and good physical habits. Swimmers will become aware of the proper execution of the strokes and the importance of warm-up, stretching and conditioning exercises. Diet, rest and involvement in other sports and activities will be stressed.
4. To compete fairly by:
 - a. Taking responsibility for your own behavior and learning.
 - b. Working to become a team member who unselfishly contributes to the good of the whole team.
 - c. Respecting the other team.
 - d. Respecting the rules and officials who uphold them.
5. To set individual goals, work towards those goals and reflect on them.
6. Work towards a team goal.
7. To keep winning and losing in perspective.
8. To encourage swimming as a life-time sport.

MEMBERSHIP, AGE GROUP REQUIREMENTS AND DUES

1. Member of the YMCA. This is a National YMCA requirement.
2. Any boy or girl 5 years of age who can swim one length of the pool freestyle and one length backstroke.
3. Placement into swimming levels is based primarily on the ability level of swimmers. The practice groups are as follows:
 - a. Junior
 - b. Junior Elite
 - c. Senior
 - d. Senior Elite
4. The following age groups will be used for competition:
 - a. 8 and under
 - b. 9 & 10
 - c. 11 & 12
 - d. 13 & 14
 - e. Open (defined as 11 years and over)

Each swimmer's age is determined as of December 1st of the current season. If the swimmer turns 9 on Dec 2nd they would continue to swim in the 8 & under group the whole YMCA season.

MEETS

The Chippewa Piranha Swim Team will be competing in swim meets from October through March and possibly April. Most of these meets are 1 day competitions, but some may be 2 or 3 days long. Swimmers may opt for only 1 of those days if necessary. It is the responsibility of the parents to inform the coach whether or not their child will be swimming in a particular meet and to get them to that meet. If for some reason on the day of the meet, due to illness or an emergency-please call Cathy (864-2349) to let her know your swimmer will not be coming! We worry when swimmers don't show up!!!

1. Sectionals and State

The Sectional Meet is a YMCA Meet only. We compete with Eau Claire YMCA, LaCrosse YMCA, Stevens Point YMCA and Wausau YMCA. The State meet is a championship meet which includes YMCA's from the entire state.

a. Sectionals

This is 2 1/2 day meet and all swimmers are encouraged to participate. You will either continue on to the State meet by having made a qualifying time previously during the season or at this meet.

b. State

This is a 2 1/2 day meet for those who qualify under State rules. Swimmers must have competed in 3 YMCA meets in order to qualify.

c. Nationals

This is 4day meet in Fort Lauderdale in April for those individuals Who have made a National time throughout the season. In order to qualify, swimmers must have participated in 3 closed meets-which Were for YMCA's only plus the Y State meet. These meets for us include:

1. High School Boys Meet
2. Stevens Point Invite in Nov
3. Frostbite in LaCrosse
4. Home meet in Feb
5. Senior State in Feb
6. Last Chance Meet in Mar
7. Sectional Meet in Mar

They must also swim at the YMCA State Meet in March.

***COACHES WILL DECIDE THE MEET AND RELAY LINE-UP FOR MEETS, INCLUDING SECTIONALS AND STATE. DURING THE REGULAR SEASON RELAY LINE UP WILL BE BASED ON BUT NOT LIMITED TO:**

- 1. MAXIMIZING PARTICIPATION**
- 2. GIVING SWIMMERS THE OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN EXPERIENCE AND TO PREPARE THEM FOR FUTURE COMPETITIONS.**
- 3. TIME**
 - A.THE SWIMMERS' BEST COMPETITION FLAT START AND RELAY SPLIT TIMES.**
 - B.MOST RECENTLY ACHIEVED TIMES.**
 - C.TIMES ACHIEVED IN PREVIOUS COMPETITIONS.**
 - D.TIMES ACHIEVED IN PRACTICE.**

FOR CHAMPIONSHIP MEETS:

RELAY LINE UP IS BASED ON BUT NOT LIMITED TO:

- 1. THE TEAMS GOAL OF MAXIMIZING THEIR TEAM SCORE.**
- 2. TIME (SAME AS ABOVE)**
- 3. PRACTICE AND MEET ATTENDANCE.**

RELAYS QUALIFY BY RELAY INDICATOR (A, B, ETC, NOT BY THE INDIVIDUALS THAT SWAM THAT EVENT)

COMPETITION;WHERE DO WE START AND WHERE DO WE GO?

This section will try to prepare you for meets. While it might seem complicated at first, after you have done it once or twice, it will become routine—honestly!

1. Competition—Preparation

The swimmer is ready for their first meet as soon as they can swim the distance required and feel confident enough to compete. The sooner the swimmer begins to compete, the sooner they will see improving times. A meet is a great teaching media and everyone is encouraged to improve their skills in preparation for the next meet. The weeks of practice before a meet and between meets are very important ones. It is during these practices that a swimmer perfects new skills and techniques and prepares for the next competition.

Each meet has a “starting time” and a “warm-up time.” The swimmers should be on deck and ready to get in the water when warm-ups begin. The quality of each warm-up decides the quality of the performances in the meet. Arriving late for warm-ups starts your child off on the wrong foot before the meet even begins.

While it is not required that you attend all of the meets, making an effort to do so when possible will be appreciated by your child. Many lasting friendships have been established by parents at swim meets.

You may want to bring drinks and snacks to the meet. Suggested items are Gator Aid, fruit juices, fruits, muffins and vegetables. You will find below a list of items to consider bringing to every meet:

- sleeping bag to rest on**
- 2-3 towels**
- 2 pairs of goggles**
- swimsuits and caps (2 if possible)**
- warm-up suit/sweatshirt and sweatpants**
- cards or other quiet games**
- socks, slippers or sandals**
- highlighter/permanent marker**
- chairs**
- video camera**

2. Competition—Events included in a meet

The events included in each meet are varying distances of the four competitive strokes: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle, as well as the Individual Medley, which is a combination of these four strokes. Relays, consisting of four swimmers, highlight many meets.

3. At the Meet

There are several things the coaches of the Piranha Swim Team ask. Please help and encourage your child to abide by the wishes of the coaches.

- a. Each swimmer needs to report to one of the coaches immediately after finishing a race. The swimmer should report their time to the coach and listen to any comments the coach may have. After speaking with the coach, the swimmer may then talk to parents and teammates. Coaches attend meets for a purpose; let them do their job-coach! Parents should be there for love and support.**
- b. While at the meets, it's a good idea for the swimmers to sit together as a team. Team unity is a very important motivator on the road to success.**
- c. Last, but not least, the coaches ask that the coaching be left up to them. Remember that these coaches are the ones who work with your child day in and day out.**

Conduct

- a. Coaches are to be on deck and therefore are unable to supervise the rest areas or locker rooms.**
- b. Swimmers should have goggles marked clearly with their names on the band. They should have a second pair of goggles with them at the meet.**

- c. Younger swimmers should be encouraged to use the buddy system so they can look out for one another. If there is trouble in the locker room let the coach know right away.
- d. Parents, please make sure your swimmer understand that they are responsible for their behavior and to abide by the rules of the host YMCA.
- e. All swimmers are required to be at the meet in time for warm-ups. Failure to do so will result in replacing that swimmer in all relays that day and may affect their placement on relays at the end of the season.
- f. All meets are officiated by certified officials. Any questions about an officials' ruling should be handled through the Head Coach.

COMMUNICATION

1. Newsletters

The coaches will do most of their communication through the calendar and newsletters. Calendars, newsletters and meet information will be sent to swimmers and parents via email. Meet sign ups can be returned to Cathy in the same manner-either by attaching the form or by stating that the swimmer will be attending a meet. Meet info and schedules will also be posted on the website: www.chippewaymca.com

There will be a box with a file for each swimmer that holds any ribbons or medals they may have earned at a meet. This box will be at the Y on the table by the pool and occasionally at the Middle School practices.

2. Practice

If you need to speak to a coach at practice, please talk with them 15 minutes before or after the practice.

3. Phone

A message can be left for a coach at the front desk of the Y-723-2201.
Or on Cathy's cell 864-2349

DOES WHEAT REALLY HAVE GERMS?

Proper nutrition is essential for first-rate athletic performance. In general, you should try to keep your child on a balanced diet, difficult as it may be, and to cut down on junk food. Use whatever vitamin supplements that have been recommended by your doctor. In most cases, being on a balanced diet will provide all the vitamins and minerals that your child will need.

You will find that your child's appetite will grow in proportion to the amount of time they put into training. You are likely to find that your child will have

fewer cold and flu and, in general, will be healthier throughout the entire year, even in the deep, dark winter. Remember, the healthiest people in the world are the Scandinavians, who at 85, still go out and jump in the ice floe every morning, so don't worry your child to death (or illness!)

“Swimmer’s ear” is a common and very painful experience, which can be normally be avoided by making sure the ears are DRY after practicing and showering.

The incidence of cramps can be kept to a minimum by giving your swimmer fresh fruit, especially bananas. Bringing a bottle of water to practice is essential.

Now a word about processed sugar—NO! That’s the best word we can think of. Processed sugars not only cause tooth decay, they impede a swimmer’s performance both at practices and swim meets! When you first eat something that contains a great deal of processed sugar, especially first thing in the morning, ie: sugary breakfast foods, candy, soft drinks, etc., the blood sugar quickly rises to a very high level then plunges and stays there. This can cause dizziness, weakness, general irritability and inability to concentrate. You can well imagine what kind of performance a child will be capable of under these circumstances. Instead of giving your child candy and soft drinks at meets, try fruit, raisins or granola.

The night before a meet should be handled as if it were a regular school night. Put your child to bed at about the same time you would on a school night. The evening meal doesn’t have to be anything special, just some favorite dish. Breakfast the morning of the meet, should be on the light side, but do not send your swimmer away from the table hungry. The meal should be high in starches—yes starches—and extremely low in processed sugars.

I WANT TO BE JUST LIKE DADDY AND MOMMY WHEN I GROW UP!

Children learn from parents, sometimes whether we want them to or not. You have probably heard a disgruntled parent say something like, “I don’t know where that kids learned to be so irresponsible. She never finishes anything she starts.” Very often these attitudes were taught to the child by their parents through the parents’ own poor example. Take care to teach your child responsibility by getting them to practices and swim meets on time—even when it’s tough. And on those cold, dark days when sitting in front of the TV is much more appealing than going to practice, nudge your child down the road to self-discipline by explaining the necessity of finishing what one begins while you are helping them into their swim suits.

As mentioned earlier, when you allow your child to join the Piranha’s, you take on some responsibility, too. We all must dedicate some of our time and

talent to running swim meets which are a part of our responsibility to our Conference. Home meets are also one of our sources of income. Even though it might be tough to spare the time, set a good example and plan to work in some capacity. Don't make the same people do all the work all the time.

If you would really like to contribute to the maintenance of a strong team, donate some of your time and ideas as Committee Chairperson or Board Member. We need and encourage everyone's participation.

Our use of the pool is a privilege extended to us by the Chippewa Valley Family YMCA, so please remind your child to treat the facility with respect.

GIVE THE KID A BREAK

There is a trap that many parents fall into. It works like this: a swimmer receives coaching/training for the first time and many defects begin to be corrected. Naturally the swimmer will show great amounts of improvement the first and second year of competition. This is great as long as it is kept in perspective, because, sooner or later, every swimmer will level off and the normal process of working for every tenth of a second will begin. The problem, or trap, is that many parents fix their expectations based on these early performances so that when their swimmer does level off, they think that something has gone wrong. They may accuse their children of slacking off in practice, not trying, or even worse, of not being able to do it.

Instead of decreasing the anxiety that their swimmer already feels at slowing down, and helping them to understand the reality of their situation, the parents actually increase the anxiety by pressuring their children to perform.

Always find something to praise your child for! Children are subjected to many negative influences today that tend to make them feel that they are less than others. Let them know that they are unique the way they are and that they are doing a fine job, in a great sport!

EMPHASIZE FUN, SKILLS and EFFORT

Without fun, your child may not want to keep swimming. Swimmers of all ages rank "fun" as the number one reason they swim. Olympians with years of experience way that they will continue with the sport as long as they are having fun! Children don't have fun standing around at practice. They don't have fun when they feel pressure to win. They have fun in well organized, skill oriented practices. They have fun competing and striving to win while developing their skills. Fun for kids is not just fun and games. Fun encompasses learning, competing, training and being with their friends. Remember, your child won't be able to control all of the factors that go into winning a race. They have no control over their competitors! But they will

find success and fun in developing and improving skills. This is one of the most satisfying aspects of sports. The most important question you can ask following practice or a meet is “did you have fun today?”

GIVE THE COACH A BREAK

Good swimming organizations do not grow on trees. A good coach is a virtual compendium of organization, knowledge, dedication, and caring. And even though they may need money to be able to continue in coaching, money is obviously not the main reason that they coach. They coach from a sense of doing something worthwhile. They like kids and they feel swimming is a super sport in which to be involved. In this day and age, good coaches are certainly strange animals. If you have any of these unusual creatures coaching your team, here are some brief hints on their care and feeding.

First of all, it is important that you not only trust your coach’s ability and judgment, but that you exhibit that trust and support in front of your children. Don’t sit around the dinner table tearing them down. We all make mistakes from time to time. If your swimmer keeps hearing what a rotten coach they have, they’ll start believing it. If you feel your swimmer is not receiving all that they could in practice, or that they’re having some sort of difficulty that is not being resolved, talk to the coach privately about it. Chances are the problem is simply a matter of different perceptions.

Finally, take the time every once in a while to show your coaches that they are appreciated. They respond to kindness just like puppy dogs. And when your coach is having one of those “what am I doing standing out here” days, your attention could make all the difference.

SUCCESS

This final chapter has been reserved for a discussion of the expectations and goals that you, as a parent, have for your children in a swimming program. In other words, what criteria will you use to judge your child’s involvement—either failure or success?

The criterion most often used is very simply, how much a swimmer wins. There is, of course, validity to this criterion, considering the competitive society in which we live. In fact, a certain amount of success is necessary for maximum motivation of a swimmer. This is the reason for the Conference, USA and National competition. But remember, success is relative. It’s easy to get caught up in the competitive aspect of swimming, sometimes winning becomes too important. To parents as well as children. Don’t think of the outcome of a meet in terms of winners and losers. Everyone who competes is a winner! A far more important factor in evaluating success is the quality of

the swimmer's effort, and the more objective reality of a "personal best" time.

There remains one final criterion which is valid for judging your child's involvement in competitive swimming, especially during the inevitable "dry spells" that all swimmers go through for one reason or another. Consider--- for a monthly sum, your child, instead of sitting home glued to the TV or out roaming around looking for something to do, is enjoying a constructive program that not only fills much of their spare time, but is also exceptionally healthy, both physically and emotionally. In the face of this, "winning" becomes far less important, and your child's swimming career will definitely be a SUCCESS!

**Cathy Krula, Head Coach
Chippewa Valley Family YMCA Piranha Swim Team**

Adapted from Beth Raver and Steve Leoni's Parent Handbook