

May 9, 2011

NEWS FOR SWIM PARENTS

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 warmup. (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. Water. Water...and...Water. All the fancy drinks are is expensive urine. Water is best.
 - E) Parents resist the urge to tell the child how to swim. Parents Parent, coaches Coach.
 - F) SHOES are a real help at a swim meet. Energy leaves the body through the arch of the foot. No flip-flops, no bare feet. Sneakers with an arch support are the appropriate footwear.
 - G) 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 warmup 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 “catchup” 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. 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) Coaches

- A) Hydrate and take care of yourself.
- B) Don't lose your voice. You can't coach without it.
- C) Control your emotions as much as possible.
- D) Careful with your comments.
- E) You know all the coaching duties you have at meets. Focus. Politely ask parents to ask you meaningful questions in another environment.
- F) Smile and have fun. No one meet is "that important". Chill.

3) Swimmers

- A) Take personal responsibility for everything. Your warmup, your swims, your cooldowns, drinking water, eating, keeping track of your goggles and clothes..the whole deal. Learn to be "adult".
- B) No drama queens or kings. Its 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!