

PREPARING FOR THE SWIM MEET

The Night Before

Rest is imperative. A well rested mind is as important as a well rested body. Swim meets usually start very early in the morning so adequate rest the night before is invaluable. Treat the night before a swim meet as if it were a regular school night. The evening meal should not be anything particularly special, just some favorite dish. Breakfast in the morning of the meet should be on the light side, but don't let your swimmer go to the meet hungry. The morning meal should be high in starches — yes, starches — and extremely low in **processed** sugars. Fresh fruit is ideal. Have your swimmer look over his goals for each event he will be swimming. Pack your swim bag the night before with a pre-prepared list. To learn more about nutrition for swimmers, visit usaswimming.org and click on Tips and Training, then Nutrition Center.

Transportation to and from a swim meet is the responsibility of each family. Carpools can be arranged among families if desired.

Swimmers: What to Bring to a Meet

- 1) Team swim suit—arrive wearing the suit
- 2) Backup swim suit—"wardrobe malfunctions" have been known to happen
- 3) Team t-shirt (if your swimmer has one)
- 4) Warm cover-ups-especially in winter. Sweats, jacket.
- 5) Closed toed shoes—keeps the feet warm between races
- 6) Hat—mainly in winter, to keep the head warm between races
- 7) Team swim cap—(see below) Have a backup in case it tears.
- 8) Goggles—racing pair and backup pair.
- 9) Towels—at least one per every two events. Smaller shammy-type towels are ideal.
- 10) Bleacher cushion or folding chair—be aware that some facilities don't have room for chairs
- 11) Light snacks in a small personal cooler. Always have a water bottle handy.

- 12) USA Swimming ID card—attach to your swim bag, having this with the swimmer is mandatory
- 13) List of current times and goal times—this is handy if attached to the swim bag as well
- 14) A printout of the swim meet event schedule and your child's events to swim that day.
- 15) Sharpie pen in a dark color, preferable fine-point or ultra-fine-point
- 16) Extra dose of determination and Team Spirit!

What NOT to bring:

CD players, handheld games and other electronics are major distractions and will not fare well around the water and humidity so they are best left at home. They can tend to “walk away” as well. If your child brings a phone, keep it dry. Let them know that using it to play games is distracting.

As for snacks, keep it light. A small cooler can be brought into most swim meets. Parents' snacks should be separate from the swimmers' so that they can be taken on deck and eaten when the swimmer is ready. Don't include sodas or candy. Juice, water, fruits, raw veggies, cold pasta and light sandwiches are all good choices. Sport drinks are most useful at practices, not swim meets. Your child must be wearing an official Vitras Swim Cap. No other cap will be allowed and should be worn during warm-up and while swimming all events.

Parents: What to Bring to a Meet

Bleacher cushion or folding chair—depending on space available at the facility

Personal snacks—swimmers should have their own on deck

Something to read or do to pass the time

Your swimmer's personal best times and goal times

Copy of the USA Swimming Times Standards

Printout of the Meet Information which includes facility address, schedule of events and more

Pen and highlighter

Team t-shirt—if you don't have one, get one and show your team spirit! One for each day is great!

Most meets feature a concession stand, but not always a wide variety of food.

Occasionally, you may even want to volunteer as a timer down on the pool deck.

You get a great seat to watch all the kids and time passes much more quickly.

Swimmers, Write on Your Hand

Yes, we all did it when we were young, and it probably drove our parents nuts. Now, the best way for your swimmer to keep up with his events and strokes is to write them on his arm with a sharpie pen before leaving home. Using the list of events sent to you by the coach, use the following format.

For example:

#35 50Fr H_____ L_____ #43 100Br H_____ L_____

meaning event number 35 is the 50 yard freestyle and event #43 is the 100 Breaststroke. Blanks are left to fill in the heat and lane assignment later. The swimmer can refer to this when checking in at the meet as well. Be careful to always use “Heat” first and “Lane” second in discussions with your children. Otherwise, either you or your child could miss watching/swimming an event. More information later in this document on how to find heat/lane for each event.

What to Expect At the Facility

Swim meet facilities vary in seating arrangement, space and amenities. Generally, the swimmer will stay on deck (the area immediately around the competition and warm- up pools) with the team and coach. Larger venues will separate spectators from swimmers on deck by railings. Some facilities have room for popups and others do not. Some facilities have spectators sit in bleachers and are not allowed on deck. Smaller facilities will have bleachers directly on deck. Occasionally, there may be space for swimmers to set up chairs, so having them ready in the car may come in handy.

Meets are generally outdoors and temperature is variable. One thing you can count on—there will be limited space for all your “stuff”. Bleacher aisles can be cramped for spectators and deck space is at a premium for swimmers. Meet officials are relatively strict about where you can and cannot sit or stand. Please be respectful of those rules.

Swimmers will usually have access to locker rooms with showers, but not the lockers themselves. Extra “swimmer’s towels” are very helpful for drying off between races (shammy-type small towels). Large towels take up a lot of space in the swim bag.

Expected Behavior at Swim Meets

As a matter of USA Swimming policy, only registered athletes, coaches and officials are permitted on the pool deck (walking area immediately around water, and sometimes the pool-level floor of a facility with bleachers).

All questions concerning a meet result, officiating call, or conduct of the meet, should be asked of the coaching staff. They will pursue the matter through proper channels. No parent is allowed to challenge meet officials directly.

Swimmers should be respectful and courteous to officials, other swimmers and spectators at all times. A swimmer's behavior reflects directly on the team and the Coach. No inappropriate physical contact between swimmers or between swimmers and coaches will be tolerated.

Swimmers are expected to support each other. Swimming is not an individual sport, each child is a part of the Vitras team. People are always watching.

After each session of a meet, the team area should be left neat and clean, especially at another team's pool.

Guardians should keep an eye on non-athlete siblings at swim meets. Be sure they follow facility rules and do not distract the swimmers of any team at the meet. Parents are fully responsible for the safety of their non-athlete children. Other adults and swim meet officials will not be monitoring younger kids around a pool at a meet and, if they observe the child creating distractions with the swim events, could ask that they be removed from the pool environment.

ATTENDING THE SWIM MEET

Swim meets are generally within an hour's drive or less from Verrado. **Arrive at least 15 minutes before warm-up time** for our team. Don't plan to arrive at the exact warm-up time. Your athlete needs to have time to check in to her events, find the team and coach, set up her area and stretch - all before getting into the pool at warm-up time.

Arriving at the Meet

There are two types of meet formats: positive check-in (or "deck seeded") and pre-seeded.

Pre-Seeded Meets

Some swim meets are “pre-seeded” meaning that each swimmer has already been assigned a heat and lane assignment for each event in which they have entered for the entire meet. Swimmers are not required to “check in” upon arriving. In all cases, if a swimmer misses an event, you will still be charged for the event on your invoice.

Even in pre-seeded meets, the longer distance events may still require positive check-in since no-shows will cause empty lanes and make the meet run significantly longer than necessary.

What Swimmers Should Do Upon Arrival

When you arrive and after checking in (if necessary), immediately proceed on deck. Look for familiar faces. It’s important for you to sit together as a team. It promotes team spirit and swimmers support each other before and after races. Coaches and deck volunteers need to know where you are at all times. Let your coach know that you are there. Set up your sitting area and prepare for the warm-up session. Keep all belongings in the team area. Since the entire team and coach may be away from the team area at times, do not leave anything of value in view.

What Parents Should Do Upon Arrival

Psych sheets or Meet Programs will be sold somewhere in the lobby area of the meet. Purchase one or share with another parent.

Head into the spectator area and look for other parents to sit with if possible. There will usually be quite a bit of time between your child’s events. Watching other swimmers in their events helps pass the time as well as reading, bringing your laptop or chatting with other parents. Meet Program

Meet Program

If the meet is pre-seeded (meaning that it is *not* a positive check-in meet) all swimmers will already be placed in their heats and lanes for each event. The Meet Program will be sold with all heat and lane information. Swimmers and spectators will know these assignments for all events before the meet begins and will not have to consult heat/lane postings to find out. Meet Programs are usually available for sale by the host team.

Generally, girls’ events are odd-numbered and boys’ events are even-numbered.

How Swimmers are Assigned Heats and Lanes

A “heat” is a group of 6 to 10 swimmers that will swim at the same time. Each event will have at least one heat. Within each heat, those 6 to 10 swimmers will be assigned a lane in which to report to and swim in. Swimmers within a heat will have similar seed times and will be closely matched in speed. If a swimmer has never swum an event before, he will be listed with an “NT” seed time (“no time”) and will most likely be listed in the first heat of the event. The fastest swimmers of each heat will always be in the middle lanes.

Another way a host team may assign heats and lanes is by “circle seeding”. This occurs usually when a meet has “preliminary” (prelim) sessions followed by “finals” sessions. In an eight-lane pool, the fastest 24 swimmers are placed in the last three heats, regular seeding is used for all other heats. In each of the three heats, the fastest of all 24 swimmers are seeded in the middle lanes throughout the heats. This way, the swimmers in the last three heats get a chance to swim against the top few swimmers.

Warm-Up Time

All swimmers should arrive in time for warm-up regardless of when their first event is. Warm-up is important for acclimating a swimmer to the specific pool, its starting blocks, lane width and walls. Every pool “feels” different. Coach’s rules of warm-up should be followed regarding circle swimming, passing and other etiquette.

It is very important for you to warm up with your team. Your body is just like a car on a cold day, it needs to get the engine going and warmed up before it can go all-out.

At the beginning of the warm-up session, all swimmers must enter the water feet first. There are no exceptions. This rule is for the safety of your child and all meet participants. A swimmer who dives into the pool during general warm-up may be disqualified by the officials and be deemed ineligible to swim either their first event or all events. Diving from the blocks is only allowed during the “sprint” session of warm-ups which comes after the general warm-up session.

The meet will usually begin 15 minutes after warmups end.

Swimming Your Events

The swimmer will refer to a “Heat/ Lane Assignment” before each race that they will swim. Your child should write the heat and lane assignment on his hand where he has written the event number before arriving. These can be found on the Meet Programs.

Swimmers are expected to find their own heat and lane assignments and be behind the blocks in plenty of time for their race. Coaches and teammates are very helpful, however it is the ultimately the child's responsibility.

Distractions such as electronic games, cell phones, texting, books and socializing can hinder his ability to “keep his head in the game”. Swimmers should head for the starting block area with- in 4 to 6 heats of their own heat, depending on the type of event. The Coach will help swimmers with any possible warm-up before a race. Swimmers should have goggles and swim cap ready and put them on in plenty of time to step up on the blocks when their time comes. At the blocks, swimmers should introduce themselves to their timer person and verify their heat and lane assignment..

It is ultimately the swimmer's responsibility to get to the blocks in plenty of time for a race, to keep up with events and take care of themselves between races.

Every swimmer has, at one time, probably missed an event because he wasn't paying attention, misunderstood the heat and lane assignment or didn't check to see that his name was on the timer person's sheet at the block. The swimmer should talk to their coach about it as soon as possible and he will help the swimmer figure out how it happened and how to avoid the problem in the future. It is very unlikely that the swimmer will be able to swim that event after having missed his heat. He may be distraught, but he should use it as a learning experience. It is a very powerful lesson that he will learn on his own, without being chided by a parent.

Swimming the Event

1. Arrive at the starting block of the lane you have been assigned.
2. Verify with the person timing in that lane that you are in the correct place and stand behind the person in the heat before you.
3. Listen to the referee to announce the heat number.
4. When you hear a series of short whistles the referee will announce the heat number. If it is your heat, stand at the left side of the block.

5. When you hear one long whistle, step up on the block (or jump in the pool for backstroke starts).
6. When the starter says "Take your mark", that's when you get into your starting position.
7. When you hear the starter tone, your race has begin. A strobe light will also flash for hearing-impaired swimmers.

Proper swim meet etiquette dictates that, when finishing a race, the swimmer should stay in the water until all other swimmers have finished unless he is instructed to exit the pool by an official. Vitras Swimmers are well-known for their pool etiquette and good sportsmanship.

False Starts: A false start may occur when a swimmer fails to remain perfectly still, leaves the block early or there is a problem with the starter or equipment. If a swimmer starts immediately before the starting tone, the event will run as normal but the disqualification of that swimmer will be noted. If a swimmer starts early and the tone hasn't sounded, the starter will ask all swimmers to "please stand" and the disqualified swimmer will be removed from the heat. Sometimes a recall signal will be sounded if there has been a false start. This will be a succession of starter beeps. If the swimmers do not hear the beeps, a rope may be dropped across all the lanes the pool to stop them. Although this is an unusual circumstance, the swimmer should be prepared and understand that a rope across his lane means that she needs to stop swimming immediately.

Fly-Over Starts: In some meets, officials make use of the "fly-over" start. In this case, a swimmer finishes his race and waits on the finish wall without getting out. The swimmer in the next race will "fly over" the previous swimmer when he starts. This is applicable for all events except backstroke. When you finish your race in a fly-over start meet, hug the wall and do not distract the swimmer over you. After they enter the pool, exit the pool quickly. Fly-over starts help to move the meet along faster.

Officials: Many officials are present on the pool deck in a sanctioned U.S. Swimming meet. They usually wear white shirts. Most meets have a referee, starter, a stroke judge for each 3 or 4 lanes of the pool and two turn judges on each end of the pool. Each lane also has two (or more) timers present in each lane as a back-up to the electronic system. This organization and structure ensures that each U.S. meet is run consistently throughout the national organization and that all times are "official." Times made at U.S. Swimming meets can be used to qualify for the state and higher level meets.

Disqualifications: A swimmer may be disqualified by the judges or other qualified officials for not swimming a stroke correctly, making an improper turn, false start, etc. For example, a swimmer could be disqualified for doing a flutter kick during the butterfly stroke or failure to touch the wall correctly in a turn. Most swimmers get disqualified at some point in their swimming careers! Officials will notify the coaches of a disqualification. The coaches will inform the swimmer and discuss the steps necessary to correct the infraction in future swims. After she understands what the mistake was, she should “shake it off” and focus on the next event. Parents should be supportive, rather than critical, treating the disqualification as a learning experience.

After the Event

After leaving the water, the swimmer can ask the timer for his unofficial time if he didn't see it on the timer board. He should then find his coach on deck for a brief chat about the swim. The coach may be watching another swimmer, so be patient. Swimmers will get post-event discussion and their warm-down instructions at this time. Swimmers should not linger or play in the warm-down pool, especially if the water is very warm since warm water saps energy. Swimmers should return to the team's area to dry off, get warm and rest.

Between Races

Swimmers should be aware of when their next race is at all times. They can gauge when to drink/ hydrate, eat snacks and when to take restroom breaks. They can check results postings as well, rest, stay warm and conserve energy for competition. The only exception to this is when IS teammates are swimming. Head to the deck to cheer them on whenever possible; however, if your child will be swimming soon, he should sit quietly and ready himself. Most importantly, swimmers should stay covered up to keep the muscles warm. By staying warm, energy is conserved for use during competition instead of used up trying to heat the body. Warm muscles are also better at converting energy into motion. Drink plenty of cool (not ice-cold) fluids to keep the body hydrated.

Swimmers should always be mindful of when your next event is coming up. It is up to the individual swimmer to be at the right place at the right time. The coach will be looking for her on the block when her heat is up, not making sure she actually gets there.

What happens if your child has a disappointing swim? Your child's coach will be the first to talk to him about the race. When it comes your turn, be sure to talk about the good things. Don't lie and say he did a wonderful job if he already knows that he didn't. Lying doesn't sit well with kids. Just don't talk about the negative things and don't dwell on the race. Drop it and get your child to focus on

the next race or something enjoyable coming up after the meet. Bribing any swimmer to improve their performance is strongly discouraged by the coaches.

Vitras has a policy to celebrate wins, ribbons, medals, and successes for swimmers who win a heat or event at a swim meet, but the team's main goal is to teach swimmers and to improve their swimming skills. This is best achieved by encouraging swimmers to beat their previous swim times every time they swim an event (i.e. LTB or Life Time Best). Parents should encourage and praise their swimmers for this goal and let the wins and losses occur naturally. Under no circumstance should parents discipline or denigrate their children for not winning a heat or event. In fact, as a rule, the coaching staff does not discuss place finishes with their swimmers but rather their time with respect to their seed time. In all things, be positive. Kids should learn that meets are fun.

Results

Periodically throughout the meet, the host officials will post computerized individual results for each event. There will usually be a special area for these postings somewhere in the spectator area. Swimmers can receive their official time and place. These results are not necessarily final until they are posted within 7 to 10 days of the meet.

Awards for each meet vary. Some meets give medals for the top three swimmers in each age group for each event and ribbons for places 4 through 8. Others give only ribbons for places 1 through 8 and yet other meets may have no awards at all. All awards are given directly to the coach at the end of the meet to be distributed to the swimmers at a later date.

Each child should remember to record their times so they can chart their improvement throughout the season. The focus should be on progress in terms of the amount of time improved, not necessarily on what place was achieved. They can also track their times and enter goals on the "Deck Pass" app.

After the Swim Meet

Your swimmer may leave the meet after his last event and after notifying the coaching staff. He may also stay and cheer on his teammates (especially those swimming the distance events). He must gather all his belongings and police the area for trash before leaving. Don't leave items overnight for the next swim session, it may not be there when you return.

Be sure that, as a parent, you check with the coach before leaving to be sure your swimmer is not included in an upcoming relay or to get instructions for the

following morning if the meet continues into the next day. Any ribbons or medals that the swimmer has earned will be given to them by the coaches at a later date.

Once you have attended one or two meets, all this becomes very routine (believe it or not). Other parents are a great source of information whenever you have questions. Everyone had a first meet at one time in their lives! These meets are a lot of fun for the swimmers. They get to visit with their friends, play games, and meet kids from other teams. They also get to race and see how much they have improved from all the hard work they've put into practices.

Swimming in meets gives your child an excellent opportunity to:

Have fun! Be a Good Teammate! Show Good Sportsmanship! Swim Fast!