

How We Choose Events for Meets (*aka “Why is my kid in that race?!”*)

I know one of the big mysteries of swim season is meet entries. From the outside, it can look random or even a little harsh when you see a new stroke, a longer distance, or more events than usual. So I want to walk you through how we actually do this at BNSC and what’s going on behind the scenes.

Who actually picks the events?

At BNSC, your swimmer’s **lead group coach** is the one who builds their event list first. That coach sees your child every day in practice, knows how they train, what they struggle with, and where they’re ready for a little push.

Once the group coaches have their entries done, **I go through the entire meet file** as head coach. I look at the whole picture: all groups, all swimmers, event order, and how the day will feel for the kids. If I see something that needs adjusting—for rest, balance, or long-term development—I’ll make changes. Then I submit the final entries, so it’s really a team effort. If an event surprises you, it has almost always been seen and approved by more than one coach.

Our “expected events” list for each group

Something most families don’t see is that **each training group has a list of events we expect swimmers to complete at least once over the course of a season.**

That might include things like:

- Certain 100s of each stroke
- IMs
- A first 200 free or other longer events once they’re ready

We do this on purpose to keep swimmers well-rounded and to push them gently out of their comfort zone. It’s really easy for kids to gravitate toward only their favorite stroke at their favorite distance and never leave that bubble. Long-term, that doesn’t serve them very well. So if you see your child in a race that isn’t their usual go-to, there’s a good chance it’s on that “expected events” list for their group, and we’re checking that box in a thoughtful way.

When we move kids into “harder” events

Those “big kid” moments, first 100 of a stroke, first 200 free, first IM—don’t happen randomly. We move swimmers into those races when we’ve watched them long enough to know they can handle it.

Usually that means:

- They’re legal and consistent in that stroke.
- Their technique holds up in practice, even when they’re tired.
- They’re mentally ready for a challenge, even if they’re a little nervous.

From the stands, a first 200 or 100 fly can look like a huge leap. From our side, it usually looks like, “You’ve earned this. You’re ready for the next step.”

Do kids sometimes get nervous? Absolutely. Do they often surprise themselves in a good way? Also yes.

Why we “load them up” early and pull back later

You may notice that at the **beginning of the season**, your swimmer has more events, more variety, and more “stretch” races. That’s intentional.

Early in the season, we:

- Experiment more with events
- Try those expected group events
- Let them race a bit heavier to build experience and toughness

As we move closer to **end-of-season meets and qualifying opportunities**, we usually **pull back**. That might mean fewer events per session, or a tighter focus on their best races.

At that point, the priority shifts to:

- Making sure they’re rested enough
- Protecting their bodies from burnout
- Setting them up to qualify or perform well in their key events

So if you see your kid “loaded up” in October and a little lighter in January or February, that’s not inconsistency. That’s the plan.

Are we overloading them?

I promise we’re not trying to turn anyone into a meet zombie who’s exhausted and miserable by the last relay.

When we choose how many events a swimmer has, we think about:

- Age and group
- How demanding each event is
- How much time there is between races
- How they’ve been handling training and meets

Sometimes that means they only have a couple of events. Sometimes, especially older or more experienced swimmers, can handle more. “More events” isn’t automatically better, and “fewer events” isn’t automatically bad. It all depends on what we’re trying to accomplish for that swimmer at that meet.

Why it might look strange, but it isn’t random

Big picture: we’re always trying to give swimmers a mix of **comfort events** (where they can chase time drops and feel confident) and **stretch events** (where they grow).

We want them to:

- Be well-rounded in all four strokes
- Learn how to race different distances
- Build confidence doing hard things

So yes, sometimes their entries will look a little “weird” compared to what they’d choose on their own. That’s us doing our job, not throwing darts at a list of events.

When to reach out

If you or your swimmer are really nervous about a particular event, please don’t feel like you have to sit on that worry.

A great way to start the conversation is something like: “I noticed my child is in the 200 free for the first time. What are you hoping they gets out of that race?”

That gives us room to explain our thought process and help you support them, rather than just wondering or worrying.

At the end of the day, your child’s events aren’t random.

Their group coach chooses with intention, I review everything with the big picture in mind, and together we’re trying to **stretch them in smart, purposeful ways**, because we genuinely believe they’re capable of more than they know.