

Hardin Otters Parents Handbook and Team-Building Guide

Welcome to the Hardin Otter Team! It is our pleasure to welcome you to competitive swimming with the Hardin Otters (HOT) Swim Team, affiliated with Montana Swimming and USA Swimming. Our mission is to empower strong and healthy swimmers by encouraging individual excellence and team unity. Our mascot is a river otter.

The HOT Team

Any child able to swim 25 yards nonstop in a comfortable manner is eligible to be a swim team member. We will then take that basic skill and shape it into more refined swimming strokes and your child will become part of a great team. If your child is still a beginning swimmer, we will recommend he/she receive further instruction in basic swimming before joining the team. Parents will be informed within two weeks of practice if your child is not yet ready for swim team, and your club registration fee will be returned.

The regular swim season runs October into February. Post season begins after our last designated meet of the season. Coaches will determine which swimmers are eligible to continue in the intensive post-season program in preparation for state-wide competition. An end-of-the-season awards banquet will be held yearly to celebrate each swimmer's accomplishments.

HOT registration fee for the 2023-24 season is \$140. High School Swimmer registration gives Hardin Bulldogs a solid foundation before the high school swimming season begins and costs \$50. Each new family also must create a USASwimming (USAS) family account online and enroll swimmers as members of USAswimming (\$7 fee). If you miss the kickoff event, contact HOT at hardinotters@gmail.com for help completing this process.

Swimmers will need a well-fitting, one-piece swimsuit without bows, ruffles, or other decorations for competition. Boys should have well-fitting briefs or jammers for competition and/ or practice. Well-fitting goggles are also needed. Long hair should be secured, and a swim cap is recommended.

Our HOT team website is www.hardinotters.org. Please visit often to review our schedule, policies, and visit our team store.

Practices: Practices run on school days Monday thru Thursday 3:30-5:00 (short days, practice 2-3:30) at the Hardin Community Activity Center (HCAC). **Children must be picked up by 5:15 (3:45 on short days).** For the safety of our swimmers, **we ask that parents enter the HCAC to pick up their children** in person. We will keep swimmers inside until a responsible adult arrives. Our coach will also take attendance and will inform parents in text or email if their child missed practice, unless the coach has received prior notification of the absence. We want all our swimmers to be safe.

Meets: Competing in a swim meet provides a sense of accomplishment and purpose to the Hardin Otters program. Swimmers are expected to compete in both our home meets in at least one event. **Parents are required to volunteer the equivalent of one full day at each home meet.** Optional travel meets will be designated during months when we do not host a meet. HOT will coordinate registration, and parents are responsible for transportation and lodging. Meet registration fees typically run from \$20-\$45 and are collected at meet registration two weeks before the scheduled meet. **Payment must be received by the deadline for swimmers to compete at travel meets.** Regular attendance at practices is required for meet participation. Please communicate with coaches if your child has special schedule needs. **Swimmers must arrive on time for warm up on meet days.** Swimmers missing warmups will be considered absent and scratched from their events for the day. Warming up is part of being on the team.

Parent Involvement: The Hardin Otter Team is a Parent-based organization. HOT cannot function without parent involvement. When a swimmer joins the HOT swim team, their parent(s) join the HOT Parent Team. If we each do what we are willing and able to do, HOT will continue to be strong in the future.

MEET VOLUNTEER- Parents are required to help at each of our home swim meets, which are our principal source of income. Each team member must have a responsible adult volunteer for a minimum of one full day or two half-days for each of our home meets. Parents may volunteer in ad sales, concessions, computer, timing console, lane timing, announcing, deck marshall, hospitality room.

MEET OFFICIAL-Parents may also complete special training to serve as meet officials in administering the meet or judging the swimming events. **Officials are needed to run our meets– please consider serving in this important role!** Fully certified officials receive discounted registration for our home meets.

HOT BOARD-The HOT Board meets monthly with coaches during swimming season. Board offices include President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Members-at-large. We welcome all members to attend board meetings.

Organization

USA Swimming- As the national governing body for competitive swimming, USA Swimming (USAS) is responsible for the conduct and administration of swimming in the United States. USAS formulates the rules, implements policies and procedures, conducts the national championships, disseminates safety and sports medicine information and selects the athletes to represent the United States in international competition. USAS is a non-profit organization made up of volunteers. All policy decisions are made through a chain of committees reporting to an elected vice president.

The USAS website, www.usaswimming.org, provides a variety of services and programs for its membership. Among the many services are publications, educational programs, fundraising activities, sports medicine programs, video resources and general information about swimming related activities. USAS staff are available to assist you in answering questions or providing additional information about USA Swimming.

Montana Swimming is our Local Swimming Committee (LSC). Within the United States, USAS is divided into fifty-nine Local Swimming Committees (LSC's) each one is responsible for administering USAS activities in a defined geographical area. Each LSC has its own set of bylaws under which it operates. A House of Delegates with representation of athletes, coaches, members of the Board of Directors and clubs is responsible for managing the business affairs of each LSC. Meetings are twice yearly.

The Hardin Otter Team is a member of the LSC known as Montana Swimming (MTS), which consists of approximately eleven teams and geographically covers most of the State of Montana. USAS has also divided the United States into four zones and we are a member of the Western Zone. The MTS website, www.mtswimming.com, contains a wealth of information about all MTS-sponsored activities, regulations, and procedures.

Athlete/Adult Relations–SAFE SPORT POLICY summary

HOT is committed to providing a safe, caring, and friendly environment to all our members. Athletes should feel safe and supported with coaches and teammates. To maintain safe relationships between HOT athletes and **applicable adults** (coaches, board members, officials, adult athletes, all adult USAS members and nonmembers in regular contact or authority over athletes), the **Minor Abuse Prevention Policy (MAPP)** is implemented by all USAS member LSC's and clubs, including Montana Swimming and HOT. This policy must be reviewed and agreed to in writing by all athletes, parents, coaches, and other non-athlete members of member clubs on an annual basis, with such written agreement to be retained by the club. Following is a summary of USAS MAPP. The complete MAPP is available on the Hardin Otter Team Website: www.hardinotters.org.

ONE-ON-ONE COMMUNICATION: All one-on-one interactions between a minor athlete and an Applicable Adult must occur at an observable and interruptible distance from another adult. In one-on-one meetings or sessions, the door must remain open. Meetings must not be conducted in a hotel room or other overnight lodging location. If it occurs in conjunction with team participation, a closed-door meeting with a health professional may be permitted provided that the door remains unlocked, another adult is present at the facility and is advised that a closed door meeting is occurring, and written legal guardian consent is obtained in advance by the health professional, with a copy given to the club.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION: All communications between a coach or other adult and an athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. The content and intent of all electronic communications must adhere to the USA Swimming Code of Conduct regarding Athlete Protection. Communication between athletes and adults must be *Transparent* (clear and direct, and free of innuendo), *Accessible* (considered part of the public team record, and include more than one adult), and *Professional* (should not include private discussions of social or family life). Legal guardians may request in writing that their minor athlete not be contacted in electronic communication by the club, absent emergency circumstances.

Adult members and athletes may communicate via text or e-mail between 8 am and 8 pm, and messages must be copied to the athlete's parent, even in the case of a reply to an athlete's communication. Adult members may not communicate with athletes via "instant message" or "private message" on Facebook or other IM sites. Athletes are not permitted to "friend" or join an adult member's social page on Facebook, Twitter, or other social media. Our team has a Facebook page which athletes and parents may join. **Find us on Facebook under Hardin Otters, and request to join the group.**

TEAM TRAVEL: Parents are responsible to provide transportation home from practice and to and from meets, independent of HOT, its coaches, and its board members. A waiver of this policy may be granted by a coach or board member upon **advance written** request of a participant's parent or guardian, given that the travel arrangement abides by the Minor Abuse Prevention Policy (MAPP), e.g., an applicable adult may not travel alone with an unrelated minor athlete. The required travel waiver form is posted on our website www.hardinotters.org, under "documents."

MASSAGES and RUBDOWNS/ ATHLETE TRAINING MODALITIES

Any massage (refers to rubdown, stretching, or any physical manipulation) must be conducted in an open and interruptible location and must be performed by a licensed massage therapist or other certified professional. The coach must not perform a rubdown or massage of an athlete under any circumstance, even if the coach is a certified massage therapist. Written consent by a legal guardian must be obtained in advance by the licensed massage therapist, with a copy provided to the club. Legal guardians must be allowed to observe the massage. At least one other adult must be present in the room.

LOCKER ROOMS and CHANGING AREAS

Deck changing is prohibited; a locker room or designated changing area must be used to change in or out of swimwear. The use of any device's (including a cell phone's) recording capabilities, including voice recorder, still photo, or video camera in locker rooms or changing areas is prohibited. An unrelated applicable adult must not expose his or her private parts (Breasts, buttocks, groin or genitals) to a minor athlete under any circumstance, nor request a minor athlete to expose private parts to an unrelated applicable adult under any circumstance. Other than athletes on the same team or athletes attending the same competition, unrelated applicable adults are not permitted to be alone with a minor athlete in a locker room or changing area absent emergency circumstances.

The club must regularly and randomly monitor the use of locker rooms and changing areas, by conducting a sweep of the changing area before athletes arrive, posting staff directly outside the locker room, leaving doors open, and making

occasional sweeps of the locker room with women checking on female locker rooms and men checking on male locker rooms. **Legal guardians are discouraged from entering locker rooms and changing areas.** It must only be a same sex legal guardian, and they must notify a coach or administrator in advance.

The complete Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP) is available online at www.hardinotters.org under the “documents” tab.

BULLYING: Bullying—the use of prolonged and/or severe aggression, whether intentional or not, which hurts another person—is unacceptable in the Hardin Otter Swim Team and will not be tolerated. Bullying creates an intimidating, fearful environment, and undermines the HOT mission to equip and empower youth for success through competitive swimming. Swimmers should report bullying to a parent, coach, board member, or to the USASwimming safe sport staff. Our approach to bullying is threefold:

- 1. Prevention:** All team members will agree in writing to treat other athletes, coaches, and pool staff with respect. Swimmers will be reminded of this agreement in minor incidents.
 - 2. Intervention:** In case of a major incident, adults will intervene to make children safe. Information about the incident will be gathered from witnesses. A determination will be made whether the incident is considered bullying according to the USASwimming definition.
 - 3. Support:** All children will be supported, including the victim(s), the perpetrator(s), and any bystanders/ to rectify the situation and to make appropriate amends and follow up.
- Our complete bullying policy is posted on our website www.hardinotters.org under the “documents” tab.

Conduct

Swimmers are expected to be respectful at all times to themselves, their teammates, and to their coaches. Swimmers are expected to work hard and strive for their best performance according to their coach’s instructions.

Matters of misconduct will be dealt with by the coach during practice. The usual procedure consists of a coach/swimmer conference and the swimmer returning to the pool. The swimmer may be assigned a short strength-training exercise, such as pushups. If misconduct continues after three warnings, it may be necessary to remove a swimmer from the water to sit at poolside for the remainder of practice. If this occurs, the swimmer will be made aware of the conduct violation and the parents will subsequently be informed of the matter.

If the swimmer is removed from practice a second time because of behavior issues, the parent/guardian will be called and the swimmer will be suspended from practice the next day. The third time the swimmer is removed from practice because of behavior issues the parent/guardian will be called and the swimmer will be asked to present their case to the board meeting where they will discuss whether the swimmer can continue swimming with HOT. If the swimmer does not appear at the meeting the swimmer will be done for the rest of the season and will forfeit all entry fees and dues.

Conduct is a two-way street. If you as a parent have concerns about conduct of your child or others, please contact the head coach to discuss your concerns. If you are still not satisfied, you may approach the President of the club to help you with your concerns. A customizable Draft Letter of Concern is available under the “documents” tab at www.hardinotters.org.

Hardin Otter Team Policies and Procedures

Hardin Community Activity Center (HCAC)

The Hardin Community Activity Center welcomes the Otters and hopes the swimmers and parents are proud of the swimming community and facility. We are fortunate here in Hardin to have a community center with the finest swimming facility in the state for our use without incurring daily rental fees. The Otters will treat the staff and the facility with respect, and will abide by pool policy.

Pool Policy

1. Entrance through shower areas only.
2. Full shower is required before entering pool area.
3. No shoes worn on deck. (Coaches may wear indoor-only shoes). No dirty shoes in locker room.
4. No gum in the building.
5. No food or pop in dressing rooms or on deck. Water (non-glass bottle) is the only drink allowed on deck.
6. You are responsible for your belongings.
7. No horseplay or running in the locker room or on deck (deck is slippery!).
8. According to HCAC policy, Otters are not allowed to use the hot tub.
9. Must be out of the locker room by 5:15.
10. Wait for rides in the lobby, not on deck or in the locker room. Do not enter staff-only area behind front desk or central offices.

Practice

- Be prompt to practice. Practice start times—3:45 M-TH, 2:15 on early release days—are when practice begins. Swimmers need to be dressed out and ready to swim in the pool at that time.
- Be consistent. Come to every practice session you can. Poor attendance will hurt a swimmer's chance to improve. 7 out of 10 practices are required in the two weeks prior to a swim meet.
- Swimmers are expected to swim if they are at the Community Center. Presence at the pool without participating in training exercises will not count as practice.
- Do not send a sick child to swim practice. If a child comes to practice and does not swim/ feels ill or is removed by the coach, he/she will have to stay on the deck until the end of practice.
- Swimmers will stay inside the HCAC building after practice until a responsible adult enters to receive them, or the parents have made other arrangements with the coach in writing. Practice ends at 5:00 , and swimmers must be picked up by 5:15 (3:45 on early release days).

Our hope is that every child will be challenged, work hard, and experience success in personal growth and teamwork. Swimming is a healthy sport that can continue throughout the lifespan.

Welcome to the team!