

# SOMERSET

SWIM TEAM

## Dolphins Frequently Asked Questions

- **My child's not a big swimmer – why should s/he join the team?**

The Dolphins are 90% about having fun/feeling part of the great Somerset community, 10% about swimming. Kids and parents across the neighborhood get to know one another, little kids get to be on a team with big kids they come to look up to, and everyone has a ton of fun during what will feel like a really intense 8 weeks of summer from the start of practice through to the team banquet. Every kid on the team will enjoy seeing how much they improve over the course of the swim season. Minis learn to be water safe and are encouraged to attend all social events so they feel part of the “team.”

- **My child can swim but doesn't know the four strokes swum at a meet – can s/he still join the team?**

Yes! We fully expect all swimmers to have to learn the strokes. The good news is everyone “knows” freestyle because pretty much any sort of swimming qualifies as freestyle. Kids also pick up backstroke pretty easily, while breaststroke and butterfly take longer to learn especially for the 8 and Unders. We dedicate our 4:30pm practice (once morning practices start) to targeted stroke instruction. Most of our coaches also offer private swim lessons for more 1:1 instruction (visit the [Coaches page](#) on our website if you are interested in private lessons).

- **What is the difference between the Minis program and the Dolphins team?**

Minis is for kids ages 4 to 7 who are learning to swim and are not yet comfortable swimming across the deep end of the pool and treading water for extended periods of time. Minis practices are taught by teen Dolphin swimmers in the shallow end of the pool for 30 minutes a session. Dolphins practices are run by a team of paid coaches and junior coaches in the deep end of the pool for 1- 1.5 hours at a time. Practice schedules are on our website for [Dolphins](#) and [Minis](#). Older Minis often move up to the team towards the end of a season and swim in meets if they are ready/willing/able.

- **My child can't make all of the practices or the practices designated for his/her age group/experience level – what should we do?**

Kids should attend as many practices as they can attend and/or want to attend. We have a wide range of swimmers on our team – from swimmers who want to attend every practice to swimmers who are still building up their swimming strength and want to attend fewer practices to swimmers who have regular conflicts and will only be able to attend a few practices and meets. We also understand that schedules don't always line up with the practice times your child can attend. The practice designations are a guideline for how the practices will be run (and

# SCMERSSET

SWIM TEAM

are designed to ensure swimmers of similar age/strength practice together) but if we have some younger swimmers who can only make the 5:30pm practice or older swimmers who can only make the 4:30pm practice, the coaches will group those kids in a single lane and adapt their coaching of that lane accordingly.

- **Am I expected to stay at practice and monitor my child?**

No – in fact, the opposite. Please drop your child off and pick him/her up after the session is over. If it's more convenient for you to stay at the pool, we ask that you stay clear of the deck area around the deep end of the pool. You can sit in the chairs by the shallow end of the pool or at the tables and chairs in the food area. We do not want parents on deck during practice – it's distracting for the kids and the coaches.

- **What's the procedure for canceling practice or a meet?**

Either the Team Rep or the Head Coach will do their best to notify families via email of any practice or meet cancellations or delays at least an hour in advance. In the case of practices or home meets, you can also call down to the pool and ask the staff if there has been a weather delay or closure of the pool. The most common cause of cancellations or delays, especially for afternoon practices is thunderstorms. We will – and have – practiced and had meets in the rain in the past, but when there is thunder, there is automatically a 30-minute clock that starts where kids cannot be in the pool. Most weather-related delays or cancellations occur in the afternoons – so during afternoon practices or B meets. For A meets, if the meet is underway, we will likely wait it out and try to resume the meet as soon as it is safe to do so. Please note that summer storms are highly unpredictable – our preference is always to swim, but these are judgment calls and the safety of our swimmers is everyone's top priority. If we are forced to cancel the early practice but the later practice can still be held, feel free to send your swimmer to that practice even if it's not the practice they usually attend. We appreciate everyone's patience and understanding that sometimes we will get the weather (and the call to either hold or cancel practice) wrong. Our [Inclement Weather Policy](#) is available on our website.

- **Who swims at Time Trials?**

Every single swimmer on the team who is available should swim at Time Trials. This is just our team swimming to record baseline times for the start of the season. Every swimmer has an opportunity to race all individual strokes; swimmers who cannot yet swim a stroke legally are not expected to swim that stroke. Time Trials is a really low-key way for swimmers, especially those new to the team, to experience a meet-like atmosphere at our home pool surrounded

# SOMERSET

SWIM TEAM

only by fellow teammates and encouraging parents. It's also a good way for us parents to remember how to do all of the volunteer jobs it takes to run a meet.

- **What is the difference between A Meets and B meets? Who should attend each?**

A Meets are Montgomery County Swim League (MCSL)-sanctioned dual swim meets. We swim against another team in our Division and earn points (win/lose) for each meet. All six teams in our division will swim together in the Divisional championship meet as the last A meet of the season. There is also an all-relay (which our swimmers love!) Relay Carnival A swim meet that counts towards our Division standing and includes all teams from the Division. Swimmers must qualify to swim in A meets by being one of the top 3 (back, breast, fly) or top 6 (freestyle) swimmers in an individual event. Because we are a small team, it is not unusual for swimmers who are new to swimming to qualify for an A meet, which is really fun for them! For Divisionals, only the top 2 (back, breast, fly) or 3 (free) swimmers will compete in the meet. Time Trials times (where every swimmer on the team swims), A meet times, or B meet times all count towards qualifying to swim in an A meet and qualifications are finalized ahead of each A meet immediately following that week's B meet. Every year MCSL determines the Division assignments for every team in the league and home vs. away meets are set by the team's seeding within that Division.

B Meets are also dual meets but they are not MCSL-sanctioned events and no points are earned (and no relays swim). Any swimmer can swim in a B meet, though swimmers who finished in the top 3 in an individual event in the prior A meet cannot swim that event in the subsequent B meet. For B meets, we swim against pools that are typically within a 15-minute drive of Somerset vs. A meets we have no control over who we swim against – or where they are located.

Whether swimming in an A meet or a B meet, swimmers are only allowed to swim 3 individual stroke events. For B meets, swimmers can also swim the Individual Medley event, and for A meets swimmers are allowed to swim 5 events total (the latter can be met by swimming some combination of the Individual Medley event and the two relay events).

Everyone who is available to swim for Time Trials or any A meet or B meet or Divisionals should indicate your swimmer's availability to swim via TeamUnify or via the SE Motion app (using the same login as your Somerset Dolphins account). **Remember: do not assume your swimmer will not qualify for an A meet or Relay Carnival or Divisionals** – we have had many, many new to the team or mostly-B meet swimmers qualify for A meets and Divisionals over the course of the season – either because of time drops or because other swimmers are not available. It's such an accomplishment for new swimmers especially so keep an eye on our swimmer(s) place finishes

# SOMERSET

SWIM TEAM

during B meets as you think about your Saturday morning plans this summer! The entire meet schedule can be found on the [Dolphins event calendar](#).

- **Who swims on A meet relays?**

There are two types of A meet relays: the Boys/Girls Open Medley Relays (open to any age swimmer on the team but typically swum by our 15-18 year olds, with each swimmer swimming a different stroke) and the Boys/Girls 14 & Under Freestyle Relays (restricted to 14 and under swimmers swimming freestyle as the name implies). A meet relays are typically seeded by the Head Coach **during the A meet based on swimmers' performance that day**. There is both an A relay and a B relay. Typically, the A relay has the swimmers' with the fastest times but if the team has the opportunity to earn more points by splitting the fastest swimmers between the A and B relay the Head Coach may do so. Ultimately, who will swim the A vs. B relays is at the discretion of the Head Coach and we appreciate parents' being patient and understanding in this regard. The Head Coach will communicate directly with your swimmers who will swim in which relays.

- **What is a "swim up"?**

Swim ups only happen at A meets. If our team does not have enough swimmers in a particular age category for a given meet (not uncommon for Somerset given our smaller team size), the Head Coach is allowed to designate a younger swimmer to "swim up" in that age category. The swimmer will then have to swim in that age group the entire meet. Swim ups are a great way for a swimmer in one crowded age group to have an opportunity to swim in an A meet they might not otherwise get. The Head Coach always confers with the swimmer in advance and only has a swimmer "swim up" who is happy to do so.

- **What are legal and illegal strokes? What is a DQ?**

MCSL has specific rules, mostly aligned with USA Swimming rules, for what qualifies a stroke as legally swum (e.g., swim in conformance with all rules for that stroke) vs. a stroke that is swum illegally, causing the swim to be "disqualified" (DQ'ed). The stroke and turn officials are trained in these rules and make the determination for disqualifications. DQs happen in both A and B meets. If a swim is DQ'ed, the time is not counted/recorded. You can learn more about the rules for swimming each stroke in the [Officials Guide](#) on MCSL.org.

- **What are the "themes" I see listed in the A Meet events and what other Dolphins traditions should I know about?**

There is a long tradition of kids dressing according to a pre-designated theme at every A meet. Our junior coaches select the themes, and we try to give families as much notice as possible so

# SOMERSET

SWIM TEAM

their child can be prepared – so make your trips to the party store or Amazon.com now! The coaches typically acknowledge the swimmer(s) who do the best job of dressing according to the theme. The last home swim meet always has a prom theme.

Another tradition is the Dolphins team mascot, Captain Purple: a head-to-toe purple superhero who will make an appearance at the start of every A meet and home B meets, lead the team in a cheer, and then jump into the pool. We also have several songs that are always played during home A meets, with the kids doing a special dance to “Love Shack.”

Finally, if your child qualifies to swim at Divisionals, prepare yourself to awaken to a heavily toilet-papered front yard. It’s a tradition, and the junior coaches are really good at getting a lot of toilet paper up in trees and across yards in a short amount of time under the cover of darkness.

- **I thought A meets were only on Saturdays – why is Relay Carnival scheduled for a Sunday?**

The Relay Carnival is always on a Sunday. As the name suggests, it is an all-relay event featuring all six teams in our Division. Who swims at Relay Carnival is determined by the Head Coach based on swimmer times – so the line-up is not finalized until AFTER the A meet the day before. We ask that all families be aware of this and be ready to respond quickly when the line-up comes out and make sure you have let us know if your swimmer is available to attend Relay Carnival – or indicated they are not available – so the Coach can do the line-up quickly. If you have a swimmer who is a top swimmer in a particular event, you can expect them to swim a lot of relays.

- **I keep hearing I need to “declare my swimmer(s) availability” for all meets but I don’t know how to do that?**

If you do not indicate your swimmers’ availability to swim in a meet, they cannot be added to the line-up once it’s finalized and they will not swim in that meet. By letting us know in advance, you save the coaches lots of time trying to track you down to confirm a swimmer’s availability.

There are two ways to let the Coaches know if your swimmer(s) are available to swim in meets. You can log into your account via the Somerset Dolphins website or you can download the SE Motion (Sports Engine Motion) app and login using the same login information as when accessing your account via the website. The SE Motion app is a much easier way to indicate your swimmer(s) availability – after logging in, click on the upper left hand corner to access the menu, go to “Events & Jobs,” choose “Events & Meet Entries” and then click on “Declare” or “Commitment” for each A and B meet listed. You will see all of your swimmers listed, and it will say “Undeclared” if you have not yet “committed” them. Click on Yes or No, make sure Day 1

# SOMERSET

SWIM TEAM

Session 1 is checked, and click "Apply". We need you to fill this out for each swimmer and every meet – **it is as important you let us know if your swimmer is NOT available as letting us know they are available.** You can always edit your availability if your plans change.

To declare your swimmers' availability via the Dolphins website, you will "Sign In" to your account at [www.somersetdolphins.com](http://www.somersetdolphins.com), choose "My Account" where your account name appears in the right hand corner, then choose "Events & Competition" and then "Team Events" from the left hand menu. Choose the Event, then click on your swimmer's name. Choose "Yes" or "No" under the "Signup Record" dropdown menu, Click Day 1/Session 1, and then click Save Changes. Do this individually for all of the Meets and all of your swimmers - including Time Trials, A Meets, B Meets. Relay Carnival (Yes/No only) and Divisionals. **Please indicate your swimmer's availability for A Meets even if they do not typically swim or have never swum in an A meet. This is very important and saves the Coaches lots of time trying to track down swimmers. We have had many disappointed swimmers over the years who qualified for an A meet but the Coach didn't know they were available to swim. Once the draft lineup goes out, we will not bump an available swimmer for another swimmer that we didn't know what available.** The coaches try their best to ask "undeclared" swimmers who qualify if they are available but we have 100 swimmers on the team and a short turnaround time between the B meet on Wednesday and when the draft A lineup goes out on Thursday. Please help us make this easier on the coaches!

We cannot stress enough how much easier it is to indicate your swimmers' availability using the SE Motion app so please download it from the [Apple store](#) or [Google store](#)!

- **I have a Dolphins account – I get all of the Dolphins emails – but it won't let me log in or make changes to my account?**

Each family can only have one account login with administrative privileges so check to see who registered your swimmer(s). Chances are it was your spouse who registered your swimmers and you will need to share the email and password in order to login and be able to do administrative actions like indicating your swimmers' availability. If you are not sure which email you used to register your swimmers, please email Ann Bolten ([annkelly411@gmail.com](mailto:annkelly411@gmail.com)) and she will look up the information. Another critical piece of information about our website database: you will want to register your swimmers every season using the same email address. This will ensure that your swimmers' times stay visible in your account. TeamUnify does a great job of retaining all of your swimmers' times, but if you create a new account, you will lose the ability to see that time history (the good news is that the swimmer's ID will stay unique so those times are still associated with your swimmer, they just aren't visible to you).

# SOMERSET

SWIM TEAM

- **What role do parents play on the swim team?**

Parent volunteers are the only way we can have a swim team and run swim meets. Each meet needs lots of volunteers - **if your swimmer is swimming in a meet, you are expected to volunteer to help out at that meet.** Our biggest needs each season are for timers for each meet (18 for Time Trials; 9 for every A and B meet – unless a pool has 8 lanes, in which case we need 12) and help with Social Events and Concessions. Timing is a really fun way to watch the swim meet, socialize with other parents, and make the time pass quickly (especially during B meets). There is a timer training before every single swim meet – it is not difficult so do not be afraid to sign up to time at a meet. Concessions volunteers get to step away and watch their swimmer when they swim. Social Event volunteers have a light lift that typically involves overseeing junior coaches and coordinating set-up and clean-up volunteers. Longer-term, we need parents interested in volunteering for more involved roles, including organizing the team and training to be meet officials.

- **Who is invited to team social events and when are they happening?**

Dolphins, Minis and their families are all invited to participate in social events. Social events are listed on the website [Calendar](#). They will also be posted to the bulletin board at the pool.

- **Tell me more about the team banquet – who should attend?**

The team banquet is our final opportunity to come together (Minis, Dolphins, parents, and siblings) and celebrate the season. Kids will get their final awards, eat dinner and dessert together, and cap it all off with the slide show of photos from the season. The banquet is the Sunday after Divisionals down at the pool.

- **Is there a way to add all of the events to my iPhone calendar?**

Yes! From your phone, go to [www.somersetdolphins.com](http://www.somersetdolphins.com) and login to your account, click on the Calendar menu, click on the Team Events tab (this is the default view), scroll down to the yellow “Subscribe” button, then click “Copy Link”. You should see a “link copied” notification. Go to your phone’s calendar, click on “Calendars”, select “Add Calendar”, select “Add Subscription Calendar”, paste the link. You should see all Somerset Dolphins events on your calendar. Make sure to change the calendar color to purple (of course)! Note: we don’t post anything to the “General” or “Practices” calendar so there is no need to subscribe to those.

- **What is the Coaches Long-Course Meet and All-Stars?**

Coaches’ Long Course is a meet for the top 8 swimmers from each individual event across all of MCL. Swimmers who qualify will swim their event in a long-course (50 meter) pool, twice the

# SOMERSET

SWIM TEAM

distance of the event they swim during regular meets (e.g., a 50-meter short-course freestyle swim will be a 100-meter long-course freestyle swim).

All-Stars are for the top 16 swimmers in an individual event or relay team across MCSL. All-Stars occurs the weekend after the banquet on Saturday and Sunday. Swimmers who qualify for All-Stars will continue practicing the week after the banquet to prepare for All-Stars. We have had many first-time or summer only swimmers qualify for All-Stars Relays so keep an eye on your swimmers performance early in the season and feel free to ask any of the Dolphins reps about your swimmer(s) chances as it's a really fun meet.

- **There is a lot of information sent by email – how do I keep track of what's happening when?**

Please visit [www.somersetdolphins.com](http://www.somersetdolphins.com) for everything you need to know about what is going on this season – we repost weekly emails to the [News](#) section that is on the front page; the [Calendar](#) online has all of the meets and social events for the season in one place; the Practice Schedule is as the name suggests, and the Minis tab has all Minis information. We have also [outlined what communications you will receive each week](#) and what requires your response. Finally, the bulletin board down at the pool will post key announcements.

- **I have a question or a concern – who should I contact?**

Please direct any administrative/scheduling/website/SE Motion questions to one of the (all volunteer parents) [Team Reps](#). If you have a specific question about your child's swimming, please direct it to [Head Coach Calen Janesky](#) and if your child is old enough to self-advocate, we prefer kids to talk directly to their coaches. We do, however, ask that you not lobby for your child to swim in a specific event or complain if they are put in an event you don't think they can swim legally (e.g., breast or butterfly). Coaches often place kids in events where they are not yet consistently legal to get them comfortable with swimming that event and/or because they believe they are close enough that they may have a legal swim.

- **Is there anything else I should know?**

**We ask that parents go easy on our coaches and volunteers throughout the season.** Everyone within the Dolphins organization is trying to put together a fun and rewarding season for your kids. That doesn't mean mistakes won't happen. MCSL has also asked that parents approach the A meet season modeling the behavior they already see in the kids who are more apt than their parents to go with the flow when mistakes happen, when they didn't get the lineup they hoped for, or when an official misses a call. It's just swimming after all.