



**SOMERSET**

---

**Swim Team Handbook**

Last revised: March 2022

## Table of Contents

1.	The Somerset Dolphins .....	1
2.	Purpose of the team.....	1
3.	Who is eligible for the team.....	2
4.	How to join the team .....	2
5.	Practices .....	3
6.	Coaches .....	4
7.	Mini Coaches .....	5
8.	Team suits and other gear .....	5
9.	Team activities.....	6
10.	Supervision .....	7
11.	Transportation .....	7
12.	Noise and parking restrictions .....	7
13.	Team Organization and Volunteering .....	8
14.	Team Jobs .....	9
	Non-Deck Jobs .....	9
	Deck Jobs - Jobs needed to run “A” or “B” meets.....	10
15.	Information about the meets .....	10
	“A” meets .....	11
	“B” meets.....	14
	Expectations at all meets.....	15
	Directions to meet locations .....	16
	Kids who do not want to swim in meets .....	16
	Other Meets.....	16
	Time Trials .....	16
	Relay Carnival .....	16
	Divisionals .....	17
	Long Course and All Star meets: .....	17
	Disqualifications .....	18
	Swim league rules .....	18
16.	Ribbons, Trophies, and Awards .....	19
17.	Where to find more information.....	20

## 1. The Somerset Dolphins

**Team Colors:** Purple & White

Mascot: Dolphin

Team Superhero: Captain Purple

**Regular team:** Town residents, ages 6-18, who can pass the deep water test

**Mini Team:** Town residents ages 4-7 who are comfortable putting their face in the water.

**League affiliation:** MCSL (Montgomery County Swim League) members since 1975 (maybe!).

**Swim Season:** Tuesday after Memorial Day to last weekend in July.

**Meet Schedule:** Time Trials the second Saturday in June. 10 to 11 dual meets - Every Wednesday late afternoon (B meets) and Saturday morning (A Meets) starting the third week of June. Divisional Championship – third Saturday in July. All-star events – last weekend in July. Relay Carnival takes place in late-June or mid-July. This schedule is subject to minor adjustment.

### **Practice Times:**

- Afternoon Practice: Sessions between 4 p.m. - 6 p.m., starting the Tuesday after Memorial Day. Length of sessions and swimmers assigned to each session determined by the Coach.
- Morning Practice: 8:30am to 10:15am, starting the day after MCPS lets out.

### **Other Important Dates:**

Late April – Spring Parents Meeting

Friday or Saturday in May – Opening Party

Saturday night after the Divisional Championship – Team Banquet

## 2. Purpose of the team

The Somerset swim team is an important part of the community. It brings neighbors together in an enjoyable outdoor activity both at swim meets and at the many social functions that the team sponsors. The team is meant to be an activity that is fun and beneficial for kids with a wide range of swimming abilities and experience. Many kids who are not very fast swimmers enjoy participating in the team year after year and are encouraged to do so, for both the athletic and social benefits. The team also offers opportunities for excellent swimmers. The MCSL league to which our team belongs is the second-largest summer league in the country, with top swimmers. Our best swimmers get to compete in all-star meets with other top swimmers in the county.

The happiest swimmers are usually those who concentrate on improving their own times, and who get excited to watch their progress rather than focusing on how fast or slow they are compared to other swimmers.

### **3. Who is eligible for the team**

#### Regular Team:

Team members must be Town residents (as defined by the Town) between ages 6 years and 18 years old. The age cut-off is determined by a swimmer's age as of June 1. At a minimum, team members must also pass the deep water test, which requires swimming two lengths of the pool, floating on your back for 1 minute, and treading water for 30 seconds. All team members must also be assessed by the coaches to determine safety and suitability for the team. The coaches have the sole discretion to determine whether a swimmer is sufficiently skilled and water-safe to participate in the team.

#### The Minis:

The Minis is a learn-to-swim program for swimmers 4-7 years old who cannot pass the deep water test. At a minimum, mini swimmers must be comfortable putting their face in the water. All mini swimmers will also be assessed by the coaches to determine safety and suitability for minis. The coaches have the sole discretion to determine whether a swimmer is sufficiently skilled and water-safe to participate in minis or is eligible to move to the regular team.

Minis practice three days a week. There is also one Mini meet. Mini swimmers are an important part of the future of the swim team and are invited to attend all the social events. Mini swimmers are primarily coached by team teenagers setting up a nice relationship between the younger and older kids in the community. One of the regular team coaches or an outside coach will serve as the head mini coach and will be responsible for training and supervising the teen mini coaches.

#### If you are not available for part of the swim season:

This is fine. Many team members are away for a week or two of the season at camp or on vacation. If you know that you are going to be away for part of the season, please tell the coaches. There will be an online sign-up for the meets where you can indicate whether your child will be available for each of the meets. This is crucial for the coaches because this is how they make the line ups. If you say you can come to a meet and then don't show up it makes it hard on the team.

### **4. How to join the team**

Registration for the team is [online](#). Details about registration will be distributed by email to all prior swim team accounts, through the Town's private listserv, and in the Town Journal. New families interested in being on the team's email list should use the [Contact Us](#) form on the website.

All information about the team, practices, meets, schedule changes and general back and forth will be communicated through email updates and posted to the website. When you sign up for the swim team you will be added to the e-mail list. Parents will be asked to volunteer for a variety of jobs during the swim season.

We accept registrations for joining the team at any time prior to the end of the season. The registration fee is not pro-rated for those who join late or are available for only part of the season.

**Refunds:** We will refund the registration fee only if a request is made to drop from the team within a week after the swimmer attends his/her first practice or at the discretion of the Team Rep or Head Coach. We will also refund the fee if the coaches determine that a child is not yet ready for the Minis team.

## 5. Practices

Swimmers should come to practice every day that they are available, and should keep coaches informed of when they have conflicts that will cause them to be absent for several days. (There is no problem if your child needs to miss practice for camp, vacations, etc. - just keep the coaches generally informed).

Afternoon practices usually begin the Tuesday after Memorial Day. After the public school year ends, there is both morning and afternoon practice - swimmers may come to either one, but are encouraged to come to morning practice if possible, since the full pool is available and the coaches can give more individualized attention. Swimmers may attend both practices a day if they wish.

Swimmers are expected to pay attention at practice. Any swimmer who is causing trouble or distracting others will be asked by the coaches to leave practice for that day.

Although attending practice is not mandatory, attendance will be taken into consideration when the line-up is done for the Saturday meet. Swimmers who attend all practices will have an advantage when the coach is deciding who will swim.

### Canceling Practice:

Always assume that there is practice as practice is rarely ever cancelled. If the pool is open, there is practice – rain, shine, too hot or too cold! We try not to cancel practice, but occasionally it happens. Swimmers should call the pool to see if it is open on days that look like it might be storming.

### Afternoon Practice Times:

Afternoon practice sessions usually run from 4 p.m. to 6p.m. Prior to the start of afternoon practice, the Head Coach will communicate the number, duration, and who will attend which afternoon practice sessions during the period before morning practices start. This allows the coaches to assess swimmers' abilities in an orderly manner. If a swimmer has a schedule conflict with the session he/she has been assigned, then he or she can, with the Head Coach's permission, attend a different session; but as a rule, it is hard to accommodate one swimmer outside of his/her practice group who really needs a different type of coaching. This is especially true for younger swimmers who need more stroke development and less endurance swimming. Since practices require swimmers to share lanes, it is really important that swimmers swim with the age/development group they have been assigned. Once morning practices start, it becomes much easier to accommodate swimmers with scheduling conflicts.

### Instruction:

The practices have a large number of kids and individual attention is not generally possible. There are fewer swimmers at morning practice, so there is more chance for individual attention.

### Private coaching:

If you want more instruction, coaches may be hired for individual lessons, separately from the swim team. Their willingness to provide lessons and contact information is included on the website in their coaches' bios. We encourage all swimmers to take advantage of this – be they fast or slow. All coaches are required to charge a standard fee for coaching sessions. Please contact coaches individually to set up sessions and determine cost of instruction.

### Parents & Practice:

Parents generally should not attend practice. If you do wish to attend practice to observe your child, please do not approach the coaches during practice unless it is an emergency. The coaches' primary focus is on the swimmers.

## **6. Coaches**

The swim team is coached by a head coach and one or more assistant coaches and several junior coaches. The coaches are responsible for supervising practices, doing the line-up and coaching both "A" and "B" meets. All coaches are certified lifeguards.

### Hiring:

The coaches are selected by the swim team representatives. They are hired by and work for the pool management company. The Town of Somerset helps underwrite the cost of the team's coaches, so the team's budget and hiring plan is subject to Town Council approval.

Questions for the coaches:

If you have any issues with the coaches concerning your child or anything special you want the coaches to know about your child, please talk to the coaches directly. Questions about practice, why your child is/is not swimming in a meet, why your child disqualified in an event, or other swimming-related questions should be addressed to the coaches. Please contact the coaches at a time when they are not busy - before or after practice rather than during practice. You can also make appointments to meet with the coaches during the day. We also really encourage your children to communicate directly with the coaches about any questions or concerns they have with their swimming.

Questions about the coaches:

If there are any issues that do not seem addressed by talking to the coaches, you can contact the team representatives who supervise the coaching staff. The rep(s) try to optimize the situation for both the coaches and the team whenever possible.

## **7. Minis Coaches**

The Minis are coached by team teenagers, supervised by an experienced Coach. The minimum age of teen mini coaches is 13; this may vary by need and discretion of the swim team executive committee. Minis coaches may choose to receive community service hours or a stipend for the summer. All Minis coaches must attend a training session. The team does not pay for this training. The Minis coach program is as important to the teenagers, for whom it is usually their first job, as it is to the younger children, who get a chance to get to know the big kids on the team and learn from them.

## **8. Team suits and other gear**

Suits:

Swimmers wear racing suits. The girls wear one piece suits and the boys wear “jammers” (bicycle shorts-like suit).

Team suits are optional but encouraged. The salesperson for the team suits usually attends our opening day party and takes orders. If you do not buy a suit when they are sold at the pool, you may order one yourself from our supplier or from any other source that sells our brand of suit.

A number of our swimmers wear older models of Dolphin team suits, which is fine. MCSL bars swimmers who swim in A meets from wearing suits bearing the logo of any other team besides their MCSL team.

Caps:

Male and female swimmers with hair longer than a “buzz” cut, wear caps during

practice and when racing. Caps are available for purchase along with other spirit wear. Generic caps are also available for purchase at any sports store or online. MCSL bars swimmers who swim in A meets from wearing suits bearing the logo of any other team besides their MCSL team.

Goggles:

Swimmers should wear goggles during practice and at meets. Goggles are available at the opening day party from the team suit salesperson or can be purchased at local stores.

Fins:

From time to time, swimmers will practice with fins. The team has many pairs, but swimmers are encouraged to bring their own fins to practice if they have them.

## **9. Team activities**

The social opportunities and team activities are as important as the swimming in the Somerset Dolphins season. All events are open to the team and the Minis. Many events are also open to siblings and parents. The many treasured annual activities may include:

Movie Night: Join us at the pool for movie night!

Lunch after the meet: Lunch after the swim meets is an important team building tool and lots of fun. After home meets, the team usually grills hamburgers and hot dogs or orders pizza. After an away meet, the team picks a restaurant and eats as a group there. Saturday meet ribbons are distributed at lunch. This event is open to the entire swim family – siblings, parents, etc.

Breakfast with the Coaches: We pick one or more weeks of morning practices to serve breakfast afterwards so the kids can spend quality time with each other and their coaches.

Team Pictures: A team photo will be taken during the season. We also have one or more volunteer photographer who takes photos at meets to compile at the end of the season.

Dessert Contest: We pick a day after practice where every swimmer (or groups of swimmers) create a dessert that they bring to the pool. A panel of judges (typically the coaches) taste test each dessert and declare winners in each dessert category. Then everyone enjoys the leftover desserts!

Team Banquet: This is the end-of-season dinner held at the pool the evening after Divisionals. The event includes a slide show, presentation of trophies, and individual awards – all swimmers (including Minis) get trophies with their names on them. All team members and their families are invited.



We offer many other spirit activities throughout the season to help swimmers feel connected to the team and one another.

## **10. Supervision**

All children younger than 8 must be supervised when they are at the pool. This is a pool requirement and applies when children are at swim team practice or a meet or any other team event. If the pool closes unexpectedly for any reason, practice will end abruptly, and the coaches and pool staff are not responsible for supervising the swimmers or waiting for them to be picked up. During practices, the coaches and lifeguarding staff are responsible for supervising the safety of children while in the water, but are not responsible for children who are not in the water - if a child wanders away from practice, the coaches and pool staff may not know where the child is, and they have no responsibility to supervise that child. Please make sure a caregiver is able to quickly pick up your child from practice or a meet if the weather changes abruptly.

## **11. Transportation**

You are responsible for driving your child to the away meets, or finding transportation. For away meets, some people may meet at the pool and then caravan over to the meet. We can usually form car pools but you must come to the pool or contact a fellow swim team member in order to arrange transportation. The swim team takes no responsibility for the safety of the transportation.

Meets can often end early due to weather or pool breakdowns. Please make sure that you have arranged for someone to be responsible for your child at meets if you are not there, so that they are not stranded at the meet.

## **12. Noise and parking restrictions**

The pool is located very close to many neighborhood homes, and it is necessary that we make every effort to keep the noise within reasonable limits. Please do not bring any noisemakers to the pool grounds, such as megaphones, drums, boom-boxes, or pots and pans. Please do not honk horns or cheer on the way to the pool before meets. For Saturday morning meets, there is no cheering at the pool prior to 9 AM, and any conversations or activities should be kept as quiet as

possible prior to 9 AM. It is also important to keep noise levels down at the pool when we have a home B meet which can run late in the evening.

On days of home meets, parking is limited and we must leave the spaces for the away team. Please walk to the pool whenever possible, especially at meets so that the visiting team can use the spaces in the parking lot.

### **13. Team Organization and Volunteering**

The swim team is run by parent volunteers – we need a lot of parent participation to run a successful season. The swim team executive committee consists of the Dolphin Team Representative; an Operations Manager; two “A” Team Representatives; two ”B” Team Representatives; and the Treasurer. Other volunteer swim team leaders include MCSL certified officials; the Automation team; the Spirit Wear coordinator; the Concessions Chair; the Banquet Chair; the Minis Coordinator; and many others. Any of these positions may be divided among two or three individuals; or one individual may assume more than one of these positions. The executive committee meets monthly starting in February each year, and then weekly as the start of the season approaches. The broader volunteer committee meets at least once a year, and at times more frequently. The executive committee oversees coach selection, selects mini teen coaches, ensures that individuals are assigned to complete essential tasks, creates a budget for Town Council approval, and recommends changes in policies and procedures to the swim team parents. Any swim team parent may attend any official Swim Team Committee meeting, which are communicated by the Town Manager via the Town’s communications platforms.

#### Volunteering:

Swim teams are unique in the number of volunteers that are required to run a meet as well as run the other activities of the team. Parental involvement is part of both the fun and community building aspects of the team. We can promise that you will meet many wonderful families in the neighborhood during your swim team years.

It is impossible for the team to operate unless parents volunteer. **It takes 36 parents to run a meet.** The minimum expectation is that each swim parent will volunteer for one job during the course of the summer but we ask everyone to expect to help out in some capacity at each meet when your child is swimming – especially with timing.

We also need people who are willing to be trained officials – stroke and turn judges, starters, head timers, and referees. If you are willing to take a training course (~3 hours, with many online now due to COVID), please tell us at the beginning of the season, and we will tell you the dates of the training courses, or you can look them up on the MCSL web site ([www.mcsl.org](http://www.mcsl.org)).

## 14. Team Jobs

Every parent is required to volunteer for at least one job. As you can see, there's something for everyone! Parents who do not sign up for a job will be assigned one (usually timing!). Team jobs come in two types – non-deck jobs needed to run the team and deck jobs required by the MCSL for running the meets.

### Non-Deck Jobs

- Dolphin Team Coordinator: Chairs the swim team executive committee. Is a member of the pool committee
- Team “A” Representative: Represents the team at MCSL functions and coordinates the running of “A” meets.
- Team “B” Representative: Coordinates and schedules “B”meets
- Team Operations Manager: Assists the team rep with planning, communications, website upkeep, registration, and filling any gaps.
- Banquet Chair: Coordinates year-end banquet
- Breakfast with the Coaches: Coordinates breakfast at select practices.
- Concession Chair: Coordinates concessions for “A” and “B” meets
- Food Truck Chair: Arranges for food trucks at home meets.
- Automation Chair and Data People: Maintain team computer and data base
- Hot Heats Coordinator: Arranges for awards for winning swimmer at randomly selected heats during B meets.
- Minis Coordinator: Coordinates the developmental team and organizes mini meet and Popsicle days. Also responsible for buying gifts for mini coaches!
- Officials Coordinator: Recruits new officials; assigns officials home and away meets.
- Social Events Coordinator: Plans and staffs team social events
- Spirit Wear: Selects spirit wear for the season, coordinates with vendor to develop website for sales, arranges for delivery of spirit wear.
- Treasurer: Collects money, pays bills and prepares yearly budget
- Trophy person: Order and pick-up trophies, working with Data people and coaches to get names for point club and coaches trophies.

### **Deck Jobs - Jobs needed to run “A” or “B” meets**

It takes over 36 parents to run a meet – not including concessions. These jobs come in two categories – those that are “certified” and those that do not require any MCSL training. MCSL rules require us to furnish all these personnel (except for personal best ribbon writer).

1) Certified Officials: These jobs require the volunteer to attend a mandatory MCSL training session (see note from Team Rep below) --

- Referee (home meets only) – runs meet
- Stroke and Turn Judges (need 2 per team at every meet) – judges swimmers stroke and disqualifies swimmers who aren't doing the stroke correctly
- Starter (away meets only) – starts races

2) These jobs do not require MCSL certification:

- Automation and Data Entry – enter times after races and scores meet (typically same people as Data People! We need 2 per team at every meet.)
- Clerk of Course – checks in swimmers before races
- Head Timer – Makes sure that timers are ready before race starts and ensures accuracy of recorded times for each meet. Spare watch at meets.
- Timers (need 9 per team) – time races (three per lane)
- Announcer (home meet only) – announces race
- Ribbon Writers – fills out ribbons (sticks labels provided by data entry people on them at an A meet, much more work at B-meets)
- Runners – takes time cards from Head timer to Data Entry people.

## **15. Information about the meets**

"A" meets are on Saturday mornings.

"B" meets are on Wednesday evenings

There is no "A" and "B" team – many swimmers swim at both “A” and “B” meets.

Swimmers compete against other swimmers in their age group, based on gender, and their age as of June 1. The age groups are 8 and under, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, and 15-18.

## “A” meets

The “A” meets are against other teams in our division. We are put in a division with five other teams that had approximately the same strength swimmers as we did in the previous year. Team scores are kept at “A” meets. These meets also have a set line-up and a limited number of athletes who can compete. Three per event, except in some events where there are two heats. The line-ups for A meets are due on Fridays and may not be changed before the meet.

### How to indicate you are available for an “A” meet:

Any swimmer who wants to be considered for each week’s “A” meet must indicate that they are available for the meet by completing the availability section of the online registration. It is the responsibility of the swimmers and the parents to make sure that this information is accurate and current. If you have not specified your availability, the coaches will not put you in a meet. If you have indicated you can be in a meet, and have a change of plans, you must notify the coaches by **email or in writing** by Thursday before an A meet. Please do not “just tell” the coaches, or have your swimmer “just tell” them. There are far too many kids to keep track of verbally.

### How coaches select which swimmers to enter in an “A” meet:

When doing a line-up for an “A” meet, the coach must follow the MSCL rule: *No swimmer may swim more than 5 events at a meet broken down as follows: 3 individual events and two relays (including IM) or 2 individual events and 3 relays.* The decision regarding which swimmers to enter at each “A” meet is *solely the decision of the coach.* The primary factor the coach considers is the best time achieved season-to-date at either an A meet, B meet, or Time Trials (the coach will have available the times from all the meets, including the “B” meet immediately preceding the upcoming “A” meet). Usually the coach decides on whom to swim based on these top times. But the coach may also take into account any other factors that s/he believes are relevant. Examples of such other factors include: 1) the coach may decide to limit the number of races in which a swimmer is entered if a swimmer does well when swimming in a couple of races but does not perform as well when in more races; 2) the coach may decide not to use a swimmer in a stroke where s/he believes the swimmer is likely to disqualify based on observation of the swimmer’s stroke; or 3) the coach may choose not to swim a child who has refused to practice when available, or otherwise has caused problems for the team or does not appear interested in contributing to team efforts; 4) A coach may decide to give a swimmer a chance because of something he/she has observed in practice; 5) For events with two heats, the coach may rotate through slower swimmers to give everyone a chance to swim on Saturday.

The swimmers in “A” meets will vary week to week, depending on the above factors and which swimmers are available that week. Many people do not

indicate that their child is available for an “A” meet because they think the chances are low that they will be selected - but sometimes faster swimmers are out of town on a given date, and there would have been a slot for the swimmer if it was known that they were available. (The coaches sometimes make some calls to find other available people if there are not enough swimmers available, but don’t count on this because time is very limited when the coaches are doing the scheduling).

The coach evaluates the best strategy for maximizing the points scored by the team. The coach must decide which events to enter the swimmer in (a maximum of three of the four strokes and five events overall), and if there are not enough swimmers in an age group, which younger swimmers to “swim up” in age. Swimmers are expected to be willing to swim all of the events that they are entered in, and to willingly “swim up” when needed.

There is a freestyle relay at the end of each “A” meet, with an “A” and a “B” relay. The swimmers for this relay are not selected in advance of the meet. The Somerset practice is to use the swimmers with the fastest freestyle times swum that day in the “A” relay, and the second-fastest in the “B” relay. There are two exceptions: sometimes a fast swimmer will not be entered into freestyle at the meet (because they were entered into all the other strokes), and if they are clearly the fastest freestyler even though they did not swim the event that day, then they will still be used in the freestyle relay. The second exception is that sometimes the coaches balance the fast swimmers between the “A” and the “B” relay if they believe that they could get both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place with that strategy.

Checking to see if you are scheduled to swim:

Draft line-ups will be emailed out with a deadline for letting the coach know if mistakes have been made – i.e., you are not going to be there or that you have been put in too many strokes. Coaches will adjust the line-up as needed and a final line-up will be emailed out before the meet.

If you have indicated online that you are available for an “A” meet, then you **MUST** check the line-up to see if you have been scheduled to swim. The line-up is not finalized until Friday at noon, so there can be changes from the draft emailed on Thursday. You will not be given a call telling you that you are scheduled. *Failure to show up for an “A” meet when you have been scheduled to swim may mean that you will not be scheduled to swim the following “A” meet.*

Checking in for “A” meets:

“A” meets at home: Swimmers should be at the pool by 8 AM ready to warm-up.

All swimmers are expected to warm-up with the team.

A swimmer who does not check in on time for an “A” meet risks getting scratched from the meet if we have other swimmers available – we will try to call your house if time permits if you do not show up on time, but we can’t guarantee it. If you are running a few minutes late but are on your way, get word to the pool – send word with another swimmer, have a parent come down to the pool even if the kid isn’t ready yet, call the pool at 301-951-1141 or a coach or A Rep’s cell phone.

Staying for the full “A” meet:

“A” meets require a swimmer to be available continuously from the check-in time up until the end time of the meet – the coach may want to use the swimmer in the last race of the day, which is a relay event where the swimmers are not scheduled in advance. Meets generally last until about 11:30, and may last longer if there is weather or other delays. If a swimmer needs to leave the meet before the relay, please tell the coach before leaving.

Sometimes swimmers have a schedule conflict where they are available for only part of the meet. In this case, the swimmer cannot indicate that they are “available” for the meet on the sign-up list, but must specifically indicate the hours that they are available. The coach will then decide which events to enter the swimmer in.

Why it is necessary to have strict procedures for “A” meets:

The coaches must turn in an electronic entry list to the opposing team by noon on Friday. It takes a lot of effort and strategizing for the coaches to figure out which kids to enter in which events, and then takes a lot of time for the volunteer computer operator to enter the entries in the correct format, and for the coaches, computer operator, team reps, etc. to check that the entries are correct. This is why we **MUST** know who is available for an “A” meet by the end of the day on the Tuesday preceding the meet.

No Shows:

Because of the MCSL scratch rules, it is very difficult to fill a lane on Saturday morning. Empty lanes cost the team points, but more importantly, for every no-show there is probably a swimmer sitting at home wishing he/she could race. There are generally more swimmers who would like to swim at “A” meets than there are entry spots. Please understand that it feels terrible to these swimmers to know that there are empty lanes and that there would have been a spot available for them, but they weren’t entered because some other kid said they were available but later changed their plans, or got sick and didn’t tell anyone in time.

It is also unfair to kids to keep them in suspense about whether or not there is a spot for them, or to tell them at the last minute.

What if there is an emergency preventing a swimmer from being in the meet:

Please tell the coaches as soon as possible. If the coaches know before Friday morning, they will be able to change the entry list before submitting it to the opposing team. If you tell the coaches earlier than Friday, that's even better, because it takes time and effort to change the list and rearrange the other swimmers.

If the coaches are told after Friday morning but before the meet on Saturday, there is a limited ability to "scratch" up to three swimmers and substitute other swimmers. If you anticipate a potential conflict (like a pending ear infection), please keep the coaches informed so they can plan accordingly, and perhaps line up another swimmer.

If an emergency or illness happens too late to reach a coach at the pool, call the A Representative at home – 6:00 am before the meet is not too early! If the emergency is at the last minute on the morning of the meet, ways to get a message through include: have a parent come down to the parking lot by 7:45, call the pool at 301-951-1141 between 7:30 and 7:45, send word with another swim team family, or try to reach a coach on his/her cell phone.

Lunch after the meets

After Saturday "A" meets, we will pick a spot to meet up for lunch or have lunch at our pool after home meets. The coaches will usually bring the ribbons there for distribution (or you can get them later at the pool). We encourage this Somerset tradition!

"B" meets

"B" meets are Wednesday night meets scheduled with other teams that we choose – based on location, past experience, available schedules, and teams that have similar philosophies. "B" meets are supposed to be run similar to "A" meets, but are not official meets subject to the MCSL league rules, and therefore may be slightly less formal than "A" meets. "B" meets are not scored, and do not count towards our division standing with MCSL.

All swimmers are eligible for "B" meets and are encouraged to come to them. The team considers them equally important to "A" meets. Swimmers that have placed first, second or third in an event at the preceding "A" meet may not swim that same event at the "B" meet, but can swim other events. The coaches would like to know in advance who will not be coming to the "B" meets since there are typically more swimmers and putting together line-ups are time-consuming. Please notify coaches if you are no longer available to swim as it helps reduce some of the chaos as B meets. Swimmers should follow the same procedure for filling in their availability for B meets online.



### Checking in for “B” meets

“B” meets at home: Swimmers should be at the pool by 5 PM ready to warm up

“B” meets away: Swimmers should plan to be at the away pool ready to warm-up by 5:30 PM. They do not need to check in at Somerset before going to the away pool.

### Parent Volunteers:

“B” Meets require more volunteers because more kids swim. Nine timers are needed for each meet. It is mandatory that one adult per household volunteer and, if unable to meet that commitment, that parent is responsible for finding a replacement and notifying the “B” Meet Representative.

### Expectations at all meets

Swimmers should remain in the team area during the meet. If a swimmer needs to leave the team area for any reason, the swimmer should inform one of the coaches before leaving. We do not want any swimmers to miss the check-in time for their event, or cause the coaches to have to hunt them down.

Parents, siblings, relatives, friends, etc., are all encouraged to volunteer at and watch the meets. Cheering is welcome, but spectators need to be careful to be quiet once “Quiet for the start” is announced so that swimmers can hear the starting equipment. Parents who are helping with officiating, such as timers, are not supposed to cheer – this is according to league rules, so that all officials can concentrate on officiating in a neutral manner.

The deck area around the pool and at the ends of the pool needs to be left clear for officials working the meet. Please do not stand at the end of the lanes to cheer your swimmer, or allow younger siblings to run up and down the side of the pool, since officials need a clean line of sight along the pool sides and pool ends to fairly judge the meet.

Please do not use flash photography during the meet, since the flash may be confused with the flash of the starting equipment. Cell phone ringers must be turned off, because they may be confused with the sound of the starting equipment.

### **Directions to meet locations**

Meets are held all over the county as well as at our pool. Addresses for meets can be found on the team website or the MCSL website ([www.mcsl.org](http://www.mcsl.org)).

### **Kids who do not want to swim in meets**

There are some kids, especially young or newer swimmers, who do not want to participate in any meets. This is fine. The coaches will encourage swimmers to try a meet when they are ready for it. Usually, for developmental team members, this happens for the last couple of "B" meets. If you believe that your child will feel pressured by the coaches encouraging them to try a meet, then talk to the coaches to make them aware of it.

### **Other Meets**

Mini Meet: This is a really fun event at the end of every season where the Minis get to show off their new swimming prowess. Mini coaches run the meet and are available to help the swimmers get across the pool if need be with team swimmers acting as officials and timers. Pizza is served. Team swimmers assist with timing and cheering. The mini meet has special events just for the minis:

- Full and half length  
kickboard
- Full and half length  
Freestyle
- Full length Backstroke
- Full length Breaststroke

Ribbons are given out to the swimmers immediately upon finishing the meet.

### **Time Trials**

This event kicks off the swim team season. It is just like a regular meet, but it is only for Somerset swimmers. It is great practice for the kids and the officials, and the results of Time Trials determine who is selected for the first "A" meet. If a swimmer cannot come to Time Trials. Swimmers who do not get timed on these days will need to come to a "B" meet to get their first times.

### **Relay Carnival**

This is an all-relay meet, using 4-6 swimmers from each age group, which takes place on a Sunday morning in late June or by mid-July. If you are likely to be in the meet, we will contact you a few days before to check if you are available. The final list of who will be entered may not be known until the afternoon before the meet (since any best times swum in the Saturday morning "A" meet will be factored into the decision about who to swim).

## **Divisionals**

This is the championship meet for the six teams in the division. Fewer swimmers are entered than in an “A” meet, as each team may enter only two swimmers per event, rather than the usual three in “A” meets. Divisionals starts an hour earlier than an “A” meet.

We have to submit the entry list a week in advance. For any swimmers who are likely to be entered in Divisionals, we will contact you in advance to see if you are available. The coaches use the same procedures for selecting swimmers for Divisionals as is explained above for “A” meets, using primarily the fastest times swum in any “A” or “B” meet. Note that the times listed in the meet program for entered swimmers are only “A” meet times, due to league rules. So if you are looking at the entry lists and see times or swimmers that are different from what you expect, this is probably because only “A” meet times are listed there.

Divisionals is a long but fun meet, with the coaches from our team and usually other teams in various theme costumes. Many kids enjoy coming to Divisionals even if they are not swimming in the meet.

If you are going to be out of town in the week or two before Relay Carnival or Divisionals but would be back in time to swim, please tell us so we know how to contact you. If we do not know that you are available and cannot readily contact you, you will not be entered – so please keep us informed.

## **Long Course and All Star meets:**

These are for the top swimmers in the county, or the winners of the divisional relay carnival. If you qualify for these meets, the coaches will let you know. You can track your chances by looking at the top times report for the entire league on the MCSL web site each week.

The Long Course meet is held in the middle of the season, and the races are twice as long as the standard races on a 50 meter pool instead of a 25 meter pool. Swimmers with the top times in the county are invited to this meet.

All Star meets are held at the end of the season, a week after the Divisional meet. Qualification for Individual All Stars is based on a swimmer attaining the “all star nominating times” that is established by MCSL. MCSL then takes the top swimmers (16 plus alternates) of those who have qualified. Attaining an “All Star” time at any point is an impressive achievement, but does not necessarily mean that the time will be good enough to make it into the All Star meet.

The Relay All Star meet entries are the teams that have won a relay at the division’s Relay Carnival (or, for the Open Medley or Graduated Free, the best time swum in the division during the season). A team is allowed to use any swimmers it wants at Relay All Stars, not just the swimmers that won the relay that got them into All Stars. However, the Somerset practice is to use the same

swimmers that swam the original relay, unless they are not available or there is some other unusual circumstance.

We encourage team members to come as spectators to Long Course and All Stars, both to support our swimmers in those meets and for the excitement of seeing the best swimmers in the county.

### **Disqualifications**

There are four different strokes: freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly. Freestyle is the easiest to master, and most swimmers do not disqualify in freestyle races unless they start too early or pull themselves along the lane ropes or walk along the bottom. The other three strokes are more difficult, and younger or less experienced swimmers frequently disqualify because they are not doing the stroke properly. Please help your younger swimmer understand that strokes other than freestyle are difficult to master, and that disqualifying is frequent at first. The standards for disqualification are the same at “B” meets as “A” meets. This is not always true in practice, since “B” meets are sometimes staffed with officials who are newer and do not see all of the disqualifications, or some teams we swim do not provide enough officials to check disqualifications at “B” meets, or “B” meets run late and it is hard to see in the dark. It can seem harsh to some people that the disqualification standards are the same at “B” meets as at “A” meets, but it is necessary because we do not want kids getting good times at “B” meets because of doing the stroke illegally, and then get entered into an “A” meet and promptly getting disqualified there, which costs the team points. Meanwhile they may have displaced another kid from being entered into the “A” meet, whose time might be slower but they were doing the stroke legally.

### **Swim league rules**

MCSL rules are used at all “A” meets, and are the basis for determining whether or not the strokes are swum correctly. The rules are generally similar to USA Swimming rules, with a few exceptions. The MCSL handbook lists all the rules.

Handbooks are available on the MCSL web site at [www.mcsl.org](http://www.mcsl.org). MCSL highly recommends that the same rules be used at “B” meets, but the implementation is up to the teams running the “B” meets. The MCSL handbook also details how meets are scored. At “A” meets, the fastest five swimmers in the event earn scores of 6,4,3,2, and 1 respectively – so that having the second and third best swimmers is worth more than having the best swimmer. Relay events are worth more points.

## **16. Ribbons, Trophies, and Awards**

### **Ribbons:**

At “A” Meets: Place ribbons are given to any swimmer who scores points – which is the first 5 places in the individual events. There may also be “finisher” ribbons for those who participated, but didn’t score points. This is up to the

discretion of the hosting team. Swimmers do not receive a ribbon if they DQ in a race.

“A” meet ribbons are handed out after the meet at the team lunch.

“B” Meets: Ribbons are given to all participants. Ribbons will say the place for the 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> place swimmer, and the other ribbons will say “participant.”

Times are written on the back of the ribbon. No times are given for a race in which the swimmer disqualified, and the swimmer may or may not receive a ribbon.

“B” meet ribbons will be distributed at the pool.

#### Participation Trophies:

All team members – regular and developmental - will receive a trophy at the team banquet. If you are not at the team banquet, you can pick up your trophy at the pool.

#### Point Club Trophies:

Swimmers can earn an additional trophy based on how many points they score in the dual A meets (exclusive of Relay carnival and divisionals):

- 25 Point Club: Swimmers who earn 25 to 49 points
- 50 Point Club: Swimmers who earn 50 to 74 points
- 75 Point Club: Swimmers who earn 75 to 99 points
- 100 Point Club: Swimmers who earn more than 100 points

#### Coaches Recognition Trophies:

There are three special awards each to male and female swimmers. The coaches determine the recipients of these awards. “Most Improved” goes to a swimmer who, in the coaches’ opinion, has put forth a lot of effort which resulted in significant gains in ability, usually compared to performance in previous seasons. The coaches look at times in this season and the previous season, but do not apply any specific formula or quantitative method in determining the most improved swimmer. “Spirit” award goes to a swimmer for dedication to improving themselves and, more importantly, dedicating efforts to support the team and other team members. “Coaches’ Award” goes to someone who serves as a role-model for others on the team.

#### Senior Recognition:

When a swimmer is no longer age-eligible for the team or has graduated from High School, it is the tradition of the Somerset Dolphins to honor him/her at the banquet and present him/her with a gift. High School graduates who have not aged off the team are encouraged to return to the Dolphins in the future while still

eligible. Swimmers who age off have traditionally received a personalized kickboard.

## **17. Where to find more information**

Look for announcements on the Swim Team e-mail list and on the Dolphins website. There are weekly (sometimes daily!) e-mail updates during the season. Other information is also posted on the bulletin board at the pool. The team website is [www.somersetdolphins.com](http://www.somersetdolphins.com). The website has a copy of this handbook, meet and practice schedules, meet results, team cheers, team records, etc. The MCSL league website is: [www.mscl.org](http://www.mscl.org)