

South Haven
Rams Aquatic Club



Swim Team Handbook

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Introductory Information

Welcome to the Rams Aquatic Club (RAC)!

Our Mission

Rams Aquatic Club is a non-profit competitive swim club focused on teaching competitive swim strokes, proper technique, good sportsmanship, individual integrity, and team play. RAC is a member of the Southwest Michigan Swim League (SWMSL) and adheres to the Age Group Constitution for the League. We will provide a safe environment where young swimmers can improve their strokes, increase their self-confidence, and learn teamwork through proper swimming technique and quality coaching, in a fun and social atmosphere.

Who We Are

RAC is made up of three integrated entities:

- The **swimmers** are the heart, and the only real reason we do this;
- The **coaches** are the brains, providing direction for the kids; and
- The **parents** are the backbone, keeping things going and making things happen.

Our team will only be a success through the quality and quantity of involvement of all three groups.

RAC Website

Visit us on the web for valuable information: www.ramsaquaticclub.com. You can also find club information and announcements on Facebook at www.facebook.com/RamsAquaticClub.

Eligibility Requirements

Rams Aquatic Club members must be at least 6 years old and may swim with the club through their senior year of high school.

Any swimmer is welcome on our team as long as they can swim one length of the pool (25 yards) without walking, hanging on the lane lines or side, drowning, or wearing a life preserver (or using another swimmer as one) and is developmentally able to understand and follow directions. We do, however, reserve the right to remove a child from the team for safety concerns. If, for any reason, a coach feels that a swimmer isn't quite ready for the swim team, we will respectfully ask the parents to take their child off the team. (A full refund will be given.) This is purely for safety concerns.

Commitment

As with any activity, the more time you put into the activity, the more you reap the rewards. Some swimmers attend every practice/meet, and some come when it fits their schedule. You may choose how much your family would like to participate. We only ask that you:

1. COMMIT OR DECLINE SCHEDULED MEETS BY THE PUBLISHED DEADLINE so that the meet entries can be completed and relays assigned.
2. VOLUNTEER TO HELP AT MEETS IN WHICH YOUR CHILD PARTICIPATES. Meets are run solely by the parent volunteers. We take pride in running quick, smooth and enjoyable meets but we cannot do this without everyone's help.

Registration

Rams Aquatic Club offers two seasons every year. Swimmers may choose to participate in one or both seasons. There will be a separate registration and fee for each season.

Winter Season

Our winter season typically runs from October thru February of the following year. Registration for this season typically opens in September following the SWMSL coaches meeting where the season's meets are scheduled. The club will publish information about the season, including registration fees, practice schedules, and scheduled meets as the board is able to plan. We will also send a reminder email to all families who had swimmers participate in the previous winter and summer season.

Summer Season

Our summer season typically runs from mid-June thru the end of July. With summer being a short season, it is a great time for new swimmers to try RAC. Registration for this season typically opens in May following the SWMSL coaches meeting. The club will publish information about the season, including registration fees, practice schedules, and scheduled meets as the board is able to plan. We will also send a reminder email to all families who had swimmers participate in the previous summer and winter season.

Fees and Fundraisers

The RAC board works hard to keep costs down. Registration fees are necessary to cover operational expenses such as coaching, upgrades to the software to run our meets, team suits, kickboards, ribbons, stopwatches, and even some fun activities such as our end of year awards banquet. The RAC board may plan fundraising events during the year to raise money for other expenses.

Refund Policy

The club will allow full refunds during the first week of Summer season and during the first two weeks of Winter season. After that time, no refunds will be given for any reason.

For accounts on an installment payment plan, all installments are due if you do not cancel before the refund period for the season expires.

Code of Conduct

All participating members of RAC, as well as their parents, must abide by the following Code of Conduct. By joining RAC, all swimmers and parents agree to follow this code.

The actions of each swimmer, parent, and coach reflect upon the entire club. All swimmers, parents, and coaches are expected to act responsibly and maintain appropriate behavior at all times.

Practice Session Behavior

During practice sessions, each swimmer will:

1. Maintain a cooperative and respectful attitude toward the coach.
2. Maintain conversational voice levels.
3. Be ready to begin practice on time. Swimmers should be in the pool area with all necessary equipment, ready to begin practice at least 5 minutes before the scheduled time at which their practice is to begin.
4. Observe and comply with the following rules of South Haven Community Pool or any other pool used:
 - a. NO running on the pool deck, in the locker rooms and in the hallway.
 - b. NO one on the diving board without a coach's permission at any time.
 - c. NO horse play, dunking, spitting, or pushing in or out of the water.
 - d. NO splashing.
 - e. NO chewing gum.
 - f. NO obscene, derogatory, or profane behavior or language.

5. Respect the personal property of teammates, the pool, and RAC on the pool deck and in the locker rooms.
6. Be responsible for own swim gear and keep facilities clean.
7. Demonstrate cooperativeness and respect to all persons involved with RAC.
8. Practice good sportsmanship at all times during/after practice and at meet settings.
9. Gladly pitch in if asked to assist a coach or parent member.
10. Resolve differences through conversation and compromise. Disputes not successfully resolved verbally should be referred to the coach.
11. Practice lane etiquette. Swimmers who stop in the middle of any set for any reason should rejoin their lane as quickly as possible with the least disruption as possible. Circle swim on right side (counterclockwise). If you lap the swimmer ahead of you, assume their position in the lane – politely.
12. Avoid unreasonable physical contact. There should not be physical contact between swimmers, which could be considered unreasonable. The RAC coaching staff will deal immediately with slapping, hitting, or punching any swimmer, in jest or in anger.
13. Swimmers will be out of locker rooms within 10 minutes from conclusion of practice.
14. Parents need to come at conclusion of practice to help facilitate their swimmers out of the locker rooms.

At all club functions, whether it be practice, meets, or social gatherings, the RAC coaching staff expects all members to behave in such a way that their actions reflect positively on the team.

Disruptive Behavior During Practice Sessions

1. Disruptive behavior during practices will not be tolerated. The intent of practice is to improve technique and endurance.
2. The coach will handle disruptive behavior during practices. If necessary, the coach reserves the right to dismiss and/or suspend the swimmer from practice.
3. If the swimmer has been dismissed from practice, they may NOT leave the pool deck area until the practice session is over and the coach personally speaks with and dismisses the swimmer. Should the disciplined swimmer wish to call his/her parents for immediate pick-up he /she may do so with permission from the coach. The swimmer must then remain on the pool deck until the parent arrives and the coach is notified that the swimmer is now under parental supervision. The discussion of the incident must be postponed until a time is convenient for the coach.
4. Under no circumstances will the coach, while coaching on deck, engage in a conversation with a parent concerning an individual disciplined during a practice session.
5. It is the coach's responsibility to inform the parent(s) following a reprimand that dismisses the swimmer from practice. This may be done verbally (in a private location) or in writing. The coach will maintain records of each incident; including date, incident description, and swimmer's signature.

Swim Meet Behavior

Expectations for swim meets:

1. During a swim meet, we are the guests of the host team. We must follow host team rules.
2. When hosting a meet, practice session rules apply. Each family member attending any RAC swim meet should display exemplary behavior. Parents (adult/guardian) are responsible for their children's conduct as well as their own. Swimmers are responsible to clean up after the meet, throw out trash, and gather belongings.

Disruptive behavior during meets:

1. Poor manners, poor sportsmanship, and poor behavior reflect negatively upon ALL RAC swimmers and could jeopardize our invitation in future meets.

Disciplinary Guidelines

1. Minor Infractions

- a. Will consist of negative behavior that the coach sees as impairing the swimmer and/or other swimmers from performing at his or her best during practices and/or swim meets. These will be taken care of for the most part by the coach and swimmer, or the coach, swimmer, parent(s), and parent board member. Coaches will keep records concerning infractions and consequences regarding all swimmers.
- b. Coaches will assume the responsibility for explaining the Club and their group's expectations to their swimmers. Any RAC coach will deal with any swimmer who chooses not to meet these expectations.
 - i. SIT-OUT: Any offending swimmer who compiles three (3) verbal warnings for expectation violations in a practice will be asked to sit out for the rest of that practice (at the discretion of the coach).
 1. Swimmers signs the coach's notes for that day.
 2. Parents are contacted about the incident.
 - ii. SUSPENSION: If the coach has demonstrated and documented three or more attempts to conform the swimmer's or parent's behavior with personal talks and contacts and the swimmer or parent continues the offensive behavior (whether the same or other), the swimmer or parent will be assessed a two-day suspension by the coach and parent board.
 1. Parents contacted (for swimmer)

Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention

The safety and well-being of RAC swimmers is always our top priority. The policy and procedures that follow apply to all adults authorized to have regular contact with or authority over minor athletes, including but not limited to coaches, meet marshals, timers, parent board members, meet volunteers, etc.

Every coach and volunteer working in a position with authority over minor athletes must complete an application and will be subject to a background check, including inquiries regarding any previous record of sexual abuse or other unlawful activity. Furthermore, every coach and volunteer working in a position with authority over minor athletes will participate in training regarding protecting youth/abuse prevention.

Coach and Minor Athlete Interactions

One-on-one interactions between a minor athlete and an applicable adult who is not the minor's legal guardian must occur at an observable and interruptible distance from another adult unless under emergency circumstances.

Meetings between a minor athlete and an applicable adult may only occur if another adult is present and where interactions can be easily observed and at an interruptible distance from another adult, except under emergency circumstances.

If a one-on-one meeting takes place, the door to the room must remain unlocked and open. If available, it must occur in a room that has windows, with the windows, blinds, and/or curtains remaining open during the meeting.

Individual training sessions outside of the regular course of training and practice between applicable adults and minor athletes are permitted if the training session is observable and interruptible by another adult. Legal guardians must be allowed to observe the training session.

Social Media and Electronic Communications

All electronic communication from applicable adults to minor athletes must be professional in nature. Except under emergency circumstances, if an applicable adult with authority over minor athletes needs to communicate directly with a minor athlete via electronic communications (including social media), the minor athlete's legal guardian must be copied. If a minor athlete communicates to the applicable adult privately first, the applicable adult must copy the minor athlete's legal guardian on any electronic communication response to the minor athlete.

When an applicable adult with authority over minor athletes communicates electronically to the entire team, said applicable adult must copy another adult.

Requests to Discontinue

Legal guardians may request in writing that their minor athlete not be contacted through any form of electronic communication by RAC, or by an applicable adult subject to this Policy. RAC will abide by any such request that the minor athlete not be contacted via electronic communication, or included in any social media post, absent emergency circumstances.

Hours

Electronic communications must only be sent between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., unless emergency circumstances exist, or during competition travel.

Prohibited Electronic Communication

Applicable adults with authority over minor athletes are not permitted to maintain private social media connections with unrelated minor athletes, and such applicable adults are not permitted to accept new personal page requests on social media platforms from minor athletes, unless the applicable adult has a fan page. Minor athletes may "friend" RAC's official page.

Applicable adults with authority over minor athletes must not send private, instant, or direct messages to a minor athlete through social media platforms.

Travel

Local travel consists of travel to training, practice and competition that occurs locally and does not include coordinated overnight stay(s). Applicable Adults must not ride in a vehicle alone with an unrelated minor athlete, absent emergency circumstances, and must always have at least two minor athletes or another adult in the vehicle, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the minor athlete's legal guardian.

Team travel is travel to a competition or other team activity that the organization plans and supervises. During team travel, when doing room checks, two-deep leadership (two applicable adults should be present), and observable and interruptible environments must be maintained.

When only one applicable adult and one minor athlete travel to a competition, the minor athlete's legal guardian must provide written permission in advance and for each competition for the minor athlete to travel alone with said applicable adult. Chaperones who travel with RAC must be team members in good standing.

Unrelated applicable adults must not share a hotel room, other sleeping arrangement or overnight lodging location with a minor athlete. Minor athletes should be paired to share hotel rooms or other sleeping arrangements with other minor athletes of the same gender and of similar age.

Meetings during team travel must be conducted consistent with the Coach and Minor Athlete Interactions section of this Policy (i.e., any such meeting must be observable and interruptible). Meetings must not be conducted in an individual's hotel room or other overnight sleeping location.

Locker Rooms and Changing Areas

The designated locker room or changing area must be used when an athlete or applicable adult changes, in whole or in part, into or out of a swimsuit when wearing just one suit (e.g., deck changing is prohibited).

Use of any device's (including a cell phone's) recording capabilities, including voice recording, still cameras and video cameras in locker rooms, changing areas, or similar spaces by a minor athlete or an applicable adult is prohibited.

An unrelated applicable adult must not expose his or her breasts, buttocks, groin, or genitals to a minor athlete under any circumstance. An unrelated applicable adult must not request an unrelated minor athlete to expose the minor athlete's breasts, buttocks, groin, or genitals to the unrelated applicable adult under any circumstance.

Except for athletes on the same team or athletes attending the same competition, at no time are unrelated applicable adults permitted to be alone with a minor athlete in a locker room or changing area, except under emergency circumstances. If the organization is using a facility that only has a single locker room or changing area, separate times for use by applicable adults must be designated.

Monitoring

RAC must regularly and randomly monitor the use of locker rooms and changing areas to ensure compliance with this Policy. Locker rooms and changing areas may be monitored by use of the following methods:

- Conducting a sweep of the locker room or changing area before athletes arrive;
- Posting staff directly outside the locker room or changing area during periods of use;
- Leaving the doors open when adequate privacy is still possible; and/or
- Making occasional sweeps of the locker rooms or changing areas with women checking on female locker rooms and men checking on male locker rooms.

Every effort must be made to recognize when a minor athlete goes to the locker room or changing area during practice and competition, and, if the minor athlete does not return in a timely fashion, to check on the minor athlete's whereabouts.

Legal guardians are discouraged from entering locker rooms and changing areas. If a legal guardian does enter a locker room or changing area, it must only be a same-sex legal guardian and the legal guardian should notify a coach or administrator in advance.

Reporting

The President of the RAC Parent Board, or his/her designee, will be the designated representative to receive reports of sexual abuse or other inappropriate conduct. This representative will promptly notify the proper law enforcement authorities.

All coaches, volunteers, parents, and program participants are directed to report any incident of abuse or suspected abuse that they witness or that is reported to them to the designated representative of the RAC Board. Note: This does not preclude individuals from reporting abuse or suspected abuse to the proper law enforcement authorities.

The designated representative will keep other Board members fully informed.

Should a suspected incidence of abuse be reported, the coach/volunteer in question may be temporarily suspended from duties while an investigation takes place.

The RAC Board, when appropriate, shall communicate reports of child sexual abuse to RAC members. The confidentiality of those who make a report will be protected.

Practice Times

The practice times for the upcoming season will be published prior to registration opening. Please check the website at www.ramsaquaticclub.com for practice times, as well as stroke clinic times.

- Regular practices are held Monday through Thursday
- Swimmers should arrive 5-10 minutes prior to practice time in order to be ready for dry land. Swimmers should sit on the bench until directed to begin dry land by a coach.
- Swim caps (especially for girls) and goggles are strongly encouraged to be worn by all swimmers. These should be on prior to entering the water to make the most of your workout time.
- Please exit the pool promptly when your practice is over, so as to not delay the next group's practice.
- Practices are held rain or shine. Practice in the pool may be canceled if there is severe weather in the area (see Severe Weather Policy). The coaches and Parent Board will do their best to post cancellations on Facebook, on our website, and via text message (only families with a valid verified text number in your account will receive text messages) as soon as possible.
- Although attendance at daily practice is not mandatory, keep in mind the more practices a swimmer attends, the more this increases their chances of improving their strokes, dropping times, and building camaraderie with their teammates.
- Parents are asked to remain in the seating area of the pool deck. Please do not try to communicate with the coaches or the swimmers during practice—**this is a safety issue**.

Severe Weather Cancellation Policy

RAC will follow the lead of the South Haven Public Schools (SHPS) and cancel practice and home meets on days of school closings due to inclement weather.

On days that SHPS would not normally be in session (i.e., Saturdays), the RAC board, along with the Coaches, will discuss the situation and agree with a majority vote, based on the status of the weather warning. Upon making a decision, an announcement will be made no less than 2 hours prior to the time swimmers are to be on deck (practice, home or away meet). If the meet has two parts, a second decision/ notification shall follow regarding the status of the latter half of the meet. This decision will also be made no less than 2 hours prior to the time swimmers are to be on deck for the second half of the event. The RAC board secretary (or designee) will notify swimmers, parents, and opponents of the cancellations at the earliest possible time and should use any and all sources available, including but not limited to Facebook, email, text message, and Team Unify.

It is the intent of this policy to ensure the safety of RAC swimmers and parents, as well as others who may travel to or from meets. While weather services can be wrong and short distances in geography can make large differences in weather, every effort will be made to safely allow swimmers to participate in meets while still following the recommendations of the weather service.

Meets

Please see our website at www.ramsaquaticclub.com for the meet schedule.

All meet signup will be done online at our website or via the OnDeck app. It is the swimmer/parent's responsibility to commit or decline each meet prior to the posted deadline. Late meet registration will not

be allowed as the coach needs time to work on the line-up which must be turned in prior to the upcoming meet. Swimmers are required to be at each meet **one hour prior** to start time for warm-ups.

Heat/Lane Assignments

Often swimmers find the event/lane/heat numbering system confusing. It is recommended that once the heat sheet is published, you or your swimmer write the event number and stroke for individual events and the event number, relay team, stroke, and relay on the back of their hand or arm in a Black Sharpie pen. It is a good idea to keep a Sharpie in the swimmers' bag during the entire swim season for this purpose. Writing this information on their hand/arm will help them remember their event throughout the meet and avoid confusion. Plus it keeps our event marshalls happy. It will look like this on his/her arm:

#4 25 FR (Event #4 25 Freestyle)
#12 25 BK (Event #12 25 Backstroke)
#22 25 FLY (Event #22 25 Butterfly)
#52 25 BR (Event #52 25 Breaststroke)
#65 100 FR A 3 (Event # 65 100 Freestyle Relay, Team A, Leg 3)

Relay Events

If your child has been entered into the medley relay and/or the free relay, it is imperative that your child is present at the meet for these events. The medley relay is at the beginning of the meet so it is important that your child arrive on time for warm-ups. The free relays are at the end of the meet. If your child is included in the lineup for a free relay event, please stay until this event. If your child leaves the meet early, it is not always possible to find a replacement for the relay. It takes four swimmers to make a relay team—don't make your child be the one that causes three other swimmers to forfeit their relay. Please note: Due to the large and/or odd number of swimmers in each age group, it may not be possible for all swimmers to participate in relays at every meet.

Relay Placement

It is the sole decision of the coaches who to swim and which relays (i.e., "A", "B" or "C") the child will be placed on. The coaches take into account the swimmer's times, dedication to the team, work ethics, the dynamic between the swimmers on the relay, and a little bit of gut feeling. Even though the main factor for placement is time, please keep in mind all factors listed above and respect the coach's final decision. If you have any questions concerning your child's placement on a relay, please email the Head Coach. Confronting any coach on the pool deck at practice or at a meet is NOT acceptable.

Meet Starting Times

During the winter season, our meets are generally held on Saturday mornings with a 10:00 am start (warm-ups starting at 9:00 am). During the summer season, meets are held on Thursday evenings with a 6:00 pm start (warm-ups starting at 5:00 pm). However, this may change meet to meet. It is best to check with the Rams Aquatic Club website to confirm meet start and warm-up times.

Worker Check In

Parent Volunteers for the meet should check in with the Volunteer Coordinator at the start of warm-ups. This will help us establish if we have enough workers.

Disqualification

Swimmers can be disqualified in any event for start, stroke, touch-turn and finish violations. If a swimmer is disqualified in an event, the time does not count as an official meet time, and the swimmer does not qualify for an award at that meet.

Disqualification is common in the early age groups, especially in the Butterfly and Breaststroke and especially at the beginning of the season. Please inform your new swimmers that disqualification (DQ) is part of the learning process. Every swimmer has been disqualified at some point in his or her career and usually several times.

Sometimes officials do not see the stroke infraction. If this is the case, the swimmer is not disqualified.

Swimmers can also be disqualified or removed from a meet for sportsmanship and behavior infractions. Coaches and meet officials can evict swimmers for these offenses.

Meet No-Show Policy

It is important that all swimmers who have committed to attend a swim meet show up on time for warm-ups and be ready to swim their entered events. In the event that a swimmer has committed to a meet but is unable to make it, it is important that the Head Coach or a Board Member is notified as soon as possible. If a swimmer is unable to attend a meet and has not contacted the Head Coach or a Board Member at least 30 minutes prior to meet start time, they will be considered a No-Show/No-Call for that meet.

The first time a swimmer is a No-Show / No-Call for a meet, they will not be allowed to participate in any relays at the next meet. If the meet has entry fees for events, the club must be reimbursed for those fees prior to participation in the next meet.

The second time a swimmer is a No-Show / No-Call for a meet, they will not be allowed to participate in any relays for the remainder of the season. A board member will also contact the swimmers parents. If the meet has entry fees for events, the club must be reimbursed for those fees prior to participation in the next meet.

The club will send reminder notices prior to each meet (via email) and will also post a list of committed swimmers on the bulletin board in the pool hallway the week of the meet. This will be your chance to verify that you are signed up for the meet or to let the Head Coach know if you are signed up in error.

League Championship Meet

All RAC swimmers have the opportunity to participate at the Southwest Michigan Swim League Championship Meet at the end of the season. To compete at the Championship Meet, a swimmer must compete in at least one meet during the regular season.

Parents, please try to arrange your schedules so that your swimmer can participate at the Championship Meet. This is a meet where each swimmer has one last chance for the season to beat a personal or team record. It is a great opportunity for swimmers to be able to participate in the full line-up of meet events and to get to compete against all the teams in our league.

Besides individual awards (medals for 1st thru 3rd place finishers, ribbons for 4th thru 16th place finishers), the team has a chance to earn a trophy for Top Team or Runner-Up in each age group.

Awards

Meet Awards

Swimmers are awarded ribbons based on their finish within their age group, excluding any disqualifications. Ribbons are awarded for 1st thru 6th place finishers as well as for the winner of each heat. The League Championship meet and some invitational meets may award medals for 1st thru 3rd place as well as ribbons for 4th thru 16th place. Swimmers may claim their ribbons at the next practice following each meet from their folder in the communication box. Championship Meet ribbons and medals will be available at the

awards banquet following each season.

If you have a question about a finish or a lack of an award, please send an email with the swimmers name, the meet name/date and the event in questions to the Head Coach. Please be patient while waiting for a response. Sometimes an answer is immediate and other times, it takes communication between the coach and the opposing team to determine the answer.

Team Awards

There are several team awards that may be awarded at the Awards Banquet following the Winter season. All active swimmers are eligible for these awards. The board and coaches reserve the right to add or remove awards each season.

RAC Superstar

To be eligible, a swimmer must have perfect meet attendance for all published meets during the Winter season. Special recognition will be given to those swimmers who attend all Middle School meets as well as all regular team meets during the season.

Most Valuable Swimmer

This award is given to the swimmer with the highest point total for the Winter season for the following age groups by gender (separate award for Boys and Girls in each group). The team will use the points returned in the Top Points Report to determine the award recipients.

- 8 & under
- 9-10
- 11-12
- 13-14
- 15-18

Most Improved Award

This award is given to the swimmers who had the greatest time improvement across all events in the Winter season. To determine improvement, the “best” swim of the season is compared to the first swim of the season. More weight is given to improvement across multiple events versus a drop in only one event. This award may be given to a swimmer in the following age groups by gender (separate award for Boys and Girls in each group), but there may not be an award for all age groups or genders if the data does not support it.

- 8 & under
- 9-10
- 11-12
- 13-14
- 15-18

Coaches Award

This award is given to swimmers by coaches' choice. The head coach will pick out the swimmer who they feel displayed sportsmanship and drive. This award may be given to a swimmer in the following age groups, but there may not be an award for all age groups.

- 8 & under
- 9-10
- 11-12
- 13-14
- 15-18

Record Holder Award

This award is given to any Rams Aquatic Club swimmer who breaks a team record during the season. Besides updating our current record board with their name and new time following the season, an award will be presented during the banquet following the season the record was broken.

Swim Meet Volunteer Job Descriptions

We love our Parent volunteers!

Announcers – The announcer is in charge of announcing the events, swimmers in the water, current staging and results. The announcer should report to the pool at least 30 minutes prior to the meet and is expected to stay until the meet is complete.

Awards – Receive ribbon stickers from the computer team, apply them to the correct colored ribbon and file them in the correct communication box folder for the swimmer to pick up at the next practice. Work typically begins after the first relay series and is completed after the final event. You must stay until after the end of the meet when all stickers are produced by the computer team. The opposing team's ribbons must be placed into a bag and distributed to the opposing team's head coach.

Event Marshall – The Event Marshall workers are in charge of the marshalling area. The responsibilities are:

- Setting up the marshalling area by lining up and numbering the benches and setting up the Event Board. The head marshaller needs to obtain Heat Sheets and clipboards from the coaches' office and distribute them to the other marshalling helpers.
- The Head Marshaller must ensure that all race events are called early enough to allow sufficient time to gather all swimmers in the marshalling area. This is especially important with the 8 and under age group. Event numbers 1-4 should begin to lining up at least 10 minutes prior to the start of the meet.
- Ensuring that the Event Board reflects the event numbers being called for line up.
- Assuring that swimmers are lined up by Heat and Lane in a timely manner and sent to the blocks for their events. This is a lot like herding kittens.
- Ensuring that the number of swimmers behind the blocks is sufficient to keep the meet running in a timely manner. The Event Marshallers should arrive at the meet one hour prior to official start time to set-up and is finished when the meet is officially over and marshalling supplies are collected.

Computer/Scoring – The Computer/Scoring team perform several functions. The computer/scoring team is under the direction of the Administrative Official. On the day of the meet, the computer operator makes lineup changes provided by Head Coaches when approved by the administrative official. If additional heat sheets are needed, additional copies should be produced. Once the meet begins, the computer team receives timer sheets, DQ cards and other information from the runner and updates the computer information as needed. As early as possible, the computer team will begin printing ribbon labels. The Computer/Scoring team should arrive two hours before the meets begin and will stay until after all post meet issues have been resolved.

Concessions – The concession volunteers are responsible for selling food items and heat sheets in the concessions area. These individuals should be 14 years and older. Workers should arrive at the pool one hour and fifteen minutes prior to the start of the meet. The workers are expected to work until the meet is complete and the concession area is cleaned and restored to its original condition.

Extras – Unfortunately, when working with volunteers, there will inevitably be parents who either will not sign up to help at meets or who do not show up for their assigned job (for whatever reason). The two extra

volunteers will fill these vacant positions, if needed. Extras should arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the meet.

Heat Winner Ribbons – The heat winner ribbon person is on the pool deck and responsible for giving a heat winner ribbon to the winner of each heat. Ribbons are given only to the winner of a heat or the four members of heat winning relay team. There is only one heat ribbon person who works the entire home meet. The person will receive the ribbons at the awards table and should be on the pool deck at least 10 minutes before the start of the meet.

Officials – All officials should be MHSA Swimming trained and certified.

- **Starter:** The Starter is the official that announces and starts each race. They operate the starting device to begin each race. They also determine false starts and act as a turn and finish judge. He or she has been trained in the proper starting procedures and will control the start of each event. The starter will be needed at home meets and may be needed at the All City Swim Meet.
- **Stroke Judge:** The Stroke Judge has been trained to recognize legal and illegal motions for each stroke. He or she is also trained to recognize legal and illegal finishes and relay takeoffs. They are responsible for observing the athletes and determining disqualifications during the swim. We will need one Stroke Judge and one Turn Judge at every meet.
- **Administrative Official:** The admin official is in charge of the dry side of the meet including: entries, seeding the meet, timers, the scoring/computer team, and all results.
- **Head Official:** The Head Official is the person in charge of the meet. He or she is the head official on duty. The responsibilities are:
 - Determining qualifications at any place in the pool.
 - Notifying athletes and coaches of the infractions and resulting disqualifications.
 - Checking that each swimmer takes the proper lane, call them to step onto the starting block and signal the starter to begin.
 - Helping to judge false starts.
 - Acting as a turn judge.
 - Watching for proper finishes and starts.
 - Assuring that all competition is being conducted according to the rules.
 - Stopping or suspending competition whenever elements require.
 - Resolving any disagreement in a timely manner.
 - Running the officials and timers meetings at the beginning of the meet.

Runners – Runners collect DQ cards and times (as needed) after each event and deliver them to the computer area. They should attend the Timers meeting prior to the beginning of the swim meet. Runners should arrive 30 minutes prior to the beginning of the swim meet.

Set-Up /Clean-Up – These individuals are responsible for setup or clean-up for home meets. They will arrive to the pool 2 hours before the swim meet in order to prepare the pool area. They will remove all necessary equipment from the swim team storage area and place it in the appropriate place on the deck. These individuals will be responsible for hanging backstroke flags, hanging sponsor signs, moving chairs and bleachers, etc. At the conclusion of the meet, the clean-up people will remove and return all equipment to the swim team storage area. The pool deck is to be returned to its original state.

Timers – These volunteers stand in pairs at the end of each lane and use a digital stopwatch and back-up button to time the swimmers. Times are recorded on pre-printed event sheets. Timers should report to the pool at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the meet to attend the timers meeting before the start of the

meet. Timers are expected to work the entire meet. Timers will also assist swimmers in getting out of the pool (usually 8 & under) and will also provide stopwatch times to swimmers and runners if asked.

Communication

Communication with the Coaches

Many of you may have questions regarding your child's swim team experience throughout the season. The coaches are more than happy to discuss questions you may have. Please use these guidelines for communication:

- Email the Head Coach with your question or concern. He/she will get back to you as soon as possible.
- If you must speak directly to a coach, please wait until after practice. Their responsibility is to the age group in the water at the time. This is not only from a coaching standpoint, but a safety issue as well.
- Before or during the meet is not an appropriate time to communicate with a coach. They need to focus on the swimmers and the many meet responsibilities they have. If you have a problem, please contact a Parent Board member.

Other Communication

- Email – The majority of team information is dispensed via email. This includes updates regarding meets, changes in meets or practices due to weather, social events, etc. It is imperative that we have your current email address and that you check it frequently (**daily**) during the season.
- Text Message - Parents who have a verified SMS number listed in their account are eligible to receive text alerts from the team. Text messaging will be used for urgent or time-sensitive information. You can add and verify your cell number by following the steps here: [Setup SMS](#)
- On Deck Alerts - Parents who have the On Deck app installed on their phones and who have enabled alerts will receive alerts for urgent or time-sensitive information.
- Communication Box – There will be a Communication Box for swimmers that we will use to distribute ribbons, and special communications to families. The file box will contain a file folder for each swimmer sorted by last name. Please check this folder at least twice a week during the season.
- Team Website – check the website at www.ramsaquaticclub.com often for current information.
- Facebook – all team announcements and team events will also be posted on our Facebook page. Please “like” us at www.facebook.com/RamsAquaticClub.

Swim Suits and Apparel

All swimmers are encouraged to wear team swimsuits and caps during the swim meets. Although it is not mandatory, it encourages team spirit and unity and it makes it easier for coaches and parents to recognize our swimmers. Team suits should be reserved for wear during meets to ensure they last throughout the season. Please do not use your team suit as a practice suit.

Parent Responsibilities

The reason we are here is for the benefit of our kids – they are the heart of the team. However, it is the parents that keep the team and the meets going. It takes approximately 40 parent volunteers to run a home meet. It is the parent's responsibility to sign up for a job at each home meet your child attends. Without you, the meet cannot proceed. If for any reason, you are not going to be on time for the meet due to other responsibilities, please find a substitute until you arrive.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can be a member?

The swim team is open to any swimmer, ages 6-18, with the ability to swim one unaided length of the pool (25 yards). The head coach has final decision.

Where do I find out what my child is swimming in the meet?

Individual and Relay lineups are emailed to all swimmers who are committed prior to the meet (generally the night before). You may also view the events your swimmer has been entered in via the OnDeck app available for iPhone and Android phones. Heat sheets with event information are also for sale at concessions at all home meets.

What do we need to bring to swim meets?

- A robe or other cover-up is great for younger swimmers. Also bring more than one towel.
- Goggles and swim cap.
- Games, books, cards, etc. (something waterproof for the swimmers to do while they wait for their next event).
- Sharpies (for writing on your swimmer) and highlighters (for your heat sheet).
- A water bottle filled with water
- Nutritious snacks

What happens at the meets?

- First, you will need to have your swimmer dressed and on the pool deck ready to swim by the time of warm-up and make note of his/her event/heat/lane numbers.
- If you are volunteering you will need to sign in at the volunteer sign-in table.
- Mark your swimmer's hand with the event #, heat #, and lane.
- Cheer for your fellow teammates!

If I am volunteering do I have to work after my swimmer is finished with his/her events?

Yes, unless you can find someone to replace you, or your job is fully complete.

How long does a meet last?

Usually, 3-4 hours.

How many events will my child swim?

All children may swim a maximum of four events (generally the rule is a maximum of three individual and two relays but this may vary depending on the rules the meet host sets).

When will my swimmer get his/her ribbons?

Ribbons will be available in family communication box within a few days of the meet.

What is the Champ Meet?

This is a league championship meet that is held at the end of each season. All RAC swimmers who have participated in at least one other meet in the current season may participate.

Which teams participate in the Southwest Michigan Swim League and where are they located?

The following teams participate in SWMSL:

- Allegan Tigershark Aquatics
- Bridgman Sea Bees Swim Club

- Hastings Hammerhead Swim Club
- Mattawan MCats Community Swim Club
- Otsego Bulldogs Swim Club
- Plainwell Trojan Aquatic Club
- Portage Crocs Aquatic Club
- South Haven Rams Aquatic Club
- St Joe Otters Aquatic Club

Please visit the RAC website for addresses and driving directions to other league pools.

Glossary

The following is a glossary of commonly used terms in the sport of swimming

Age Group – Division of swimming according to age. The Age Group divisions based on age as of the season aging date are: 8 and under, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14 and 15-18.

Backstroke – One of the four competitive racing strokes, basically any style of swimming on your back. Backstroke is swum as the first stroke in the Medley Relay and second stroke in the I.M.

Blocks – The starting platforms located behind each lane. Some pools have blocks at the deeper end of the pool, and some pools have blocks at both ends. Blocks have a variety of designs and heights and can be permanent or removable.

Breaststroke – One of the four competitive racing strokes. Breaststroke is swum as the second stroke in the Medley Relay and the third stroke in the I.M.

Butterfly – One of the four competitive racing strokes. Butterfly (nicknamed FLY) is swum as the third stroke in the Medley Relay and first stroke in the I.M.

Cap – The latex or silicone covering worn on the head of swimmers.

DQ (Disqualification) – Time and score do not count. The swimmer has been judged as not performing the stroke, turn, or finish correctly. Time and score do not count.

Dive – Entering the water head first.

Dual Meet – Type of meet where two teams/clubs compete against each other.

Event – A race or stroke over a given distance that is timed.

False Start – When a swimmer leaves the starting block before the horn.

False Start (Relay) – An illegal start done by the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th member of a relay team. The swimmer on the block breaks contact with the block before the swimmer in the water touches the wall.

Final Results – The printed copy of the results of each race of a swim meet.

Freestyle -- One of the four competitive racing strokes. Freestyle is swum as the fourth stroke in the Medley Relay and fourth stroke in the I.M.

Goggles – Underwater eyewear worn by swimmers to keep their eyes from being irritated by the chlorine in the water.

Heats – Each group of swimmers starting together, one per lane.

Individual Medley (I.M.) – A swimming event using all four of the competitive strokes on consecutive lengths of the race. The order must be: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke and Freestyle. Equal distances must be swum of each stroke.

Invitational – Type of swim meet that requires a club to receive an invitation to attend the meet.

Jump – An illegal start done by the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th member of a relay team. The swimmer on the block breaks contact with the block before the swimmer in the water touches the wall.

Kick – The leg movements of a swimmer. A popular word to “yell” to encourage swimmers during a race.

Lane – The specific area in which a swimmer is assigned to swim (i.e., Lane 1 or Lane 2). As the swimmers stand behind the blocks, lanes are numbered from right (Lane 1) to left (Lane 6 or 8).

Lane Lines – Continuous floating markers attached to a cable stretched from the starting end to the turning end for the purpose of separating each lane and quieting the waves caused by racing swimmers.

Lap – One length of the pool.

Leg – The part of a relay event swum by a single team member. A single stroke in the I.M.

Marshall – Individuals in charge of enforcing safety, supervision, and relations at a meet. They will also be lining up swimmers for events to keep the meet moving.

Marshalling – The staging area where swimmers are organized and wait to be walked to their lane for a swimming event. Marshalling is usually off to the side of the pool and has rows for the swimmers to line up.

Medley Relay – Four swimmers swimming one leg of a relay. Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, and Freestyle.

Meet – A series of events held on a particular date and time.

Pool – The facility in which swimming competition is conducted.

Practice – The scheduled workouts a swimmer attends with their swim team/club.

Race – Any single swimming competition (i.e., preliminary, final, timed final).

Record Keeper – Individual in charge of recording team records.

Relay – Four swimmers, each swimming one leg (part) of an event.

Ribbons – Awards in a variety of sizes, styles and colors given at swim meets.

Safety – The responsible and careful actions of those participating in a swim meet.

Schedule – List of meets with dates, meet host, meet location, type of meet and contacts address and phone.

Seed Time – A swimmer’s best official time in an event used to place him/her in order for championship meets, etc.

Stand Up – The command given by the Starter or Official to release the swimmers from their starting position.

Start – The beginning of a race. The dive used to begin a race.

Starter – The official in charge of signaling the beginning of a race and insuring that all swimmers have a fair takeoff.

Step Down – The command given by the Starter or Official to have the swimmers move off the blocks. Usually this command is a good indication everything is not right for the race to start.

Stroke – There are four competitive strokes: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke and Freestyle.

Suit – The racing uniform worn by the swimmer, in the water, during competition.

Warm-up – The practice and “loosening” up session a swimmer does before the meet or their event is swum.

Watch – The hand held device used by timers and coaches for timing swimmers’ races.

Whistle – The sound a starter/official makes to signal for quiet before they give the command to start the race.