



## The Anatomy of a Swim Meet



The following is a brief description of how to approach a swim meet (I am sure there is a lot I am leaving out, but it will give you something to do on your snow day). This is probably most useful for our newer families, but it may also offer a perspective on the importance of reading the meet announcement and available data tracking for our veteran families.

Typically, December brings a big team travel meet to the Trees Pool at the University of Pittsburgh for the Annual Christmas Meet. This meet highlights one of the reasons why we are a part of the Virginia Gators as team buses roll into Harrisonburg to pick up our swimmers, athletes stay together and eat together at the team hotel, and



participate as a team in this high level meet. Last year this meet was extra special because a group of amazing coaches, many of whom were our own swimmers' parents, led our team during an uncertain time and made this a meet to truly remember. The Annual Pittsburgh Christmas Meet requires qualification times that are published in the meet announcement (attached for your reference). Below

are a few pictures that highlight the reasons that our swimmers look forward to these types of championship meets – team camaraderie, the high level of competition, unique stories like the smallest on our team taking elevator rides (when we could still do that) with the largest of the NFL football players staying at our hotel, and the pure exhaustion that comes in the best kind of way from swimming your heart out with your teammates.

Due to the pandemic, the LSC for the Pittsburgh region stopped sanctioning meets this Fall so in lieu of our usual travel meet the Blue Ridge Gators organized a December Invitational (another advantage to being in the Gator system). This meet announcement is simpler and will be used as an example for this first of the team newsletters briefly highlighting information of interest each month (the real ones start in January headed by our elite publishing team of Cece Dunham and Sheryl Beckwith). The logistics of attending a meet work much better if you take the time to read the meet announcement in full. It includes basic things like the address of the facility with directions, important hotel information for overnight meets, opportunities to volunteer as an official or timer, and a list of events offered. The meet announcement also lists important rules for that meet including COVID guidelines

for this year's meets. Any facility costs or swimmer surcharges will be listed as will the cost for each individual event. This is important to note as you will see that meet fees must be paid by our team before the start of the meet (6PM yesterday was the deadline for this weekend's meet). So, once you commit to swim in a meet, choose your events, and the deadline passes you are obligated to pay for those fees whether you swim or not (your account is charged each month for these meet fees). Finally, warm-up times are listed so you know when to arrive and prepare for your time as a spectator.

Coach Scot takes a collaborative approach to select events with each individual swimmer. At our team meeting that will be scheduled in the next few weeks via Zoom you can hear much more from him about his recommendations for approaching various meets throughout the year and the trajectory of his training plan. However, whether you are an amateur cyclist (and biology professor – hence the title of the newsletter) at heart like me or a Virginia Gator of Harrisonburg you probably understand that the Tour de France or a regional meet in February leading to a qualification time for Age Group or Senior Virginia Swimming State Championships really aren't that different: "Gameday" is the same in just about every sport. For that reason, preparation is key as you may have noticed that practices were a little different this week with some of the swimmers referring to it as "tapering" for our culminating Fall meet while Coach Scot more accurately called it "meet prep." For those swimmers that love to compete a meet is where they can track their progress and compare their times, not so much to the swimmer in the lane next to them (although that is important to some), but rather to the national time standards published as [USA Swimming National Age Group Motivational Time Standards](#). When you hear swimmers talking about wanting to swim for an "A" time, that is what they mean in one of the beautiful parts about this sport in which an athlete can compete against a standard no matter what level of meet they attend. Last month our team attended the GATR Fall Invite as we built toward the last December Invite Meet of 2020. The following is a brief summary of that meet that had our swimmers achieve 92 best times out of 156 total events:

GATR Fall Intrasquad	Female	Male	Total	Best Times
Individual Events	94	62	156	92
Individual Athletes	18	13	31	26

This kind of data allows Coach Scot to track the progress of our team and compare accomplishments as the season progresses. This weekend's meet certainly doesn't replace the annual trek to Pittsburgh, but it does give our swimmers a chance to compete at whatever level they wish during a time when we are trying to prioritize safety while balancing that with the competitive drive of our young athletes. In fact, we have the highest percentage of athletes from any Gator site attending the meet at Hargrave Military Academy (HMA) this weekend with almost 50% of our team traveling to Chatham, VA. HMA offers an amazing facility with a 22-lane pool just like at the University of Pittsburgh facility. If you are not able to attend the meet this weekend, you might be interested in downloading [Meet Mobile](#) (free version is good, and there is a small fee for the premium version that many prefer) to track real-time results of your friends on the team who are swimming (also streaming on Facebook live under the Virginia Gators). Additionally, the [OnDeck](#) app, which is linked to our Team Unify system, allows you to track your own swimmers' progress in great detail. Hopefully, this allows you to gain a little better understanding of what goes into organizing a swim meet and/or reminiscing a little about a time when we could travel more freely. If you are attending the meet this weekend, **please take care to stay safe, swim fast, and have fun!**