

## NPY Gator Notes: YMCA Competitive Swimming



You may have heard a coach, official or experienced swim parent comment that the NPY Gators are a competitive swim team. What you may not understand is that there is significant meaning behind the term “competitive”. The use of the word "competitive" in this instance means that all activities of the team are conducted under the rules and regulations of a YMCA National Advisory Committee of Competitive Sports that detail strict guidelines for conducting events and verifying and recording its results, which are in turn used to determine if athletes qualify for regional and national championship level events. The results of these events are verified and published and can be reviewed by other competitive teams as well as High Schools, Colleges and Universities. The other major competitive swim team program in the country is the USA Swimming program. The times for both organizations are equivalent in all aspects. In the sport of swimming, there is a saying, “A time is a time is a time.” Meaning that it does not matter what organization you earn a time under, it is comparable and valid when comparing times with all other swimmers and organizations.

### North Penn YMCA Competitive Swim Team

The North Penn YMCA (NPY) Gators is a *competitive* swim team in the National YMCA Competitive Sports Organization. The team is located at the Lansdale Area YMCA and is one of over 650 YMCA competitive swim teams in the USA. Specifically, the NPY Gators are part of the Penn-Del Swim League, a volunteer-run organization that monitors and regulates YMCA Competitive Swimming for Eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware.

The League consists of 25 YMCAs, comprised of 52 individual teams, with over 3,500 total swimmers. Within the Penn-Del League there are 5 Divisions – Adams, Jefferson, Washington, Madison and Monroe Divisions, which comprise the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. The North Penn YMCA (NPY) team currently competes in the Jefferson Division which includes the following additional teams: Brandywine/Lionville YMCA (BCLY), Lansdowne YMCA (LYM), Upper Main Line YMCA (UMLY), and the Willow Grove YMCA (WGY). The team also competes on an independent basis with other nearby YMCA teams such as Upper Perkiomen YMCA (UPY) and the Bethlehem YMCA (BYST). All of these teams compete in what’s called a Closed Formal Championship Competition Format. This

means that all swim meets occur exclusively among Y member athletes and are conducted with certified officials and follow the minimum competition standards set forth by the sport's YMCA National Advisory Committee where athletes work to qualify for increasing levels of competition ranging through League, District, State, and National level events.

### **Types of Swim Meets**

Dual Meets: A YMCA dual swim meet is a competitive event between two teams where swimmers from different age groups compete in various events. These meets follow specific guidelines and age group classifications to ensure fair competition. Times in these meets are used to determine eligibility of swimmers for higher levels of competition. Also, points are awarded to each team based on performance of swimmers across the order of events. These points go towards evaluating which team wins certain elements of the Division with awards being granted separately to boys and girls for each age group and overall for the entire team.

Invitational Meets: An YMCA invitational swim meet is a competitive event where a host team issues an open invitation to all YMCA teams within and outside their division. Often these meets will have age eligibility restrictions (e.g. only swimmers aged 12 and younger, swim your own age, etc.), involve a fun theme, have additional events not offered at dual meets, etc. These meets serve as an extra opportunity for swimmers to improve their times and obtain qualifying times for higher level championship meets. Points are sometimes awarded based on the nature of each meet. Examples of invitationals are: Boyertown Boo (held near Halloween), Turkey Trot (held near Thanksgiving), and the NPY's Winter Luau (held in the middle of winter), to name a few.

Penn-del Distance Meet: The distance meet is a special invitational competitive event where swimmers compete in what are typically described as distance events such as the 500 Free, 1000 Free, 1650 Free, 400IM, 200IM (younger swimmers) and so on. All YMCAs within the Penndel League are invited to participate, but in order to be eligible to compete, each athlete must have competed as an Official or Exhibition swimmer in a minimum of two (2) PennDel dual meets during the current season.

Division Championship Invitational Meet: This meet, referred to simply as "Champs", is an invitational style meet open only to the swimmers and teams of the Division they compete in during the season; Jefferson Division in the case of the NPY Gators. This meet is held at the end of the regular season prior to the start of the postseason championship activity. This meet serves as a "last chance" meet for swimmers to obtain qualifying times for the following championship meets. Points are awarded to each team for their performance just like dual meets.

Charles Hartley Memorial Silver Championship: This meet, often referred to as simply “Charles Hartley”, is a special championship style meet held by the PennDel League. The spirit of this meet is to give an opportunity for Silver Level swimmers (i.e. those not qualified for District or National level competition) to experience the fun and excitement of a high-level championship meet (e.g. Districts and States – see below). In order to be eligible to compete at Charles Hartley, each athlete must have competed as an Official or Exhibition swimmer in a minimum of two (2) meets since September 1 of the current season and either be in the 8 and Under age group or have achieved an individual Charles Hartley qualifying time obtained in a USA or YMCA invitational, dual, championship or high school meet competition during the current swim season.

District Championships: This meet is a regional championship where each Division in Pennsylvania competes in one of three assigned districts (Eastern, Central, Western) across the state. The Jefferson Division is part of the Eastern District. The three District Championships are postseason closed championship meets. In order to compete in a District Championship (aka “Districts”), an athlete must have competed in a *minimum* of 3 closed YMCA inter-association meets during the current season and must achieve the *minimum qualifying District time standard* swimming as an aged 9 or older swimmer during the current season for each event in which he/she intends to enter.

YMCA PA State Championships: the State Championship meet or “States” is the highest level of general Divisional/District team competition in the postseason period. In this meet, the qualifying swimmers from the Eastern, Central and Western Districts of Pennsylvania compete to become State Champions. To be eligible to compete, each swimmer must have participated in a minimum of three (3) closed YMCA inter-association meets during the season, *in addition to* the District meet for their region. Selection of qualifying athletes is based on the top 6 placing swimmers in each Individual Event from each of the 3 District Championships plus next 6 fastest swimmers At Large (based on District Championship results) for a total of 24 swimmers in each Individual Event. This is a prestigious event where the best swimmers in the state compete against each other.

YMCA National Championship: the National Championship is a meet where the highest caliber swimmers from across the entire country come together in competition in celebration of their elite level skill. The meet is not part of the Regional/State Championship progression and invitation is governed by a set of qualifying standards that must be met on an individual event basis. In order to qualify, an athlete must be at least twelve (12) years of age, and not older than twenty-one (21) years of age on the first day meet itself. Plus, each athlete must have competed in a minimum of - three (3) closed YMCA inter-association non-championship meets and one (1) sanctioned YMCA

championship meet. Finally, an athlete must have achieved the minimum national qualifying time standard, during the current season.

### **Swimmer Restrictions Regarding YMCA Competitive Swimming**

Dual Representation: dual representation (e.g. swimming simultaneously for two teams) is a violation of the purpose and spirit of YMCA Competitive Sports. It occurs when an athlete represents more than one team in competition. Interscholastic competition and closed summer league competition are the exceptions to dual representation. Note it is permissible for a Y athlete to represent a non-YMCA team in the same sport, provided that the non-YMCA organization could not compete against the athlete's YMCA team in *open* competition. An example is a *closed* summer recreational league in which YMCA and NGB teams may not participate.

Amateur Status: For Y competition purposes, an amateur is an individual who has not represented a post-high school institution in competition, including varsity and club-level competition, and who has not accepted pay or compensation for competing in his or her sport.

### **Tech Suit Regulations**

Tech suits, or technical suits, are racing swimsuits for competitive swimmers made with water-repellant fabrics and designed in such a way to reduce drag in the water, support an athlete's musculature, thereby increasing speed and performance.

In general, tech suits cover more of an athlete's body and this coverage is regulated and limited by FINA (French: Fédération internationale de natation; English: International Swimming Federation; now called World Aquatics) the governing body for aquatic sports. Men's tech suits cover from the hips to the top of the knees. Women's tech suits, also known as a "kneeskin", extend to just above the knees and are not allowed to go past the shoulders or cover the neck. All tech suits can be identified by a clearly marked patch on the suit that shows the FINA or World Aquatics logo. Example:



Tech suits are illegal for 12 & Under swimmers for both YMCA and USA swimming. 12 & Under female swimmers may wear non-tech suit "kneeskins" but the suit must have a what is known as the "green checkmark" logo on the suit. This indicates that the suit is NOT a tech suit and therefore legal for a 12 & Under swimmer to wear. Example:



Tech suits are expensive with prices ranging from \$300 to \$600 and above. In order for a tech suit to benefit an athlete, that athlete must swim with optimal technique at a higher speed. This is rare for swimmers competing below the High School level of competition. The saying goes, “If you can’t do it without the suit, you shouldn’t be wearing it.”

### **Eligibility Conditions for Coaches**

In order for individuals to serve as a designated coach representing a YMCA swim team as well as be present on deck during championship meets, they must complete all background screenings, child/athlete protection trainings, general safety certifications, Lifeguard/CPR/First Aid certification and any other training and certification as required by their Association, the YMCA of the USA, and the U.S. Center for SafeSport and must not be on the banned, suspended, or disciplined list of the U.S. Center for SafeSport or any sport’s National Governing Body.