

Welcome to the Dominion Hills Warriors Swim Team!

We're glad to have you with us!

Introduction

Every swimmer's parent has experienced that first day of swim practice or that first swim meet where they wonder, "Why am I here and what's going on?" We've all been there before and will be glad to enlighten you in your quest to understand the world of summer swimming. Although this handbook is explicitly written for use by parents of new Dominion Hills (DH) Warriors swimmers, the fundamentals are true for any area swim team. It will (hopefully) provide some information which will help you understand what is happening while your child swims. Please remember that the only stupid question is the one which is unasked. Your Team Reps, Coaches, and fellow swim parents all want you to understand and enjoy our summer swim program.

Chapter 1: About the Swim Team

Our Philosophy

The philosophy of the Dominion Hills swim team is that having fun is the most important thing we can do. Most of the kids don't care if we're in a top division or a bottom division. We'd all like to be division champions, which usually means going undefeated, but only one team out of six can usually claim this honor. In addition to having fun, personal development is also an important goal, and, for a swimmer, that usually means improving their times. We believe that by establishing a healthy environment that encourages kids to do their best, recognizes their contributions, and is fun for the entire family, we will have met our goals.

We've all taken our kids to soccer, baseball, or other sports and probably stood by as two or three parents ran the team. Swimming isn't like that. You can't run a swim program without parental help. In fact, it takes over 40 parents to time, officiate, and score a typical swim meet, and that doesn't include pool set up and tear down, or running concessions, or other non-swimming-related team activities.

Swimming is unique in that there's a place on the team for anyone eighteen or younger who can swim across the pool (25 meters) without assistance. How many other sports have kids five years old to eighteen years old, and their parents, on the same team participating in the same competition?

Expectations

Although swimming is considered an individual sport, our summer league is structured with an emphasis on the team. Any team is only as good as the people on it. In keeping with our philosophy articulated above, our expectations are simple:

1. The Dominion Hills Swim Team is not a swim lesson program. A swimmer should be able to tread water for one minute and swim one length of the pool to join the team. We don't necessarily care how fast, or how ugly, or how legal the stroke is, or even how long it takes to swim that length. We'll help your swimmer become a better swimmer, but in fairness to the other 135-plus swimmers on the team, and especially for the safety of your swimmer during practices, we must insist that all swim team members be competent and comfortable

in the water. Your child will feel better about his/her being on the team if he/she is competitive with most of the other kids of the same age.

2. Keep your commitments: We're planning on you being available for all swim meets, unless you tell us you're not available, preferably at sign up, but, at least three days in advance.
3. Pay attention to the coaches: With over 135 swimmers, disruptions aren't fair to the other swimmers.
4. Do your best - it's a lot more important than being the best.
5. Have fun!

The Legend of the Warriors

The team is named for the young, athletic members of the Indian tribes who in the past roamed this area. They would be called by Chief Powhatan to meet periodically at the natural spring currently enclosed in a spring house in the valley at the rear of the Dominion Hills' property. The spring appears on the first maps of the area. Dominion Hills Warriors draw their strength from a long line of warriors, and their speed from the "fast water" of the spring.

Chapter 2: Important Basic Stuff

Practices

Practices begin the Tuesday after Memorial Day. Until Arlington County Public Schools are released, practices will be held in the evenings and on Saturday mornings (outdoors at the DH pool). Practice times are posted on the Swim Team Bulletin Board and are available @ <http://www.dominionhills.org/Pages/swim.html> Swimmers should come to practice regularly, be prepared to enter the water on time, and be prepared to do their best. Attendance and participation in practice will be taken into consideration when choosing swimmers for the Saturday meets. Parents or swimmers should let the Team Rep or Coaches know the reasons for practice absences.

Parents may stay to watch practices from behind the fence on the upper pool deck. We ask that you refrain from going on deck or holding discussions with the coaches or swimmers during practice. Only swim team members are allowed in any of the pools during practice, and then only under the direction of their coaches. Discussions with the Coaches are encouraged, outside of practices, either at the request of the Coach or during times they have announced that they will be available. Also, please understand that the coaching staff cannot provide supervision for children not on the swimming pool deck during practice. Please be sure your child arrives and departs the facility at the appropriate times and is appropriately supervised. The game room is not to be used during team practices.

Swimmers should do all possible to make the appropriate age-designated practice. If the practice time scheduled for your child is a problem for your family's work or your child's camp schedule, please inform the Coach and the Team Rep. We try to accommodate each family's needs considering also the safety of the swimmers in the water. Coaches appreciate knowing who's coming when, so that workouts can be planned that are appropriate for the swimmers in attendance.

If the weather is too cool or too stormy to go into the pool, practice will more than likely still be held. Bring sneakers and sweats for "dry land" workouts. Practices in the pool will be held in light rain, as long as there is no thunder and lightening!

Basic Swimmer Apparel

All swimmers should wear a swimsuit that will be comfortable and appropriate for racing. The Warriors, like every other swim team, have a team suit. The wearing of the team suit is optional. Sometimes, there is culture shock for some boys regarding the tight fitting "jammer" style suits used for racing. Usually, when they realize that this type of suit is good for racing and everyone else is wearing one, their opposition breaks down. They, too, will become adept at dropping the shorts they'll wear over them, just as they are about to enter the pool. The Team Rep will announce information about where to purchase the team suit.

You should also consider buying at least one practice suit for your swimmer. Sport Fair on Lee Highway in Arlington, as well as other area swimsuit retailers (there are several on-line) frequently sell suits discontinued by manufacturers at a reduced price as practice suits. Having a practice suit often protects the team suit for competition as regular use of the suit in the pool can cause more excessive wear on the suit.

The team will provide one DH swim cap (latex) per swimmer. Only caps with the DH logo or plain caps can be worn in Northern Virginia Swim League (NVSL) meets (turn other caps in side out). A team t-shirt is also provided to each swimmer on the team. Team clothing (e.g., deck pants and sweatshirts) may also be offered for sale at an additional charge.

Accessories for the Well Dressed Swimmer

Every swimmer needs a towel (or two), the bigger and thicker the better. Other accessories you should consider are goggles (probably two pair as they are always getting lost), a sweatshirt and deck pants (for cool days), a swim cap (especially for girls with long hair), a hat or other sun protection, and a bag to carry everything. You should also have liquid refreshment (Gatorade, Propel, or a water bottle) and a light snack for during the meet such as fruit, granola bars, or other healthy foods. Save the sweets at the concession stand as a reward for swimming a great meet.

Team Mail Box

The team mail box is located on the ledge beneath the swim team bulletin board, under the awning attached to the club house. Each family, whose team dues are current, has a folder with the family name on a tab. As the season gets underway, the family folder should be checked frequently for ribbons, news items, team photos, and other bits and pieces. There are folders at the front of the box for the Team Rep and the Coach. Communications for him/her may be left in that folder.

E-mail

An e-mail distribution list is maintained by the Team Rep, and weekly, or often times even more frequently, e-mails go out with important information. Please be sure the Team Rep has your current e-mail address and that you monitor it frequently during the swim season.

Web Page

As part of the Dominion Hills website (www.dominionhills.org), the DH Swim Team maintains a web page. Our page contains the swim meet schedule, this handbook, registration forms, and other information. There is also an official NVSL website that lists meet results each week and contains administrative information including NVSL records. All NVSL teams have web pages on the NVSL site. Some are kept more current than others.

Parent Volunteers

As already mentioned, it takes a lot of parent volunteers to run a swim team and swim meets. While some of the meet officials must attend NVSL training sessions to qualify for their positions, there are many other volunteer roles that need little or no advanced preparation and can be learned “on the job”. At a minimum, ONE VOLUNTEER FROM EACH FAMILY is needed to keep the swim team functioning smoothly. The Team Rep will be asking you to volunteer for a position, or you should tell a volunteer you are interested in helping them. Or while you are still trying to figure out which job might appeal to you, sign up for a shift at the concessions stand during home meets, or try timing at a Monday night meet. Sign-up sheets are posted on the bulletin board. The parent volunteers need all the help they can get; it’s just that sometimes they are too busy to ask for it!

Chapter 3: Organizational Stuff

This chapter covers a few organizational items, just to make sure we're all in sync.

Dominion Hills Pool

The Dominion Hills Area Recreation Association (DHARA), of which we are all members (or renting someone else's membership), owns the facility that we use. Although each member of the swim team pays a fee in order to be on the team, the pool membership at large funds more than half of the cost of these teams. The Association is governed by a 15-member Board of Directors, of which one Director is designated Chairman of the Water Sports Committee which oversees the swim and dive programs. To be a member of the swim team, your family must own a membership or rent a membership and meet other NVSL criteria described in the NVSL Handbook, a copy of which is made available to each swim team family who wants one.

Team Reps and Coaches

The people you'll run into the most in your swim team dealings are the Team Reps and the Coaches. The Team Reps are volunteer parents who were new to swimming at one time just like you are today. The Team Reps are responsible to the Association Board for managing every aspect of the swim team and represent the Dominion Hills pool to other swim teams and the NVSL. It's a job that is impossible to do successfully without help from a great many parents. The Board of Directors hires the Coaches (following the recommendations of the Water Sports Committee), who are responsible to the Pool Manager for coaching the swimming portion of the program.

The Northern Virginia Swim League (NVSL)

In 1956, eight Northern Virginia pools founded the NVSL. Today, the NVSL has over 10,000 swimmers on 102 teams and is the largest summer swim league in the United States. Obviously, with this many teams, there has to be some division of teams. During the off season, the NVSL ranks each team from 1 to 102 based primarily on swimmers' times the past season, and then divides the teams, based on these rankings, into 17 Divisions of six teams each. This means that the fastest (and typically largest) teams are in the lower numbered Divisions and the less competitive (and smaller) teams are in the higher numbered Divisions. The other teams in our division and the meet locations are in the NVSL Handbook, on the DH web page, and listed on the schedule given to each swim team family. Directions to the pools are provided prior to the meet, but can also usually be found on the NVSL website.

Time Trials

Time trials are traditionally held the Saturday before the first NVSL Saturday meet of the season. As a practice for real meet conditions, time trials are held just like a real meet complete with all the trappings of starter, judges and timers, all dressed in blue and white. Times are recorded for each event for each swimmer and used as a base time for the swimmer to improve upon during the season, and as a basis for selecting swimmers for the Saturday meets. Swimmers are encouraged to compete in all events they can. Times from Monday night meets and prior Saturday meets will also factor into Coaches' decisions for Saturday morning placements. But, times from winter swim competitions cannot be used.

Dual Meets

The six teams in each division swim the other five teams, one at a time on five consecutive Saturdays, in a series of Dual Meets, so called because there are two teams competing. Based upon the results of these five meets, a division champion will be crowned.

All-Arlington Adams Relays

This event is held in celebration of the many contributions made by Al Adams to youth swimming in Arlington. On the morning of July 4th each year, members of Arlington Forest, Dominion Hills, Donaldson Run, and Overlee Swim Teams meet at one of the four Arlington pools on a rotating basis for a morning of fun relays. Besides mixed age and mixed sex relays, there is the ever popular “family” relay and water polo, along with other zany events. We’ve tried, but we have yet to get teams from the Colonial Swim League to join in on the fun.

Relay Carnivals

Another NVSL event is the Divisional Relay Carnival, which takes place on the Wednesday between the third and fourth weeks of the season. All six teams in each division converge on one pool for an evening of relay races. These include both Freestyle relays (each swimmer swims the Freestyle) and Medley relays (each swimmer swims a different stroke). The Carnival is scored, and the winning team for the Division receives a trophy. The next night, all the Division Coordinators meet and relay teams are selected to swim at the All-Star Relay Carnival the following week. The sole criterion for selection to the All-Star Relay Carnival is to have one of the eighteen fastest times in events swum at the Divisional Relay Carnivals.

Divisionals

On the sixth Saturday of the season, each Division has an Individual Championship meet, commonly referred to as “Divisionals”. Each team is allowed to enter two swimmers in each event, but a swimmer can enter no more than two events. If a team does not have two swimmers for an event, other teams can “bid in” their swimmers to fill the empty lanes. This is strictly an individual meet and is not scored.

All Stars

After Divisionals, all the Division coordinators meet to select swimmers for the All-Star meet the following Saturday. The sole criterion for selection to All-Stars is to have one of the eighteen fastest times swum that day in an event in the Divisional meets. All Stars can be overwhelming for a first-time swimmer as approximately 600 swimmers, plus parents, coaches, and officials, converge on a pool for a meet that takes about six hours. If your swimmer is fast enough to be named an All Star, it is a thrill they will never forget.

US Swimming

US Swimming is the governing body for swimming in the United States. US Swimming establishes rules for the strokes and for the conduct of competition. The NVSL swimming rules are US Swimming rules with minor changes to accommodate the facilities and skill levels found in our league.

Chapter 4: My Kid Says He's Supposed to Swim Like a Butterfly

If you're not a former swimmer, the strokes and their rules can be a cause of bewilderment. While the stroke rules are simple enough for a six-year-old to understand, most people do not have a copy of the US Swimming Rules, so we'll briefly describe the strokes below. The rules below are the US Swimming rules as modified for use in the NVSL. Teams in other leagues may have slightly different rules.

Freestyle: The freestyle is defined as any means of swimming across the pool. Any stroke and kick are acceptable. There are, however, a few don'ts associated with this stroke, specifically: 1) You cannot walk on the bottom or pull yourself along using the lane lines, and 2) In a 50-meter race (two pool lengths), you must touch the wall at the 25-meter end before touching the wall at the 50-meter end (This may seem obvious, but sometimes swimmers do miss the wall at the turning end of the pool).

Backstroke: Like the freestyle, almost anything goes on the backstroke as long as you stay on your back. Watching swimmers learn the backstroke is a perverse sense of fun as they bounce off lane lines and wonder where they are. Eventually, they will learn to guide off the lane lines, use the overhead backstroke flags and the lane line markings to know where they're at in the pool, and count strokes from the flags to the wall. Backstroke starts are different from all others because the swimmer is in the water feet planted against the wall, and hanging on to either another swimmer's legs or the lip on the pool awaiting the starter's signal. "Legs" must be grabbed below the knees. Persons serving in an official capacity (such as timers or coaches) may not serve as "legs". If your swimmer is a backstroker, he or she will eventually learn the backstroke flip turn. The flip turn is the one exception to staying on your back, and can be used only as part of a turn (not a finish) at the pool wall.

Breaststroke: The breaststroke has two components, the arm pull and the kick, which must be done in sequence. The arm pull and its recovery must be under the breast and cannot extend further back than the waist area. The kick is a "frog" kick and the toes must be pointed outward during the propulsive part of the kick. The arm pull and kick must be in an alternating sequence and the elbows must stay below the water except for touching the wall at the finish. Breaststroke turns and finishes require a simultaneous two-hand touch.

Butterfly: A well-executed butterfly (or Fly) is the most beautiful exhibition of power you'll ever see in a swimming pool. Quite frankly, the fly is the hardest stroke for most swimmers to perfect, and while they are learning it many look like they are drowning. There are two components of the fly; the arm pull and the kick. The arm pull must be an over the water recovery (arms breaking the surface of the water) while moving forward simultaneously. The kick is a dolphin-style kick with both legs moving simultaneously. Unlike the breaststroke, there is no requirement to alternate the kick and pull. Like breaststroke, turns and finishes require a simultaneous two-hand touch at the wall.

Individual Medley: The individual medley (or IM) is when an individual swims each of the four strokes in the sequence Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle. We swim a 100 Meter IM, which means that 25 Meters, or one pool length, of each stroke is swum. In a 100 Meter IM, every turn is a stroke change and stroke finish rules apply. This means no Backstroke flip turns are allowed.

Relays: There are two kinds of relays, the freestyle relay and the medley relay. Both involve a team of four swimmers, each swimming one quarter of the total distance. In the freestyle relay,

each swimmer swims the freestyle. In the medley relay, the sequence is Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Freestyle. At the NVSL Relay Carnival, swimmers eight and under swim a modified medley relay where the fly leg of the relay is replaced with a freestyle leg. In all relays, each swimmer must wait until the previous swimmer touches the wall prior to leaving the deck. Running starts or pushes from teammates are not allowed.

Chapter 5: Swim Meets

There are two basic types of meets you will encounter as a parent: Saturday morning meets, which are scored dual meets (so-called "A" meets), and Monday night meets, which are unscored dual meets, and are called developmental or "B" meets. Saturday Meets consist of 38 Individual events and 12 Relays. The events swum for each stroke and age group are shown below. Remember, each pool length is 25 meters.

Who Swims in "A" Meets?

These meets, which are run under the auspices of the NVSL, are to see who can score the most points, so the fastest swimmers get to swim. Three swimmers from each team can be entered in each individual event, and no swimmer from either team may swim more than two individual events. Since swimmers take vacations and go places such as scout camp, and a swimmer can swim in only two events (plus relays) in any meet, you don't necessarily have to be one of the three fastest swimmers to swim in a Saturday meet. Who swims an event may seem to be a mystery. However, after the first meet, both teams know the other swimmers' times, so we try to position our swimmers to optimize our points and win. There is much deliberation and attention to the previous meet sheets of the opposing team. Consideration will also be given to attendance and participation at practice, but ultimately it is the need of the team that determines the placement of the swimmers on the meet sheet.

Meet sheets are finalized the Thursday before each Saturday meet. While the coaches will notify your swimmer if he or she is swimming that Saturday, the preliminary meet sheet will be posted on the Swim Team Bulletin Board by Friday, at the latest. It is your responsibility to check the meet sheet. If your swimmer is unable to make the meet for any reason, please notify the coach or team rep as soon as possible, so that another swimmer might swim. Even if your son/daughter suddenly becomes ill early Saturday morning, please notify the coach or team rep immediately, as it might not be too late for another swimmer to be contacted. Scratches can be made anytime prior to the start of a race.

Scratches

Once the meet sheet and team roster are exchanged with the opposing team on Thursday evening prior to the Saturday morning meet, no changes can be made on the meet sheet. However, scratches can be made the day of the meet up until a particular race is called to begin. Ideally, once the team rep and coaches know which team members are present, they record their scratches for the scorers and the announcer, so that the changes can be noted as the meet progresses. A substitute swimmer must be on the team roster and must not have a faster time in that event than the swimmer being scratched. A swimmer may not be scratched in to a slot if there was no swimmer listed there on the original meet sheet.

Swimming Up and Aging Up

For each NVSL meet, participants' ages are the age they are on the day of the meet. If a swimmer's birthday moves them from one age bracket to the next higher age bracket, they are said to have "aged up." Swimmers with summer birthdays have it particularly tough when they have to change age groups in the middle of the season. We affectionately call these "bummer birthdays." Swimmers whose birthdays fall in the week between divisionals or relay carnival do not age up for

the following all-star meet.

“Swimming Up” is a coaching tactic allowed by the NVSL in dual meets. A swimmer may be placed in a race for an older age bracket. There are various reasons for doing this. It allows the team to “fill the meet sheet,” if there are gaps in the older age groups, giving the team at least a chance to earn points in those races. It also gives swimmers who normally wouldn’t swim in a Saturday meet, a chance to swim. And, it can strengthen swimmers by having them race with older swimmers. Some swimmers enjoy the challenge of “swimming up.” Others hate it. Swimmers are not allowed to “swim up” in the mixed age relays, nor are they allowed to “swim up” at relay carnivals or the divisional meet.

The Ladder

The ladder is a listing of the current fastest times each swimmer on the team has achieved in each stroke the child has swum. Hopefully, all swimmers will have a time for each of the four strokes — freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly. There will be a boys’ ladder and a girls’ ladder for each age group and each stroke. The ladder will be posted on the team bulletin board and will be updated each week after the results from the weekly meets have been entered.

The ladder is a way for the swimmers to see how their times compare to other swimmers in their age group. Ideally, it should be used as an incentive for swimmers to work hard to improve their times.

It is also a useful tool for the Coaches when they are putting together the meet sheets for the Saturday meets, the divisional relay carnival, and divisionals. But, it is not the only information on which they base their decisions. They also rely on information about the other teams and their knowledge of our own swimmers from practices, so that they can put together the best set of swimmers for each event.

Getting to the Meets

Home Meets – An arrival time will be announced prior to the meet. Each swimmer should be in the designated team area, ready to go into the water for warm ups at the appointed time. Team members who are not swimming in the meet are encouraged to attend to cheer on their teammates.

Away Meets – The team caravans to away Saturday meets. A time is set for all cars, drivers, and swimmers to meet in the DH parking lot for swimmer check-in. Driving directions to the away pool and streamers for the cars will be distributed at that time. “Fast Water” will be collected from Powhatan Springs prior to the departure time.

Arriving at Away Meets – The swimmers are to congregate in the host pool’s parking lot and enter the pool area as a team. Please treat the other team’s pool facility as if it were your own. Please call the Team Rep’s cell phone if your swimmer suddenly absolutely cannot be present at an NVSL meet they are scheduled to swim in so another swimmer can be given a chance to swim in their place.

Seeding

In Saturday meets, the home team is assigned lanes 1, 3, and 5, while the visiting team is assigned lanes 2, 4, and 6. The fastest swimmers swim in lanes 3 and 4, the next fastest in lanes 1 and 2, and the third fastest in lanes 5 and 6. Swimmers are seeded based upon their fastest times attained in prior competition. Lane 1 is always on the right side as you stand facing the pool at the starting end.

Meet Sheets

While all NVSL meets have an announcer, the best way to follow the meet is with a meet sheet, which lists all the events, swimmers, and seed times. Meet Sheets are usually found in the concession area and typically sell for \$2 or less.

Scoring

In the individual events, a first place finish earns 5 points for the team, a second place, 3 points, and a third place finish, 1 point. Relays are scored as 5 points for the winner and 0 points for the loser. There are 404 points up for grabs in a Saturday meet. Unless there is one or more places not awarded in an event due to DQs or lack of swimmers, you need anything more than 202 points to win. And, yes, meets are sometimes won by 1 point, or even end up in a tie.

In the event of a tie in an individual event, the points for the places involved are equally split among the swimmers who tied. For example, in a two-way tie for second place, each swimmer earns 2 points for their team (3 points for second plus 1 point for third equals 4 points, half for each swimmer). No third place would be awarded because the next swimmer is fourth. For a third place tie, each swimmer is awarded 1/2 point.

Disqualifications (DQs) and False Starts

A swimmer will be disqualified (or “DQd”) if he/she does not follow the rules of the stroke or false starts. These items are covered in more detail in Chapter 7.

Developmental (Monday Night) Meets

Monday night meets are basically the same as Saturday morning meets except as follows:

- 6 & Under events are held at the option of the competing teams.
- IM events are added for 10 & Unders, 11-12s, 13-14s, and 15-18s at some meets.
- Multiple heats of each event are usually held for the younger swimmers, and ribbons are given according to the swimmer’s place in their heat.
- Events may be combined in order to shorten the duration of the meet.
- There are no relays in these meets.

While you may sometimes hear these called “B” meets, at Dominion Hills everyone is part of the same team, and we don't really have an "A" and a "B" team.

All swimmers are strongly urged to swim in Monday night meets. Even swimmers who swam on Saturday can use Monday night meets to work on their weaker strokes. However, they are not allowed to swim an event in which they placed 1st, 2nd, or 3rd on the previous Saturday. Unless announced otherwise, swimmers are only allowed to swim in two events at a Monday night meet. Please be sure your swimmer signs up for Monday night meets prior to Monday evening.

Ribbons

While swimmers’ individual times and improving on those times are the most important result of swim meets, in many swimmers’ minds, getting ribbons is their source of gratification for a job well done. Saturday meet ribbons are prepared during the meets. They will be passed out by the

coach following the meet. Listen during the meet for an announcement of the designated meeting place. Ribbons from Monday night meets are not prepared during the meet, but will be placed in the family folders in the team mail box as soon as they are ready, or handed out by the coach at the Friday pep rallies.

Relay Carnival

At Relay Carnival, teams are not seeded. Each team's lane assignment for the first event is based upon the luck of the draw and the teams then rotate one lane to the left after each event. The meet sheet lists only the team swimming in each lane in each event (except for All-Star Relay Carnival).

Chapter 6: Who Are All These People Dressed in Blue and White?

Your first swim meet can be a bewildering experience as you encounter a vast horde of adults dressed in blue and white. NVSL rules require white shirts and blue slacks or shorts (no team logos) as the color to be worn by all officials. This is also practical as white shirt is a good color to wear on a hot humid summer morning, so start shopping now. The various officials required to run a swim meet and their responsibilities are listed below.

Clerk of Course: The Clerk of Course is the “gatekeeper” or “kid herder” for all swimmers in our meets. The people who perform this function get the swimmers to the right lanes for the correct race. You can’t run a race without swimmers and the Clerk of Course makes sure the right swimmer gets to the right place at the right time.

Referee: The Referee is the chief official for each swim meet. He or she is responsible for the conduct of the meets and is the final authority on the interpretation and enforcement of all swimming rules. Prior to the start of each race, the Referee sounds two to four short blasts on his/her whistle to advise the participants to get ready. After the event is announced by the announcer or starter, the Referee sounds one long blast on his/her whistle as a signal for swimmers to get into position for the start or to jump feet first into the water for a backstroke event. For backstroke events, a second long blast of the whistle is given to bring the swimmers to the wall for the start. When the Referee sees that all the swimmers are ready, he extends his arm pointing towards the Starter. At this point, the Starter takes control of the participants.

Starter: The Starter is responsible for ensuring that all swimmers are given a fair and equitable start. The Starter will instruct the swimmers to “Take your mark”. After all swimmers are ready and still, the Starter will start the race, using a “Colorado System” (so called because it is built by Colorado Timing Systems). This system consists of a public address system, a horn, and a strobe light. A race can be recalled only if it was a bad start by the Starter (i.e., not all the swimmers were ready) or for a safety reason. This is done using a recall signal on the Colorado system (you’ll know it when you hear it). For more information on the start, see False Starts in Chapter 7.

Stroke and Turn Judges: Once the race has started, the Stroke & Turn Judges are responsible for ensuring that all swimmers obey the rules of the stroke that they are swimming. Two judges are typically positioned at each end of the pool, with each judge at each end responsible for watching swimmers in three of the six lanes. If a Stroke and Turn Judge believes he or she has seen a violation of the rules, he or she raises his or her hand to signify that an infraction has occurred. A disqualification is recorded on a DQ slip, which the Referee reviews and approves and forwards copies to the Table Workers and the Team Reps.

Course Marshals: Marshals are responsible for ensuring that warm-ups and the meet are conducted safely, and that order is maintained during the warm-ups and the meet. Duties include stopping any horse play and directing swimmers to the appropriate place on the pool deck.

Relay Take-off Judges: During relays, you’ll see four Relay Take-off Judges at each end of the pool (two per lane). Their job is to insure that each swimmer touches the wall prior to the next swimmer in the relay leaving the pool deck. Each Judge notes on a slip of paper whether each swimmer in his lane left before or after the swimmer in the water touched the wall. Relay Take-off Judges do not raise their hands when they observe an early take-off because a disqualification occurs only if both Relay Take-off Judges observed an early takeoff.

Timers: The Timers are the most important people to every swimmer. They are the people who determine each swimmer’s official time for each race. Being a Timer is a good entry-level po-

sition for new parents. Some parents have been Timers for years and wouldn't want to see a swim meet from any other vantage point. If you can start and stop a stopwatch, you can be a Timer. We'll even provide the stopwatch. Timers start their watches on the strobe light from the Colorado System and stop their watches when the swimmer touches the wall. There are three Timers per lane, and all three times are recorded. The middle time of the three is recorded as the official time. The Chief or Head Timer collects the time cards from the Timers, reviews them for accuracy and completeness, and forwards them on to the Table Workers.

Table Workers: The time cards from the Timers and any DQ slips go to the Table Workers who determine the order of finish for each event, score the meet, and prepare ribbons for the participants. Several people from each team perform these functions to ensure that errors are caught before the results are announced.

Team Rep: The Team Rep is the designated recipient of all DQ slips for his/her team and is the only person with any official standing to challenge any decisions made by the Referee. It sounds like an easy job, but remember, most of the Team Rep's job is done before the meet starts.

Coaches: During the meet, the Coaches primary responsibility is to encourage and praise the swimmers and to make sure that they get to the Clerk of Course in time to swim their event.

Other Very Important People: It would be impossible to host a swim meet without a number of people in Other Very Important Positions. These people set up the pool and sell concessions. They also announce the results, run social activities, and do other jobs that need to be done. We need the help of every family in order to have a successful swim season.

Spectator Suggestions

Always wear (or bring) your whites. Besides being a comfortable color for a hot summer morning, you never know when you might be needed to time. Bring sun screen, a hat, an extra towel for your swimmer (or for you to sit on), and money for concessions. Expect to be able to purchase coffee and a doughnut to enjoy as you read the meet sheet. Other items will be available later in the meet. There should be quiet during the National Anthem and when the referee blows the whistle prior to the start of each event. Cheer as often as you would like, in a positive manner, but only after the race has started. Stay off the pool deck at all times, if possible. If not possible because of the way a pool is constructed, stay back - particularly during races since various officials need to walk along the sides of the pool. Send your swimmer back to the team area after their "good swim" hug and plea for money for concessions. Swimmers are to be with their team in the team area throughout the meet. Keep other children from wandering onto the pool deck, into the team areas, or into other pools at the facility. It is not appropriate to argue with any official during a meet. Problems should be brought to the attention of the Team Representative. Unsportsmanlike behavior will not be tolerated. No booing, vulgarity, nastiness, or unpleasant behavior by anyone will be accepted.

Chapter 7: What Do You Mean, My Kid DQ'd?

In swimming, the rules must be followed or a disqualification, or DQ, is committed. This can be traumatic the first time a swimmer is DQ'd for just one mistake, but it isn't fair to other swimmers who swim the entire race per the rules to do otherwise.

What is a DQ?

A DQ (short for disqualification), also called a “deek,” is any violation of the rules observed by any appropriate official. Some of the more common reasons for DQing are as follows:

Freestyle:

- Failure to touch the wall at the turning end of the pool.
- Walking on the bottom or pulling on the lane lines.
- Exiting the pool before swimming the specified distance.

Backstroke:

- Past vertical towards the breast at any time except during a flip turn.
- Leaving the wall after a turn past vertical towards the breast.
- Improper flip turn (older swimmers).

Breaststroke:

- Incorrect kick, such as a scissors kick or flutter kick.
- Non-Simultaneous two-hand touch or one-hand touch at turn or finish.
- Toes not pointed outward during the propulsive part of the kick.
- More than one stroke underwater with arms fully extended at start or turn.
- Arm recovery past waist except on first stroke after start or turn.
- Head didn't break surface by conclusion of second arm pull underwater after a start or turn.

Butterfly:

- Non-Simultaneous or one-handed wall touch at the turn or finish.
- Non-Simultaneous leg movement during kicks.
- Arms don't break water surface during recovery.
- Non-Simultaneous arm movement during recovery.

Relay Races:

- A swimmer leaves the deck before the previous swimmer touches the wall.

False Start:

- A swimmer starts the race early
(more details below).

How will I know a DQ occurred?

Unlike football, we don't blow a whistle and announce to the world that a rules violation has

occurred. When a Stroke and Turn Judge observes a violation, he or she raises his or her hand to signify that they have observed a violation, then writes it up on a DQ slip. The judge then takes the slip to the Referee, who verifies that a rule has been broken and can question the stroke and turn judge to ensure that he or she was able to see the violation that was cited. The Referee then gives one copy of the DQ slip to the Team Rep and another copy to the Table Workers. Another clue that a DQ has occurred is observing a Stroke and Turn Judge writing and a longer than normal pause between events.

Disqualifications for early relay takeoffs are done slightly differently. The Referee receives all the take-off slips from all the judges. If both judges on a lane agree that an early takeoff occurred, the Referee will stand over the lane that the team being DQ'd swam in and raise his or her hand.

False Starts

A false start occurs whenever a swimmer moves towards the pool after having assumed a still position (taking his/her mark), and before the Starter has started the race. When this occurs, a swimmer is usually trying to anticipate the starting signal and beat the other swimmers into the water.

If the false start is detected before the starting signal is sounded, the offending swimmer can be removed from the race prior to it starting. If a false start occurs, but the starting signal has sounded, the race will not be stopped. Instead, the false starting swimmer(s) will be notified of their false start at the conclusion of the race. The use of a recall signal is now limited to a bad start (i.e., not all swimmers were ready) or for a safety reason. If the starter sounds the recall signal, no swimmer can be removed for a false start.

How do I know if my kid DQ'd?

Your kid will probably know before you do since the Team Rep tells the Coach, who tells the swimmer. You'll probably find out if you saw your swimmer finish with one of the top three times, but he or she isn't announced later in the top three places. Similarly, someone else DQ'd if your swimmer finished in 4th, 5th or 6th, yet is announced as one of the top three finishers. Another way to find out is by reading the official Meet Results, which are posted at the pool by 4 PM the day of the meet. You also can get results by visiting the NVSL web site.

A Word About Officials and DQs

Every Official on the deck will always give the benefit of the doubt to the swimmer. Although the difference between "legal but ugly" vs. "illegal" is sometimes close to call, any violation called by an official is an "I saw" not an "I think I saw".

Protesting Disqualifications

The Team Rep is the only person who can officially question a disqualification, or any other call by an official. If something happens involving your swimmer which you do not think is right, talk to the Coach or the Team Rep. The Team Rep will initiate action in accordance with NVSL rules if thought to be appropriate.

Chapter 8: We'd Rather Have Fun Than Be in Division 1

If you get to know the parents of swimmers in Division I teams, some of them will tell you that swimming isn't always fun. At the pinnacle of the NVSL are the six best teams, and they all want to be #1. At Dominion Hills, we like to win, but it isn't our reason for being. Some of the things we do to have fun are:

Pep Rallies: A Pep Rally is held every Friday night at the pool. The time, theme, and cost (if any), will be announced and posted on the Swim Team Bulletin Board.

Friday Morning Breakfasts: Breakfast will be provided on Friday mornings following each practice. The menu typically rotates between bagels, doughnuts, and pancakes. There will be a sign-up sheet on the Swim Team Bulletin Board for juice donations and pancake servers.

Team Pictures: We take a team picture every year and we'd like your swimmer to be in it. You are not obligated to purchase one. The date and time, during team practice, will be announced and purchasing information distributed prior to picture day.

Swim and Dive Team Banquet: We cap off the season with a Swim and Dive Team Banquet. This Dinner is held on the front lawn the Sunday evening after Divisionals. Every swimmer gets a trophy. And several special awards will be given out. The evening is traditionally capped by a multi-media show put together by senior swimmers featuring the team members.

Other Activities: Do you have an idea for a team activity? By all means bring your suggestion to the Team Rep...and be prepared to help with the event!

What's Mandatory: While we hope you will participate in all the social activities, they are all optional. Similarly, the purchase of team suits and other team clothing items is entirely optional. What is mandatory is that you honor your commitments and have fun!