

# Swim Terminology

## Swim Strokes, Events and Age Groups

Swimmers will be learning and competing in four strokes: freestyle (Free), backstroke (Back), breaststroke (Breast), butterfly (Fly). Each stroke represents an event in which a swimmer can compete. A 5th event in which a swimmer can compete is the Individual Medley (IM) event, which is 25 yards/meters of each stroke in the order of Fly, Back, Breast, and Free.

There are five official age groups in which swimmers are classified and compete against each other, separated by gender. Swimmers compete in an age group based upon their age on June 15th of the season in which they are competing. The five age groups are: 8-and-under (8&U), 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, and 15-18. Any swimmer under the age of eight can compete in the 8&U age group. This is up to the coaches' discretion. However, at some meets, there is a unique 6&U age group designated, especially for the Free and Back events.

8&U swimmers will swim 25 yard/meter distances in all four strokes. 9-10 swimmers swim 50 yards/meters in the Free, Back, and Breast events, but 25 yards/meters in the Fly event. Swimmers in the 11-12, 13-14 and 15-18 compete in all strokes at the 50 yard/meter distance.

## Legal Strokes and Disqualification (or "DQ")

During each event at a meet there are four Stroke and Turn (S&T) judges, the Starter and the Meet Referee who are watching all swimmers to ensure that they are performing their respective strokes correctly or "legally". Each stroke consists of specific mechanics relating to how it: 1) is performed, 2) must be finished at the wall, and 3) how a turn must be completed, when a swimmer is competing in a 50 or 100 yard/meter event.

If a judge sees a violation of a stroke rule (from 1-3 above), he/she will raise one hand and fill out a Disqualification or DQ slip, indicating what the rule violation was. The Referee will ask the S&T judge questions and either accept or reject the DQ. Once a DQ slip has been signed by both the S&T judge and Referee, the computer operators receive a copy.

Team Representatives are given all meet DQ slips at the end of a meet, which are then handed off to the coaches. However, coaches are usually aware of a DQ for a swimmer before his/her event is over. Coaches enlist the support of the Team Representative to find out the reason for a swimmer's DQ, and in some instances, the DQ may be contested.

When a swimmer DQ's, there will be no official time recorded for the swim. At Saturday "A" meets, a DQ means that the swim does not qualify for a time or points for the team. A swimmer may have "won" the race, but a DQ would change the event standings.

Keep in mind, disqualifications are determined by the subjective view of the volunteer stroke-and-turn officials and they are not always clear-cut. Help your swimmer keep these in perspective - A DQ is unfortunate, but not terribly serious. And especially for new swimmers, a DQ means only that the swimmer made a stroke error, never that they did something "wrong" or "bad."

Coaches will work closely with swimmers to prepare them for a competing in any stroke, specifically to prevent a swimmer from getting a DQ. They will not deliberately enter a swimmer into a an event if the swimmer has not consistently performed a legal stroke during training.

Some examples of when a swimmer will earn a DQ are: swimming the wrong stroke for an event, turning over too far onto one's stomach in the backstroke, flutter kicks instead of a dolphin kick in the Fly stroke, touching the wall with only one vs both hands in the Breast and Fly events, or too many underwater pulls in the breaststroke.

### **False Starts**

A false start is when a swimmer enters the water before the light and sound go off to start a race. False starts are rarely charged to swimmers during summer league swimming, however, if a swimmer is charged with two, they will be DQ'd for that heat.

### **Time Trials**

Time trials occur before the first Saturday meet and are set up like a meet with each swimmer competing in all four strokes. This "mock" meet gives coaches a baseline at the start of the season against which to measure progress and help decide which swimmers will represent the team at later scored meets. Time trials also help familiarize new swimmers and volunteers with how a meet runs, and to train new meet officials. All families are expected to volunteer at the time trial if their swimmer attends.

### **Saturday "A" Meets** (Approx 2.5 hours)

Saturday meets (also called "A" meets) are **scored**, dual competitions against the five other teams in our Gold Division of the Colonial Swim League. A team's performance at these five Saturday morning meets is what ranks it in their Division. At "A" meets, one heat of each individual event is swam in the event order of: Freestyle, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly. Events go in the order of ascending age group, in alternating boy-girl order. Each event heat includes three swimmers from each team (or four swimmers at 8-lane pools) in each age group.

After these four individual events, team relays are raced and scored. Each team enters one relay team per age group and gender. After the scored portion of the meet, swimmers are allowed to swim the individual medley (or IM) event, which consists of one lap of all four strokes.

### How are “A” Meets scored?

Throughout the meet, team scores are kept based upon a point system. Only first, second and third place finishers in each event earn points to add to the team score. Therefore, it is important for a team to have at least three swimmers in each event to maximize points. First place finishers earn or score 5 points for the team, second place finishers earn 3 points for the team, and third place finishers earn 1 point for the team. Relay teams earn 7 points for a first place finish. No points are awarded to any other place. Ribbons are awarded to the first 3 places: First - Blue, Second - Red, Third - White. Swimmers who earn ribbons will receive them at a post-meet social event or at their next practice session.

### How do I know if my swimmer will compete at an A Meet?

The coaches decide which swimmers will be entered in each event. Generally, it is the three swimmers who have the best time in that stroke. In addition, a swimmer will only compete in an event for which they can swim a legal stroke, swimmers are ordered in heats from slowest to fastest.

The final list of Saturday meet swimmers is emailed no later than Friday evening, the day before the meet. It is your responsibility to make sure your swimmer is at warm-ups on time Saturday. If your swimmer is entered, but can no longer attend the meet, please let the coaches know immediately, so that an alternate swimmer can be notified to swim the event.

### **Wednesday Developmental “B” Meets** (Approx 2.5-3 hours)

Wednesday evening meets (also called "B" meets) are **non-scored** dual or tri-team swim meets. These meets provide opportunities for swimmers who may not have raced in Saturday meets to improve their strokes and times. Because many more swimmers participate in these meets they can be lengthy, but they are low-pressure competition and great for building confidence. Swimmers who swam in an event at the previous Saturday meet, and placed first thru third in that event, aren't allowed to swim that event at the following Wednesday meet (in any age-group). However, they may swim in any other events in which they did not place in the previous A Meet.

At Developmental Meets, no team scores are kept, and no team winner is determined.

Individual times are recorded to determine progress and to improve event times for possible participation (seeding) in the next Saturday “A” Meet. Ribbons are awarded to the swimmers finishing in the top 6 places: First - Blue, Second - Red, Third - White, Fourth - Yellow, Fifth - Green, Sixth - Pink. In addition, Heat Winner ribbons (black) and Participation ribbons (multi-pastel) are usually awarded, regardless of whether the swimmer DQ's in his/her heat.

## **CSL Relay Carnival**

The Colonial Swim League hosts a Relay Carnival on a Sunday midway through the season. This is an all-relay event, so there are no individual swimmer events. Swimmers are selected to swim in relay events based on their best times, the coaches' discretion, and strategy for maximum performance at the meet. There are unique and unusual relay combinations at this meet. Only Gold Division teams compete against each other for ribbon awards.

## **CSL Divisional Qualification Meet**

The Saturday following the last "A" meet, a Divisional Qualification swim meet is held for each of the four CSL divisions (Red, White, Blue, Gold) to determine entrants for the CSL All-Star Meet. Each team enters three swimmers in each of the 5 individual events (free, back, breast, butterfly and IM). A swimmer may swim in a maximum of three events at this meet. Swimmer entries are based on best times and coach-swimmer conversations. There are no relay events at the Divisional meet.

Each Division awards trophies to the top scoring team in each age- and gender group. These trophies are awarded at the Divisional meet. The Division winning team (best win-loss ratio) is awarded its trophy at Divisionals.

## **CSL All-Star Meet**

The Saturday following the Divisional Qualification Meet, the League holds a meet where the top 18 swimmers in the league in each event compete. This is the final meet of the season. All All-Star swimmers are awarded medals at this meet.