



**KENT GARDENS DOLPHINS
SWIM TEAM HANDBOOK**

A guide for new and bewildered swim parents

***IMPORTANT NOTE: In order to join the KG swim team, NVSL rules require membership—either permanent or temporary—at Kent Gardens Recreation Club. Dolphin members, inactive members, and August members are not eligible to participate on the swim team.**

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CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, you can always ask the Team Reps or coaches. We're here to help.

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Chris Hinton is our head coach, and has been since 1999. His commitment, longevity and exceptional coaching are the leading factors in the success of the KGRC Dolphins. He teaches fourth grade at Kent Gardens elementary and his kids swim alongside yours.

INTRODUCTION

The whirlwind nature of the swim season can leave anyone spinning, and it can be especially overwhelming for families new to swim. We've all been there and we're happy to help you through it. The Team Reps, Coaches and fellow swim parents all want you to understand and enjoy our summer swim program. Welcome to the Dolphins! We're glad to have you with us!

First and foremost, we want to foster a healthy environment that encourages the kids to do their best, gives them ample opportunity to practice good sportsmanship, recognizes their contributions, and is fun for the entire family.

SWIM LESSONS, MINI-DOLPHINS OR SWIM TEAM?

The swim team does not offer official "swim lessons," though many of the coaches and junior coaches do offer private sessions. You can contact them individually for more information, and many of them will post flyers near the front desk. The lifeguards will offer swim lessons for younger children; you can sign up at the front desk. The lessons usually start after school lets out and run weekdays for two weeks and the price is reasonable. Swim lessons are intended for kids who

- Are afraid to blow bubbles in the water
- Cannot be out of arm's length of an adult in the pool

If your child can swim a little but can't yet swim the length of the pool, Mini-Dolphins is the place for them! Mini-Dolphins meet for a half hour each day to practice. They do not compete in meets. During the last week of the season, they are invited to the end of season Intrasquad

meet to complete in a Lollipop Race. Each lane is staffed by a junior coach for encouragement and safety, and each participant gets a special lollipop! During the regular practices, the lanes run a minimum of two coaches each. Mini-Dolphins are intended for kids who

- Can stay afloat a stroke or two – can push off the wall and “swim” to a parent a few feet away
- In general, are anywhere from 3-7 years old

Some kids start the season in Mini-Dolphins and make so much progress so fast that they move up to the regular Swim Team practices. For older kids, you don’t need to be legal in all strokes – or even know what they are - to join the team. If you can swim the length of the pool, we’ll teach you the rest. If you have a question about whether Mini-Dolphins or the Swim Team is the best fit for your child, come to the first practice for an assessment. The Swim Team is intended for kids who

- Can swim the length of the pool. Doesn’t have to be pretty or legal, but they can get there
- Are as young as five, but most are six or seven

PRACTICE TIMES

Our summer 2024 practice schedule is as follows:

Swim team practices for regular Dolphins (NOT Mini Dolphins) will begin Monday, May 20. Our practice schedule will be as follows.

Monday, May 20 - Wednesday, June 12, 2024 (while FCPS is still in session)

Practices held Monday - Friday

(No practice on Memorial Day)

- 4-5pm: Age 13&up
- 5-6pm: Age 5-9
- 6-7pm: Age 10-12

Our Mini Dolphins group will begin practices Monday, June 17.

Thursday, June 13 - Friday, July 19, 2024 (after FCPS is no longer in session)

Beginning June 13, we will shift to our standard summer schedule, offering both morning and afternoon practices. Your swimmers may choose whichever practice session best fits their schedule. (You do not have to commit to one schedule for the entirety of the summer; you may adjust on a week-to-week basis as needed.)

The schedule is as follows:

Morning Practices

Held Monday - Friday

- 7:30-9:00am: 11&up
- 9-10am: 10&under
- 10:00: Mini Dolphins

Afternoon Practices

Held Tuesday - Friday

- 4:30: Mini Dolphins
- 5-6pm: 11&under
- 6-7pm: 12&up

*Please note: There will *NOT* be 5pm and 6pm evening practices on June 18 and June 25 due to home dive meets. We *will* still hold Mini Dolphins on those days.

Time Trials will be held on Saturday, June 8, 2024. Our first B meet will be on Monday, June 10 at Highlands Swim and Tennis Club, and our A meets begin Saturday, June 15.

[The complete summer swim schedule can be found on our website.](#)

We understand that while school is in session your child will have a lot of demands on their time. They may still be finishing the soccer or baseball season, or have a concert or awards night at school. Just make as many practices as you can. If you have kids in multiple age groups, depending on the skill level of the younger one, they might be able to “swim up” with the older age group at practice. Other kids really need to be in the correct age group for their skill level. Talk to Coach Chris about whether swimming up might be a good solution for your family. We do not allow “swimming down” for the safety of the younger swimmers.

COMMUNICATION – “I’m not getting the emails!”

General information is typically sent via email several times each week. Be sure to check your e-mail for emails sent from KGRC Swim Team or for B Meet sign ups sent directly from ACTIVE. The emails we send typically include several links, so they can get caught in spam filters. **Please configure your inbox to always receive emails from swim@kgrc.org.**

- **If you have Gmail, you might need to make sure our KGRC Swim Team emails are coming to your primary box and not your promotions or social.** Directions on how to make sure our email gets past your filters appears here:
<http://kb.mailchimp.com/delivery/deliverability-research/place-emails-in-primary-tab-in-gmail>
- If you use Outlook, you need to list us as a Safe sender: <https://askleo.com/how-do-i-stop-outlook-com-from-putting-legitimate-messages-in-the-junk-mail-folder/>
- Similar process with Hotmail:
<http://email.about.com/od/windowslivehotmailtips/qt/How-To-Make-Sure-Windows-Live-Hotmail-Does-Not-Ban-Important-Mail-As-Junk.htm>

The emails will always come to the email address used to register the swimmer. If you would like your work in- box, spouse, co-parent, grandparent or child care worker to also receive the emails, just tell one of the Team Reps and we'll add them to the distribution list.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

It takes approximately 50 parent volunteers to run a typical meet. Without parent volunteers, the swim season simply would not happen. Therefore, it is critical for the success of the program that each and every family does its part to participate as volunteers throughout the swim team season. Most other teams have a requirement for the families to participate, with required hours based on the number of children you have participating. We have tried very hard to stay away from this model with an understanding that people have seasons of their lives and not every season is conducive to volunteering. **That being said, if you have a child swimming, someone from your family should be in blue/white volunteering for some portion of most meets.**

PLEASE NOTE: WATCHING YOUR CHILDREN SWIM IS A PRIORITY. IF YOU ARE WORKING A JOB THAT IS AWAY FROM THE POOL DECK (CLERK OF COURSE, TABLE WORKER, CARD WRITER) YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE A QUICK BREAK TO WATCH INDIVIDUAL RACES.

Volunteers at any meet – A or B Meet – should wear the official NVSL uniform of a white collared shirt and dark blue shorts/pants.

The volunteers you'll run into the most in your swim team dealings are the Team Reps, Lauren Braccia and Bethany Nguyen. The Team Reps are volunteer parents who were new to swimming at one time just like you are now. Team Reps represent the Kent Gardens Dolphins to other swim teams and the NVSL. Most of the Team Reps' job is done before the meet even starts.

There are two types of jobs at meets – those that require special training and those that don't require any particular knowledge or skill set, just a willingness to help out. No Experience Required jobs will go out via a sign-up genius. All you need to do is sign up and you'll be trained on-site at the meet.

Meet Volunteers - No Prior Experience Required:

- **Timers** determine each swimmer's official time for each race. Being a timer is a good entry-level position for new parents, and it's the best view on the deck! If you can start and stop a stopwatch, you can be a timer. We'll even provide the stopwatch & a brief training before each meet. Timers start their watches on the strobe light 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 is the official time.
- **Marshals** are responsible for maintaining safe and appropriate conduct by swimmers and spectators throughout the meet. The marshal ensures that warmups are conducted

safely and that order is maintained during the warmups. Marshals help keep order on the pool deck during meets by limiting access to the pool deck to appropriate swimmers, coaches and volunteers. Marshals also raise a "Quiet" sign during race starts to keep spectator noise to a minimum so that swimmers can hear the start and are less likely to false start. The marshal job begins as soon as swimmers step into the pool for warm-ups, so it's important to be on time for this job.

- The **Clerk of the Course** is the "gatekeeper" for all swimmers in our meets. You can't have a race without swimmers, and the clerk of the course makes sure the right swimmer gets to the right place at the right time. These volunteers also assist the coaches in handing out the swimmers' race entry cards. We generally need one really experienced clerk, and others can learn on the job. We need more clerks of course for the B Meets than we do for the A meets since we're running multiple heats of most events. This job is a great way to put names with faces!
- The time cards from the timers and any DQ slips go from a **DQ Slip Runner** 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. As with clerk of course, it's good to have a mix of experienced table workers and new folks. This is a great job if you can't be on your feet for the entire meet.
- During relays, you'll see four **Relay Take-off Judges** (A-Meets and Relay Carnivals only) at each end of the pool (two per lane). Their job is to ensure that each swimmer touches the wall prior to the next swimmer in the relay leaving the 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.
- **Card Writers** will fill out time cards with names and event numbers for kids to take to the clerk of course. This job is for B Meets only.

Meet Officials -- Experience and/or Training Required:

- The **Announcer** has the important responsibility of keeping all parents, officials, coaches and swimmers informed and on schedule throughout the meet via the Public Address System. The announcer sets the tone for the meet by greeting everyone, announcing pre-meet briefings of timers and officials, as well as warm-up times, and announcing each event and heat. During A meets, the announcer also reads out swimmer names, race results, and overall meet results.
- At home meets, the **Chief Timer** (NVSL official training required) collects the time cards from the timers, reviews them for accuracy and completeness, and forwards them on to the table workers. The Chief Timer also conducts a pre-meet briefing for all timers to review the rules and procedures for timers and hand out stopwatches. At away meets, the **Assistant Chief Timer** assists the opposing team's Chief Timer in these same functions.
- The **Computer Operator/Data Coordinator & Reader** (NVSL official training required for Data Coordinator) ensures that all of the official race times are recorded accurately into the swim meet software, produce results, scores, and ribbon labels. They also maintain

all swimmers' times for the season, calculate swimmers' improvement and records, generate meet result reports, and use the swim meet software to prepare meet sheets.

- The **Referee** (NVSL official training required) is the chief official for each swim meet. The Referee is responsible for the conduct of the meets and is the final authority on the interpretation and enforcement of all swimming rules.
- The **Starter** (NVSL official training required) is responsible for insuring 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 system that consists of a public address system, a horn, and a strobe light.
- Once the race has started, the **Stroke & Turn Judges** (NVSL official training required) are responsible for insuring that all swimmers obey all the rules for the stroke that they are swimming. These people are always at the ends of the pool, from the start of the race to the finish, closely watching the swimmers in their designated lanes. If a Stroke and Turn Judge sees a violation of the rules, he records that an infraction has occurred on a DQ slip.

If you're interested in one of the Experience Required jobs, please speak to one of the Team Reps and we'll get you connected with the instruction you'll need. These clinics occur in May and June, so don't wait until the meets begin to indicate interest or willingness!

WHAT IS THE NVSL?

In 1956, 8 Northern Virginia Pools founded the Northern Virginia Swimming League. Today the NVSL has over 17,000 swimmers on 102 teams and is the largest summer swim league in the United States. During the off season, the NVSL ranks each team from 1 to 102 based primarily on swimmers times and the previous season's record, and then divides the teams based on these rankings into 17 Divisions of six teams each. This means that the fastest teams are in the lower numbered Divisions and the less competitive teams are in the higher numbered Divisions. We've been as high as Division 4 and as low as Division 13. NVSL information (which contains all A Meet rankings for all the divisions) and swim meet results can be found at:

<http://www.mynvsl.com/>

SWIM APPAREL

The KGRC Dolphins, like every other swim team, have an official team suit. We encourage all swimmers to buy the official team suit though it is not required at B meets. A meet swimmers should have a team suit – they will feel more comfortable and more a part of the team if they are dressed like their peers. We will have the company that sells the suits come to a couple of practices before Time Trials and you can buy them on-site. Be prepared for sticker shock – boy suits are about \$50 and girl suits about \$75. If you miss the vendor at practice or need another during the season, we'll let you know where to go to buy one. If swimmers have the team suit, we recommend they only be worn for the meets and not for practices because they will wear out. For practices swimmers should wear a competition suit (one-piece racing suit for girls,

briefs or jammers for boys). Avoid bikinis or trunks at practice as this makes proper stroke work difficult. While not required, caps and goggles generally benefit the swimmer by keeping hair and water out of their eyes. We encourage swimmers to use these items at practices as well as meets.

Though you can wear other caps, a KGRC swim cap is preferred for A meet competitions. If a cap is worn during a meet, NVSL requires that it not be the cap of a different team. If you borrow a cap from another swimmer that has a name on it, please turn the cap inside out so that the name doesn't show. Other teams can challenge if they think the wrong person is swimming the event.

Spirit wear – shirts, pajama pants, etc. – will be available for sale on the KGRC website.

YARD/METER CONVERSION

We are a YARD pool, and we will swim almost exclusively against METER pools. What does this mean? Our pool is shorter, so times swum in our pool are faster. To get a conversion time (or a decent approximation), multiply a yard time by 1.1 to get the meter time, and multiply a meter time by .91 to get a yard time. Make sure your swimmer understands this. If they swim at KGRC in a 36.00, but at another pool with a 39.50, they actually got faster!

HOW OLD AM I?

A swimmer is assigned to a particular age group based on his/her age **as of June 1** and remains in this age group for the entire summer swimming season. This is a recent rule change (2012) and eliminates situations where swimmers “age-up” in a new age group during the swim season. So if you have a child who turns 9 on June 15, they will swim all season as an 8 year-old. Make sure they understand this so that they don't confuse the clerk of course by telling them their actual age and not their “swim age”! This is especially important with 8 and under swimmers since they swim shorter distances than 9 and older swimmers do.

TYPICAL SEASON CALENDAR

Daily practices begin the day after Memorial Day and continue throughout the season. Time Trials will occur sometime in mid-June. ALL STARS is always the first Saturday in August, so you can count backwards seven weeks from there to figure out when Time Trials will be held in any given year.

HOW DO THE MEETS WORK?

Swimmers typically swim up to 2 events. 8 and under swimmers swim shorter distances (25 yards or meters) in all strokes. 9-10 still swim the shorter distance (25 yards or meters) in butterfly only. Older swimmers cannot swim the shorter distances.

TIME TRIALS

Time trials are held the Saturday prior to the first meet of the season and they are for ALL swimmers. **At this meet only, swimmers swim each legal stroke for practice, experience and seeding purposes.** They establish a baseline time for each swimmer for every stroke they swim and the results give each swimmer a time upon which they can build and reach a personal best time. It also serves as a practice for our officials and volunteers. Yes, volunteers are needed for this event and they need practice too!

Swimmers who cannot attend time trials can swim each legal stroke at the first B Meet. Otherwise, you are limited to two strokes (plus IM if offered) per B Meet. **Swimmers need coach's permission to swim breaststroke or butterfly.** We try to only swim kids who have a reasonable expectation of being legal.

The format for the rest of the swim season consists mainly of two types of meets – B Meets and A Meets.

B MEETS

B Meets are held each Monday night throughout the season and are open to every registered member of the swim team. All swimmers are encouraged to participate. We typically have 5 B Meets plus a 6th Intrasquad Meet the week before Divisionals. We try to have the B Meets at neighboring pools, so we often swim against friends and neighbors. B Meet warm-ups are at 5pm for home meets and 5:25pm for away meets. Meets begin at 6pm and last until close to 9pm. Typical order for meets is Freestyle, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly. For the last 2-3 meets, we will also have Individual Medleys. Those can either begin the meet or end the meet; it's up to the hosting pool. You're free to leave the meet when your child is finished swimming – as long as you've also finished your shift as a volunteer.

Swimmers are limited to two events, plus an IM if offered. Swimmers need coach's permission to swim breaststroke or butterfly.

The B Meets benefit the swimmers and the coaches. They give the swimmer a chance to implement the instruction that is provided during the practices. Coaches will provide immediate feedback to each swimmer after the events. These meets are an opportunity for swimmers to gain experience in a competitive and supportive environment. Swimmers are encouraged to try new events each meet and compete in each event for their age group over the course of the season. B Meets also give the coaches information regarding who swims which strokes in the fastest times to seed for A meets.

Swimmers that place in an individual event during the preceding week's A meet (i.e., 1st, 2nd or 3rd) may not participate in that event at the next B meet and should instead swim a "non-preferred" stroke.

Each 12 and under swimmer will receive a ribbon for each event that is swum; we do not print ribbons for 13 and up swimmers. 1st-6th place will receive place ribbons and all other swimmers will receive a Participant ribbon. These ribbons will have a sticker on the back with the swimmer's name, the stroke, the date and place of the meet and the swimmer's time. These ribbons will be in a ribbon box at the KGRC front desk usually by the end of practice the next morning. Additionally, the meet results will be posted in a binder at the front desk if you're curious who else swam and with what times. B Meet ribbon places and meet results are for our team only – so your child could have been beaten by kids from the other team but still end up with a blue 1st place ribbon if they were the fastest Kent Gardens swimmer.

The B meets have multiple heats per event per age group. For instance, there may be 27 girls in the 9-10 age group swimming freestyle. The swimmers will be divided into multiple heats, each heat of five or six swimmers. However, all event times will be ranked together to determine the standings. It is possible, therefore, to win or place in a heat, but not be the event winner. Make sure your swimmer understands this so they're not disappointed if they "win" on Monday but aren't selected to swim on Saturday. They might have won their heat, but be ranked 10th out of 27 who swam that night. They might also be the event winner but still have posted a slower time than the fastest time of other kids at other meets and not be chosen to swim at the A meet. If you ever have questions about whether or not your child's time is fast enough to be considered for an A meet, please speak to a coach or Team Rep.

A MEETS

A Meets are the competitive division meets held each Saturday morning throughout the season. We will have 5 A Meets during the season. A meet warm ups begin at 8am for home meets and 8:25am for away meets. Meets begin at 9am and typically last until 11:30am or so. We often try to have lunch together as a team after an away meet.

Typically the three swimmers with the fastest individual times for each event within an age group are asked to represent the Dolphins at that Saturday's A Meet. Since the teams we swim against for A Meets are based on team strength and not location, the A Meets can be anywhere in Northern Virginia, sometimes at home or just down the road and other times up to 40 minutes away.

In Saturday meets, the home team has lanes 1, 3, and 5 while the visiting team has lanes 2, 4, and 6. The fastest swimmers swim in lanes 3 and 4, the next fastest in lanes 5 and 2, and the next fastest in lanes 1 and 6. Lane 1 is always on the right side as you stand facing the pool at the starting end.

A Meets also include relays – something we don't do in B Meets. 8 and unders do a freestyle relay, while older swimmers swim medley relays (one swimmer swims each stroke). We end the meet with a mixed-age freestyle relay. The Mixed Age Relays are swum by, in order, an 11-12 year old, a 9-10 year old, a 13-14 year old, and a 15-18 year old.

A Meet swimmers may compete in up to two individual events, plus team relays. Seeding times will be based on your best time from the season – either yard or meter.

It's important to note that just because you're not seeded 1st, 2nd or 3rd doesn't mean you won't get to swim an A meet! It's not uncommon for a strong swimmer to be at or near the top of the ladder (the list of who swims each stroke fastest) in every stroke. But since that swimmer can only swim two strokes at the A Meet, often the 4th, 5th or even 6th on the ladder will get a chance to swim. People also take vacations or get sick during the season and are unable to swim. **That's why it's important to update your availability with the coaches and Team Rep for each meet. Never assume you won't be needed at an A meet!** Coach Chris will let swimmers know at practice on Wednesday who will swim. Those names are turned over officially to the other team on Thursday afternoon. After we turn over our list of names to the other team, we can't change it. We can "scratch" and swim someone else who is slower than your child instead of them, but if a different combination of swimmers and events makes more sense, it's too late to make that change. Coach Chris is brilliant at "coaching jiu-jitsu" – deciding who should swim which stroke in order to earn the most points for the team at a given meet. Help us make sure he has all the information he needs to make those decisions.

A Meet swimmers will receive place ribbons, and those will be available in the ribbon box usually the day after the meet. The meet results will be posted on the NVSL website usually sometime late Saturday afternoon. <http://www.mynvsl.com/> You can also check the site to see where your A-meet swimmer ranks within the division or across the NVSL.

In a swim meet, you compete both as an individual and as a team. Scoring an A Meet: 1st place receives 5 points, 2nd place receives 3 points and 3rd place receives 1 point. No points are awarded for places 4-6. Relay winners receive 5 points; no points for the second place relay. In the event of a tie, the points are split between the swimmers. In a tie for first place, each swimmer receives 4 points and no second place would be awarded. In a tie for second place, each swimmer earns 2 points and no third place would be awarded. For a third place tie, each swimmer is award 1/2 point.

RELAY CARNIVAL

The Division Relay Carnival 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 4-person Freestyle relays (each swimmer swims Freestyle) and 4-person

Medley relays (each swimmer swims a different stroke). There will also be mixed age freestyle relays. It's a short meet since there are only 22 events. In Relay Carnivals, teams are not seeded. Each team's lane assignment for the first event is based upon luck of the draw and the teams then rotate one lane to the left after each event. Each pool can only send one relay team in each event, so it's a slightly smaller group than even the A meets, but it's a lot of fun.

ALL STAR RELAY CARNIVAL

The sole criterion for selection to the All-Star Relay Carnival is to have one of the eighteen fastest times in events swum in the Division Relay Carnivals. Remember there are 102 pools in the NVSL, so being one of the top 18 is a real honor! The All Star Relay Carnival is the Wednesday after the Relay Carnival. It's a much longer meet that starts in the mid-afternoon. Same 22 events, but with 3 heats of each event it takes a lot longer to get through.

DIVISIONALS

During the sixth week of the season, each Division has an Individual Championship meet, commonly referred to as "Divisionals." Each team is allowed to enter only two swimmers in each event and a swimmer can enter no more than two events. Seeding for this meet is based on the swim team ladder. The swimmers with the fastest times for a particular event have priority in choosing to swim that event at Divisionals. Remember, just because you're #3 or #4 doesn't mean you won't get to swim! Often the same kid is #1 or #2 in multiple events – and they have to pick just two. Divisionals have Individual Medley events in addition to freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly. In older age groups, some pools have trouble filling their lanes, so we sometimes get to add swimmers based on their best times of the season. 1st through 6th place finishers receive a wall plaque that you can have engraved. 7th-12th places receive a ribbon. Your Divisionals time could qualify you for ALL STARS.

ALL STARS

The sole criterion for selection to All Stars is to have one of the eighteen fastest times swum in an event at the Divisional meets across ALL divisions. Remember, 102 teams means 204 swimmers per event to select only the top 18 swimmers. All Stars is an amazing experience - 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's a thrill they will never forget. 1st-6th place receive medals, 7th-18th place receive special ribbons with rosettes.

TEAM RECORDS

For each pool, and NVSL-wide, there are both meter and yard records. We're lucky to swim at a yard pool so we get almost as many chances to set yard records as we do meter records! The

NVSL maintains their own records for the fastest times ever swum in the league. NVSL records cannot be broken at B Meets, only at A Meets. Our team has its own records for just KGRC swimmers. Those records can be broken at A Meets or at B Meets when another team is present. KGRC team records cannot be broken at Time Trials or at our Intrasquad meet.

MEET PROCEDURES FOR SWIMMERS

- **BEFORE THE MEET:** Rule of thumb is—the night before a meet, carbo load (eat a high carbohydrate meal like pasta, noodles...) and drink LOTS OF FLUIDS. Go to bed on time or early and get a good night's sleep. On the morning of an A meet, eat a light breakfast, and on the evening before a 'B' meet eat a light dinner. Try eating at least one hour before meet time if not earlier. The worst thing for your swimmer to do before any meet is spend an afternoon at the pool, swimming or sunning. On days before meets, relax at home or any nice sun-free spot! And try not to close down the pool on the Friday night before an A meet!
- **DURING THE MEET:** Swimmers should stay in the team area during the meet and be available when called for their event. When called for their event, swimmers go to the Clerk of Course to check in and are not to leave the area until the clerk escorts them to their starting spot for the race. Swimmers should report to the coach immediately after each race for feedback on their swims. When all swimming events for an individual are done and that individual has checked in with the coach, he/she may join their family and cheer on their teammates!!

MEET PROCEDURES FOR SPECTATORS

- When the referee blows the whistle for the start of an event, absolute silence must be observed until the race is underway to ensure that each race is started accurately and fairly.
- SILENCE ALL CELL PHONES!
- NO FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY
- After either a home or away meet, swimmers and parents are to ensure the area is clean. **After home meets, everyone is to pitch in to get areas ready for general membership swimming.**
- No parents are permitted on the deck or in the Clerk of Course area, unless volunteering.
- The area behind the timers must be kept clear so that swimmers may be positioned for the next race.
- Table workers cannot provide spectators with information on scores and times. Results are announced periodically during the meet. Most pools have lane Time Boards, which will indicate each swimmer's time.

WHAT TO BRING TO A MEET

- Cap and goggles (wear your swimsuit)
- Two towels
- Cards and other “disposable” quiet amusement
- Team shirt & shorts (sweatshirt for cooler days)
- Shoes or sandals
- DRINKING WATER!
- SUN SCREEN!
- Money—there is a snack bar (but save sweets until after the meet!)

UH OH. MY KID GOT A “DQ”

Sometimes your child will get disqualified. This means that they have not swum the stroke legally, so their time doesn't count. The stroke and turn judge who saw the infraction will write out a DQ slip and that slip will make its way back to the coaches. The coaches will be able to tell you and your child how they can improve their stroke for next time. Here are the basics of the strokes and common reasons for disqualifications.

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:

- You cannot walk on the bottom or pull yourself along using the lane lines
- 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 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. Younger backstrokers often 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 starts in the water with feet planted against the wall and hands 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 knee. 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. This 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. Common reasons to DQ include:

- Flipping onto your front at the finish (you must finish on your back)
- Flipping onto your stomach too early at the turn
- Pulling yourself on the lane line

BREASTSTROKE - The Breaststroke has two components, the kick and the arm pull. The pull and its recovery must both 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 tagging the wall at the finish. Breaststroke turns and finishes require a simultaneous two-hand touch. Common reasons to DQ include:

- 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 - A well-executed butterfly (or Fly) is an amazing exhibition of power, but it's also the hardest stroke for most swimmers to perfect. There are two components of the fly; the arm pull and the kick. The arm pull must be an over the water recovery (elbows breaking the surface of the water) with the arms moving 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. Turns and finishes require a simultaneous two-hand touch at the wall. Common reasons to DQ include:

- Non-Simultaneous or one handed wall touch at the turn or finish
- Non-Simultaneous leg movement during kicks
- Incorrect kick, such as a Scissors kick or Flutter kick
- Arms don't break water surface during recovery (judged at the elbows)
- Non-Simultaneous arm movement during recovery

INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY (IM) - We swim a 100 Meter IM, which means that 25 Meters, or one pool length, of each stroke is swum (fly-back-breast-free). In a 100 Meter IM, every turn is a stroke change and stroke finish rules apply. This means no Backstroke Flip Turns. Common reasons for DQs are an incorrect turn or simply not engaging the brain soon enough when you go to the next stroke (doing a flutter kick for the first few strokes on the breaststroke leg, for example).

TEAM RELAYS – Both relays have 4 swimmers. For freestyle relays, each swimmer swims freestyle. In the medley relay, the sequence is Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Freestyle. 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. The most common reason for a DQ is a swimmer starting before the previous swimmer has touched the wall or one of the swimmers swimming their leg incorrectly.

FALSE STARTS - A false start can occur in any stroke or relay and happens whenever a swimmer moves toward the pool after assuming a "set" 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.

HOW WILL I KNOW A DQ HAPPENED? Unlike football, we don't blow a whistle and announce to the world that a rules violation occurred. When a Stroke and Turn Judge observes a violation, he raises his hand to signify that he has 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 was able to see the violation that was cited. Disqualifications for early relay takeoffs are done slightly differently. The referee receives all the take-off slips from all the Relay Take-Off judges. If both judges on a lane agree that an early takeoff occurred, then the relay will be DQ'd. But it's very possible that your child may know about a DQ before you do since the Team Rep tells the coach, who tells the swimmer. The coaches will explain to the swimmer why he/she was DQ'd. A DQ'd swimmer (no matter what place they finish) will not place in that event, allowing other qualified swimmers to move up in the finish order. If they DQ at a B Meet, they will still receive a Participant ribbon for that swim.

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."

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 that you do not think is right, talk to the coach or the Team Rep. If appropriate, the Team Rep will initiate action in accordance with NVSL rules.

JUNIOR COACHES

We offer older swimmers opportunities to become junior coaches. Teens earn service hours, a little bit of pocket money, or both. Junior coaches must attend NVSL training and spend one season as a volunteer in order to be hired as a junior coach. If your teen is interested in this, please encourage them to attend the information session prior to the beginning of the season and/or speak to the Team Rep for more details.

WINTER SWIM

Hopefully you have such a good time that when the summer ends you can't bear the thought of a long winter without us! Kent Gardens offers a once-per-week winter conditioning program. The price is reasonable, and we rent space at a nearby indoor pool. Registration usually goes out sometime in August, and we practice on Sundays beginning in mid-September and going until Memorial Day. If you want to really lean into the swim season and feel that once-a-week isn't enough for your child, the Team Reps and other swim parents can offer lots of great

advice. With a team this large, we can put you in touch with someone who swims/has swum with every program in town.

WHAT ABOUT DIVE?

While the Dive Team is separate from the swim team, they are an important part of our KGRC family! We coordinate closely with the Dive Team to make sure that any swimmer who wants to dive may do so. We use the same facilities and same swim apparel. In general, big kids (11 and up) practice dive while the little kids swim and little kids (10 and under) practice dive while the big kids swim, so you can go from one practice straight to the next. Many of our kids are both swimmers and divers. Dive meets are held on Tuesday nights so that they don't conflict with swim meets and other scheduled activities. If you're interested in Dive Team, we can help put you in contact with their coach or Team Rep.

FUN STUFF

All swim and no fun makes for an unhappy kid! Here are some of the ways we enliven the summer swim experience!

Pep rallies – On Friday nights, we often will have a pep rally. Pep rallies often include a skit by the older teens and ALWAYS include cheers and cowbell! If we're hosting the meet the next day, we often decorate signs to welcome the opposing team. Sometimes we have a potluck dinner or sell pizza or frozen yogurt at the event. Pep rallies take place immediately after the Friday evening practice.

Tuesday Treats – Tuesdays, the morning after the B meet, is our "fun" practice with games and water polo. It's a practice the kids never want to miss! We sometimes have Tuesday Treats after morning practice for each age group – bagels, muffins or some other breakfast to help our swimmers replenish those lost carbs from the previous night's meet!

Pancake Breakfast – After the final morning practice of the season, we will have a pancake breakfast after morning practice for each age group.

Theme Meets – Each A Meet will have a theme. Swimmers (and sometimes officials!) get into the spirit of the meet with costumes or other decorations. Past themes have included Superheroes, 80's, Aloha, Patriotic, etc.

Movies, Bowling or other activities – Sometimes if we don't do a pep rally, we'll often plan an outing to a movie or to play laser tag.

End of year Awards Banquet – The Sunday after Divisionals, we host a Swim/Dive Awards Potluck Banquet. We recognize ALL swimmers and especially celebrate outstanding achievements, effort, sportsmanship and spirit during the season.

And yes, these events, just like the meets, don't happen without your active help volunteering and bringing food and other items when needed. It's a team effort, both in the pool and outside of it.

I hope this helps you understand a bit more. It's an action-packed few weeks, but you'll hear more than once during the winter, "I can't wait for swim season to start!"