



# **NEW TO COMPETITIVE SWIMMING?**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This guide was created to answer all your questions. Please take the time to read it thoroughly and if you have further questions, please contact your swimmer's coach or your Swimming Club. This document will describe Club competitive swimming and will only briefly touch on school carnivals. Please be aware that what happens at a school carnival may be vastly different to what happens at official competitions (ie meets).

### **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SCHOOL COMPETITIONS & CLUB COMPETITIONS**

In school swimming, your carnivals may not follow all the rules of swimming and may allow stroke infringements (ie incorrect stroke movements), or allow 2nd starts if a swimmer accidentally false starts. The carnivals may not have Accredited officials running the carnival and therefore it may mean the times gained may not be permitted to be used to enter official competitions. The school carnivals may also have the swimmers compete in "Heats" and then if they qualify, to also compete in "Finals" later that day.

In Club Competitions, "meets" (equivalent to carnivals) will follow all the rules of swimming and will disqualify swimmers who perform incorrect stroke movements, or who start before the starting signal (aka a false start). The meets will have Accredited officials running the meet and the times can be used to enter higher level competitions. There will be no "Heats", instead every event will be a "Timed Final". This means that even if there are 2 Heats or 20 Heats, the fastest 3 swimmers overall in that one event (eg 50m Freestyle) will be the winners. There is no such thing as "winning a heat".

### **CLUBS VS AREA VS STATE VS NATIONAL VS INTERNATIONAL SWIMMING**

In competitive swimming there is a hierarchy beginning with Clubs and progressing up through the chain of ability from Clubs to Areas (within geographical region) to State level (within NSW) to National level (Australia wide) to International level (eg Olympics, Commonwealth Games, FINA World) swimming. Clubs and/or Areas run competitions at a Development or Qualifying level which means more often than not, swimmers can compete with or without a qualification time in most strokes.



# **BEGINNING COMPETITIVE SWIMMING**

## **HOW TO BEGIN**

Like any team sports, in order to begin your competitive swimming journey, your swimmer will need to join a Club which is affiliated with Swimming NSW (SNSW). Clubs are assigned to Areas (eg Metro North East) within SNSW and in turn SNSW is affiliated with Swimming Australia. When you join a Club, your Club will be able to tell you which "Area" your Club belongs to. This guide is specific to Clubs within the Metro NORTH EAST Area. Joining a Club in our Area as a Full Swimmer member automatically makes your swimmer a member of the Metro North East Area.

### **WHAT SORT OF MEMBERSHIP DO I PURCHASE**

If you're wanting to take competitive swimming to a higher level than just your Club you must purchase a "Full Swimmer" membership. If you only want to do your own Club swimming, your Club may offer a lower level membership and this guide may not be relevant to you.

### **HOW TO PURCHASE MEMBERSHIP**

"Swim Central" is the whole of sport administration system used to purchase memberships, enter competitions and see your results. The cost of a Full Swimmer membership will vary across all the Clubs but will include membership to your Club, Swimming Metro North East (SMNE), Swimming NSW (SNSW) and Swimming Australia (SAL). Ask your Coach or your Club committee how to join up.

### **WHAT COMPETITIONS CAN WE ENTER?**

When you're starting out, your swimmer starts with a clean slate and has no qualifying times. The more official events you swim, the more qualifying times you gain. Initially, you will only be able to enter your own Club meets and one Area meet, the Speedo Sprint Heats (held in February each year). Other Clubs may host a meet where swimmers don't need a qualifying time (QT) to enter, but your coaches can help with which events to enter. The idea is to obtain faster and faster official times or QTs in each event in order to be able to compete at levels higher than Club and Area.



# ***RACING - WHAT NOW?***

## **ENTERING A COMPETITION/MEET**

All meets will be "Hosted" by a Club, the Area (SMNE), the State (SNSW) or by our National Body (Swimming Australia). Work out who is conducting the meet and visit their website. Most meets will have a 'Meet Flyer' which tells you all the information required like where and when it will be held, what events are in the program, how to enter the meet (usually via Swim Central) and when the meet closes for entries. **LOOK FOR THE FLYER!**

### **A WEEK OR TWO BEFORE RACE DAY**

There will be an Entry List, a Timeline and a Meet Program published on the Host Club website (after the meet has closed for entries) where you can check your entries, see what time your events are on and how long the meet will go for. You can also log into Swim Central and check your entries. I suggest you do your own research and look at the Host's website for all meet information rather than contacting the Host Club for every question you have. With between 100 and 500 swimmers attending, you can imagine the overwhelming flood of emails if everyone decided not to check the Host website! It is not possible for the Host to tell you exactly what time your events will be on until after the Timeline has been published so there's no point asking. If they know, it will be on the flyer and on their website.

### **ON RACE DAY**

Your coaches will tell you what time you need to arrive at the pool but as a general guide arrive 90 minutes prior to your first race. Most coaches will give the swimmer warm up instructions before each race and then will want to chat to your swimmer after each race. Parents/Spectators are not permitted on pool deck and should remain in the stands or the seating area. It is only the swimmers who are permitted in the coaching area on pool deck.

Remember to allow for traffic and err on the side of caution if going to Sydney Olympic Park Aquatic Centre, Homebush (SOPAC) as the traffic in that area can get bottled up.

Your Club will usually tell you where spectators/parents should sit, depending on the venue. There may be an entry fee to pay and parking fees.



## WHAT TO BRING ON THE DAY

Nowadays, most Host Clubs don't print out the program and will usually just publish it on their website. Either print the program or Timeline out or write down what Events, Heats and Lanes your swimmer is entered into and the approximate race time. It's a good idea to at least print out the timeline and highlight your swimmer's races. The following list is a guide as to what to take with you:

- Healthy snacks, and meals if you will be at the meet for an extended period of time
- Water - multiple bottles
- Swimming gear (training suit x 2, racing suit, goggles x 2, club cap x 2, club shirt)
- Towels x 2
- Dry clothes
- Dry bag or plastic bag to put your dry or wet clothes (keep them separate)
- Extra clothes to keep you warm (even in summer as some pools are cool, others are warm!) – Ugg boots, socks, jumpers, club jacket, warm pants
- LABEL ALL YOUR GEAR

## WHEN YOU ARRIVE

- Find your club members seating area at the venue.
- Ask your swimmer to find their coach and let him/her know you have arrived (they may be on pool deck or in the stands with the Club parents)
- Find out where you need to go for marshalling and how far in advance you need to present yourself (usually two events before yours).
- Remind yourself when you need to be in marshalling. It is your responsibility to get there on time – do not be late, keep an eye on the results board to see what event number is in the water
- Follow your coach's instructions to warm up
- Keep warm when you get out of the pool
- Make yourself known to the Marshall/Help Desk/Check Starter and follow their instructions. It's a good idea to let them know if it's your very first event so they can take the time to explain the marshalling procedure. The Check Starter will lead you out on to pool deck before you compete in your event.



### **AFTER YOUR RACE**

- Ask your coach what you need to do to warm down after you have swum in your event(s)
- If you have won a medal or ribbon, you may need to collect the award or you may be presented the award on the podium. At Club and Area meets, there will be a presentation table where you will collect your award approximately 15 minutes after your event.
- At State and National meets, you need to find out when you need to be in the medal presentation area to receive your medal - usually within 5-15 minutes after your event. You must ensure you are at the table when asked otherwise you risk not receiving your medal.
- Get dressed into your Club shirt - stay warm
- Eat, drink water

You are welcome to leave after you have competed in all of your events. Make sure you check in with your coach before leaving the pool. Check you have all your belongings.

### **DISQUALIFICATIONS (DQs)**

If your swimmer has been disqualified your Coach will know why or can find out why. You must allow the Coach to investigate and speak with the Technical Officials rather than you go down to pool deck. Once the Coach determines why, they will speak with the Swimmer to ensure swimmers are made aware of what stroke infraction they performed in order not to repeat the mistake again

### **YOUR RESULTS**

- Quite often, the Meet Hosts will publish the live results on an app called Meet Mobile which can be purchased off the Apple store or Google play. Ask another parent in your Club to help you with this.
- Results from Official Meets will be uploaded to Swim Central within 7 days following the last day of the meet (if it's a multi-day meet) and usually published on the Host's website. There is no need to contact the Host Club, all the information will be located on their website and you can see your results in Swim Central.



# GLOSSARY

## SOME COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

- BF - Butterfly
- BK - Backstroke
- BR - Breaststroke
- FR - Freestyle
- IM - Individual Medley
- DQ or DSQ - Disqualified
- DNF - Did not finish (a race)
- LC - Long Course 50m pool
- MC - Multi-class swimmers (para-athletes)
- NT - No Time (no qualification time entered)
- SC - Short Course 25m pool
- SAL - Swimming Australia (the governing body for Australia)
- SMNE - Swimming Metro North East (Area governing body)
- NSW - Swimming NSW (the State governing body)
- SOPAC - Sydney Olympic Park Aquatic Centre

## UNDERSTANDING AN ENTRY LIST (AKA STARTLIST)

#8 Girls 11-13 50 Back  
#24 Girls 11-13 50 Free  
#36 Girls 12-13 100 Free



*Event Numbers*

38.67	3/8
31.03	3/3
1:08.88	2/6

↑      ↑  
*Heat*      *Lane*