

PARENT SWIM MEET SURVIVAL GUIDE



How to Survive a Swim Meet ...A Parents Guide

Chapter 1 – THE NIGHT BEFORE...PACK

The Swim Bag

Perhaps you've been to a meet and already know about some of the routine stuff..you know the swimsuit, towel, goggles etc. However, for cluster dual meets and invitationals, you need EXTRA STUFF! Here's a basic checklist:

- ☆ Sleeping bag or soft blanket (NO Dad this in NOT for you!)
- ☆ Swimsuit, two pair of goggles, cap
- ☆ Towels, two are better than one
- ☆ Between event wear – remember these are wet people, so loose comfortable clothing works.
- ☆ Slippers, flip-flops, or aqua-socks...you know something for cold toes. Cold feet make for cold children! Being cold is not only uncomfortable; it wastes a lot of energy too! Keep your Marlins WARM between events.

The "Other" Bag

Do NOT underestimate the importance of "The Other Bag". This is the activity bag to keep our children happy and busy while they wait for their events to be called. Rest is important particularly at the long invitational meets, so here are some suggestions for quiet, yet fun activities:

- ☆ Paper and crayons
- ☆ Electronic hand held games
- ☆ Cards
- ☆ Books
- ☆ Walkman – portable cassette or cd players (with headphones)
- ☆ Travel games
- ☆ Homework ??? (We can try!)

Remember to label all your items and keep an eye on your things!

What Parents Need:

While some folks enjoy watching the competitors and spend nearly all of their time in the pool area, other folks prefer to relax with their children in-between events. You may want to consider bringing some of the following creature comforts and optional items:

- ☆ A comfortable folding chair (rock-hard gymnasium floors and unforgiving bleacher seats will get uncomfortable as the day progresses!)

- ☆ Ball-point pen, Magic marker, and/or Highlighter
- ☆ Book, paper, magazine or other reading material **
- ☆ Paper work or small handiwork**

** If this is a home meet that we are hosting, you will likely be busy helping with one of the many volunteer positions and won't need to bring these kinds of items.

Remember if you are dressed for cold weather, it gets VERY warm in the pool area. Be sure to dress in layers, or bring some lightweight cool clothing to change into.

The Cooler

This is optional. Some facilities do not allow outside food, Check the Meet registration form.

If you opt to pack some food/drinks, here are some good and bad swim meet food choices:

Good:

- ☆ Water, juice, sports drink (fluids are VERY important)
- ☆ Bagels (hold the cream cheese)
- ☆ Carrot and celery sticks
- ☆ Fruit – grapes, bananas & apples (oranges can be messy)
- ☆ Granola bars, oatmeal
- ☆ Plain or artificially sweetened yogurt

Think natural energy. Easily digestible, portable foods are your best choices.

Bad:

- ☆ Candy & sweets (anything with heavy sugar content)
- ☆ Fatty foods (takes too long to digest)
- ☆ Greasy, heavy foods (no nutritional value)

FLUIDS ARE VERY IMPORTANT! Even slight dehydration can cause cramping and fatigue and a bad swim meet experience. Encourage your Marlins to sip, sip, sip all day long. Don't let them slam down a box of juice and think they are all set. This can cause cramping, too. Don't worry about too much fluid - they know what to do when that happens!

Moderate your child's food intake and remember less is better. Some kids think they're hungry when really they're bored and looking for something to do (visit "the other bag")

Now that you're all packed...tuck the kids in bed (Marlins need EXTRA sleep before a meet) and put the sleeping bag, swim bag and the 'other" bag near the front door. (You'll be glad you did this the next morning!) This will help to reduce last minute rushing around and you can concentrate on getting everyone loaded in the car (take a pillow for the longer rides!) You have of course already checked at swim practice to make sure you know the warm-up times and have planned to arrive at least 15 minutes prior. Maps are usually available – check the bulletin board.

Chapter II – WE'RE ON OUR WAY!!

In the Morning:

Scoop up your Marlins, throw the duffels in the back of the car, grab the cooler (or your wallet) and allow plenty of time to get there! Oh yeah – COFFEE, don't forget your coffee. If it's an hour drive or more, allow time for the kids to have a good breakfast (but skip the milk)

Ladies and Gentlemen....START your engines!

Chapter III – THE ARRIVAL

What do I do FIRST?

When you first arrive, have your children go to the designated locker area and change into their swimsuit. They should take their cap, goggles and towel and immediately report to their coach in the pool area. Now, YOU have a few things to do...

If this is an invitational meet, heat sheets will be available. Purchase one and put your name on it. Tuck it under your arm and head for the gymnasium. Look for MCY Marlin camp. Lay claim to some space and spread your stuff out. (By end of the day, we'll be sharing everything and stepping over each other's stuff)

Ok I've got my spot, now what?

Don't worry about your Marlins in the pool; they will be joining up with you soon. Before your chilly swimmer returns, this is a good time to get out your heat sheet and your marker. If there isn't a heat sheet, just look around the events will be posted. You will want to mark your child's events. (Show your team spirit and highlight all the Marlins swimmers, if you'd like!)

You've probably noticed it's a bit chilly in the gym, sometimes REAL chilly, OK...It's freezing! This is where those slippers or aqua-socks are going to become real important. Is your Marlin back, warmed up and sipping a drink? Now make sure they know their events, too. A very convenient place to write them down is on the back of your child's hand – YES this is what we do, they can't lose their hand!

Remember to use a waterproof marker or pen. You will see most of the 10 and under kids with this – some of them will even have added decorations. It's the one time we DO allow our kids to write on themselves! Here is an example:

4-25 breast

16 – 50 fly

48 – 100 Relay B

This tells your child the event number, length and stroke he/she will be swimming. If we have more than one relay team, they will be designated by the letters A, B, C etc. Don't worry too much, your child will get a helpful reminder in the clerk of course and also on deck before they jump in the water. The important thing is that your child remains in the gym and listens for announcements as the clerk of course workers call the event numbers.

Chapter IV – THE MEET:

Your Marlin is back, warm & hydrated, you know his/her events, now what?

If this is a meet we are hosting, head to your volunteer post. Just keep an eye on your child's event numbers so you have plenty of time to pop in the pool area and watch their swim. Don't worry, your volunteer co-workers all have the same idea – we work together to make sure we don't miss our child (ren)'s events.

If we're at another team's hosted meet, this is a great time to scope out their facility a bit. Make sure you know where the clerk of course is, the restrooms and of course the pool area, and finally how to get back to home base – the gym. (Some Y's are huge and tricky to get around).

Meanwhile back at the gym, check in on your Marlin. Keep them warm. The body uses energy trying to warm itself up and energy is something to conserve before their events. There's nothing more nerve wracking than searching for caps and goggles seconds before its time to report. If they keep their caps on, and their goggles pulled down like a necklace they're less likely to lose these things!

Your main job at this point is to make sure your child (ren) stays in the gym area between events as opposed to wandering the facility.

Clerk of Course. I've heard this term but what is it?

Basically, the Clerk of Course is a staging area where children are gathered and put in an orderly fashion to enter the pool area. This is critical to making certain kids are lined up for the right heat and the right event. Clerk of Course is staffed by parent volunteers from the host team. The staging area may be in the gym or could be in another location. It will consist of several rows of chairs and some very haggard looking parents standing or sitting at a table with no voices left.

****Your swimmer needs to pay attention to all announcements****

Clerk of Course workers will continually announce the next event. When your child hears FIRST CALL for an event number...they should check their hand to see if they are swimming this event. This is a skill they should be taught early in their swimming

career, and one they should be encouraged to be responsible for on their own. If your child is not paying attention to the calls, he/she could miss an event and will be extremely disappointed. When your child's event is called, he/she should march over to the Clerk of Course and listen for their name. He/she will be shown to a seat that marks their order. Once a child is seated in Clerk of Course, they should remain there until they are escorted into the pool area.

OK, I know what Clerk of Course is; my child is sitting in there now, where do I go?

Head for the pool to finally see what you came for – YOUR Marlin in the water!

People are constantly moving in and out of the pool area and you will notice there is a lot of activity going on. There generally aren't any reserved "team" sections, but there will be a viewing area for spectators. Find a seat where you're comfortable and resist the temptation to go see your child (YOU AREN'T ALLOWED BEHIND THE STARTING BLOCKS ANYWAY!). After that, he/she will head back to the gym where you can meet him/her and give him/her their much-deserved kudos!

Remember that the primary focus is to have FUN! Your child will constantly learn and improve some aspect of their swimming.

What is the purpose of swimmer Disqualifications?

It takes time and lots of practice to master the technical aspects of competitive swimming. Throughout your child's swimming career, he will increase his knowledge and improve his starts, strokes, turns and finishes. During a sanctioned meet, officials and judges monitor the competition to ensure that starts, strokes, turns and finishes are done in accordance with rule requirement. Some latitude is granted to younger swimmers, but it is important that proper stroke technique be learned early in a swimmer's career.

ALL kids will at some time in their career, experience the disappointment of being disqualified (DQ'd) in an event. Remember that this is a learning opportunity and the DQ is an excellent tool to help your child. (Children rarely repeat the same error) Your child's mistake will be explained to them and they will be encouraged to correct their technique. Though it may be disappointing, you can help your child by offering support and encouraging them to always do their best.

Hey, my child did pretty well:

Of course, your child did well! Ribbons and trophies are awarded at many meets. Typically, they are awarded for 1st through 5th place finishes in each event. If your child swam very well in his/her event, he/she may have qualified to receive an award. Ribbons are distributed in family folders at the YMCA branches, typically the next practice following the meet.

Chapter V – AFTER THE MEET:

You made it!

Give yourself a pat on the back! YOU survived a swim meet! The day was long, the races are over, and everyone was a winner! You made some new friends and learned more about the sport of swimming. While your Marlin is in the shower, gather up your stuff making sure you've got everything you came with.

Drive home safely!

Return to Chapter I for the next meet!

Remember: If you have any questions about what to take to a meet or what goes on at meets, be sure to talk to one of the experienced parents. Look for the other Marlins parents wearing the bright yellow Booster Club t-shirts.