

You have been working out with the team and have finally convinced yourself to sign up for your first swim meet. After figuring out how to register for the meet and select your events (talk with your coach about that), the day of the meet has come!

## What Do I Bring?

You will want to have the following items:

1. Your racing suit, which may be a team suit, as well as a backup suit
2. Cap and goggles, you'll also have additional in case of breakage and tears
3. Several towels (2-4)
4. Sweat jacket and pants and team t-shirt for on deck between swims
5. Deck shoes or flip-flops
6. Water bottle
7. Easy to eat/carry snacks (dried fruit, protein shakes, energy bars, peanuts, snack mix)
8. Heat sheets (print off a copy and highlight your event, heat and lane numbers)
9. A deck chair or bleacher seat, if allowed
10. A Great Attitude!

## What are Psych Sheets and Heat Sheets?

Several days before the meet, you will receive an email with the *psych sheets*. This file will list the events with everyone's name and entry time. Check the list and ensure you are entered in the events you registered for with the correct entry time. You may reply to the email if you need to scratch an event or correct your time. If everything is fine, do nothing.

A day or so before the meet begins, you will be emailed the *heat sheets*. This file lists each event with its number, along with the number of heats and lane assignments for each swimmer. Everyone cannot swim at one time so they group people by time for each heat. Use this to reference and follow along at the meet. Keep track of how the meet is moving along by listening to the announcer and watching the scoreboard for which event they are on. You can also find your friends that are swimming and watch their heats!

## How to Warm Up

There will be a group warm up where everyone gets into any lane they choose, usually with friends or teammates, and does their own warm up. **You must enter FEET FIRST, with NO DIVING.** *You are not allowed to use any equipment for warm up. That means; no kickboard, buoy, fins or paddles.* Your coach may have something specific for you to do. If not, you should warm up as you usually do for practice. Get in some swimming, kicking and drilling for about 15-20 minutes or more if you are swimming distance events. When there are about 20 minutes left of warm up, the referee will open "sprint lanes." These are ONE WAY swims using the starting blocks. You can practice your starts and get in a few quick 25s to get used to diving in and swimming fast. Swim only in one direction then get out and walk back or shift to another lane to

swim back. Occasionally, there will be a 65 and older lane for our more seasoned swimmers. Feel free to use that if you qualify!

## **Time to Race**

You are now warmed up and ready to go! Your event is coming up soon so you head to the blocks several heats before yours will be called. If you are swimming a 50 or 100, you may want to walk over sooner. Early is on time! Check with the timer in your assigned lane to verify you are in the right place and then wait for your heat. *You are responsible for keeping track of the heat number and stepping up for your own swim.*

You will hear a series of whistles before each race. There will be a series of SHORT whistles before the next heat is called. Short whistles mean to “get ready, you are next up.” If you still have your towel or jacket on, you should remove them quickly. The heat number will be announced and then you will hear a LONG whistle. The long whistle indicates you should step up onto the block, to the pool edge (if you are not using the block) or you may step into the pool to start from the water. For backstroke, you will step into the water when you hear the LONG whistle. There will be another long whistle which means, “set your feet” and be ready. You will then listen for the starter to say, “Take Your Mark.” Get into your ready position quickly and then hold as still as possible until you hear the starting signal. At that point, it is GO TIME! Dive in and and have fun racing!

Once you finish your swim. Wait until the rest of your heat has finished before getting out of the pool. Listen for direction from the starter who may direct you to wait until the next heat of swimmers starts their race. Be sure to congratulate your fellow competitors! Watch the meet to see how it works.

## **Touchpads and Timing**

How will I get my time? Many pools now have an electronic timing system which uses a touchpad. The pad sits against the wall at the start end of the pool. It will cover most of the finish wall and may have a slightly rough feel to it. This allows the most accurate times for our races. When you finish your race, be sure to give that pad a good, solid touch. There will be a timer that also presses a button to stop the clock as well as an additional stopwatch. Make sure you thank the timers for volunteering. We could not run our meets without the volunteers!

After each event, many directors will print out and post the event results on a wall somewhere in the pool area. You can look for your official time and place. Each event is seeded by time with no regard for age. The final standings will be broken down by age group so be sure to check how you did against people your age! If they are not posted at the meet, you will be sent the meet results several days after the event. Every swim counts and can be used as a baseline. Use the times to set goals for yourself for the next swim.

## **Relays**

If you are at the meet with a team or workout group, you should be able to enter relays if they are offered. These are the most fun events of all the meet. You can swim with friends of all ages and have a good time doing it! There are both men's and women's relays as well as mixed (two men, two women). Grab three fellow swimmers and enter a relay or two. If you do not have a coach, just ask a meet official where the relay cards are so you can enter the relay events. Occasionally, you will see a relay trying to break a state, national or world record. These can be so exciting to watch and cheer for. Jump right in there and give them some encouragement, as well all of the relays. Who does not like to be cheered for?

You should now be fully prepared for your first meet. Just tuck away those butterflies and get ready to have a great time at your first masters meet!

Celia Wolff, Level 4 Coach  
Hawk Masters Swimming