

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SWIM MEET

Wake up and arrive at 6:45 am. This is crazy! Got to love this sport... but somehow my kids spring out of bed easier for this than on a school day. I was a competitive swimmer growing up and taught my kids to swim, at two years old, in our Jacuzzi tub. I made it fun with goggles and toys on the bottom. Now many years later... here we are swimming for the Sharks in our 10th year!

THE NIGHT BEFORE: Preparation helps us get out the door quickly. Pack your car the night before and go down your checklist: folding chairs, goggles, swim cap, hair bands, cooler, full laundry load of towels, games, sunscreen, snacks etc. This year you will need to pack a pop up tent or arrange to share one.

6:45 am: Arrival. We arrive with two minutes to spare and I send someone immediately to “circle” our names on the list indicating we made it to the meet. We rarely use the drop off area in the large parking lot to unload our gear but may need to this year. The other drop off zone, adjacent to the pool area, will be policed carefully this year – the driver must not exit the car here.

6:55 am: Make your way through the sea of swimmers and find your SPOT. Once all the gear is unloaded find the volunteer table and check in. The arm writers are positioned near the table with Sharpies – they write your child’s events on their arm. Beware this does not totally wash off for a day or two! But they wear this and the “Eat my bubbles” motto scribbled on their back proudly.

7:00 am: An announcement comes over the loud speaker reminding everyone to make sure they are circled in... All swimmers are removed from the meet if they have not circled in by then. We were running late one day and called my neighbor to circle us in. That is why it is good to recruit your friends 😊

7:10-7:40 am: The announcer calls all home team swimmers to warm up by age group. The visiting team warms up typically from 7:45–8:15 am. I take a second sip of my coffee that I poured at 6:40 and realize it is cold.... So I go to the concession stand and buy a cup of Starbucks coffee and a program (AKA Heat Sheet). I also provide the concession stand with \$20 and my family member’s names to prepay for my kids that day. This keeps the purse rummaging to a minimum. I finally get to sit for a minute and look through the heat sheet to see my kid’s events and times and to learn the names of their fellow swimmers.

8:00-8:15 am: The announcer makes a call for all first shift volunteers to engage. Officials meet with the head referee, ready bench volunteers receive their lists for the first few events and all other volunteers.. 1st shift timers, scribes...begin to make their way into position. The coaches gather the swimmers for a team cheer.

The National Anthem: Please rise and sing along!

8:15 – 8:29 am: Age group parents wave a poster around in hopes of getting the attention of their kids. The poster has gender and age information so be looking for them....I have done this job and affectionately call it herding cats. They herd all kids in that age group to their upcoming event guiding them to the ready bench area. The ready bench volunteers call the kid's names and have them sit in a particular order and in their appropriate heat (group).

8:30 am: The meet starts and they’re off like a herd of turtles! I love watching the 6 and under age group swimmers... just think Michael Phelps started out just like them! You can watch from behind the flags along the sides of the pool. Please do not stand under the white tents at either end of the pool.

As the events progress: Keep an eye on the event number board and your kids events (on their arm) to make sure they report to the ready bench on time. The age group parent or the announcer will help remind you of the events but ultimately it is the swimmers responsibility to make it to their event on time.

8 and Under Swimmers: In most meets this age group receives a heat ribbon if they finish first in their heat.

Meet Results: The race results and times are posted on the wall several events later. There is a delay in the posting of the events as a double check for accuracy is done once the computer person enters the times. Any disputes should be brought to the attention of your Sharks Team Rep.

All swimmers may leave after their last event; however, they should let the coaches know. Just go by the coaches' tent on your way out! Please don't let your kids "hang out" at the coaches' tent. The coaches need to keep their eye on all swimmers and provide them with feedback as well.

2nd Shift: The announcer will ask all second shift volunteer to report after the half way mark. Please report as quickly as possible as we want to keep the meet running.

Relay Events: The last events are the relays. This is an exciting and hectic time as the coaches and age group parents corral all the relay teams and line them up. Typically there are A, B and C relay teams if there are enough kids in that age group. If your child is entered into a relay event, please do not leave the meet early without telling the coaches. If one person does not show up the relay team may not be able to swim – age group parents and coaches frantically look for someone to swim in this situation.

NOTE: The 6 and under free relay is held at the beginning of the meet (event 5).

Last but Not Least... Please be courteous and pick up any trash around you as you pack up and head for home. The takedown crew goes into action disassembling the ready bench, chairs and tents etc. Any extra hands are always appreciated as everyone is anxious to get home.

Ribbons: Ribbons are awarded to the first 6 places. The ribbons are handed out the following week at practice by the coaches.

Final Meet Results: Results of the meet are posted on the www.ShenandoahSharks.com web site. You must create an account on this site to have access to the results.

And so the meet day comes to a close... as I recap the events with my kids I praise them for doing their best. It is not all about winning a ribbon... it is about setting goals to improve their time each and every time they swim and putting in the hard work at practice to refine their strokes and turns.