

Lake Central Barracudas

Parents and Swimmers Manual

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Lake Central Barracudas! You are on your way to becoming a part of one of Indiana's most successful and respected swimming clubs. Founded in 1977, we offer a guided age-group youth program for children ages 5 and up, from the beginning swimmer to the most competitive and skilled swimmer.

The objective of the Lake Central Barracudas is to provide expert assistance to young swimmers so that he/she may have every opportunity to develop to his or her potential. When a young person becomes a member of the Lake Central Barracudas he/she learns the value of sportsmanship and teamwork. Swimming, through the Lake Central Barracudas, provides physical, emotional and intellectual skills that will last a lifetime.

In addition to joining the Barracudas, you become a member of United States Swimming (USS). This is America's largest program of guided fitness activities for children. USS is one of few sporting professions for young children which requires that its coaches maintain certification and continually educate themselves with the evolution of the sport. Age group swimming builds a strong foundation for a lifetime of good health.

The purpose of this manual is two-fold. It will explain to new members just what the Lake Central Barracuda swim club is about, as well as outline various policies that affect all swimmers, year after year. We have selected pertinent information relating to swimmers and parents. We hope that you will find it both informative and interesting, with the eventual goal being that our parents become informed and educated about the sport of swimming.

We are eagerly anticipating the start of another season, and are very excited that you have chosen to be a part of it.

Happy Reading!

P.S. Please check us out on the world wide web! Visit www.LCBswim.com. And don't forget to check out our LCB Hotline! 365-0799.

Getting to Know the Barracudas

Contained in this section, you will find all sorts of useful information on our club. We have provided a history of our team and a basic description of the different levels of our team. In addition to these, we have also provided an outline of our practice schedules, and a description of what to expect during a swim season.

Team Philosophy

The Lake Central Swim Club is dedicated to improving swim skills, providing an excellent source of exercise and developing individuals beyond the swimming pool. Embedded in our foundation are the following beliefs:

- We believe in structuring practices according to a swimmer's ability and letting each individual swimmer progress at his or her own rate.

- We believe in letting swimmers have different priorities and goals. Some swimmers may swim for the exercise; some for a social activity; some for strictly fun; while others set their sights on the competition aspect of the sport. The majority of swimmers encompass a combination of the above. Our club caters to all levels of swimmers.
- We believe swimming should be fun—at all levels. We do encourage and strive to have swimmers be the best they can be, but we should not lose focus that we are an age group swim club that should include fun in the equation.
- We believe in providing a positive environment for children to learn and develop. Goals, respect, courage, discipline, teamwork and social interaction are key components of our swim club.
- We believe a strong club is developed and maintained through strong communication between parents and coaches and board members. Parents are encouraged to discuss concerns or questions through appropriate channels. It is through a strong communication process misunderstanding and misconceptions are minimized and a positive environment is built.

We believe to provide our swim club with a positive and strong foundation, participation from parents is extremely critical. As a professionally coached swim club, the need is extremely important, but the benefits are abundant for all.

Team History

The Lake Central Barracudas Swim Club was founded in 1977 by parents of the Lake Central School Community in conjunction with Mr. Jim Walsh, Lake Central High School's first swim coach. The club's purpose at that time was to provide a feeder system for the high school swim team. This remains one of the club's major concerns today.

The Lake Central Barracudas take pride in the fact their program has produced many swimmers that not only went on to receive college scholarships, but also continue to swim today. This certainly proves that the Lake Central Barracudas are committed to keeping people involved in the sport for a lifetime.

TEAM LEVELS

GOLD TEAM

The Gold, or Senior team, consists both of those competitors who have achieved qualifying times needed to compete at the United States Senior and Junior National Championships, and of the Lake Central High School swimmers and some other swimmers that exhibit a high level of swimming and workout ability.

SILVER

Silver swimmers are well-versed in technique and race strategy. They are also a full-fledged training group. They generally have a skill level commensurate with Indiana Junior Olympic time standards or Semi-State time standards.

BRONZE

These swimmers have started to exhibit good swimming skills and will be introduced to some training skills and processes. There is still a great emphasis on stroke mechanics, as more advanced aspects of the sport are introduced.

COPPER

This is a beginner group with a heavy emphasis on stroke technique. This group will be introduced to low levels of competition, such as intrasquad, dual and invitational meets. This group will cover all fundamentals of starts and turns in detail.

Swim Seasons

The swim year is divided into two seasons. The winter or "short course" season, runs from mid-September to mid-March. The meets are held indoors in 25 yard pools. The summer or "long course" season runs from mid-April to early August. Meets are generally held outdoors in a 50 meter pool, but local clubs, including LCB, will host 25-yard course meets in the summer season.

TRAINING SESSIONS

Training sessions are the most important aspect of competitive swimming. Consistent training is needed to progress through the classes of swimmers. Training schedules are designed to provide only slightly more time than is required for a swimmer to accomplish this. Therefore it is important that each swimmer attends as many practices as possible to derive the full benefits of the program. Pool availability is our most limiting factor.

LCB trains at the Lake Central High School pool year-round. Currently, we enjoy the privilege, one which not few teams in the country have, of very low pool rent. The High School teams have priority in scheduling of practices and meets. Occasionally, a practice will be canceled due to a high school meet or some other school sponsored activity. Traditionally we do not have a practice on the Friday of a varsity home football game. Most High School meets are swum on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, which means we cancel practice on these dates. We provide all of our swimmers with a monthly practice schedule calendar that shows all these cancellations.

Occasionally, scheduling conflicts arise which could not possibly appear in the calendars, such as high school football home play-off games. We will post any short-notice cancellations or practice time changes on the bulletin board in the hallway adjacent to the pool locker room entrances. Parents and swimmers should make a routine of checking this bulletin board, as this often proves to be our only means of notifying the club's members of changes on short notice.

BARRACUDA PRACTICE SCHEDULE

TYPICAL WINTER PRACTICE SCHEDULE

COPPER	Monday thru Friday	5:00 to 6:00
BRONZE	Monday thru Friday	6:00 to 7:15
SILVER	Monday thru Friday	6:30 to 8:45

TYPICAL SUMMER PRACTICE SCHEDULE

LEARN TO SWIM	Monday thru Friday	1:00 to 4:00 pm
GOLD	Monday thru Friday	7:30 to 10:00 am
SILVER	Monday thru Friday	4:30 to 6:30 pm
COPPER	Monday thru Friday	6:15 to 7:15 pm
BRONZE	Monday thru Friday	7:00 to 8:15 pm

BARRACUDAS POLICIES

It is important for each swim family to become familiar with the policies that our club abides by. Contained within this section are practice policies, responsibilities of both parent and swimmer, our procedure for entering meets, and our means of keeping our club members informed on what's happening with the Barracudas. This is definitely the most important section in the book, and all swim families should familiarize themselves with our club policies.

Practice Policies

The following guidelines are to inform parents and swimmers of the coach's policies regarding practice. These policies have been developed over many years and are designed to provide the best possible practice environment for swimmers, parents, and coaches.

1. The Lake Central Barracudas do not have a set attendance policy. As a general rule, the least possible interruption in the training schedule will produce the greatest amount of success (i.e., attending 60% of the practices will provide the swimmer 60% of what the program has to offer). We do, however, encourage younger swimmers to participate in other activities in addition to swimming. As a general recommendation, Copper swimmers should attend 3 practices a week, Bronze swimmers should attend 3-4 a week, and Silver swimmers should aim for 4-5 practices per week.

2. Swimmers should arrive on school grounds no earlier than 15 minutes prior to workout time. They should also be picked up no later than 15 minutes after practice is over. Please come in to the school to pick-up your swimmer. We discourage swimmers from waiting outside for their rides. This is especially true for the Copper Swimmers.

3. Swimmers are to enter the building at the doors underneath the "B" entrance and go directly to the pool area or to the locker rooms to change. Any swimmers who wanders the halls (or makes prank phone calls from the pay phones) will be picked up on the High School's security surveillance cameras, and such instances will damage our current good-standing with the high school administration.

4. While on school grounds, the swimmers are the responsibility of the coaching staff. During practice sessions, swimmers are never to leave the pool area without the coaches permission. Please write a note to accompany your swimmer or talk to a coach in the event that he or she must leave early or be excused from certain activities.

5. We have an obligation to act as guests while in the High School, (both swimmers and parents). Since we are the guests at the High School, we need to remember that we should do everything possible to respect this privilege.

6. Parents are not allowed on the pool deck during practices. Coaches are responsible for swimmers in the water and cannot spend time conversing with parents during practice times. Parents are encouraged to observe practices from the pool balcony. Please do not communicate with your child during practice as this can disrupt the coach and the practice.

7. The Lake Central Barracuda coaching staff is only responsible for those swimmers which are in attendance at practice. We are not responsible for the siblings or relatives of these swimmers. Please keep an eye on any other children you bring with you to practice, ensuring that they are not on deck during practice or roaming the halls of the high school.

8. While this isn't a rule, as a swimmer's level of swimming ability increases, so does his/her responsibility. The program is designed to encourage all swimmers to be Senior Swimming bound. As swimmers improve, there is a deep commitment that requires great effort on all parts. A swimmer has responsibilities to the team, the coach, his/her parents, and most importantly to themselves. Swimmers need to prepare themselves each time they come to practice.

Code of Conduct

In order to enable our coaches to provide the quality practice time all parents want for their children, the Board has adopted the following Code of Conduct. The coaching staff has been instructed to enforce this policy. The purpose of this notice is to inform both swimmers and parents of this policy.

Please remember the following are general rules:

Parents must not be on deck or speaking with coaches during the training portion of the practice. The children in the water deserve the coaches undivided attention. If you need to speak with a coach, do so before or after practice times. A note may be placed in the coach's mailbox requesting their attention/help.

Cod of Conduct (Cont'd.)

Swimmers must not be on deck or talk to the coaches unless it is their training group's practice time. Swimmers arriving early must wait on the mats in the stretching area on deck. Parents should reinforce this rule any time they bring their children to practice early. During practice, all swimmers are to follow the coaches workout instructions and refrain from any disruptive behavior.

The coaches will apply the following progressive discipline for general misbehavior:

1. Initially, the swimmer will be warned by the coach as to what he/she is doing wrong and be requested to stop.
2. If after being warned the swimmer continues to misbehave, he/she will be removed from the pool for a period of 15 minutes.
3. If the misbehavior still continues, the swimmer will be dismissed from that practice and escorted to a telephone to call home. The swimmer must then wait poolside until their ride home arrives.
4. Dismissal from a second practice will result in the swimmer being suspended for a period of one week, during which time the swimmer and parents must meet with the coaches and Board to discuss probationary details. The swimmer will not be permitted to return to practice until this meeting has taken place.
5. If after suspension a swimmer is excused from another practice, the matter will be brought to the Board's attention for a decision regarding a longer suspension or expulsion from the team.

Please note that the discipline policy is aimed primarily at the upper level training groups. It is not the Club's intention to discipline young children acting like young children. Older children acting like young children, however, are another story.

All of our children have bad days, and it is possible that your swimmer may be sent home. You are encouraged to discuss the incident first with the coaches, and then with the Board if necessary.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SWIMMER

1. A Lake Central swimmer is a substance-free swimmer. Any swimmer who is known or admits to use of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco is subject to suspension from the team.
2. Never interfere with the progress of another swimmer, during practice or otherwise.
3. At all club functions, whether practice, meets, or social gatherings, we expect each swimmer to behave in such a way that their actions reflect positively on the team.
4. All members of the club, whether parents or swimmer, continue to protect and improve the excellent reputation the club has throughout the area and the state.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARENT

1. Please make every effort to have your swimmers get to practice on time. Realize that your child is working hard and give all the support that you can. Encourage good diet and eating habits. They will serve your child well.

2. The greatest contribution you can make to your swimmer's progress is to be a loving, supportive parent.

3. Lake Central Barracudas have a reputation in the area and in the state of hosting swim meets of the highest caliber. Over a quarter of our operating budget is generated from the Club hosting at least three swim meets each year. One of the commitments made when you joined the Lake Central Barracudas was to help work our own swim meets. We host meets usually in the middle of June, one on the first weekend of December and one on the second weekend of February. Every family is expected to provide one worker per each session that your child is competing.

4. Barracuda parents are responsible for assisting the club in securing advertisement donation (for heat sheets, etc.) from local retailers in the area. This donation can be secured in a variety of formats, whether it be wreath sales, corporate donations, private contributions, or any other format deemed appropriate by the Board of Directors. While it seems difficult to go asking for money, this form of revenue helps keep us from raising our dues.

5. The following is a transportation policy that is in effect for all functions related to the club. It is hereby the stated policy of the Lake Central Barracuda Swim Club, effective immediately and until either revoked or restated by the Lake Central Barracuda Board of Directors, that transportation of swimmers and/or coaches to practices, meets or any other event considered to be a club function by any non-public conveyance, as defined to include privately owned vehicles, is recognize by the Lake Central Barracudas as a purely private agreement between the parties involved and that neither the Lake Central Barracudas, nor the Lake Central Barracudas Board of Directors, separately or as a group, except for the parties directly involved can be or will be considered as a party to such arrangement and that any liability in any form arising from such arrangement is purely and completely the responsibility of the parties involved.

6. While we hope that each parent is so satisfied enough with our club and its functions that they speak highly of it to parents or swimmers of other competitive swim clubs, be aware that there are vague rulings against "recruiting" swimmers from other swim programs. Please do not make any effort to encourage swimmers from other teams to leave their club and become a member of the Lake Central Barracudas. If such a parent on another club is dissatisfied with their own club and wishes to ask you questions about LCB, feel free to answer them completely and honestly. Encourage them to address these issues with their own board or coach. Once they have done this, if they still would like more information on LCB, have them contact a board member or coach. Our Board thoroughly examines the reasoning behind swimmers changing clubs, in an attempt to protect the integrity of our club. Our club makes it a point not to admit families or swimmers which have a history of switching clubs or alienating themselves from their previous clubs and contacts.

7. Conversely to the previous rule, if any parent or coach from another swimming organization contacts you or your child about joining another club, please inform an LCB board member or coach immediately. The Lake Central Barracudas make every effort to uphold this rule ourselves, and we want to ensure that our neighboring clubs follow the same practice as well.

KEEPING INFORMED

In addition to this handbook, there are several options we use to keep our parents informed on upcoming events or changes. Our most implemented tool is the mailboxes. Each family on the club has one, as they are contained within a large blue box on wheels, which is located in the hallway between the entrances to the swim locker rooms. Generally, practice schedules and other club notices are placed here.

We also use the bulletin board located just past the women's locker room in the same hallway. These bulletin boards contain signup sheets for meets, and other pertinent information for parents to read. Please check this periodically for any changes or additions.

We operate a web page (<http://www.LCBswim.com>) which provides information about our club, as well as providing information and updates to club members. We have a group e-mail directory which we use to send out updates to our club members. If you have e-mail, add your e-mail address to the list to receive these updates.

We also operate a club phone line (219-365-0799). Knowing that not everyone has a computer or internet access, this is our way to give all parents a chance to keep up on what's happening with Lake Central without having to leave the house.

We try to both print and electronically post as much information as possible. With over 200 swimmers filtering through practice, coaches have limited time to meet with parents during or between practice times. If you should need to speak with the coach, please go to your specific group representative (Copper parents should speak to the Copper rep, etc.), and address your concern to him or her. Our reps will serve as a liaison, while trying to represent both parties fairly and accurately. The group reps will also assist in setting up times for parents to meet with the coaches.

Meet Entry Procedure

Much of the time in practice is spent preparing our swimmers for competition. Meets are a great experience because they provide a means to measure improvement in a rewarding and relaxing atmosphere, while still under coaching supervision.

INVITATIONAL MEETS:

Usually approximately a month and a half before an invitational meet the Meet Information Packet will be posted on the Bulletin Board. Below it will be sign-up sheets for that meet. You should fill out the sheet(s) and place them in the Meet Entry Box (usually on top of the mailboxes). Also, there will be a Meet Sign-up Night which will typically be the last time to sign-up for the meet. Watch for the completed entries (sign-ups) that will be posted on the Bulletin Board for review.

Meet Entry Procedure (Cont'd.)

DUAL/INTERSQUAD MEETS:

The following will outline the procedure that our team will follow for entry of all DUAL & INTERSQUAD MEETS.

1. An attendance sign up will occur. Check off your child's name if you would like him or her to participate.

And, that's it! Dual meets are a breeze to take care of. The coaches will take the responsibility of signing up the kids for events. If there is a certain event which your child is dying to swim, please have him (or you) make a point of telling the coach, so he may try to accommodate your request. Dual meets are of no cost to the club or the swimmer. They are a great way to expose new swimmers to swimming competitively, and are an even better way to get experienced swimmers to compete in events that they may not have done in an invitational.

Our club usually schedules about 2 or 3 dual meets per season, usually against local swim clubs. Our Intrasquad meet is one example of a dual meet.

The Parent - Swimmer Relationship

Success as a Swim Parent

To have a successful program, there must be understanding and cooperation among parents, swimmers, and coaches. The progress your youngster makes depends to a great extent on this triangular relationship. It is with this in mind that we ask you to consider this section as you join the Lake Central Barracuda Swim Club and reacquaint yourself if you are a returning Lake Central Barracuda club parent.

You have done a great deal to raise your child. You create the environment in which they are growing up. Your child is a product of your values, the structure that you have provided, and the model that you have been. Human nature, however, is such that a parent loses some of his/her ability to remain detached and objective in a matter concerning his/her child's athletics. The following guidelines will help you keep your child's development in the proper perspective and help your child reach his/her full potential as an athlete.

1. LET THE COACHES DO THE COACHING

We want your swimmer to relate to his or her coach as soon as possible concerning swimming matters. This relationship between coach and swimmer produces the best results. When parents interfere with opinions as to how the swimmer should swim it causes considerable and often insurmountable confusion as to whom the swimmer should listen to. If you have a problem, concern or complaint, please contact the coach.

2. BE THE BEST KIND OF PARENT

The coach's job is to motivate and constructively criticize the swimmer's performance. It is the parent's job to supply the love, recognition and encouragement necessary to make the child work harder in practice, which in turn gives him/her the confidence to perform well in competition.

3. PATIENCE, PATIENCE, PATIENCE!!!

One of the most misunderstood aspects of this sport is the inconsistency in performance, as this can be frustrating for parents, coaches, and the swimmer alike. Parents and coaches must be patient and permit these youngsters to learn to love the sport. Even the very best swimmer will have meets where they do not do their best times. These "plateaus" are a normal part of swimming. As a swimmer progresses through the program, there may be brief periods when they appear to slow down. This is the means of added concentration on stroke technique, but the end result is much faster performances for the swimmer.

While there are instances of young children learning to swim naturally, it literally takes years of development and practice for a child to become a great swimmer. No one is going to master this sport overnight. Everyone has to start from the bottom and work their way up. If a parent is pushing or becoming frustrated with a child's performance, this only impedes the progression of the swimmer.

4. CONCERNS WITH THE COACH

One of the traditional swim team communication gaps is that some parents seem to feel more comfortable in discussing their disagreements over coaching philosophy with other parents rather than taking them directly to the coach. Not only is the problem never resolved that way, but in fact this approach often results in new problems being created. Here are some guidelines for a parent raising some difficult issues with a coach:

A. Try to keep foremost in your mind that you and the coach have the best interests of your child at heart. If you trust that the coach's goals match yours, even though his/her approach may be different, you are more likely to enjoy good rapport and a constructive dialogue.

B. Keep in mind that the coach must balance your perspective of what is best for your child with the perspectives of hundreds of other parents and club members. On occasion, an individual child's interest may need to be subordinate to the interests of the group, but in the long-term advantages compensate for the occasional short term issue.

C. Make use of our group reps. Speak with your group rep over any concerns, as these reps are often veteran club parents that may have been through the same situations that you are going through now. They possess valuable experience and advice for handling situations. If the group rep cannot or does not satisfactorily resolve your concern, then arrangements will be made to speak with the head age group coach with the group rep serving as a third party.

D. If another parent uses you as a sounding board for complaints about the coach's performance or policies, listen empathetically, but encourage the other parent to speak directly to a rep or the coach. He/she is the only one who can resolve the problem.

Parents That Push Too Hard

The following survey is designed to test whether you are pressuring your child too much to perform well at competitions. Please ask yourself the following questions. If you answered yes to one or more of the questions, it is likely that you are pressuring your child too much.

1. Do you want your child to win more than he/she does?
2. Do you show your disappointment if he/she has a poor result?
3. Do you feel that you have to "psyche" your child up before competition?
4. Do you feel that your child can enjoy the sport only if he/she wins?
5. Do you conduct "post-mortems" immediately after competition or training?
6. Do you feel that you have to force your child to go to practice?
7. Do you find yourself wanting to interfere during practice or competition, thinking that you could do better?
8. Do you find yourself disliking your child's opponents?
9. Are your child's goals more important to you than they are to your child?
10. Do you provide material rewards for performance?

Parents are not participants on their child's team, but contribute to the success experienced by the child and his team. Parents serve as role models and their attitudes are often emulated by their children. Be aware of this and strive to be positive role models. Most importantly, show good sportsmanship at all times toward coaches, officials, opponents, and teammates.

The best way to help a child achieve goals and reduce the natural fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make a mistake. If your child does make one, remember that this is a learning experience. Encourage the effort and point out the things that were done well. Be careful not to impose your own standards and goals on your child.

ADDITIONAL READING

The following passages have been selected as useful literature to our parents. They simply reinforce the messages that are outlined in this manual, providing interesting insights and perspectives. The ultimate goal of shaping the lives of young children is our mission, and we feel that these articles help put competitive swimming into a proper perspective. We hope that you enjoy and synthesize the important facets of these articles.

The first article, "Preparation for Life", first appeared in *Swimming World* over a decade ago. This article is useful to both parent and swimmer, especially when either side gets discouraged or loses focus of the overall perspective. The fact that this article appeared in *Swimming World*, considered by many as the authoritative source on competitive swimming, only adds substantial credibility to the article.

The second article, "The Ten Commandments for Parents of Athletic Children" is a more generic approach to guiding parents of athletes. It applies to all sports, and most likely to all facets of life. Each of these articles is selected with the understanding that we must not lose perspective of our ultimate goal of shaping and providing positive influence on the youth of today. These two articles best exemplify this perspective.

PREPARATION FOR LIFE

by Phil Hansel

reprinted from *Swimming World* magazine, February 1988

Not everything we do in life is a pleasant experience. Not everything we do is beneficial. Not everything is productive. Not everything is a nurturing, loving experience. Life is full of negative, destructive experiences. Rejection, defeat and failure surround all of us. The trick is to be prepared to deal with this side of life and learn to overcome discouragement.

I have always felt that the great value of swimming as a sport is that it prepares one for life. The total swimming experience is made up of people, attitudes, beliefs, work habits, fitness, health, winning and losing, and so much more. Swimming is a cross section of lifetime situations. It can provide so many learning situations. A swimmer learns to deal with pressure and stress, sometimes self-imposed, sometimes imposed by others. One learns to deal with success and failure. One learns teamwork and discipline.

Swimming becomes a self-achievement activity. There is only one person in the water in a given lane in any race. The responsibility for performance ultimately lies with the individual. How well the individual has prepared physically and mentally to large degree will determine the performance level.

Many swimming experiences can be of the disruptive, discouraging type. But at least a young swimmer learns that this is part of life, and the swimmer must learn to cope.

By learning how to handle frustration and disappointment, the young swimmer gains confidence. The swimmer learns dedication and commitment. Through perseverance, a swimmer learns to overcome adversity. All of these experiences tend to develop an individual who is better able to handle life's hardships and face problems.

As coaches and parents, we tend to preach that hard work will lead to victory. We preach that clean living and proper training such as diet, sleep and regular attendance at workouts will lead to winning. Though in the long run for a productive successful life, these are probably truthful concepts that don't always work in short term situations.

We have all been in situations where a bigger, more gifted person with poor work habits is the victor in a race. Or we've known others who never seem to study, yet get good grades. We've known business people who never seem to lift a finger, yet for some reason or another, they close deal after deal.

These things just are not fair. Yet this is one of the valuable lessons that swimmers learn: "Life is not fair." We don't all start out in life with the same physical, mental, emotional and financial resources. In that respect, "Life is not fair."

A swimmer must learn what is fair for one is not necessarily fair for another. A swimmer learns we are all different and each individual controls his or her own destiny. A swimmer learns to emphasize given talents and skills. A swimmer learns to improve on a regular basis. By not setting limits and restrictions, this improvement will surely lead to success. A swimmer learns if he or she does their best, then there are no failures. A swimmer learns to set realistic goals. Once a goal is reached, then new goals must be established. A swimmer learns that effort becomes an ultimate crusade. If the ultimate goal is an Olympic gold medal, then with the proper talent, dedication, belief and support, all swimmers believe it can be done.

This is the positive achievement side of swimming that I like so much. Through experience in swimming, our young people learn attitudes and habits that will remain with them throughout the rest of their life. Most swimmers learn to be "can do" people.

Generally, these positive attitudes, belief in self and solid work habits will produce a terrific adult. Our society and our world is enriched by these former swimmers as they become adults. Because of their training, they handle life with a smile. They contribute time and energy to others in every way imaginable.

We can be proud of what swimming contributes to this world. Though "life is not fair," a swimmer knows how to deal with that and can achieve a balance. For the most part, former swimmers grow up to be ordinary people, but they always have that extra plus from the swimming experience.

We are different and can be proud of it. It's a pity and truly "unfair" that thousands and thousands of young people are missing the swimming experience. We must open our programs to everyone. We must find ways to share our fantastic sport.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR PARENTS OF ATHLETIC CHILDREN

Reprinted from The Young Athlete by Bill Burgess

I. Make sure your child knows that win or lose, scared or heroic, you love him/her, appreciate their efforts, and are not disappointed in them. This will allow them to do their best without a fear of failure. Be the person in their life they can look to for constant positive reinforcement.

II. Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic ability, his/hers competitive attitude, their sportsmanship, and their actual skill level.

III. Be helpful, but don't coach him/her on the way to the pool or on the way back, or at breakfast and so on. It's tough not to, but it's a lot tougher for the child to be inundated with advice, pep talks and often critical instruction.

IV. Teach them to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be "out there trying," to be working to improve his/her swimming skills and attitudes. Help him/her to develop the feel for competing, for trying hard, for having fun.

V. Try not to relive your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure; you lost as well as won. You were frightened, you backed off at times, you were not always heroic. Don't pressure your child because of your pride. Athletic children need their parents, so you must not withdraw. Just remember there is a thinking, feeling, sensitive free spirit out there in the pool who needs a lot of understanding, especially when his/her world turns bad. If he/she is comfortable with you - win or lose - he/she is on their way to maximum achievement and enjoyment.

VI. Don't compete with the coach. If the coach becomes an authority figure, it will run from enchantment to disenchantment, etc., with your athlete.

VII. Don't compare the skill, courage, or attitudes of your child with other members of the team, at least within his/her hearing.

VIII. Get to know the coach so that you can be assured that his/her philosophy, attitudes, ethics, and knowledge are such that you are happy to have your child under his/her leadership.

IX. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate, both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before over-reacting.

X. Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. Some of us can climb mountains, and are afraid to fight. Some of us will fight, but turn to jelly as a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain areas. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear, but a means of doing something in spite of fear of discomfort.

Getting to Know the Sport of Swimming

COMPETITIVE STROKES

The four competitive strokes are: Freestyle, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Butterfly. Events are held in all of the competitive strokes at varying distances depending on the age-group of the swimmer. In addition, there is a combination of the strokes swum by one swimmer called the Individual Medley (swum in the order of Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle). Other swimming events include relays, which are a group of four swimmers who either all swim freestyle (freestyle relay) or each swim one of the competitive strokes in the order of backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle, (medley relay).

Very Basic Swimming Rules

STARTS:

Each Event begins with a "start" where the swimmer leaves the blocks and begins swimming down the lane. In age group swimming, swimmers are disqualified after one false start. A false start is generally defined as an attempt by the swimmer to gain an unfair advantage by releasing from the blocks before the startingsignal. A false start must be confirmed both by the starter and the recall judge. If both judges do not agree on which lane false started, no one is disqualified.

URNS AND FINISHES:

1. On freestyle flip turns, your foot must make contact with the wall.
2. On Backstroke turn, there are two styles, beginners get to the wall on their back, then turn. More experienced swimmers flip turn. Backstroke flip turns aren't necessarily as easy to explain. Once you roll over on your stomach, you must proceed directly into a somersault and push off the wall on your back. Often times, swimmers will be disqualified for a 'noncontinuous' turn, which means that there was a significant pause between the stages of the turn. On the backstroke finish, some part of your body must be above the water. You cannot submerge at the finish.
3. On breaststroke and butterfly, you must touch each wall with two hands simultaneously on your stomach.

GENERAL RULES:

1. Swimmers are not permitted to make contact with the bottom of the pool or the lane lines. Accidental contact with the lane lines is usually overlooked, but these rules are designed to prevent swimmers from propelling themselves forward by either pulling on the lane lines or pushing off the bottom.
2. Each swimmer must start and finish the race in the same lane. During the race, a swimmer is permitted to enter another lane provided that they do not interfere with another swimmer. This rule is helpful for younger swimmers who may push off the wall and enter another lane, as it keeps them from getting disqualified, assuming they return to their lane eventually.
3. On a relay, the swimmer in the water must touch the wall before the next swimmer leaves the blocks. Swimmers on the blocks can be moving while the swimmer in their lane is in the water, but they must have contact with the blocks until the swimmer in their lane makes contact with the wall.
4. On a relay, once a swimmer completes his or her leg of the race, he or she must exit the water immediately. That swimmer may not re-enter the water at any time during the race.

A Typical Swim Meet

Swim meets are a great family experience! They are a place where the whole family can spend time together. Listed below are some in-depth guidelines geared to help you through your first couple of swim meets. It may seem a little overwhelming, but we tried to be as specific as we possibly could. If you have any questions, please contact one of the coaches, or better yet, speak to some of the veteran parents that have been attending these meets for years.

Many Barracuda swimmers participate in approximately one to two meets per month. Most meets are on Saturday and Sunday and last anywhere from two to four hours each day depending on the type and size of the meet.

At the beginning of each season a swim meet schedule will be presented to the parents. This schedule lists all the meets the team will be competing in over the following months. Occasionally, several dual meets between one or two other clubs in the area will be scheduled, and those will be added to the schedule as the details are finalized.

At the conclusion of each season, the club will hold an awards banquet. Each swimmer is rewarded with a trophy, provided that they meet one requirement, this being attendance at a few meets. In the winter, trophies are given to swimmers who attend at least three meets (invitationals and dual meets count). In the summer, trophies are given to swimmers who attend at least two meets. Swimmers who attend less than the outlined number of meets receive a certificate of participation.

BEFORE THE MEET STARTS

1. Arrive at the pool at least fifteen minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins. This time will be listed in the meet information posted on the bulletin board.

2. Many meets will be referred to as "Positive Check-in". This means that the meet hosts want each swimmer to initial a sheet indicating that the swimmer is in attendance and ready to swim. Unfortunately, a small percentage of swimmers sign up for meets and then do not show up, and this creates many delays in the meet. Positive check-in sheets are usually well marked. Traditionally, the swimmer simply needs to check or circle his name on a sheet, and then he is ready to proceed to the locker rooms. If this is not completed, the swimmer will not be permitted to swim in the meet.

3. Once checked in, write each event number on your swimmer's hand in ink. This helps him/her remember what events he/she will be swimming.

4. Once this is completed, the swimmer will report to the pool deck with their cap and goggles to await warm-up instructions. Swimmers should not enter the pool without supervision from their coach. It is very important for all swimmers to warm up with the team, as most meets designate certain lanes for specific teams. Warming up is extremely important, as swimmer's bodies are just like cars on a cold day. The swimmer needs to get his/her engine going and warmed up before he/she can perform.

5. After warm-up, your swimmer will go back to the area where his/her towel is, or sit with his/her family in the stands, waiting until the next event is called. This is a good time to make sure he/she goes to the bathroom, keeps hydrated, and settles in.

6. The meet will usually begin approximately 10 - 15 minutes after warm-up is over.

7. According to USS rules and due to insurance purposes, parents are not allowed on deck unless they are volunteering or officiating. Parents on deck without proper credentials can and will be removed by meet officials. If you have any questions regarding order of finish, disqualifications, deck entries, or anything else, go directly to the coach. They are the only people that are allowed to speak with the officials on certain matters, so contact them immediately during meets to ensure your concerns are resolved.

8. A "psych" or "heat" sheet is usually available for sale in the lobby or concession area for a few dollars per day (or the entire meet). A psych sheet will list all swimmers entered in an event, with rankings based on their entered time. A heat sheet is more useful to the swimmer as it indicates which heat and lane the swimmer will be swimming in for his/her races. A "NT" by the swimmer's name indicates that he has no time for that event, probably because he or she has never swum it before. The time next to the swimmer's names is their best performance at the time the entry was sent in. Often, entries need to be sent in weeks prior to the meet, and a child's time in the heat sheet may not represent his best overall time. No meets allow you to change these times in the psych sheets, so please do not approach the coach on these matters.

ONCE THE MEET STARTS

1. It is important for your swimmer to know what event numbers he/she is swimming. They may swim immediately after warm-ups end, or they may swim at a later time.

For Meets with a "Clerk Of Course" (& some meets only have a "Clerk" for 8 & U)

2. Your swimmer's event number will be called, over the loudspeaker or posted a board somewhere at the venue, and he/she will be asked to report to the "clerk of course." Swimmers should report ready to swim (with cap, goggles, etc.), as the clerk will lead them out to the pool area prior to their event. At most meets, a person will announce "final call for swimmers in event 66", or something similar. All swimmers are to report to the Clerk of the Course upon these final calls, and if the swimmer has the event numbers on his hand, then he will be better able to respond to the final calls for his event.

3. After the swimmer arrives at the Clerk, he/she will receive a card. This card will tell the swimmer their heat and lane number for their race. The swimmers need to keep this card, and refrain from tearing it or getting it wet.

4. The Clerk will line up the swimmers according to their cards and lead them to the pool in the correct order. The swimmers must remain in this order, as this is the order they will swim in heats. If a swimmer swims in the wrong heat or lane, he or she may be disqualified, so swimmers need to keep in the order that the clerk gives.

5. Depending on the meet, either the Clerk will give the card to the timers at the end of each lane, or the Clerk will instruct the swimmers to hand their card to the timers just prior to their swim. These cards are important because they tell the people running the meet who swam each event, and how fast they swam it.

For meets without a "Clerk" also known as a Cardless Meet:

Swimmers should look and find a posted sheet, usually on deck, that has the events and lane assignments listed. Swimmers should remember (or write them on the back of their hand) this information. It is the swimmers responsibility to be at the correct starting block when their event and heat is called.

6. After the swimmer finishes his/her race, he/she should proceed to the coaches. The coaches will briefly discuss the race with the swimmer, and explain any disqualifications or technical aspects that the swimmer does not understand. Generally the coach's discussion with the swimmers revolves around both praise and suggestions for improvement.

7. After your child speaks with the coach following a swim, he or she will probably proceed directly to his or her parents. As a parent, make sure you do the following:

- A. Tell the swimmer how great they did! Hey, it's hard work.
- B. Make sure your swimmer gets plenty to drink and relaxes.
- C. Be ready to listen for the call for the swimmer's next event.

8. During the course of the season, your child may experience a few disappointing races. When your child comes to you and starts feeling bad, make an effort to focus on the positive aspects of his race. While it is certainly acceptable for a swimmer to negatively evaluate a race, it is even more important for the swimmer not to dwell on it. Encourage your child to focus on the next race.

9. Once your swimmer has completed all of his or her events, you may go home. Always check with the coach before you leave to make sure your child is not participating on a relay.

WHAT TO TAKE TO THE MEET

1. Team swim suit, team cap, and more than one pair of goggles. If you do not have a team suit or apparel, our team colors are blue and white. Most parents will provide their swimmers with something conforming to these colors.

2. Two towels. These things get wet in a hurry, and no swimmer likes drying off with a damp towel.

3. Sweat suits, t-shirts, shorts, etc. for your child. Anything to keep the swimmer warm and comfortable between events.

4. Short sleeve t-shirts for parents. The pool area can get very warm, and nothing is worse than sweating through a hot swim meet.

5. Games or anything else to pass time. A deck of cards usually works well.

6. Food. Take plenty of fluids, and some snacks. Large meals weigh the swimmers down in the water and lead to stomach cramps. We recommend crackers, fruit, granola bars, and vegetables.

7. Many swimmers bring a blanket or sleeping bag to "camp" on in the hallway while waiting to swim. There is usually a designated area for "camping".

Understanding Disqualifications (or the "DQ")

More commonly referred to as the "DQ", disqualifications are a very much misunderstood aspect of competitive swimming. Unfortunately, many attribute negative characteristics to the DQ. Some feel that swimmers only get DQ'd when the coaches aren't doing their jobs. Others feel that DQ's only occur when the swimmer simply didn't try. As a coaching staff, we strongly disagree with these notions.

DQ's are as much a part of our sport as the balk is to baseball, or the personal foul is to basketball. Like any other sport, swimming is very structured. You must complete the race in a specific manner in order for your effort to be official. DQ's are very helpful, as swimmers whose strokes or turns do not conform with the rulings quickly learn what to address and focus on. Coaches spend a great deal of practice time correcting swimmers on technical flaws, and a DQ can often serve as another form of critiquing a swimmer.

Understanding DQ's (Cont'd.)

Take football, for example. If a player is off sides before the ball is snapped, an official throws a flag and signals the infraction. Certainly the player knows that it is against the rules to be off sides before the ball is snapped, but mental lapses occur, and this is what makes penalties very much a part of a football game.

The same can be said for swimming. Roughly 75 % of all DQ's can be attributed to a mental lapse on the part of the swimmer. A competitive swim meet can be very intimidating to some, and in these situations, it is difficult to always concentrate and focus on technique. While it is difficult for both parent and coach to understand these lapses, we need to remember that these are still just kids. Applying any negative criticism to a DQ can only hinder a child's appreciation for the sport. In all our years of coaching, we have yet to come across a swimmer that deliberately DQ'd. No one wants to get disqualified. Thus, how the coach and parent address a DQ can be critical.

A coach will take the time to explain to the swimmer any aspects of the disqualification that he or she may not understand. These rules are the same rules that apply at Collegiate Championships and the Olympics, so some of these rules can get rather complex. We will offer both praise for effort and suggestions for correction of the technical flaw. Every swimmer has had his or her share of DQ's. Everyone. Rather than viewing DQ's as a failure, we attempt to view them as a vehicle to help our swimmers grasp the rules and the sport itself. Taken in this positive context, it seems hard to imagine how the DQ acquires such a negative reputation within the sport of swimming.

GETTING INVOLVED

As the saying goes, you can never have enough help. Such is the case with swimming. In order for all parts of the club to run efficiently, we rely on the generous help of volunteering parents. While becoming more involved with the club can seem intimidating at first, many first-time volunteers find the experience very rewarding, and a large percentage of these parents go on to become officials, group reps, and members of the board.

The Lake Central Barracudas offer many opportunities for you to get involved. The simplest way is to volunteer to help at home meets. Whether helping run concessions, working the computer, or timing a lane, every position is vital to keeping the meet running smoothly.

One great way to volunteer at meets is to become an official (either "On Deck" or Administrative). The number of swimming officials nationwide is far from what it was ten years ago. Less and less volunteers are becoming officials, simply because the position is perceived as too difficult and cumbersome to attain. Such is not the case at all. Becoming an official is very simple, and it is a great way to expose yourself to some of the more technical aspects of the sport. Your help at meets is rewarded with complimentary food and drink, and you get to watch the meet (and your swimmer) from the best seat in the house - right along poolside. If you are interested in becoming an official, speak to one of the board members, and he or she will be able to direct you to the officials chairperson of our club.

Another great way to get involved is to volunteer for one of our positions on the board of directors, or some of the other positions that are tied to the club, such as Meet Director, apparel coordinator, trophy representative, and many others. We have no traditional method in running our club, but we simply

want to find the most efficient method to keeping swimmer, parent, and coach happy. Fresh minds are often the best addition to problem solving, and we hope that you will consider offering your time and creative thinking to become a volunteer to our club.

Money Management

Being a non-profit organization, the Lake Central Barracudas rely entirely on specific forms of income to cover the enormous expenses that are a part of every swim club. Contained within this section is an explanation of our board of directors, the people who make the decisions that ultimately shape the direction of our club.

Also in this section is a breakdown of where your fees are formulated, different fundraising methods we implement from season to season, and an introduction to the variety of apparel our club offers to its members.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The administrative functions of the club are overseen by the Board of Directors. The board consists of the Head Senior Coach, the Head Age Group Coach, and 7 elected positions. The three representatives are elected for a 1 year term (Copper Representative, Bronze/Silver Representative and Gold Representative) and the 4 officers are elected for 2 years (President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer). The elections for board members are held annually in April. For a listing of this season's board members, please refer to the web page.

FEE STRUCTURING

Upon registering for the Lake Central Barracudas, you were asked to pay one fee which can be broken down into two parts:

1. USS MEMBERSHIP

The first part is a membership to USS. This is mandated by the sport, as this enables your swimmer to be insured during practice time for any unfortunate incidents that may occur during a supervised practice. Each swimmer is covered at any organized practice of Lake Central Swim Club and every competition that is USS sanctioned. A summary of the coverage is available from one of the club officers.

This membership to USS also provides the swimmer with a monthly publication, Splash, which is a magazine put out by USS designed to expose age group swimmers to the many exciting facets of the sport.

2. CLUB OPERATING EXPENSES (a.k.a. "dues")

The dues that our members pay to the club are entirely what keeps our club operating at the level it currently enjoys. In addition to coaching salaries and expenses, dues help pay for trophies for each swimmer at the banquet, relay entry fees at meets, any pool rental fees, and many other related expenses. For example, during the 1999 season, we were faced with a need to purchase a new scoreboard and timing system to operate meets. All clubs are faced with these expenses and rely upon dues to help dilute these costs.

APPAREL

Apparel is a separate entity, and is available for your purchase in a variety of forms. Apparel includes team suits, team caps, goggles, team sweat suits, parent shirts, and many other clothing and swimming-related items (ask us about the pens!). Many of our club parents and swimmers enjoy the apparel as it provides a chance to show that you are a member of one of the finest teams in the state, the Lake Central Barracudas.

FUNDRAISING

Fundraising is an important part of the club, as there are many expenses for the proper operation. These have been outline previously. Fundraising takes many forms. The biggest form of fundraising are the Invitational Meets that the club sponsors. It is at these that we collect donations for advertisements in the Heat Sheets (Programs) sold during the meet.

Epilogue**Congratulations!**

If you've made it this far, you've either read our team manual cover to cover, or you just wanted to skip to the back to see how it ends. Either way, we hope you have taken the time to read the information contained in this book. This manual will probably be most useful during your initial membership as a Barracuda, but we hope that you will refer to this manual and be a part of our club for many seasons to come.

Please be aware that a stack of papers does not operate this club, people do. In this fast-paced world where cell phones and e-mail replace handshakes and face-to-face conversations, we want to make every effort to be available for our team members. Many of the families that have been with the club for several seasons have most likely figured out the most efficient means of being part of a swim club and are always happy to offer advice to new parents. After all, we all begin as freshmen.

If you have any suggestions or additions you would like to see to this manual, feel free to approach any of our club board members and voice your opinion. All governing bodies are not entirely efficient unless they consider all the opinions of those they represent. A swim club is no different. The best means of operating the Lake Central Barracudas is feedback from our club members.

Thank you again for becoming a part of our (your) organization.