

To Swim Or Not To Swim

Who should swim?

What is competitive swimming?

When would I swim?

Why compete when there are so many better swimmers?

How would I get better and faster?

Both parents and swimmers frequently ask these questions, and there are a number of answers. We hope to answer all of your questions in this handbook about the CENTRAL FLORIDA MARLINS.

The MARLINS program has much to offer beyond the challenge of competition and its inherent physical and mental benefits. MARLINS swimmers can expect new friendships, companionships, and a sense of belonging.

A MARLIN team member is generally a good student. The necessity to learn efficiency in action, economy in motion, and prompt, accurate time management all tend to discipline a swimmer toward good study habits and intensive concentration in school.

Each MARLIN swimmer can be proud of his or her association with a competitive team. He can be proud of his teammates and proud of his own accomplishments, whether they involve actual championship performances or, just as important, the improvement of his own personal best time for an event.

Our philosophy is to develop each child to his or her maximum potential and to provide the best possible competitive experience for each member of the team at his or her own level of ability.

We hope that you will take some time to read this handbook, and if it does not answer all of your questions, please feel free to ask a coach, parent, or swimmer any questions about our program. We have started with a glossary of swimming terms, which we hope will help you to understand the rest of the handbook.

Swimming Lingo

CENTRAL FLORIDA MARLINS: An awesome competitive swim team.

COACH: An extraordinary human being who works daily with our children. The person hired by the Head Swim Coach to direct practices, coach at meets, and help guide the swimmers' progress.

COMPETITIVE SWIMMING: The act of swimming in a race against the clock and/or against other swimmers.

COURSE: The length of the pool for the swim meet. Long course is 50 meters. Short course is 25 yards.

CUT-OFF TIME: A time set by the host club for entry into an event.

DISQUALIFICATION (AKA DQ): The loss of an event time and points due to an infraction of the rules that govern the meet neither the event or the time for the event count for the swimmer who got "DQd"

ENTRY FEE: A fee paid per event to swim at a swim meet. You will be asked to notify the coaches in writing if your child will not attend the meet. If you do not do so your child will be entered in the meet and you will be charged for the entry fee.

ENTRY FEE ESCROW ACCOUNT: It is recommended that each family keep a minimum balance of \$25 per swimmer in their "escrow account." Entry fee's for a meet are deducted from this account.

EVENT: Any race in a given stroke and distance.

"FUN FRIDAY": Open Friday Swim – sometimes referred to as " Fun Friday " is an informal practice for the Gold and Age Group 1 & 2 swimmers. There is no pre-set work-out. The practice is predicated on the numbers and ages that show up for practice. The practice generally consist of warm-up, a review of strokes, relays, turns and swimming games. Various coaches over the course of the year will administer the practice on a random basis.

HEAT: If there are no more swimmers entered in an event than there are lanes, the event is divided into heats according to the submitted times, with swimmers having the fastest submitted times swimming in the later heats.

HEAT SHEETS: A printed program of events sold at most meets (usually \$1 - \$10 depending On the size of the meet). This is a MUST for parents, because it tells who swims when (the event and heat numbers) and where (the lane number).

INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY (AKA "IM"): This is an event swum by one swimmer (not to be confused with the Medley Relay). It includes all four strokes--- butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle---in that order. For example, a 100 yard IM is 25 yards of each stroke swum continuously.

KSSL: The Kingdom of the Sun Swim League is a summer league composed of teams in the Marion/Lake/Citrus. There is one dual meet each week, and a KSSL championship meet at the end of July. These are short course meets and are relatively informal – good meets for newer swimmers, fun meets for all.

LIGHTNING: A natural phenomenon that finds any pool hosting a swim meet (which means that the meet lasts even longer than scheduled), but seems to avoid the pool during swim practices (which means that practices are not interrupted). Even if there is lightning at your house, chances are there is none at the pool.

MARLINS BOOSTER: Parents and/or other interested members of the community who are supporters and followers of the MARLINS.

MEET: A series of events (races) held in one program.

Invitational Meet: A meet to which many teams have been invited to participate. Often there are several hundred swimmers at an invitational meet. These meets usually last 2 to 2 ½ days.

Dual Meet: A competition between two swim clubs. These meets usually take only two to three hours. (If you hear terms like "tri-meet" or "double dual meet," ask a coach or experienced parent for an explanation! These are similar to dual meets.

PACE CLOCK: A piece of equipment found close to the pool during practice. When combined with the coach's instructions, it becomes the most terrifying creation a swimmer can imagine.

PARENTS: A group of adults who supply money; drive their children to and from practices and meets; and support their children and the coaches.

RAIN: Another natural phenomenon, but this one has absolutely no bearing on swim practice or meets, other than to make everyone involved feel very soggy.

REFEREE: The head official at a swim meet, who makes all final decisions based upon USA Swimming rules.

RELAY: An event swum by four swimmers in succession. There are two types of relay events: freestyle relay, in which all four swimmers swim freestyle; and a medley relay, in which each swimmer swims a different stroke (backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and freestyle in that order). These events are very popular with the swimmers.

SCRATCH: To withdraw from an event (usually with forfeit of entry fees).

SEASON: The "swim year" is divided into three seasons: fall, winter, spring/summer.

SPLIT: A time for an intermediate distance of a race, for example a 50 yard time for a 100 yard race.

SPONSOR: An individual or business that financially supports the sport and/or the club.

STROKE AND TURN OFFICIAL: A certified USA Swimming official that walks the deck or stands at the end of the pool during a meet to certify the legality of individual strokes and turns. This is one of the people who may "DQ" a swimmer.

The Marlin's are always looking for individuals that would like to become an official.

SWIM MEET SUPPORT (For Invitational Meets ONLY): The Marlin Swim Club host 3 – 4 meets per year. It is crucial that the Marlin parents help. Each family is expected to work 1 session, 1 day for each meet. If you have 2 or more children, that swim, you will be on "STAND-BY" for another session.

SWIM MEET SUPPORT FEE: The Marlin Swim Club host's 3 – 4 Invitational swim meets per year. For these meets each family will be charged a \$ 100 "support fee" per meet. If you fulfill your 1 session, 1 day requirement, your account will be credited the \$ 100 fee. **If your child does not attend the meet, you are still responsible for the 1 session/1 day requirement. (Anyone can cover your session).**

TAPER: A period of gradual decrease in the intensity of a practice and/or length of practice session in preparation for a championship meet. Also referred to as "resting" for a meet.

TIMER: A volunteer, almost always a parent, who operates a complicated piece of machinery called a stopwatch and records the swimmers' times.

UNATTACHED: A swimmer not representing a club of USA.

USA: United States Swimming.

WARM-UP: The time (usually an hour) before a meet when the coaches work with the swimmers. It is an important time for the swimmers because it gives them a

chance to feel the water and loosen the muscles.

Please do not allow your child to miss warm-ups!!

Central Florida Marlins Swim Team Website

www.CentralFloridaMarlins.com

MARLIN TEAM APP – <http://teamapp.com/app>

COMPETITIVE SWIMMING

The Big Picture – The Sport of Swimming

Our club is part of a much larger network of state and national swimming organizations. We participate in two programs at the state, regional, and national levels.

U.S.A. Swimming (USA) is the national governing body for competitive swimming in America. Its formation is the result a move in 1980 away from the Amateur Athletic Union into a separate entity designed to promote the sport of competitive swimming. The country is divided into 57 Local Swimming Chapters (LSC), one of which is the Florida Swimming Chapter. Florida is one of the largest LSC's in the country in numbers of registered athletes with about 12,000 swimmers.

Florida Swimming, Inc. has the responsibility of governing the sport of swimming in our state. Of their many activities, the one most obvious to us is the coordination of the planning and running by local clubs of all the swim meets in which we participate.

The Little Picture – Swimming for the Marlins

Club Background

Our club has been in existence since 1978 at the College of Central Florida, and has its roots in the old Ocala Swim Club. It is run as a community program by Marlin Swimming, LLC, with the support of an active swim team booster club, with which we hope you will become involved. We have associations with the Florida chapter of USA Swimming, and we are dedicated to supporting the swimming needs of youth in our community.

Club Philosophy

The philosophy of our club is that we are a professionally coached organization whose first commitment is to the needs of the swimmers in the program. We want a program which will meet the needs of any athlete who swims for the MARLINS. We have strived to develop a program that meets the needs and desires of all of the swimmers, from brand new novices (of any age) to regional and national qualifiers. Regardless of age or level of ability, we want all of our swimmers to be motivated and to realize their potential.

Our Age Group Program is very "event" oriented, such as: Halloween costume parade and party, Thanksgiving Food Drive, Christmas Gift Exchange, Blue/White Meet, Spring Fling, and other activities.

We support the continuous goal of patiently working with our younger swimmers with a long-range goal of developing champions and promoting high school and college swimming. For this reason we stress teaching and fun at younger ages, and gradually introduce strenuous practices and competitions as the swimmers progress.

The purposes of our club are:

- ✓ To promote the sport of competitive swimming in our area.
- ✓ To help each swimmer develop his or her fullest potential and have a positive feeling about his or her competitive swimming experience.
- ✓ To teach, through competitive swimming, self-discipline, self motivation, goal setting, and the value of hard work and winning (winning being defined as getting up and trying again after each setback and never abandoning one's long term goals).
- ✓ To help each member gain a sense of self worth by being part of a team.
- ✓ Give any child the opportunity to swim no matter their financial situation.

All of our swimmers and their families are entitled to have their own goals in swimming; for many this is simply to become the fastest, and we want to provide the coaching that can help to achieve those goals. However, in addition to that, we believe that one of our primary goals as coaches is to develop healthy bodies and minds through the discipline and spirit in competitive swimming. We all hope that all of our swimmers will continue to develop life skills which are learned from individual competition, and will continue to enjoy a sport of high fitness characteristics which can be continued long after a competitive career has ended.

COMPETITION

All of our swimmers are encouraged to swim in competitive meets, as guided by the coaching staff. The coaches will guide all swimmers to compete as appropriate for their levels of ability. It is hoped that families will attend as many out-of-town meets as possible, and it is expected that they will help out at meets hosted by our swim club. In this way, both the individual swimmers and their families are involved. We want our swimmers to compete together, and we need our parents to support the swimmers and to work together for the ongoing enrichment of our program.

One important point to remember about meets is that swimmers have varying degrees of talent and dedication. **Never compare your child to a swimmer that is either faster or slower.** Also keep in mind that the role of the parent is to encourage the swimmer and to provide a shoulder to lean on when necessary. When your child performs well, offer congratulations and show your pride. When he or she fails, express **love** and **support**. Let the coaches analyze the swim, point out mistakes, and offer suggestions for improvement.

All swim meets have different age categories, and some have certain qualifying times that must be met in order to compete. One of the most difficult turning points for a competitive swimmer is "aging up." This is when a swimmer has a birthday and moves into the next higher age category. The competition is suddenly a lot tougher, and qualifying times are faster. Generally, the most difficult transition for girls is when they turn 11, and for boys it is when they turn 13. These are the ages when young people begin to grow and physically mature. For this reason it is important for the swimmer – and their parents – to remember: **The swimmer competes ultimately against the pace clock, and the pace clock is the only true measure of comparison.** Aging up can be quite traumatic for some swimmers unless they are reminded that if they continue to race against the clock, they will eventually improve and regain higher levels of achievement.

The Nitty-Gritty – How Our Club Works

PRACTICES

Practice is the key to success in swimming as in any other sport. Most swimmers can achieve almost any goal – **if they are willing to pay the price.** No swimmer can improve without attending practice, no matter how many meets he or she competes in. Practice sessions provide refinement of skills, increased endurance, and improved speed. Simply coming to practice does not guarantee success. The swimmer must be willing to put forth the necessary effort during each practice session. For this reason, it is important for all involved (swimmer, parents, and coach) to have a common understanding of the swimmer's goals for the season. The coach can help the swimmer and parents appreciate the level of commitment and effort necessary to strive and achieve these goals.

The club is divided into eight practice groups, which are described below. **These groups are separated primarily by level of ability, with age also being a factor.** We feel this is the best way to give the more advanced swimmers the intensity and difficulty they need to continue to improve, while at the same time giving newer swimmers the attention and instruction they need without intimidation.

Swimmers are “moved up” to the next appropriate practice level at the discretion of the coach. Factors involved in the decision to advance a swimmer include skills, times, age, endurance, and sometimes the willingness of the swimmer to commit more time to the sport.

Occasionally, a swimmer may be “moved back” to a practice group that will better meet his or her needs. This does not necessarily mean the swimmer is wasting his or her time in the sport, but that we want to be sure that each swimmer receives every opportunity available to help him or her succeed. Sometimes such a change is welcomed by a swimmer that was feeling overwhelmed.

Attendance requirements and length of practice sessions are determined by many factors, including age, level of ability, and commitment to the sport. Younger swimmers may have many conflicts because they are trying different activities. Those who become more devoted to swimming, and whose abilities are improving still need to attend more frequently and have longer practice sessions.

The Practice Groups

M & M's : Ages 4 – 7 – This program is our beginner group for children. Prerequisite – Freestyle with correct breathing and the ability to swim on their back. This is an entry level program for children to experience the competitive sport of swimming. The purpose is to transition children from a lesson environment to a coach/swim team environment. We look for good body position or the ability to balance the body in the water coupled with some breathing skills both face-down and on their back. The primary goal is to develop kicking, breathing, and basic developmental skills, in all 4 strokes, with emphasis on “FUN”. The group meets 2 times per week, for 30 minutes. There is no minimum attendance requirement.

Gold: This group is for novice swimmers new to competitive swimming who can swim 25 yards of freestyle and backstroke, for less experienced returning team members, and for all swimmers ages 10 and under. Emphasis at this level is on having fun while learning the 4 competitive strokes (Free, Back, Breast, Fly). The primary age group is 7 through 10. Three practices are offered a week. There is no minimum attendance requirement.

Age Group I: This group is made up of athletes who are at least 8 years old and have demonstrated basic knowledge of all four competitive strokes by swimming a legal 100 yard IM. These swimmers also have a beginning knowledge of all starts and turns. The goals of this group are to improve stroke and racing skills, and to develop better swim conditioning.

The primary age group is 8 – 11. In order to show continued improvement and progress towards the next practice group (AG2), swimmers should attend 3 - 4 practices offered per week and attend at least 1 swim meet per month (including Fridays). Swimmers must also be able to do 10 x 100 on 1:40, a 500 Free under 7:30, legal 200 IM and have mastered Starts and Turns before being considered for Age Group 2.

Age Group II: Members of this group have mastered strokes, turns, and starts in all four strokes and have successfully completed a 500 yard Freestyle. The focus on this group will be on continued stroke improvement, race strategy, proper training techniques and conditioning and the introduction of the 400 IM. The primary age group is 11 through 14. Four practices are offered per week with a recommended minimum of 3 – 4 practices per week. For advancement to Age Group 3, 4 practices per week are strongly recommended. A pre-requisite for advancement to Age Group 3 is 10 x 100 on 1:30, a 200 I.M. under 3:10, successfully completed a 400 yard IM and must attend at least 1 swim meet per month, including Friday's.

Age Group III: A swimmer must be invited by the Age Group 3 Coach. This is for those swimmers ages 11 – 14 or in grades 6 – 8 who have demonstrated the desire to make swimming their sport of choice and a priority in their life. These swimmers and their parents are required to sign an agreement that requires mandatory work-out schedules and attendance at meets under the direction of the Age Group 3 Coach. Age Group 3 swimmers are required to attend 100% of all practices offered per week to help them prepare for advanced swimming. Advancement to the Pre-Senior group is successfully completing 10 x 100 on 1:25 and a 400 yard IM under 6:00.

Pre-Seniors: When swimmers work into the Pre-Senior group they know that if they work hard they will get the best results from their efforts. To be asked into the Pre-Senior group, a swimmer must have demonstrated a commitment to the sport of swimming, and have met all the Age Group 3 requirements and are prepared to make swimming their sport of choice- thereby making all other activities and events subordinate to the rigors and challenges of Senior Swimming. Any deviation from the practice schedule must be approved in advance, such as special trips, vacations, etc., excluding emergencies. The primary age group is usually ages 12 – 14 or grades 6-8 and swimmers must have the approval of the Pre-Senior Group Coach to advance. Swimmers are required to attend 100% of the available practices. Advancement to the Senior 2 group is successfully completing 10 x 100 on 1:20.

Senior Group I: This group is for swimmers in grades 9 – 12 who enjoy the sport of competitive swimming, but do not want to commit to, or are not yet ready for, the demands of Senior Group II. The main focus is to provide a conditioning and skill development program structured towards the high school swimmer. 4 practices are offered each week with optional attendance and meets.

Senior Group II: To be in this group means that the swimmer has set a goal to achieve the best results from his or her efforts – that of swimming fast and possibly obtaining a swimming scholarship for college. These swimmers by now should have reached the point where they, not their parents, decide how much time and effort they really want to put into swimming. To be asked into Senior Group II program, a swimmer must be at least 14 years old or entering the 9th grade, have a strong commitment to competitive swimming, and the Head Coach's approval. Swimmers are required to attend 100 % of the available practices with few exceptions. **MUST BE ABLE TO SWIM 10 X 100 ON 1:20 TO BE IN THIS GROUP.**

As outlined in our practice organization chart at the end of the handbook, the ultimate goal of all of our programs is to prepare each swimmer for advanced swimming. This does not mean we expect each swimmer to demonstrate that level of commitment, but that when the time comes to choose, we want those who do want to train at that level to be adequately prepared.

MEETS

The MARLINS compete in both dual meets and invitational meets throughout the year. Most of these meets are divided into five age categories for the girls and the same five for the boys. The most common groups are: 6 & Under; 8 & under; 9-10 (sometimes 10 & under); 11-12; 13-14; and 15 & older (often referred to as Senior). Occasionally, there may be a separate age group for 6 under; and sometimes the Senior category may be divided into two categories: 15-16 and Senior.

The member clubs of the Florida Swim LSC offer Invitational meets at various pools throughout the state. We compete in several of these each season. Most of these meets do not have minimum time standards, so any swimmer can enter; the coaching staff will provide guidance. Florida also sanctions the state Junior Olympics (AKA JO's) for swimmers age 14 and under, and Senior Championships for age 15 and older. These meets are held in March and July each year and have qualifying times. Swimmers feel a great sense of achievement when they "make" a Florida Swimming Championship cut-off time.

Other meets in which we sometimes participate are the Junior and Senior Nationals, Southern Sectionals and Florida Senior Championships. We also participate in the KSSL summer program.

Not every swimmer needs to attend each and every meet, but most should attend as many as possible. **Swim meets are an indication of what is happening in practice, and are the ultimate measure of success.**

Meets exist to promote healthy competition and to stimulate an individual's motivation. They are a high point in the swim season – the payoff for the swimmers and coaches.

For parents, meets can be fun and exciting. Not only will you get to see the progress your child is making, but you will make new friends from the area and from around the state. Enjoy the meets, get to know the other MARLIN parents, and ask questions about whatever you do not understand.

SWIM MEETS – ATTENDANCE, PROCEDURES & CHOICES - A reasonable and fair question for parents to ask is "Should my child go to every swim meet and why do the coaches select the events for them" ? Here are the philosophies we use, in our program, to enter the swimmers in meets and their events:

1. Should my child go to every meet ? **YES**. The number 1 way the coaches can assess your child's progress is by swim meets. We usually only offer 1 meet every 3 – 4 weeks, so it's important to attend. Also by experience, we have found that children that do not attend meets usually stop swimming. (Pretty boring to just go to practice all the time).
2. We enter swimmers in the greatest variety of events possible, ALL THE TIME.
3. Swimmers are continually changing and developing. We never give up on any 1 stroke and/or event for any swimmer.
4. Every swimmer benefits from swimming a variety of events, because you always have something else to "go to" when you get stuck on one or more strokes and/or events. (In every swimmers swimming career, there will be the " get stuck" issue).
5. Young swimmers improve the most in the longer events. Everyone (Swimmer, Mom, Dad and Coach) likes to watch improvement happen ! Sprints are hard to improve in, so we swim lots of longer races.
6. Always feel free to talk with your child's coach about their events. Their coach is there to help you with this process. This should give you some standard insight into what we do as coaches.

TIMES AND PROGRESS

You are encouraged to keep track of your child's times. During the meets, times are posted. By consulting these lists, you can let our child know if they have placed well (finished in the top eight or sixteen, for example), and whether he or she has achieved a personal best time.

Rapid and continuous improvements tend to be made by new swimmers as they learn and refine basic skills. Gradually, progress slows down to a more moderate pace, and more time and effort is required to become faster. New swimmers need to understand this process so that they do not get discouraged.

If you keep a record of a swimmer's times, he or she can see the overall improvements made over a period of time. Swimmers usually do not get personal best times at every meet, and sometimes may do substantially worse. This is common and expected. The coaches will discuss possible reasons for poor swims. A variety of factors can affect performance, including recent illness, fatigue from practice, change in stroke technique, mistakes in racing strategy, laziness at practice or meets, growth or such non-swimming reasons as problems at home or school. The coaches will take the necessary steps to resolve the performance problems, while the parents provide support and encouragement to help overcome problems with confidence.

SWIMMING ATTIRE & EQUIPMENT

For a beginning swimmer, the two most important items to acquire are goggles and swimsuits, both of which are discussed below. Goggles come in a wide variety of styles. Suits come in two basic materials – nylon and lycra. A swimmer needs at least two new suits to start – a practice suit and a meet suit.

Goggles are an absolute must. The amount of time spent in the pool day after day makes the chlorine too irritating to the eyes. Also, swimmers must be able to see clearly underwater. They must be able to see the other swimmers to avoid collisions and they must be able to see the walls clearly in order to have the fastest turns and finishes possible.

Practice Suits: Nylon suits have minimal stretch and last longer than lycra suits, so they are good suits for practice. Chlorine is a killer to color, so don't be too concerned with the color of a practice suit. Bright colors fade, blue changes to brown, etc.

Meet Suits: Lycra suits are "faster." These suits should be worn at meets, and they should fit snugly. Our team's meet suits are navy blue with white lettering, and any coach can give you the information you need to order one. It is difficult to know what size suit to purchase, and parents are encouraged to consult a coach or more experienced parent. A meet suit should never be purchased with the idea that bigger is better. It will not last long enough for the child to "grow into" it.

Meet suits last around four to eight meets (if they are worn only at meets). Then stretching causes a marked reduction in speed. The suit should then be 'retired' and worn for practice. Swimmers often wear two or three layers of worn out suits with the loosest on the outside. This practice does not only increase the drag in the water, but the change into one's snug meet suit "feel" much faster.

TEAM CAPS – All Marlin swimmers are required to wear a Team Cap at all swim meets.
The coaching staff usually brings extra's.

Other Equipment: As swimmers advance, they may need other items of equipment, but this will be determined by the coach. Don't try to buy items like swim fins, kickboards, or pull bouy's unless you are asked by a coach.

THE COST

It takes money to run a swim program. The swim club receives no subsidies from the college or any other source. Most of our funds come from fund-raising events and hosting meets.

Monthly Coaching Fees: Fees are withdrawn from either your credit card or ECheck the 10th of each month. If fees have not been paid by the 15th of the month, the swimmer will not be allowed to practice until payment is received. New swimmers have a one-week free trial to be sure that MARLIN swimming is for them. If you have to write a check make it payable to Marlin Swimming.

We realize that there may be times when circumstances prevent payment of fees on time, and that it can be difficult to discuss these matters. However, we do not want to deny any child the opportunity to swim, so if we are aware that there is a problem, we will try to work out a solution and help families as much as possible considering our limited resources.

Fund-Raisers : Like other community organizations and youth sport programs, we require various fundraising activities to augment our program's needs. It is important to understand the necessity of fund raising. Expenses include the wages of the coaches, swim equipment, coaches' travel expenses, team trips, postage, printing, and other miscellaneous operating costs that add up to create a significant annual budget. That is where fund raising comes in. Fundraising is mandatory so that all of our families will contribute their efforts equally. Mandatory fund raising, while it may sound harsh, is not new to competitive swimming programs. It is a part of a large majority of all swim programs in the United States.

Each MARLIN family has a fundraising obligation per year (\$ 300). Half (1/2) of your fundraising must be met by January 1st. Your child will not be allowed to continue swimming if you have not met your January 1st amount. The fundraising year extends from September 1st through August 31st. At the end of the fundraising year a swimmer will not be allowed to re-register if the family's fundraising obligation has not been satisfied.

Our program currently has 5 - 6 major fundraising events during the year. These events should offer ample opportunity for our families to meet their fundraising obligation, but any family not willing or able to meet their goal through these efforts may write a check to cover their obligation.

Hosting Meets: We host several meets throughout the year. All swimmers and their parents are expected to help out at these meets. In addition to many dual meets during the year, we generally host three or more invitational meets. These include a short-course meet in the fall, a long-course meet in the summer, and another short-course (KSSL Championship) in the summer. Invitational meets are more difficult to run, and consequently need the help of everyone.

Patriot Team: This is a program for those children who just want to swim during the summer, or who want to try out competitive swimming without any commitment. Many of our new swimmers in the fall come out of the Patriot program. This team is a part of the Kingdom of the Sun summer league.

Medical: In the club's effort to provide a "safe" and "secure" environment for all the children participating in our swim program, we ask you, the parents, for any knowledge you have regarding your child's health and well being (ex. Diabetic, Asthmatic, etc.) to be reported to the coaching staff to ensure the safety and protection of your child's well being.

ANSWERS TO COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When should my child start swimming? Although some 5 and 6 year olds who have been progressing rapidly in lessons are ready for competitive swimming, the ideal time is between 7 and 9 years of age. This is when children are most apt to learn easily, improve rapidly, and feel competitive at swim meets. The older the swimmer is when he or she starts, the more difficult it becomes to catch up to others.

What if my child cannot make it to a particular practice? Call the coach and attempt to work out a satisfactory arrangement. As a rule, swimmers are not to swim at a different practice than what is assigned, but arrangements may be made if the need is justifiable. Never show up at a different practice without the prior approval of your child's coach or the Head Coach.

How soon does my child start entering meets? Like so many other aspects of the sport, a lot depends on the swimmer's ability and progress. The coaching staff will offer guidance as to which meets your child should enter, and what events he or she should compete in. Generally, swimmers are encouraged to start competing early, to get a feel for what it's like to swim in a meet.

What if I can't get my child to practice or a meet? Swimming requires a major time commitment. Many families ease the demands by sharing transportation. Talk to families who live near you about possibly helping each other out. If your not sure who might live near you, ask the coaching staff.

How long are the seasons? The fall season starts in September and is about three months long. We take a break of around two or three weeks around the holidays. The winter season is also about three months long, starting the first week of January. We have another week or two off at spring break time, then begin the spring/summer season, which is three and one half to four months long, ending in early August.

How are these seasons organized? A typical season has a preconditioning phase in which swimmers are gradually brought into shape. There is a conditioning phase when workouts feature an increase of yardage, along with emphasis on developing proper stroke habits. A competitive phase follows, which is a period of intense training so that goal times may be reached. The last phase for some swimmers is a taper in preparation for a “big meet” at the end of the season. Not all swimmers need a taper, and not all swimmers taper for the same meet. The coaches decide who needs to taper and for which meets.

How long will my child swim? No one can answer this question with certainty, but we hope that it will be forever. The coaches really encourage swimmers to continue in competitive swimming for as long as possible, and then to continue swimming for therapeutic and recreational purposes. Swimming is a life-long adventure with lasting beneficial effects. Many of our swimmers have already swam for 6 to 12 years, aiming at high school and college swimming as the high points in their careers.

What should my child’s next goals be? We believe that setting sustainable and easily defined goals can prove to be an excellent teacher of a life skill that can help all of our swimmer become better people. Goals vary with age and with individual abilities and desires. The coaches try to help their swimmers set short-range goals for each season and long-range goals for their swimming careers. Short range goals should be tailored to the individual, measured in seconds (not against the other swimmers), and flexible enough that when a goal is achieved a new one can be set. Long-range goals are geared toward an entire swimming career. These may include winning a high school championship meet, receiving a college, scholarship, and every child’s dream – making the Olympics. We encourage these big ambitions. Goals give a swimmer an objective to reach for and give feelings of accomplishment when achieved. They are used by coaches as an incentive when practice intensity wavers.

My child will never be that good, will he? Maybe not, but only time will tell for certain who will achieve greatness. At the ages of eight and twelve most swimmers imagine themselves competing in the Olympics, while only 56 of the 750,000 swimmers make it every four years. Yet that goal is inherent in the American way of life, and to take it away from your child simply because you are more realistic, is to deprive him of the right to dream. Sooner than you think, your child will develop an awareness and will realize his limitations. That’s when the coach can sit down with the swimmer and design attainable goals which will encourage the swimmer to continue even though making the Olympic Team seems unlikely. Of course, there are those 56 swimmers every four years, and no one can predict which young swimmers will be among them. Many swimmers who are average or below average as young children will blossom into great athletes in their teens, and others who are exceptionally fast at a young age may level off or burn out before their teens. Who knows whether your child is a Katie Ledecky, who began swimming at age 7 and went to win an Olympic Gold at 15 or an average swimmer who will make modest gains but never be a champion? While you have the future possibilities in perspective, keep the fires burning in your child for as long as possible.

My child is simply not that talented. What can MARLINS offer? The majority of our swimmers are not exceedingly talented. Talent is certainly a major factor (along with ambition and hard work) if a swimmer wants to make a Senior national time standard or an Olympic Team; but hard work and a strong desire to succeed may be enough to get a swimmer to Junior Nationals, or to be a state champion. As coaches, we have worked with many MARLIN swimmers who have gone on to swim in college. Division II and III colleges cannot offer full scholarships, but they do give financial aid to promising swimmers, and can allow a swimmer to have an exciting college career. For those who do not attain this level, high school swimming is a great experience. If neither high school or college swimming are in the athlete's plans the MARLINS can still be terrific place to develop confidence in the water, commitment to dreams, positive mental attitudes, the ability to get along with others in a team setting, and a wonderful sense of self-worth.

What do I do if my child gets tired of swimming? Talk to the coach right away. The coach might suggest letting your child take a little break from the sport. Encourage him to try another activity for a while. Never force your child to continue swimming if the desire is gone. One factor that causes swimmers to quit is competition for their time. This can come from other activities, jobs, friends, and school. Another key factor is maturity. As a child enters adolescence, sometimes it becomes more difficult to stay physically fit, and to stay motivated in a sport which requires a great deal of self discipline. Sometimes the physical changes which occur during these years makes competitive swimming more difficult, which can be quite discouraging when at the same time other swimmers are experiencing an increase in muscular bulk and consequently getting much stronger and faster. Ultimately, the decision must be left up to the swimmer. We do all we can to keep the sport fun and fulfilling hoping that each child will continue swimming, but – please pardon the pun- “different *strokes* for different folks!”

With so many years in swimming, what prevents premature burnout? Burnout can be avoided in a program like ours which encourages steady improvement over several years, rather than pressuring swimmers for instant success. **We develop our younger swimmers more slowly than some programs might, but we seek to have more swimmers remain in the program through their high school years.** This requires patience from all involved – coaches, parents, and swimmers- but we feel the long term involvement in the sport is more beneficial than temporary greatness early on. That is why our younger swimmers are not required to attend all practices – we believe that it is best to develop interest gradually so the swimmer and the parents can adjust more readily, and so that the child can explore all available opportunities while still young.

Can I expect my child to improve continuously? NO!! New swimmers generally improve steadily at first, and parents may be misled by this rapid progress, expecting it to continue indefinitely. You must realize that eventually, your child will have largely perfected his or her technique and the rate of progress will decrease markedly. This is an expected phase. There are many factors that contribute to noticeable increases or decreases in the rate of improvement. Physical changes, especially during adolescence, play a major role, which may

be either to cause the swimmer to enter a phase of rapid movement or just the opposite. A swimmer's willingness to work hard in practice and his or her mental attitude are other factors. Rate of improvement is also based upon where we are in the season. Early in the season, some swimmers can swim fairly fast until training intensity increases. Then times may actually get slower, splits uneven, and fatigue exerts its effect early in the race. Improvement may not occur until season's end, and is occasionally delayed for more than a full season. Also, at times improvement should not be measured by in terms of time; frequently a swimmer will have goals such as mastering a change in technique, acquiring the ability to split a race better, or even developing a better attitude towards competition.

How will I know what is going on? Every month we send a newsletter along with your invoice. These letters give an overview of upcoming events, such as meets and fundraisers. In addition, for most meets, fund raisers, and other significant events we will send out a separate notice with details about the event. The most current information you will (or should) receive is contained in each week's "Monday News". Each Monday you will receive this information through email. Finally, check the bulletin board in front of the building, especially for information about meets. **You can also check out our website at:**
www.CentralFloridaMarlins.com.

Whom should I ask if I have a question or concern about my child's swimming?
PLEASE talk to the coach. If a problem exists, call the coach and try to work things out, or request a meeting to discuss the problem. Making negative comments to the other parents, or at meets in front of other parents undermines team spirit. Making negative comments at home, in front of the swimmer, undermines confidence in, and respect for the coach. Keeping the problem between you and the coaching staff enables the team to continue to progress. Positive feedback should also be directed to the coaching staff enabling the team to progress. Positive feedback should also be directed to the coaching staff so that they know when things are going well, and what does work, as well as what does not.

What is the function of the Booster Club? There is a MARLINS Booster Club to which all parents belong. Its main function is to plan, coordinate, and oversee fundraising efforts. The Booster Club is headed by a Board of Directors, made up entirely by MARLIN parents who have volunteered to serve, and the Head Swim Coach. The board meets monthly with the Head Swim Coach for information exchange, planning, and decision about various activities. The members of the board are: President; Vice President (who becomes next year's President); Secretary/Treasurer; Fund Raising Chairperson; Membership Chairperson; and four at large members who serve as liaisons between the board and other members of the club. The board members are elected each fall at the annual meeting of all club members.

Who makes the decisions about the overall running of the club? The Head Swim Coach and the coaching staff make all decisions regarding the structure of the team, day-to-day management, scheduling, etc.

IN SUMMARY

Congratulations are in order if you are still reading. There is a lot of information to digest, and you are not done yet! The next few pages have more specific information for swimmers and parents on a more checklist format, followed by the practice group outline and organizational chart – easy reading, so since you have made it this far, please continue to the end. Please feel free to ask the coaching staff or other parents about anything you don't understand or any questions that we haven't answered.

We welcome your entire family to the CENTRAL FLORIDA MARLINS. We look forward to getting to know all of you as you become actively involved in the club, and we hope you enjoy the experience of being a part of the

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WHAT IS EXPECTED...

... At practice?

MARLIN SWIMMERS

- ✓ Learn to read the pace clock
- ✓ Prepare mentally before practice – come ready to swim, work hard, and improve your skills. Total effort builds better swimming!
- ✓ Remain at practice for the entire time scheduled.
- ✓ Show respect for your coach and pay attention to what is being said. It is rude to talk to your teammates or fool around while the coach is talking, and it is unfair to other swimmers who are trying to listen.
- ✓ **Check the bulletin board everyday.**

- ✓ Dry off before you leave, and clear your ears.

MARLIN PARENTS

- ✓ If you provide the transportation, see that your child is on time.
- ✓ Allow the coaching staff to do their job:
 - **We prefer that you leave the pool deck, but if you stay, please do not distract the swimmers.**
 - **Save questions for after practice, or arrange for a time to speak with the coach. Time in the water is crucial.**
- ✓ Read the bulletin board for information and for "sign- ups".
- ✓ **CHECK YOUR EMAIL EACH MONDAY FOR THE MONDAY NEWS**
- ✓ **DOWNLOAD THE MARLIN TEAM APP – <http://teamapp.com/app>**

... At meets?

MARLINS SWIMMERS

- ✓ Wear your team suit and cap
- ✓ Mentally go through your race before stepping on the blocks; feel and act confident - You are ready.
- ✓ Watch other swimmers especially good swimmers.
- ✓ Practice good sportsmanship:
 - Help your teammates out – especially younger or new swimmers.
 - When any swimmer has a great swim, let them know it !!!!
- ✓ **Always report to the coaching staff before and after your swim.**
- ✓ If the unthinkable happens and you get disqualified, listen to the reason – if you do, chances are you won't make that mistake again.
- ✓ **Be on your best behavior throughout the swim meet – YOU ARE REPRESENTING THE MARLIN SWIM TEAM.**

MARLIN PARENTS

- ✓ Check the bulletin board and your email during the week and before the meet to
- ✓ find out session times, when warm-ups begin, what events your child is swimming
- ✓ in and directions to the meet.
- ✓ **Please get your swimmer to warm-ups on time (usually 1 hour before starting time).**
- ✓ Buy a heat sheet as soon as you arrive, locate your swimmer(s)' events in the heat sheet, and keep informed of event, heat and lane numbers. You must also keep track of the meet's progress – in other words, know what event is currently in the water. Some swimmers like to have this information written on their hand. **Do not send swimmers to the coaching staff for this information.**

- ✓ Remind your swimmers to get their times from the lane timer when they get out of the water and report this immediately to the coaching staff.
- ✓ Support, encourage, and congratulate all swimmers.
- ✓ Encourage good sportsmanship and good manners from your child.
- ✓ Never question officials or their judgment – that is up to the coach.
- ✓ Never enter a restricted or roped-off area during a meet unless otherwise asked.
- ✓ Insist that all swimmers in your care get enough sleep.
- ✓ Encourage swimmers to rest between events. Quiet activities on a blanket in the shade are ideal.
- ✓ If time permits, have lunch away from the meet (local restaurant or picnic). Be sure your child doesn't miss their event. If leaving the meet is not possible, large meets have a concession stand, but you might prefer to load up your cooler.
- ✓ Do not allow swimmers to eat just before they swim. See the coaching staff if you need advice in this area.
- ✓ If you have a question for the coach, wait until you are sure they are not timing a swimmer.
- ✓ **When a coach is critiquing your child's performance after a race, please make yourself scarce – your child may feel uncomfortable if you are listening, and may not give their full attention to the coach. This is an important time for swimmer – coach feedback.**
- ✓ Do not leave the meet before it is over unless you check with the coaching staff. Your child may be scheduled to swim in a relay at the end of the meet, and if they are not there, the other members of the relay will have to scratch.
- ✓ Discourage running, horseplay and other loud activities both at the meets and hotels. At meets it is distracting to swimmers and spectators. At hotels it can be distracting to other guests; we frequently make arrangements with the same hotels year after year, and we want to uphold a reputation of excellent behavior.

...At All Times?

MARLIN SWIMMERS

- ✓ Think Positive!
- ✓ If you have a problem, seek help from your coach, your parents, other parents, or older teammates.
- ✓ Support all of your teammates and be proud to be MARLIN swimmer.
- ✓ Encourage your friends to give competitive swimming a try.

MARLIN PARENTS

- ✓ Think Positive!
- ✓ If a problem should arise, seek help first from the coaching staff; if they are unavailable, consult another parent.
- ✓ Voice your concerns and suggestions in a positive manner. Constructive criticism is

welcomed.

- ✓ Support the entire team, and be a proud MARLIN parent.
- ✓ Attend all meetings – not only will you be informed about what is going with the team, but we need input from everyone in order to run a successful program.
- ✓ Lend a helping hand whenever possible- it is impossible for just a few people to do the work effectively. If you are not sure how best to help, ask.
- ✓ Realize that all parents are expected to help us run our home meets. There are a wide variety of “jobs” available.
- ✓ Remember that help with fund-raising is expected of all parents-these activities support the entire MARLIN program.

Don't ask the coach to discuss your child's swimming progress in front of the child. This should be brought up in private; then the coach can decide whether the child would benefit by being included in the discussion.

YIKES! WE'RE GOING TO A SWIM MEET!

What Do We Need To Know?

Dual Meets: These meets are usually quite short (two to three hours at the most), so for those who just need the basics-suit, goggles, cap, towel, snack, and outer attire appropriate for the weather.

Invitational Meets: These are longer meets, usually more than one day, and more often than not they are out of town, so you should consult the following checklist until you have the routine down pat.

- ✓ Plan to spend 3 – 4 hours each day, sometimes more at the pool. If you have more than one swimmer attending, you could be there all day, depending on their ages and how the age groups have been divided for the meet. Age Groups are usually divided as: 10 and under's one session and 11 and Older the other session.
- ✓ Make sure to remember when warm-ups begin so you will get there on time.
- ✓ Be sure to bring:
 - Folding chairs, blankets to sit on.
 - Entertainment items (books, cards, toys, etc..)
 - Money for souvenirs, snacks, drinks, heat heats, etc..
 - In all weather – sunscreen, T-Shirts, hats, sunglasses, etc..
 - In cold weather – several towels, changes of clothes, parka, sweats, etc..
 - Stop watch.
 - Pen or pencil (to record your child's times); also a highlighter comes in handy for marking heat sheets.

- Extra swim suits, goggles, caps.
- Cooler with plenty of food and drinks.
- ✓ **Buy a heat sheet as soon as you arrive; remember that the coaching staff does not have time to track down all the swimmers and get them to their events.**
- ✓ Remember to check with the coaching staff before leaving.
- ✓ Prepare for any weather.
- ✓ Remember that swimmers need a good night's sleep and lot's of rest.
- ✓ Vocally support all MARLIN swimmers.

HAVE A GREAT TIME !!!!

Marlin Booster Club Committee's

Swim Meet Committee's

Hospitality

Volunteer's serve meals, snacks and drinks to the coaches, timers and officials working at the meet. Volunteer's report to the Hospitality Coordinator 15 minutes prior to warm-ups and stay throughout their child's swim session.

Concession

Volunteer's sell meals, snacks and drinks to swimmers and spectator's. Volunteer's arrive 15 minutes prior to warm-ups and stay throughout their child's swim session.

Timing

Volunteer's are needed at each meet hosted by the Marlin's to time in each swim lane. Timer must attend a timers meeting 30 minutes prior to the session beginning and stay throughout their child's swim session.

Awards

Affix labels to ribbons and divide to distribute to attending teams.

Computer

Adjust and print results generated from the timing machine.

General Swim Club Committee's

Heat Sheet Ad's

Volunteer helps coordinate Heat Sheet Ad's. Sold by the Marlin swim families. Help's with the families yearly fundraising obligation.

Membership

Volunteer coordinates events to promote the team and increase members.

Banners

Sold by the Marlin families. Help's with the families yearly fundraising obligation.

Fundraising Events

Volunteer helps coordinate fundraising events. We offer events at this time.

1. October Swim Meet Heat Sheet Ad's
2. Christmas Yeti Cooler
3. Golf Tournament
4. May Swim Meet Heat Sheet Ad's
5. Casino

Banquet

Volunteer helps plan the annual swim banquet.

Marlin Booster Club Board of Director's

Serve a 1 year term overseeing committee's and representing each practice group.

Each family MUST join at least 1 General and 1 Meet Committee

