

Hershey Aquatic Club USA Team Handbook

Overview of a Swim Meet

Hershey Aquatic Club (HAC) offers competition in USA Swimming (USAS) for swimmers ages nine (9) and older. USAS offers a structured swimming program that ultimately leads to Olympic Trials. This program has benefits for all levels of swimmers.

USAS divides the United States into 59 Local Swim Committees (LSC). HAC belongs to the Middle Atlantic (MA) LSC which includes portions of Pennsylvania and New Jersey and all of Delaware. The country is also divided into 4 Zones – Eastern, Southern, Central and Western. Competition is offered at many levels – within each LSC, within each zone, Senior Nationals and Olympic Trials.

HAC primarily attends meets hosted by teams within the Middle Atlantic LSC.

A swim meet is a fantastic way to chart the improvements that a swimmer has made in each event and stroke. The coaches carefully choose meets they believe will be beneficial for all swimmers. The list of swim meets that HAC plans to attend for each season will be provided at the beginning of the season. This schedule is, however, subject to modification. USA meets are usually held over 2-3 days (Friday, Saturday and Sunday). Friday evenings most often consist of distance events while Saturday and Sunday are divided into AM and PM sessions according to age groups. Each session lasts up to four hours. Swimmers may attend one day or all days of the meet during the sessions assigned to his/her age group. The coaches strongly recommend swimming all sessions. Session assignments differ from meet to meet, and this information will be available to club members as soon as the meet entry is received from the host club.

USAS meets are structured as a series of heats seeded from slowest up to the fastest swimmers. This means a swimmers will be competing against other swimmers of the same ability level in each of his/her races.

Competitive meets have two formats. One is called a timed final format. In this type of meet, the swimmer swims his/her events only one time, and that swim determines his/her final placing in the meet. Most meets are run on a timed final basis. Awards for each event are given to the top six to eight swimmers within each level (A, B & C).

The other format is prelims and final. The preliminary swims are during either the AM or PM session with the objective being to qualify for an evening finals sessions. Depending upon the meet, either the fastest 8 (in an 8-lane pool) or the fastest 16 swimmers return to swim in the evening finals competition. If the fastest 16 swimmers return, the preliminary swimmers in the places 9 – 16 will compete in the consolation finals (consols) while the preliminary swimmers in places 1 – 8 will compete in the championship heat. If a swimmer does not wish to return for the evening session, he/she

may “scratch” the event and not be penalized if the scratch is made within one-half hour of the posting of the preliminary results. Finals provide the swimmer with an opportunity for improvement. At a prelims/finals meet, awards are given to those swimmers who participated in the championship heat.

Time Standards

USAS has established a system of time standards for each event that classify a swimmer as an A, B, or C level swimmer. The A level is further divided. The higher level A times are needed to qualify for meets like zones and sectional. Beyond the AAAA level are Senior National and Olympic Trial qualifying times.

The system of time standards can help with setting goals as a swimmer can work toward getting the times needed in each event to move to the next level throughout a season or while they are in a particular age group.

Some meets require time standards in order to compete. These time standards are defined in the meet information that host teams provide. It is important to read the specific requirements for each meet. New USA swimmers, in particular, need to look for A/B/C meets. First-time entrants into USA Swimming events are entered with no time (NT). Some meets require specific qualifying times. Only USA times may be used to enter meets (league or high school times may not be used). HAC maintains a computer database form meet results of each swimmer’s best USA times. This is used for all subsequent meet entries. Our organization will not falsify times in order to enter a meet.

Philosophy of Competition

The HAC coaches select meets for the team to attend. The meet selection has been designed to give each swimmer the opportunity to measure his/her progress. Participation in meets is completely voluntary. However, all members are encouraged to participate in at least one meet per month. The meet schedule is designed with this objective in mind. In some cases, meets are not scheduled exactly one month apart.

The coaching staff reserves the right to make the final decision concerning which meets HAC swimmers may attend. The coaching staff must approve any exceptions to the schedule. It is important that all eligible swimmers attend and contribute to the total team effort. HAC will focus on team competition at this level and will place emphasis on team championship meets. A swimmer is expected to attend the highest end-of-season championship meet that he/she has qualified for (in 2+events).

USA vs League

The HAC swim program is structured to develop successful swimmers through competitive opportunities offered through the local league and USA Swimming levels. All members of HAC must commit to attending at least 3 swim meets during the course

of the season. The coaches select USA meets for HAC's USA swimmers to attend that coordinate with its league meet schedule. However, conflicts in the schedules do occur. The coaching staff and organization will support individual swimmers in attending the meet that best meets their needs in reaching end-of-season goals. The coaching staff is always available to assist in decision-making

Meet Sign Up

The "USA Swimming Schedule Checklist" along with a meet schedule will be provided at the beginning of the season to all USA swimmers. Under each date of the meet, write YES if you are planning to attend or NO if you are not attending. This is due back to the coaches one week after distribution. As meet information becomes available from the host team, it will be posted on the Middle Atlantic website, which can be found at <http://www.maswim.org>.

- Click on MA meets are the top menu bar
- Go to the meet of interest and click on the highlighted "meet info". Carefully review the meet information.
- The information is usually in .pdf format so you must have adobe acrobat reader. If necessary, MA has a link to download it.
- If you do not have access to the meet information, a hard copy will be provided upon notification to the USA parent assistant.

The coaches will choose appropriate events to enter for each swimmer for each meet. Swimmer's input is welcome. It is the swimmers' responsibility to notify the coaches in writing of their intentions regarding participation in a swim meet. A final deadline date will be included on each month's calendar in connection with meet entry deadlines. If a change is being made to the swimmer's initial commitment on the USA Swimming Schedule Checklist, it must be made by this deadline.

Meet entries will be posted on pool deck and on the HAC bulletin board after the entries have been forwarded to the meet host. Swimmers can review to see which events they will be swimming in the meet, the days of those events and their entry times for the meet.

Meet Entries

The host team for a meet will assess a charge for each event in which the swimmer is entered. Entry fees for each event are approximately \$3-\$4. If your swimmer is signed up to participate in the meet, he/she will be billed for events. The team sends one check for the entire amount of the HAC entry fees. The treasurer then receives a list of

individual charges, and those charges will be billed to each family's account. Each family is asked to deposit \$75 per swimmer into their HAC accounts to cover meet entry fees. When the account is low in funds, the treasurer will send notification, and another deposit can be made. Keep your account up-to-date.

HAC must prepay meet entry fees regardless of whether the swimmers actually swim in the meet. Therefore, if a swimmer stated that he/she was planning to attend, he/she is responsible for meet entry fees even if there is a change in plans and he/she does not swim in the meet.

Relay Selection and Payment

Relays are included in some meet line-ups and provide a source of excitement for the team. Many times athletes perform better on a relay than in an individual event. Relay scores are double the point value of individual events in the meet. All swimmers must check with the coaching staff at the meet to find out if they are scheduled to compete for HAC on a relay.

The building of a relay team is the sole responsibility of the coaching staff. There are many variables to be considered including the swimmer's fastest time, how well the swimmer has performed at the particular meet in question, how much rest the swimmer has gotten since his/her previous event, the swimmer's ability to perform under pressure and the general attitude and practice attendance of the swimmer. With many factors to consider, it is difficult to predict which four swimmers will perform the best in an upcoming event. Support of the coaching staff in making relay selections is appreciated.

The meet entry fee for a relay team is equally divided among the four swimmers selected for the relay. If any relay swimmer would choose to leave the meet early, thereby prohibiting the relay team from competing, that swimmer will be billed for the entire entry fee for the relay.

“Everything You Always Wanted to Know About A Swim Meet, but Was Afraid to Ask!”

Swim meets are a great family experience! They are a place where the whole family can spend time together. Listed below are some in-depths guidelines designed to help swimmers and parent through their first few swim meets. We have tried to be as specific and as detailed as possible.

Before the Meet Starts:

1. Arrive at the pool at least 15 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins. This time will be listed in the meet information and will be posted on pool deck and on the HAC bulletin board the week of a meet.

2. Upon arrival, find a place to put blankets, swim bags, and chairs. HAC team members try to sit together in one place; so look for familiar faces.
3. Some meets require check-in. Find this location and check-in. This should be the first thing to do when there is appositve check-in. Positive check-ins are usually not the norm. Usually only championship meets or qualifying meets require this. Sign-in sheets are usually located by the computer tables. If this is not done, the swimmer will be scratched from the meet and not be allowed to swim that day. Sign-in sheets typically are taken down one half hour prior to the start of the meet.
4. Once checked-in (if required, the swimmer should make sure he/she knows what events he/she is swimming. Younger swimmers usually write each event number on their hand in ink. This helps him/her remember what events he/she is swimming and what event numbers to listen for.
5. The swimmer now gets his/her cap and goggles and reports to the pool and/or coach for warm-up instructions. It is very important for all swimmers to warm-up with the team. Swimmers' bodies are just like cars on a cold day; they need to get their engines going and warmed-up before they can go all out.
6. After warm-ups, swimmers will go back to the area where they towels are and sit there until their first event is called. This is a good time to go to the bathroom if necessary, get a drink or just get settled in.
7. The meet will usually start about 10 to 15 minutes after the warm-ups are over.
8. According to USA rules (because of insurance requirements), parents are not allowed on deck unless they are serving in an official capacity. Similarly, all questions concerning meet results, an officiating call, or the conduct of the meet should be referred to the coaching staff. They, in turn, will pursue the matter through the proper channels.
9. Heat Sheets. A heat sheet is usually available for sale in the lobby or concession area of the pool. It lists all the swimmers in each event in order of "seed time". When the team entry is sent in, each swimmer and his/her previous best time in that event is provided. If the swimmer is swimming an event for the first time, he/she will be entered as s "no-time" or "NT". A "no-time" swimmer will most likely swim in one of the first heats in the event.

The Meet Starts:

1. Unlike most league meets, USA meets do not have a clerk of course. Swimmers are required to line themselves up for each event. The younger swimmers will get help from the coaching staff. If this is a positive check-in meet and the swimmer misses he/her event, he/she will not be allowed to swim his/her next event.

2. The swimmer swims his/her race.
3. After each swim:
 - a. The swimmer should ask the timer for his/her time.
 - b. The swimmer should then go immediately to the coach, unless otherwise noted by the coach to warm down first after each race. The coach will ask for the time and discuss the swim with the swimmer.
 - c. Generally, the coach follows these guidelines when discussing swims:
 - i. Positive comments or praise
 - ii. Suggestions for improvement
 - iii. More positive comments
4. Things parents can do after each swim:
 - a. A. Tell the swimmer how great they did! The coaching staff will be sure to discuss stroke technique. YOU need to relay how proud you are and what a great job your swimmer did.
 - b. This is a good time for another bathroom break or snack break.
 - c. The swimmer now waits until his next event is called and starts the procedure all over again.
5. When a swimmer has completed all of his/her events, he/she is free to go home. Make sure, however, that he/she checks with the coach before leaving to confirm that he/she is not included on a relay team. It is not fair to other swimmers who may have stayed to swim on a relay for which your swimmer is expected to be a member, and she/he is not here. If you leave before swimming an assigned relay, you will be responsible for the entire entry fee for the relay.

What Happens if Your Child has a Disappointing Swim?

If your child has a poor race and comes out of it feeling bad, talk about the good things he/she did. Do not talk about the negative things. If your child comes up to you and says, "that was a bad race; don't tell me it wasn't" remember there is nothing wrong with a swimmer negatively evaluating a race. The important thing is that the child doesn't dwell on it. Parents should move the swimmer to something good. "All right, you have had a bad race. How do you think you can do better the next time?" Immediately start talking about the positive things.

What to Take to the Meets:

1. Most important: team swim suit, team swim cap and goggles. Aqua Blades and Fast Skins are reserved for championship meets, unless otherwise noted by the coaches. If you do not have team suit, you do not swim. If you do not have a team cap the coaches most likely will have some available for purchase. Parent should check their swimmers bags to be sure they have these important items before leaving the house.
2. Baby or talcum powder to “dust” the inside of the swim cap. This helps preserve the cap and makes it easier to put on.
3. Something to sit on. Example: sleeping bag, old blanket, beach chair, etc. The swimmer will be spending a lot of time on it between events.
4. Towels. Realize that the swimmer will be there for a while, so pack at least two.
5. Sweat Suit: Bring at least one. It may get soggy and wet. A nylon warm-up is a good alternative.
6. T-shirts: two or three because they will get wet.
7. Games: travel games, coloring books, books, anything to pass time.
8. Food: Each swimmer is usually allowed to bring a small cooker on the pool deck. It is better to bring snacks even though there usually is a concession stand at the meet. Stay away from junk food, especially candy. Drink suggestions include Hi-C, fruit juice, Gatorade. Snack suggestions include granola bars, fruits, yogurt, cereal, and sandwiches.

After attending one or two meets, this procedure will become very routine. Please do not hesitate to ask any parent on our team for help or information. These meets are a lot of fun for the swimmer! He/she gets to visit with friends, play games and meet kids from other teams. He/she also gets to “race” and track improvement as a result of all the hard work at practice.

Special Parent Note:

The pool area is usually VERY warm. Dress appropriately. Nothing is worse than being hot at a swim meet. It makes the time pass very slowly. At some meets, the parents are allowed to sit with the swimmers in a gym or staging area. Feel free to bring folding chairs.

Parent Volunteers:

Many host teams usually look for parent volunteers to time at various sessions during the meet. Some meets require that we provide timers or the meet will not start. We will have a designated parent coordinate our volunteers for such meets. The same parent should not be expected to time at every meet; every parent should donate some time. This also gives parents an opportunity to become an active participant in their child's swimming. Thanks for your understanding regarding this matter.

HAC's USA Swimming Policies

Registration for USA Swimming:

Registration fees are the responsibility of the swimmer and are payable to HAC. HAC will send all registrations for the team to Middle Atlantic.

Each swimmer will also be assessed an annual surcharge for cover expenses for administration, coaching and extra practice time associated with USA Swimming. Extra practice time is defined as USA Saturday practices and practices to prepare for USA championship meets when league swimming is over. This surcharge will be determined by the Board of Directors.

Gold Level swimmers are a part of USAS, and their fees are all inclusive.

Local Meets:

HAC will attempt to supply a coach at a meet with five or more HAC participants. Additional coaches will be at the discretion of the HAC head coach.

HAC will attempt to supply a coach at end of season championship meets including Age Group Championships and BB/C Championships.

All USA swimmers will be required to meet associated expenses on their own. There are no expenses that HAC will cover.

Swimmers are registered as year-round members of USA swimming in the Fall. If a swimmer is registering for the first time, the registration will be in effect from September of the current year through December of the following year.

Sectionals and/or National Meets;

Food expense is the responsibility of the swimmer.

If a swimmer is eligible, a request will be made to MA for Travel Assistance Funds. The swimmer must submit receipts to HAC for transportation (present IRS approved standard mileage rate and tolls, if driving) and lodging. Any amount received by HAC from MA

will be used toward reimbursement of the swimmer's transportation and lodging expenses.

Entry fees for events in which the swimmer has qualifying times are covered by HAC.

Expenses for time trials are the responsibility of the swimmer.