

# SHRA SWIM PARENT HANDBOOK

## Welcome to the Sleepy Hollow Rec Assoc (SHRA) Swim Team!

Joining a new sport can be a confusing and somewhat frustrating time for a parent. We understand how you feel, since each of us has been in your shoes. This handbook is designed to answer many frequently-asked questions, but please don't hesitate to contact the team reps, coaches, or even another parent who has been on the team before if you have more questions.

We're here to help you!

### Important contacts:

Team reps - Rachel Mosher-Williams and Jamie Sample, [swimrep@shrasharks.org](mailto:swimrep@shrasharks.org)  
Coaches – Dave Lassiter, Maggie Crotty, Evelyn Kirby, Daytona Kassy, [swimteam@shrasharks.org](mailto:swimteam@shrasharks.org)

## Things you need to know right away

**We are in Division 9.** It changes every year. We moved up one division this year so our meets will be exciting and quite competitive!

### The NVSL Handbook is a good resource.

If you would like to receive a copy of the 2017 NVSL Handbook, please let us know. It includes information on everything from the names and addresses of all of the pools in the League, by division, to the League records in each event, to all of the rules that govern the swim meets. Please review the handbook and pay particular attention to the Standards of Conduct on page ii. NVSL is very serious about these. The handbook, along with a ton of other information, is available on the NVSL website at [mynvsl.com](http://mynvsl.com).

### What time is practice?

There is a general guideline for practice times based on age, but the coaches might move your child to a different time based on ability. The usual times are:

Through June 23rd – Afternoon practices (in time order)

13-18 years old (“seniors”): 3:45-4:45 pm, M-F

9-12 years old: 4:45-5:45 pm, M-F

8 and under: 5:45-6:30 pm, M-F

Minnows: 6:45-7:15 pm, M-F

June 26<sup>th</sup>-July 28<sup>th</sup> – Morning practices (in time order)

13-8 years old (“seniors”): 7:30-9:00 am, M-F

9-12 years old: - 9:00-10:15 am, M-F

8 and under: 10:15-11:00 am, M-F

Minnows: 11:00-11:30, M-F

### Are the swimmers expected at all practices?

Yes, please! While we understand that the end of the school year is busy and that people get sick or things come up during the summer, it is VERY important that your child attend practice every day. The season is short and the coaches will work on a lot during those 5-6 weeks. Please help us emphasize this expectation with your kids.

### **What are Minnows?**

Minnows is a program to help young swimmers who have had lessons and are comfortable in the water but need more instruction before joining their age-group practice. Minnows are instructed by a coach or a volunteer age group swimmer and work individually or in a small group with this instructor.

Typically minnows start off on a kickboard and progress toward freestyle. Some of the skills taught include:

- Kicking on front with face in the water
- Kicking on back in a streamline position
- Diving into the water
- Basic freestyle and backstroke

Participants also begin to learn stroke technique and may be able to compete in developmental meets (B meets) on Monday nights. Once the Minnow has completed the unassisted swim he or she may join their age group practice.

### **What equipment does my swimmer need?**

**Practice suit** – many swim stores sell discontinued or solid color suits for a reduced price on a rack called “practice suits”. Having a suit to use at practice rather than the team suit will prolong the life of your team suit. Always rinse suits in tap water after being in the pool to get rid of damaging chlorine.

**Fins** – swim fins are newly-required this year. They are important to the swimmers’ training and help them improve both speed and technique. Fins can be purchased from Coach Dave in between practices (\$25/pair), during the team suit try-on (see below), or at a local swim shop, such as Sport Fair on Lee Highway in Arlington.

**Team suit** – a new team suit is selected every two years. Sizing for suits and sales usually take place during one of the first practices and a few times during the early season. **This year, suit try-on is June 7<sup>th</sup> during afternoon practices.** Be sure to write your name in it. It isn’t mandatory to get a team suit, but is highly recommended.

**Team shirt** – A team shirt is given to each swimmer before picture day. Please write names on the neck when distributed to make it easy to identify if left behind at meets or sitting on our own pool deck. Happens alllll the time.

**Goggles** – These are a must for the comfort of your swimmer’s eyes. Buy a decent pair – tinted is ideal - and write your swimmer’s name on them. A good pair of goggles can be purchased at several swim shops, like Sport Fair in Arlington or Aardvark Swim and Sport in Chantilly. Your swimmer can even be fitted for the goggles at these stores.

**Cap** – a necessity for girls and boys with longer hair at every practice. Each swimmer will be given a SHRA Cap to be worn during practices and required to wear during meets. Swimmers are not supposed to wear any team caps other than the SHRA team cap at meets. It can have color or design without words, but it’s generally preferred that the swimmers sport the SHRA cap.

**Towel** – two towels are always a good idea, especially at meets.

**Optional items** – A bag for carrying towels, fins etc. is a good idea. At the beginning of the season, when the air temperature or the water temperature is still cool, sweatshirts and sweatpants are recommended. There are team sweatshirts, sweatpants, and a

variety of other things for sale. Be on the lookout for these at home meets if you are interested.

### **Why do I need to write my swimmer's name in everything?**

You might think your child will recognize his or her own stuff, but team shirts and suits all look alike, and the only way to identify who it belongs to, is by looking for a name. Goggles, caps, and fins often get laid on the pool deck during practice and at the end of practice. Swimmers can only tell which ones are theirs if their name is on it.

### **How does communication with parents happen?**

**E-mail** is the principal means of receiving information about SHRA swim activities. If you are not on the SHRA Swim e-mail list, visit <http://www.shrasharks.org> and look for the "Keep in Touch" Box for instructions. If you are on the list but haven't seen the several emails already sent, make sure you check your spam filter and allow messages from "SHRA-Do Not Reply."

**Swim team bulletin board** - The bulletin board is located outside, between the life guard office and the women's room and has current information on it, as well as meet sheets (explained below) on Thursdays.

**Swim team "mailboxes"** – The plastic file tub located by the front desk will have a file folder for each family. Flyers for upcoming events, ribbons from meets, and any other correspondence can be found here. It is a good idea to check it daily.

### **What should I do if I need to talk to the coach?**

Please wait until practice is over to talk to the coaches. During practice, they are trying to concentrate on working with the swimmers. If you have a general question or unsure who to direct your question to, you might try talking to other parents or the team rep first. If you need to speak with us about your swimmer, you can also email the coaches at [swimteam@shrasharks.org](mailto:swimteam@shrasharks.org).

### **What is a Team Rep?**

The team reps are the liaison between the Northern Virginia Swim League (NVSL) and SHRA. Our team reps attend meetings at the NVSL and represent SHRA at the A meets in an official capacity. A team rep can argue a disqualification (DQ) or dispute a time for a swimmer if the rep thinks it an unfair judgment. Team reps recruit volunteers to "work" the meets as deck officials, timers, scorers, ribbon writers, marshals, concessions, and pool clean-up. They generally make sure the swim season runs smoothly.

## Information about Meets

### Meet etiquette

In addition to being friendly and welcoming to the other teams and always being positive with the swimmers and other team parents, we ask that your kids **stay at the meets until the end**. It is really important for all of the swimmers to support their teammates, even if they are done with their events.

### What is a practice meet?

The first Saturday meet – this year on June 17<sup>th</sup> - is a practice meet, also called “time trials,” where the swimmers can swim two events to get their first times of the year. This gives the swimmer a base time to show progress for the year. It also gives the coaches times to determine who will be swimming in the first A meet the following Saturday. We always swim this meet with our neighbors, Sleepy Hollow Bath and Racquet (SHBR), and alternate who hosts. This year, we are hosting SHBR.

### What is an “A” meet?

An A meet is swum with another team from our division (called a “dual meet”), where points are scored by swimmers and one team emerges the winner. There are 40 individual events and 12 relay events. They are divided into 4 strokes and 5 age groups. Swimmers are chosen to participate in these meets based on their times. Normally, the three swimmers from SHRA with the fastest times in each event compete with the three fastest swimmers from the other team. Each swimmer is limited to two individual events plus relays. Since swimmers go on vacations, to camp, etc., spaces often open up to other swimmers.

### What if we are going to be out of town for a meet?

We will post a grid with all meets and all family names on the swim team bulletin board at the start of the season. PLEASE PLEASE mark down any dates you know your swimmer(s) won't be there. When new things pop up, it is really important for the reps/coaches to know your child can't be there on Saturday, **before Wednesday** of that week. Wednesday is the day the coaches decide who will be swimming that Saturday, and they need to know who will be missing so they can plan the swimmers for each event accordingly. You can email the team reps and we will relay the message to the coaches. A verbal message is hard to remember, so please email [swimteam@shrasharks.org](mailto:swimteam@shrasharks.org).

### How can I find out if my child is swimming in an A meet?

The preliminary meet sheet is always posted by Thursday morning, and you should always check to see if your child is on it. The meet sheets are physically posted at the pool, on the swim team bulletin board; they are posted online, in the “Meet Docs” section of the SHRA website, at <http://shrasharks.org/teams/swim-team/>; and they are usually distributed via email by the team reps to all families as well.

Too often, we have no swimmer in the lane because they didn't check the meet sheet and didn't know they needed to be there. Don't assume your child won't be swimming just because there are other faster swimmers on the team. There are three lanes to fill for every event, and sometimes, as mentioned above, people are not available for a meet.

### But what is a Meet Sheet?

For Saturday A meets, a meet sheet, listing the six swimmers for each event, is generated. Events are seeded with the fastest two swimmers in lanes 3 and 4, the next

fastest in 2 and 5, and the next fastest in 1 and 6. At the meet itself, the meet sheet is available for purchase as a program. The cost is usually \$1.00.

**Should I be disappointed if my child doesn't swim in the A meets?**

Absolutely not. Swimming success comes with getting a better time than the last time you swam that race, and knowing that you worked hard to achieve a better time.

**What is a B meet?**

Also called "developmental meets," B meets take place on Monday evenings with another team. They are aimed at those who are not yet ready for A meets. There are no points scored and no winner of the meet, but ribbons are awarded to all swimmers who participate.

**Can everyone swim in a B meet?**

The first B meet of the season is open to everyone and swimmers are encouraged to participate since it is another opportunity to get times before the first A meet. Experienced swimmers usually swim the strokes that they didn't get a time in at the practice meet, but younger swimmers may swim the same stroke they did at the practice meet. Swimmers may swim 2 strokes plus the Individual Medley at a B meet. Once a swimmer wins 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> place in a stroke at an A meet, he/she is not allowed to swim that stroke at a B meet that Monday.

**What is the reason for this rule?**

If faster swimmers continue to swim in the B meets (even unofficially), the developing swimmers never have the satisfaction of winning an event. Because we have almost two hundred swimmers on the team, it also helps keep B meets to a reasonable length.

**How do the swimmers indicate what they will swim in the B meets?**

There is a file box by the information folders by the front desk with yellow cards. Swimmers or their parents should fill out a card for each event they want to swim and file it under the correct stroke, gender, and age in the box. If you forget, the coaches will fill out a card for you, but please try not to let this happen, since we have over 150 swimmers on the team and the coaches could possibly fill out 300 cards instead of coaching swimmers on their strokes or watching them swim.

**What should my child do to have a successful swim meet?**

During the season, healthy eating and lots of water are a good idea. The night before a meet, they can eat a dinner higher in carbohydrates like pasta or rice to store energy for the next day.

The morning of the meet, they should eat before coming to the pool, and if snacks are needed, pack bagels, granola bars, or fruit.

Pack two towels, two pairs of goggles and two caps for every meet. If it is cold, pack a sweatshirt and sweat pants to keep warm between races.

Arrive at least 10 minutes before warm-ups are scheduled to begin.

Swimmers should stay in the team area. After a race, the swimmer should go talk to the coach before going to visit Mom and Dad.

Parents should let the coaches work with the swimmers, and not interrupt them during a meet. If a parent has a question about their child's performance, they should talk to the coach after the meet.

Always be positive when talking to your swimmer. Be encouraging, not discouraging.

### **What time do we go to the meets?**

Always check the bulletin board to be certain, but a general rule of thumb is:

- **Home B meet** – warm up begins at SHRA at 5:00 pm.
- **Away B meet** – meet at SHRA at 5:00 pm (can vary depending on the distance to the other pool), travel to other pool; warm up at 5:30.
- **Home A meet** – warm up begins at SHRA at 8:00 am.
- **Away A meet** – meet at SHRA at 7:30 am (can vary depending on the distance to the other pool) to caravan together to the other pool; warm ups start at 8:30.

### **What is a relay carnival? How about All Star Relays?**

The six teams in the division meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday evening of the season – this year July 12<sup>th</sup> - to swim a meet consisting of only relays. Swimmers are chosen and notified for this meet by the coaches. The top 18 times in the NVSL for each event go on to swim at the All Star Relay Carnival the following Wednesday. SHRA is hosting the relay carnival this year.

### **What is an IM Carnival?**

We participate in the Todd Potts Memorial meet at Forest Hollow Pool. All swimmers swim a 100 Individual Medley - one length of the pool of each of the four strokes in the following order: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle. This is a scored meet. Times are used to qualify swimmers who are 9 years old and up for Divisionals, but 8 and unders are welcome to participate.

### **What is the Woodley Mini Meet?**

We participate in the Woodley Mini Meet, which is a “no faster than” meet held for 10 and unders. A “no faster time” meet means all of the swimmer have not swum a time than the cap. For example, if the cap is 20.00 seconds, a swimmer with an official time of 18.71 cannot be entered, though a time of 20.01 would be allowed. This meet is held in the later portion of the season and they give out great ribbons. Talk to a swimmer who has done this meet and they always remember the ribbons.

### **What are Divisionals? Individual All-Stars?**

On the last Saturday in July (this year, it is July 25<sup>th</sup>), the six teams in the division send their two fastest swimmers in each event to compete in the Divisional Championships. Each swimmer is only allowed to swim in two events, and the coaches will help the swimmers decide by Monday of divisionals week which events to select. This means that there are often places for other swimmers who are not the top two, and sometimes at the seeding meeting, if another team has only one swimmer competing, it leaves a spot for the next fastest swimmer in the division.

There are two heats in each event (12 possible swimmers), and seeding is done by using the swimmer’s fastest recorded time at an A meet during the season. If a swimmer is competing in Divisionals, he/she is expected to attend practice during that week. Swimmers not participating can still practice with the team.

Awards for the meet are plaques for 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> place and ribbons for 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> place. The top 18 times in the NVSL recorded at Divisionals go on to compete against each other at the All Star Individual Championships on the following Saturday. If a swimmer is going to swim in the All Star meet, he/she will need to attend practice for an extra week. During this week, everyone practices together at 9:00 am. This practice time is only for those who qualify for Individual All Stars.

### **Should I come to a meet I'm not swimming in?**

It is always nice to have non-swimming team members there to help cheer, and older swimmers are encouraged to attend B meets to help cheer on the younger, newer swimmers. Swimmers not competing in A meets may enjoy coming to the meet to see what it is like.

Sometimes opportunities to swim in A meets open at the last minute because of illness or a last minute scratch. Always check with the coaches to find out if they would like your swimmer to be available as an alternate.

### **What is a DQ or being DQ'd?**

Being disqualified (DQ) means that the swimmer did something that broke a rule for the legal execution of the stroke. This often happens as swimmers learn the finer points of a new stroke, and it is not a life-shattering event, merely a learning experience. All swimmers (even Olympic athletes) have DQ'd many times in their lives, but they learned how to be successful at the stroke as a result.

## **The NVSL**

### **What is the NVSL?**

The Northern Virginia Swim League (NVSL) was founded in 1956, and is made up of over 100 teams divided into 18 divisions. It is the oldest and largest summer swimming league in the country with over 10,000 swimmers. The NVSL issues the rules and schedule by which we operate our swim team. Lots of info is available on the website: [mynvsl.com](http://mynvsl.com).

### **Who are all the people dressed in white shirts and blue shorts?**

These are all of the officials running the meet. Though many of them are trained, they are also VOLUNTEERS. It takes more than 40 parents to run each meet! Usually these duties are divided between the two teams.

**Referee** (provided by the home team) – The referee is the chief official of the meet. S/he is responsible for conducting the meet and is the final authority on interpretation and enforcement of all rules. S/he signals the start of each race by blowing a whistle, at which time everyone becomes quiet.

**Starter** (provided by the home team) – The starter is responsible for making sure all the swimmers get a fair start. At the beginning of each race, s/he announces the stroke and the distance of the race, instructs them to “take your mark,” and once the swimmers are ready and still, s/he starts the race.

**Clerk of Course** (one from each team) – These two people are the “gatekeepers” for the swimmers. They get the swimmers lined up in the correct order for each race in a special area.

**Stroke and Turn Judges** (two from each team) – The officials make sure that each swimmer swims in accordance with the rules for that stroke. If a swimmer does not, the stroke and turn judge records the error on a disqualification (DQ) slip and gives it to the referee for review. The DQ slip then goes to the team rep.

**Relay Take-off Judges** (four from each team) – During relays, these officials are positioned at each end of the pool to make sure each swimmer touches the wall before the next swimmer leaves the pool deck.

**Timers** (nine from each team) – Each lane has three officials with stopwatches. Each timer starts their stopwatch at the beginning of the race and stops it when the swimmer touches the wall. The three times are then recorded on the swimmer's card, the fastest and slowest times are thrown out, and the middle time becomes the official time recorded for the swimmer.

**Table Workers** (each team provides several, but the head table worker is from the home team) – The table workers put time cards in place order, check and document team records, verify the official score coming from the computer print-out, and prepare the ribbons.

**Marshals** (one from each team) – The marshals help direct teams to their team areas, keep spectators off the pool deck, and maintain order during the meet. The marshal has the authority to reprimand individuals engaging in unsafe or unsportsmanlike behavior.

**Announcer** (provided by the home team) – The announcer maintains the tempo of the meet by announcing events, swimmers in the event, and results of the events.

**Data coordinator** (provided by the home team) – The data coordinator is in charge of all swim team information and enters the official times of each swimmer in each event, to produce the official scores for each event and the entire meet. She/he has every swimmer in the database and enters all of the official times from every meet, which is then turned in to NVSL for the official records. S/he also provides the coaches with information on everyone's time in each event so they can decide who will swim in the meets, personal best times, new records, prints out the cards for the meets, and prints out the stickers for the back of the ribbons.

**Team Rep** – The team rep is the meet manager and watches the meet for any unfair judgment during the meet. It is the team rep's responsibility to protest anything they feel is unfair.

### **How can I become an official?**

Most positions just require you to sign up! We are usually in need of table workers, marshals, and timers for each meet so please participate! We use SignUp Genius to coordinate volunteers for each A and B meet so please ensure that your spam filter won't grab these emails and sign up as soon as you can after the email comes to you.

Referees, starters, and stroke and turn judges require training sessions with the NVSL. Officials Clinics are held in late May and early June. If you are interested in becoming a trained official, let the team rep know before the season starts, if possible, so you can find out the training schedule.

It's often hardest to find stroke and turn judges so please consider getting certified in one of the remaining trainings if you haven't already – please see the schedule on the front page of the NVSL website for dates and locations.

## **Fun stuff**

**What are all the social events on the calendar?**



Most of the social events on the calendar are optional, but they are part of what makes being on the swim team fun:

**Hot Dogs after the Time Trials on June 18** – Free hot dogs to swim team members and their families are available after the time trials with SHBR. We are visiting this year so please plan to bring cookies or other dessert to donate to the cookout.

**Picture Day** – At the beginning of the season – this year it will be July 13<sup>th</sup> - a picture of the team as well as optional pictures of individual swimmers are taken by a professional photographer.

**Pasta Dinner** – One Friday night during the season, spaghetti and other pasta dishes, plus salad and bread make a great dinner at the pool for team members and their families.

**Pep Rally** - Friday nights at 6:00, we will have a Pep Rally. All swimmers are required to attend to build team spirit and get everyone ready for the A meet the next morning. Pep Rallies typically have a theme and prizes may be awarded to the most spirited Swimmer.

**Senior lock in** - One night during the season, the Swimmers, Divers and Tennis team members over the age of 13 will have the opportunity to stay overnight at the pool, with activities such as a movie marathon, corn hole, moon bounces, making s'mores, and much much more. This is a good time for the Senior swimmers to bond as a group, and get a cool commemorative T shirt, as well try to stay up all night long. Zzzzzzzzzzz!!! This event will be supervised by adults, including the coaches, who do stay up all night.

**End of Season Banquet** - on the Sunday after Divisionals, we host our annual End-of-Season Banquet where Swimmers, Divers, and Tennis Teams come together for awards and recognition. There is typically a potluck dinner beforehand.

### **Planning for next year**

**Is the calendar the same every year so I can plan camp week, vacations, etc.?**

The exact dates change every year, but the structure is the same. Individual All Stars is always the first Saturday in August. Count back one week to the last Saturday in July for Divisionals. The five Saturdays prior to that are the five A meets. Count forward three Wednesdays after the first A meet to get the date for the Relay Carnival, and one week after that for the All Star Relay Carnival. The practice meet or "time trials" with SHBR is always the Saturday before the first A meet.

Keep an eye on the bulletin board between the lifeguard office and women's room. This may answer a lot of your questions...

## **Have a great summer season!**