

Castor Tritons Summer Swim Club - Parent Handbook

The Castor Triton Summer Swim Club is a competitive swim club participating in summer swimming through the ASSA. We have a fun, fairly intensive training season from May to early August, finishing our season at ASSA provincials. The swimmers are coached in stroke improvement, starts and turns, endurance, team participation, athletic discipline, meet procedures and all around fitness. Triton swimmers are encouraged to participate in swim meets.

Club Philosophy

The focus of the club is to develop swimmers with excellent swimming technique, traits of good sportsmanship, team spirit and to create a positive environment for friendships to develop between swimmers. We want to expose all the swimmers to the complete range of experiences that summer swimming has to offer. The Club provides a positive atmosphere that focuses on personal growth. We try to emphasize effort and improvement and not winning. Remember, not every swimmer becomes a record holder but everyone gains from their swimming experience.

Summer Swimming

The sport of swimming has many benefits among which are the people you and your child will meet. The camaraderie among swimmers is unique; many swimming buddies become lifelong friends.

In addition to being around fine people, swimming provides one of the most beneficial forms of exercise for cardiovascular and overall fitness. This exercise can be enjoyed throughout one's life.

Possibly the greatest benefits of participating in an organized swim program are the life skills your child will develop. These skills include time management, self-discipline and sportsmanship. Your child will reap the benefits of swimming long after his/her participation ends.

Season

The summer swim season runs from May long weekend until the second or third week of August. The last practice for most swimmers will be the Thursday before Regionals. The practice sessions after Regionals are generally only for those who qualify for Provincials.

The Executive and Members

The Executives are a group of elected volunteers who run the club on a day to day basis. They are all unpaid and many put in very long hours on your behalf. They pay the bills, hire the coaches, negotiate practice times, work with the ASSA and Region D, organize our swim meets, etc. Our executive normally consists of a president, vice-president, past-president, secretary, treasurer, registrar and several directors who coordinate fund-raising, newsletters, training for officials and more. The club exists for the swimmers; our competitive members, but it is all the parents and guardians; the working members, who keep things running.

Communication

Communication in any organization is extremely important, and the Tritons work by electronic e-mails and the use of the bulletin boards and signup sheets at the Castor pool. We hope to have a fully functional and interactive website available for the 2013. If you have any concerns, comments,

suggestions etc please approach our club president or any member of the executive and they will be happy to assist .

Please try to remember the executive is running the club for the benefit of all present and future swimmers and must follow ASSA rules and procedures.

The Coaches

The head coach or coaches, and all assistant coaches are the paid workers of the club. They are hired by a three person coach committee of the executive during the off-season and report directly to the club president during the season. They are generally pre or post-secondary students that have been competitive swimmers themselves right up to the top levels in amateur sport. Some may work as lifeguards and swim lesson coaches year round. In addition to their experience as swimmers, they are required and have taken considerable training as competitive swimming coaches. The ASSA and the Tritons club requires coach certification, police background checks, and a variety safety considerations for our coaches.

The Castor Tritons also have a coaches code of conduct that all coaches are required to sign and adhere to for each season.

We sometimes have junior coaches helping out during the younger swimmers practice. These are usually senior swimmers who have an interest in coaching and volunteer their time.

Practice Etiquette

The coaches really do like to talk to parents. Don't hesitate to ask them questions or ask for help. Don't forget though – they are working on deck during practices and are concentrating on your swimmer's progress. Please do not interrupt them during practice times. The coaches like to see swimmers arrive about 15 minutes before the official practice time for a dry land warm-up. Warm-ups before a practice keep injuries to a minimum and increase flexibility and strength.

Equipment – What they'll need

Competition Suit

A team racing suit is recommended but not mandatory for competition. Suits need to be ordered well in advance and are often ordered when registering. To promote team spirit, swim club members will be encouraged to wear their club suit to swim meets.

It is highly recommended that swimmers do not wear their competition suit to practice. As swimsuits deteriorate rapidly with daily use, swimmers are encouraged to wear training suits to train in; therefore maintaining the quality and appearance of their competition suits for meets.

After each use, suits should thoroughly rinsed with cool tap water. Suits can be washed using mild detergent and hung to dry. Avoid using a hot dryer to dry suits.

Caps

Goggles

Goggles are worn by swimmers during practices and competition to enhance vision and protect their eyes from the effects of chemicals in the water. Goggles come in many shapes and sizes to fit different shapes and sizes of faces and eyes. When purchasing goggles, have the swimmer try them on to ensure a tight, sealed fit.

Goggles are highly recommended, especially in practice as swimmers without goggles often cannot fulfill the practice or disrupt practices due to the strain put on the eyes.

Team Clothing

Team apparel is available to be ordered and is important when building team spirit. A well dressed and matching team looks very sharp at the swim meets and helps lost swimmers find their teammates.

Towel

After getting wet it is important to dry off. A thick, large beach towel is usually preferred by swimmers. A minimum of two towels is recommended for swim meets.

Sports Bag

A sports bag can be carried on deck. Leave all valuables at home or in a locked vehicle! Clearly label all clothing and equipment with your child's name.

Swim Meets

Competition is designed to be a learning experience. By implementing what has been learned in practice, the swimmers test themselves against the clock to see how they are improving. Competition is the one true measure of improvement. Without the improvement at competition, practices can be very tedious to the swimmers. The improvement may be completing the first tumble turn to take five seconds off the race time.

Swimmers are encouraged to attend meets when possible. All swimmers are requested to attend our own club's meet and as many as we can for the regional meet in early August. Swimmers who qualify for Provincials must go. Swimmers qualify for Provincials by obtaining a first or second place at Regionals.

Meets are a chance for swimmers to try out their skills and for the new and youngest swimmers, a chance to finish the race and beat their time. Swim meets take a bit of getting used to for both swimmers and parents. Meets are an all day commitment but are a lot of fun. Warm-ups are usually held about 7:00 a.m. although at large meets warm-ups can be as early as 6:30 a.m. Races start about 8:00 a.m. Getting to warm-up can be quite a challenge, especially for the late-risers. Warm-ups are absolutely essential though. Warming up before a meet gives the swimmers a chance to go over their strokes in a pool they are not accustomed to. Every pool is different in temperature, depth, blocks, lane ropes, backstroke flags, lighting, etc. In addition, muscles need to be loosened and warmed up for the coming races. The coaches expect all swimmers to show up to warm-ups. Research has shown that even if you do not swim your race for two or three hours, there is still a great benefit in warm-ups.

During a meet, competitors are usually allowed to swim up to 4 individual events and 2 relays. The events they swim are up to the coach's but can be negotiated. Between events, the swimmers get to spend most of a whole day with other swimmers, lounging in the team area and generally relaxing. Parents get to do much of the same kinds of things and a good time is had by all.

Relays are really fun for swimmers. There are 4 on a team (usually from the same age group but not always), swimming 2 lengths each. Relays are normally swum in the afternoon. If you intend to leave after the heats, please notify the coaches as early as possible because they make the relay teams first thing in the morning and may be counting on your swimmer to participate.

At meets, the coaches like the swimmers to visit their table /booth or designated "pre race talk" or post race talk area. This provides a chance for positive last minute encouragement, consolations, feedback and coaching tips.

Parent tips for swim meets:

Be prepared to spend most of your day at these meets.

Food, healthy snacks, sports beverages and especially water are important. Often there are concession facilities available at meets serving homemade meals as well.

Bring lawn chairs, sleeping bags, mattresses, lots of towels, extra goggles and books or electronic games and music devices if so desired for your swimmer.

Some meets have outdoor team camp areas so tents are encouraged for these meets, and many parents bring their RV's as well.

For outdoor pool meets, waterproof sunscreen is required for swimmers.

Meet Procedures

As soon as the swimmers arrive at the pool, they must check in with the coach.

Get prepared for and do warm up

Check in with coach before and after EVERY RACE.

Report to your coach before leaving the pool area. If an event is missed, the swimmer may be disqualified from the rest of the meet.

The swimmer is responsible for listening for the announcement of their race. You will want to purchase a race program to identify the event number and order of your child's races. You will be listening for the "marshalling" of your specific event number.

Many kids write their event numbers on their arms with marker to be sure they know which ones to marshal for. Our senior swimmers and others within our club will gladly assist the younger ones with marshalling to races, as well as the asst coaches helping out where needed.

What to Watch at the Swim Meet

The Racing Course

The length of the short course pool is 25 meters and the long course pool is 50 meters; almost all summer meets are held at short course pools. The pool is between 5 and 8 lanes.

Events

At most swim meets, swimmers are allowed to participate in a maximum of four individual and two relay races. Events are run for the youngest age group to the oldest age group, alternating girls and boys. At most swim meets, swimmers are usually seeded so that they compete against competitors with similar times.

Freestyle Event

In the freestyle event, the competitor may swim any stroke he or she wishes. The usual stroke used is the front crawl; characterized by the alternate overhand motion of the arms. The freestyle event occurs at 25, 50, 100, 200, 400, 800 and 1500 meter distances.

Backstroke Event

The backstroke begins with swimmer in the water holding onto the block. The feet, including the toes must be under the surface of the water. At the start signal, the swimmer pushes off and swims on his/her back, using alternating motion of arms and the flutter kick. During the turn, the swimmer may turn over to the front, after which a continuous single arm pull may be used to initiate a turn. Once the body has left the back position, there will be no kick or arm pull that is independent of the continuous turning action. At the wall, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back. The backstroke event occurs at 25, 50 and 200 meter distances.

Breaststroke Event

Perhaps one of the most difficult strokes to master; the breaststroke requires simultaneous movements of the arms on the same horizontal plane. The hands are pushed on or under the surface of the water and are brought backward in the propulsive state of the stroke simultaneously. The kick is a simultaneous thrust of the legs called a frog or breaststroke kick. No flutter or dolphin kick is allowed. At each turn, the swimmer must touch the wall with both hands at the same time. The breaststroke event occurs at 25, 50, and 100 meter distances.

Butterfly Event

The most beautiful and physically demanding stroke, the butterfly features the simultaneous overhead stroke of the arms, combined with the dolphin kick. The dolphin kick features both legs moving up and down together. No flutter kicking is allowed. The butterfly was 'born' in the early 1950's as a result of a loophole in the breaststroke rules. The butterfly event occurs at 25, 50 and 100 meters distances.

Individual Medley (IM)

The individual medley commonly referred to as IM features all four competitive strokes. In IM, a swimmer begins with the butterfly, changes to the backstroke after $\frac{1}{4}$ of the race, then the breaststroke for another $\frac{1}{4}$ and finally finishes the last $\frac{1}{4}$ with the freestyle. The IM event occurs at 100 and 200 meter distances. Butter my Back my Breast is Free.

Relays

Four different swimmers of the same sex swim in a relay race. Each swimmer completes $\frac{1}{4}$ of the race distance. Each leg of the relay is governed by the rules of the stroke of that leg of the race. A swimmer is only allowed to swim on one relay team per event. The relay IM event occurs at 100 and 200 meter distance.

Freestyle Relay

All four swimmers swim the freestyle stroke

Medley Relay

All four swimmers are required to follow this stroke order:

Backstroke

Breaststroke

Butterfly

Freestyle (Freestyle = front crawl in medley relay)

The Rules

The technical rules of swimming are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of swimming. Each swimming stroke has specific rules designed to ensure that no swimmer gets an unfair advantage over another swimmer. Trained officials observe the swimmers during each event to ensure compliance with these technical rules.

If a swimmer commits an infraction of the rules, he will be disqualified from the events and he will not receive an official time, nor be eligible for an award in that event.

Disqualification may result from actions such as; not getting to the starting blocks on time, false starting, walking on or pushing off the bottom of the pool, pulling on the lane ropes or un-sportsman-like conduct.

Technical rule violations for each stroke may include among other:

Freestyle The swimmer must touch the wall at each turn and at the finish, no touching the bottom of the pool or pulling along the rope.

Backstroke Turning past the vertical onto the stomach, gliding or kicking into the wall on the turn (the roll to the stomach must be part of a continuous turning action), pushing off the wall on the stomach (not the back) after a turn; not remaining on the back while swimming turning onto the stomach before the finish.

Butterfly Alternating movement of the arms and legs; pushing the arms forward under the water instead of over the water surface (underwater recovery; a breaststroke style of kick) touching with only one hand at turns or finish.

Breaststroke An illegal kick such as a flutter (freestyle) or dolphin (butterfly) kick or scissor (side stroke) kick; shoulder not level; alternating movements of the arms; taking two arm strokes or two leg kicks while head is under water; touching with only one hand at the turns or finish. Breaststroke is a particularly difficult stroke to master. Completing a breaststroke event without a DQ is a goal some swimmers have worked on for an entire season and achieving that goal is just as important as winning a race; if not more so!

DQ (disqualification)

DQ's or disqualifications happen sooner or later to every swimmer. This is no big deal. Even the coaches have been DQ'd and this knowledge often helps swimmers deal with it. Most swimmers will be upset when DQ'd but a positive attitude from parents will help them to learn from the mistake. Stroke and Turn Judges, the Referee and the Starter can all DQ swimmers for reasons ranging from false starts to swimming the wrong stroke. Officials don't like to DQ swimmers and are kind about it. It's better to correct a problem early than to let a bad habit develop. There are no DQ's for "6 yrs and under" events.

On the subject of DQ's there are some definite and very important protocols for parents to be aware of:

Don't ever approach the disqualifying official to question or challenge a DQ. These people are parents just like you. Moreover, disqualifications can only be judged from the position of the disqualifying official. No matter how good your view of the race, you were not in the official's shoes.

If a disqualification is to be questioned, it must be by the rules of swimming and be questioned by the coach. If you are concerned or interested in a DQ, ask the coach about it. If he or she feels there is any reason that the DQ should be overturned, he or she will go to the referee with the inquiry or protest.

Your Role as a Parent

Competitive swimming programs provide many benefits to young athletes such as good sportsmanship, self discipline and time management skills. Competition allows the swimmer to experience success and to learn how to deal with defeat, while becoming healthy and physically fit.

As a parent, your major responsibility is to provide a stable, loving and supportive environment. This positive environment will encourage your child to continue. Show your interest by ensuring your child's attendance at practices and by coming to swim meets.

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

Remember that your child is the swimmer. Children need to establish their own goals and make their own progress towards them. Be careful not to impose your standards and goals.

Try not to overburden your child with winning or achieving best times. Not every swimmer will take time off at every meet. The most important part of your child's swimming experience is that he learns about him or herself while enjoying the support. Feeling good about the effort made is a goal for every meet and practice. This healthy environment encourages learning and fun which will develop a positive self-image within your child.

Let the coach's be the coach.....The best way to help a child achieve goals and reduce the natural fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make a mistake. If your child does make one, remember that they are still learning and that it is the coach's job to correct errors. Our job is to support the efforts of the swimmer and to support the coach's decisions by encouraging swimmers to follow the coach's instructions.

Club Discipline

Swearing, excessive horseplay, teasing, bullying, disregarding coach direction, or any physical retaliation will not be tolerated. The swimmer will be reminded of the rules and if the problem continues the child will be asked to leave the pool area and the parents will be notified of the incident. A second occurrence of misbehavior will result in a term of suspension as determined by the coach and/or swim team board.

Parents are not allowed on the deck unless there is an emergency or during meets or home events requiring volunteers. We encourage parents to participate further in swimming by taking their timer or stroke and turn courses, allowing them to help out at swim meets with on deck officiating.

Lifeguards at the pool have the ultimate authority and pool rules must be obeyed at all times.

Fundraising Initiatives

We encourage parents to assist with our club fundraising initiatives such as our casinos, swimathon, silent auction and swim meet, and any other programs our fundraising chair undertakes. We try to keep swimming affordable for everyone, and keep our registration costs down, and this does make our fundraising that much more important each season.