



Maple Hills Marlins Swim Team Handbook

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Welcome to New Parents

We would like to welcome you to the Maple Hills Marlins Swim Club. The Maple Hills Marlins is a short summer season swim team for children ages 6 to 17 years (or the summer after high school graduation). Our season begins each year in late May and lasts through July with Midlakes Swim League divisional and league championships the final two weekends. Maple Hills Marlins Swim Team is a member of the Midlakes Swim League. We abide by the rules and objectives of Midlakes and seek to provide a competitive swimming environment for young swimmers that is fun and relaxed. We are proud of the accomplishments of our organization and of the recognition and reputation earned by our swimmers, our coaching staff, and our membership, and we welcome you to join us in our commitment.

The Maple Hills Marlins Swim Team offers young swimmers a fun way to perfect their swimming strokes and skills and to build physical fitness while swimming with others of the same age and ability. Although swimming is an individual sport, participating on swim team helps create an enthusiasm for swimming that is hard to achieve by just swimming alone. Swim team promotes team-building skills, self-discipline, friendliness, and sportsmanship among teammates and opponents.

This handbook is designed to assist you and in turn help your child succeed in swimming. Swim meets emphasize fun and personal improvement. They teach that success isn't necessarily winning, but is related to hard work and doing your best. Supporting your child in swimming can be a very rewarding experience. Your child's experience in swimming has to do with your positive support. Please feel free to ask questions of the Board Members, officials and fellow parents. We all have the same goal: to provide your child with the best possible experience in swimming.

-Maple Hills Marlins Swim Team Board of Directors

Statement of Purpose and Philosophy

The community of Maple Hills encompasses approximately 400 families. The center of this community is the community park, with the adjacent swimming pool. Supported through the efforts of the community each summer, the park and pool are the gathering place for family and friends. The summer youth swim team is one of the most popular gatherings for this community and a source of pride. For two months each summer, about 125 boys and girls between the ages of 6 to 17 (or the summer after graduation) work hard in order to represent their families and friends in friendly competition with other pools in the immediate vicinity. Each Tuesday and Thursday will find these hard-working kids engaged in the split-second, heart-pounding exertion of competitive swimming. On the pool deck the deafening roar of neighbors, families, and teammates offer support and encouragement for everyone to exceed their personal best and add to the team's success. The end results are exuberant youth, and proud parents, relatives, and neighbors.

Members of this community started the Maple Hills Swim Team more than 30 years ago. Through the years it has helped develop literally hundreds of community-minded citizens with strong character and a sense of worth that places them far ahead of their peers. The common thread is the effort that they extended as part of the swim team and community. Development of a sense of accomplishment that can be shared with their friends, teammates, and coaches will always remain with them and extend into other endeavors. The swim team is a significant source of community-based spirit. It is one of the things that makes this community stand together and realize how important it is to share time, thoughts, and efforts with those nearby.

It is the declared goal of our team that the youth of this community will benefit through the building of character, pride, self-confidence, community spirit, a sense of accomplishment, and the feeling of belonging. These goals will be reached through the competitive sport of swimming. Each team member will develop a competitive spirit, make and meet attainable goals, and increase their level of physical conditioning. They will develop the ability to work with other children toward a common goal.

The families of each of the team members will also benefit from the swim team. Through its volunteer program, each family member becomes involved in the operation of the team and its meets. Social and organizational gatherings throughout the year bring families, friends, and neighbors together and provide a wholesome atmosphere for our youth, in and out of the pool.

Team Eligibility

To compete for the Maple Hills Marlins, a swimmer:

- Must be at least 6 years old (or finishing Kindergarten);
- Must be no older than 17 or in their first summer after high school graduation;
- Must be able to swim 25 yards one length of the pool (training time is afforded to the youngest of swimmers to accomplish this goal); and
- Must have paid registration and any other fees.

Communication of Team Information

The Marlins website is the primary source for all team information. Visit it often at <http://marlins.maplehills.org/main.html>. Beginning in March, registration information and preliminary dates are posted on the website front page. Registration forms and the team sweats order form can be found on the Forms page. A newsletter with the schedule and all other season-specific information is posted on the website early in May on the Newsletter page. Along with the website, this newsletter is the primary means of general communication within the club. The website pages are: Newsletter, Forms, Schedule, Meet Results, Records and Awards, Board Members, and Team Handbook. There are also links to Midlakes and to Swim Clubs and Addresses. The website also contains an e-mail link for communicating with the coaches about swimmer absences, etc. (see Communicating with Coaches below).

Team information may also be communicated in person at the team swim suit fitting in early May and/or at an all-parent meeting. Subsequent newsletters, postings on the team bulletin board at the pool, group e-mails, and fliers also may be used to disseminate important information.

Board of Directors

The Marlins Board of Directors meets before, during, and after the season and you are welcome to attend the meetings. Our club holds a general membership meeting in early fall (usually October) at which time the annual budget is presented for approval, fundraisers for the following year are discussed, our coaching staff is looked at for revisions if necessary, and the next year's swimming season is outlined. Current Board members and committee chairs are listed on the Maple Hills Marlins website on the Board Members page.

Roles and Responsibilities

Swimmers' Responsibilities

The Maple Hills Marlins wants every child to feel successful and good about their swimming experience. We do have certain expectations and responsibilities for each swimmer. Please take a moment with your swimmer and have them read this part of the handbook. Maple Hills Marlins are expected to:

1. Demonstrate good sportsmanship;
2. Respect the property and facilities of others as well as those of our club;
3. Remember that all swimmers in the club are part of your team;
4. Take all club information home;
5. Help with fundraising activities;
6. Be on time for workouts and meets;
7. Use common courtesy and clean language; and
8. Exercise good behavior at all club functions.

At swim meets, swimmers are also advised to:

- Rest between events,
- Drink lots of water or juice,
- Pay attention for your events,
- Cheer for your teammates,
- Demonstrate good personal conduct,
- Leave your area neat and clean,
- Wear team caps, and
- Wear team suits and sweats if you have them.

Coaches' Role and Responsibilities

Our coaches have a variety of responsibilities from planning workouts to hands-on training with the kids to setting meet lineups. However, their primary goals are to:

1. Support the needs of all our swimmers, at all levels of competitive swimming; and
2. Establish a fun, positive, and supportive environment to help all swimmers develop good sportsmanship and teamwork.

Also, please note that it is the coaches' role (not the parents') to provide stroke instruction during practices and meets, and to determine lineups (who will swim what).

Parents' Role

Parents are participants on the team in supportive roles only. As a parent, your major responsibility is to provide a stable, loving, and supportive environment. This positive environment will encourage your child to continue, even at the beginning and when they hit rough patches. The workouts are structured to increase endurance and will require a true commitment. We ask that you take notice of your swimmer's daily workouts to ensure that they are participating fully. Completing each of the coaches' requests to the best of their abilities will help them have a successful season. Getting your swimmer to practices and meets (or ensuring they get there) is also an expectation, as is communicating absences with coaches (see Communicating with Coaches below).

Parents serve as role models and their children often emulate these attitudes. Most importantly, show good sportsmanship at all times toward coaches, opponents, and teammates. Unsportsmanlike conduct by a swimmer or family member will severely tarnish the Maple Hills Marlins reputation and high standing in the community. Incidents of unsportsmanlike conduct will be discussed among the Board members with coaches and involved parents. Resolution of an incident will be based on a case-by-case basis depending of the offense.

Children need to establish their own goals, and make their own progress. Be careful not to impose your own standards and goals. Do not over burden your child with your expectations of winning. The most important part of your child's swimming experience is that they learn about themselves, improve through their hard work, and enjoy both the sport and the community. This healthy environment encourages learning and fun that will develop a positive self-image within your child.

Finally, it is important that parents show up to all the meets if at all possible. This is critical both from the standpoint of supporting your athlete as described above, and from the volunteer standpoint described below.

Here are some very practical things you can do on practice and meet days to support your child and our team:

- Get your child to practice. The swim team season is a short 8-week commitment. This is a fundamental piece to the competitive puzzle. The more they work on the strokes the better their season is. Hard work truly pays off in this sport.
- Get to the swim meets on time. Swim meets are hectic and confusing. So arrive 15 to 30 minutes before your swimmer's warmup is scheduled to start.
- Make sure that your child gets to their starting block on time. The meets move very quickly, so have your child in place for their race. The announcer during a swim meet calls out three races at a time, calling in reverse order, to give the swimmers time to stage for their races (e.g., "first call event #3, second call event #2, third and final call event #1").
- Congratulate your swimmer and the other swimmers in your child's heat; be sure to cheer for your neighbors. The summer swim season is competitive by nature but we should not solely focus on the winner of an individual race.

Volunteering

It takes close to 50 volunteers to run a home swim meet! Our team will be hosting or attending meets each week for six weeks. We will need your help with scoring, timing, officiating, concessions and many other areas. Each swim team family will be required to provide an adult family member to fulfill 7 units for the season. Units are equal to the actual tasks on each meets volunteer sign up sheets, which are available at the team suit fitting, at the all-parent meeting, or at the intersquad meet, at the Board's discretion. (Bring a pen and a calendar so you can be sure of your commitments and record them to refer to later.)

It is each family's responsibility to fulfill each unit that they commit to. A list of jobs with brief descriptions is provided on the following page. There are also some jobs that are not on meet day (event chairpersons, for example) that can count toward your commitment if necessary. Please discuss with the Volunteer Coordinator. Please note that if you have communicated with the Volunteer Coordinator and just cannot commit to fulfilling the volunteer responsibilities of a Maple Hills Swim Team parent, you may

opt out by paying a fee of \$250. This should only be used as a last resort; we need your participation more than we need your money. Swim team is unlike other sports your children may participate in, such as baseball or soccer. The swim team simply cannot function without reliable help from the entire pool of parents.

Volunteer Duties

Position	# of volunteers needed	Duties
Meet Set-Up (1 hour before meet)	4	Put in lane lines and starting blocks, set up concession area, set up podium for announcer and starter
Timers	18	Use stopwatch to time each race. 3 timers per lane (2 from home team), one writes down all times on cards. Timers are required to time for one half of meet. 2 backup timers are also needed - they are not assigned to any particular lane.
Stroke and Turn Judges	2	Must have attended training. Judges observe the stroke techniques of the swimmers and can disqualify swimmers for doing the stroke improperly or not performing the proper "touch" upon finishing. They also watch relays for correct starts and touches.
Announcer	2	Announces the first, second, third and final calls for the start of each event. Does any other general announcements.
Starter	2	Announces the starting sequence for swimmers. Insures swimmers are properly set and "starts" the race. Must be familiar with the rules for race starts.
Computer Operator	2	Keypunch swimmers time for each race. Prints ribbon place labels.
Ribbon Helpers	2	Circles the middle race time for each swimmer. Puts awards labels on the proper place ribbon. Sorts ribbons by team
Card Runner	2	Picks up cards from timers after each race and delivers them to the ribbons table. Cards should be place in lane order before giving to table.
Concessions	6 - 8	Sales and preparation of food.
Meet Clean-up (1/2 hour after meet)	4	Take down lane lines, put away podiums, take down starting blocks, clean up concessions area.

No experience is required for the jobs listed above, except for the Starters and the Stroke and Turn Officials. These jobs are reserved for veteran parents who have taken a Midlakes class to become trained. It is not recommended to jump into this area until you have had some experience with competitive swimming. These trained officials have a very technical job.

Communication with Coaches

Summer swim team is meant to provide all of our kids with a positive experience that will develop their swimming skills and their character by fostering qualities like commitment and teamwork. Please do your part to model those qualities by striving to communicate effectively with our hard-working coaching staff. Please respect their limited time by not chatting them up on deck during practices. There is a button on our website that will send an e-mail to the coaches. If you wish to speak to them about your swimmer in person, please either set up a time to talk in advance or keep it as short as possible so as not to detract from the ongoing practice. However, any communication about practices or meets that your swimmer will be missing needs to be sent via the website e-mail link.

If your swimmer will miss a meet (or arrive late or leave early), the cutoff date for notifying the coaches that you will miss a meet is the Friday prior to the meet. If you do not notify the coaches by Friday your child will not swim in the following week's meet. Exceptions will be made for emergency or illness. PLEASE use the e-mail link on the website as soon as possible if there is a last-minute emergency or illness.

The bottom line is that coaches must know in advance when swimmers will be absent from any practices and/or meets. The line-ups for meets are set the Friday before the next week's meets. Creating these lineups takes considerable time and effort on the coaches' part to ensure each swimmer can put their best foot forward for the team. Coaches are frustrated and kids are disappointed when swimmers (and their parents) do not demonstrate commitment and do not extend the courtesy of communicating as requested with the coaches. No shows often make relays particularly difficult to restructure and affect the success of our team. Please do your part to put the "Three Cs" of commitment, courtesy, and communication into practice with our coaching staff this season!

Team Fundraising

The Marlins have a couple of ways that we raise money. Our concession stand is the primary source of revenue. We strongly encourage our families to buy dinner at the concessions stand during our home meets. (Most of the Maple Hills Marlins families bring picnic dinners to the away meets, which help keep the sport affordable.) The team also has a fun event called the Mile Swim towards the end of the season, which operates like a swim-a-thon, with money pledged for each lap completed (or just a flat donation for participation). Board members, parents, or captains also occasionally organize raffles or other fundraisers in support of the team. All money raised goes for equipment replacement, which is not fully covered by our fees, and to our scholarship fund.

Meet Day Details and Hints

So, here is what a meet day might look like, with some hints and details sprinkled in as needed.

During practice, check the fence for the meet lineup. If it's listed, you can write down your swimmer's events. Have a veteran parent show you how to read the lineup sheet. Your child will not swim in every event available for their age group. The coaches determine the meet entries after considering swimmers' abilities, experience, and goals, and the needs of the team. During regular meets, each swimmer is allowed by league rules to swim in three individual events or four individual/relay combination events (but they may not swim that many). Championship meets are different and coaches will walk you through that.

During the day, check the website and pull off directions to the club if it's an away meet. Have your swimmers pack their bags with a towel for each event, goggles, swim cap, suit, slides or thongs, and sweats. (Double check behind little ones.) Pack a cooler with healthy snacks and drinks and a bag with a pen and paper, a Sharpie (for writing event/heat/lane on your swimmer's arm), cash for concessions, and some fun things to do in between events. Check your volunteer commitment and be sure you are prepared to cover both that and your kids. Make sure you have camping chairs and any tents, shelters, or umbrellas you might want if it is raining or very hot. For away meets, you may want to pack a picnic dinner to keep things affordable.

For home meets, arrive for 4:30 p.m. check-in, with warmups starting at 4:45 and the meet starting at 6 p.m. For away meets, leave with enough time for 5:00 p.m. swimmer check-in, with warmups starting at 5:15 and the meet starting at 6 p.m. Leave time for parking, which is often quite difficult at away meets. At our home pool, consider walking or parking in the fire station lot or on the lower field to make room for our guests in the main lot.

When you arrive, have your swimmer let the captains know you've arrived. Find a place to sit and set up your chairs/towels. If you set up in the same place every time at home meets, it makes it easier for your kids to find you during the meet. Double check the meet lineup for changes and/or collect your swimmer's event sheet from the captains/coaches. If you want, write the event/heat/lane on your swimmer's arm for their reference. Event numbers for each age group end in the same number (except medley relays). Boys' events are even, girls are odd. After medley relays, events are spaced ten apart. Each swimmer in each event is assigned a heat and lane. Exhibition heats occur before the scoring heat. The scoring heat participants can win ribbons for first, second, third, fourth, or higher. Exhibition heat swimmers can win participant/exhibition ribbons and they also get a qualifying time that will apply to their overall success and their standing on the team.

Scope out where your child will likely want to play/hang out with friends and decide on the parameters you'll give them so you can find each other.

Ensure your swimmer participates in warmups as directed by the coaches. Block heights and surfaces vary, so it is especially important that your child practice starts with the team at away meets.

Participate in any parent meeting and/or the team cheer as part of the experience!

Each meet opens and closes with relays. If your child is in the opening relay, find those racing in the heat with him/her and help them get organized. The lineup sheet and/or your child's individual event sheet will show the order of swimmers. In the medley relay, the order of events is back, breast, fly, free. For other events, ensure your child gets to the staging area shortly after first call.

If you are buying dinner from concessions, get your food early. The “good stuff” goes fast! It also helps to limit your swimmer’s treats and spread them out.

Cheer on not just your child, but your neighbors’ children! Have your child watch the older children and the scoring heats to develop an appreciation for good technique and the beauty of fast, strong swimming! Get to know other swim parents and encourage your child to get to know other swimmers. The social element makes it more fun!

Celebrate progress and downplay and reassure after setbacks. Take the pressure off by not reacting with disappointment or surprise if your swimmer does not perform as well as they could have. They don’t need your disappointment added to their own. Save the constructive observations for later. Swimming is so great for all ability levels because you can make it about the improvement in their time, not about their finish order. Also, those in exhibition heats can still get the feeling of winning their heat, even though they aren’t technically winning the event in the scoring heat.

Once your child has finished their last assigned event and you are done with your volunteer commitment, feel free to pack up and head out. Clean up your area before you go. Let the coaches know you are leaving in case they’ve had last-minute changes and might need your swimmer for the final relay.

Congratulate yourself and your swimmer on a job well done!

Glossary of Swimming Terms

A Champs – Midlakes League Championship for swimmers with Qualifying “A Times.” Only a portion of our swimmers is usually eligible for A Champs, and their swim season is extended by one week.

A Meet – At these meets, everyone is eligible to swim in any event the coach places them in.

Age Groups – Swim team events are broken out and scored by age groups: 15 & over, 14 & under, 12 & under, 10 & under, and 8 & under.

B Champs – Midlakes Division III Championships where swimmers can swim in any event that they do not have a qualifying “A Time.”

B Meet – At these meets, swimmers with times that qualify them for the Midlakes League Championships in an event are not eligible to swim in that event. They can still swim in events in which they do not yet have a qualifying time (A Time).

Blocks – The starting platform

DQ – A disqualification, more commonly called a “DQ,” occurs when a swimmer makes a mistake in their stroke, turns, or touch. This disqualifies a swimmer from having their time officially recorded. Officials alongside the pool watch for these mistakes so that all competitors have equal advantage during their race. If the official calls a DQ, the official will usually explain that to the swimmer at the finish of the race. Most DQs are caused by the failure to do one of the following during the race: 1) In freestyle, swim the entire distance without touching lane lines, pool side, or bottom; 2) In breast stroke, point knees/toes out and kick simultaneously, pull arms in front of body, finish with a two-handed touch; 3) In backstroke, stay on back the entire race, including start, turn, and finish; 4) In butterfly, kick feet together during stroke from start to finish, pull arms simultaneously, finish with a two-handed touch; and 5) In relays, dive after the previous swimmer has touched the wall. A DQ is only a learning opportunity. Please

talk to your coach after each race and let them know if an official noticed something wrong with your stroke so you can work together to fix the problem before the next meet.

Flags – Backstroke flags are placed 5 yards from the end of the pool. They enable backstrokers to execute a backstroke flip turn more efficiently by counting their strokes.

IM – Slang for individual medley, an event in which the swimmer uses all four strokes in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle.

Intersquad Meet – This meet opens our competitive swim season, and each swimmer swims races against other Marlins to obtain a basic time to start the season. It is a valuable introduction to new swimmers and parents because it is run like a dual team meet.

Medley Relay – All four strokes are swum in this relay. The first swimmer swims backstroke, the second, breaststroke, the third, butterfly and the final swimmer, the freestyle for one time. The coaches maintain splits for the swimmers to gauge their individual progress.

Relay – An event in which four swimmers compete together as a team to achieve one time.