

How to Survive a Swim Meet – A Parent’s Guide to Sanity

*I wrote this trying to remember everything I wish I had known our first season with children 6 and 8 years old. They are now 14 & 16 and we have lived to tell the tale. Swim meets can seem like semi-controlled chaos. Considering the number of children, workers and events, swim meets actually run very smoothly. There are 3 keys to a great meet: **Plan ahead, be Prepared and Pack your PATIENCE.***

Sign up to work: It takes about 60 parent volunteers to give our swimmers the meet they have been training and practicing so hard for. Working meets is not only required, it is the best way to learn how a swim meet works. Don’t be scared of jobs that include the word “judge”, those have some of the best seats. Positions that need certification are noted on worker sign ups. We understand you want to see your child swim, let me know when they are swimming and I will try to fill in so you can watch them – this is all about the kids.

Dress Accordingly: Piranhas swim rain or shine! Swimming is an outdoor sport involving water, there is a good chance you will get wet. If you are working on pool deck, you will most likely get splashed. I have worked meets in flip flops and a tank top. I have also worked them in rain boots and a jacket. Meets can go late in the evening and temperatures can drop, you may want to bring sweatshirts and pants. Pack comfy close for the little ones to ride home in. Pajama pants and a t-shirt packed in a zip lock bags will make bedtime a lot faster. **Check the weather and come prepared, it makes for a much more enjoyable meet for the entire family.**

Parking: Due to the small size of our parking lot during meets it will be limited to handicapped, food trucks, coaches and certified officials. Another great reason to become a certified official. All others will park on one side of the neighborhood streets; this is extremely important. **If cars are parked on both sides of the street emergency vehicles cannot get through!** This could affect your child that fell at the pool or the neighbor down the street having a heart attack. There will be “No Parking” signs posted along one side of the street, it is imperative that you comply with these signs. **Bring a flashlight**, Concord Hills does not have streetlights and it will be dark when we leave. One other lesson I have learned, get a carabiner clip for your car keys. Weather you clip it to your bag or belt loop, you will be grateful that you know where your car keys are.

Seating: Bring your own seating, the chairs, loungers and tables you see around the pool at practice **will not** be there during meets. Blankets and beach mats are also a good idea. Swimmers have a good amount of down time between events, cards games and other activities to fill this time are a good idea.

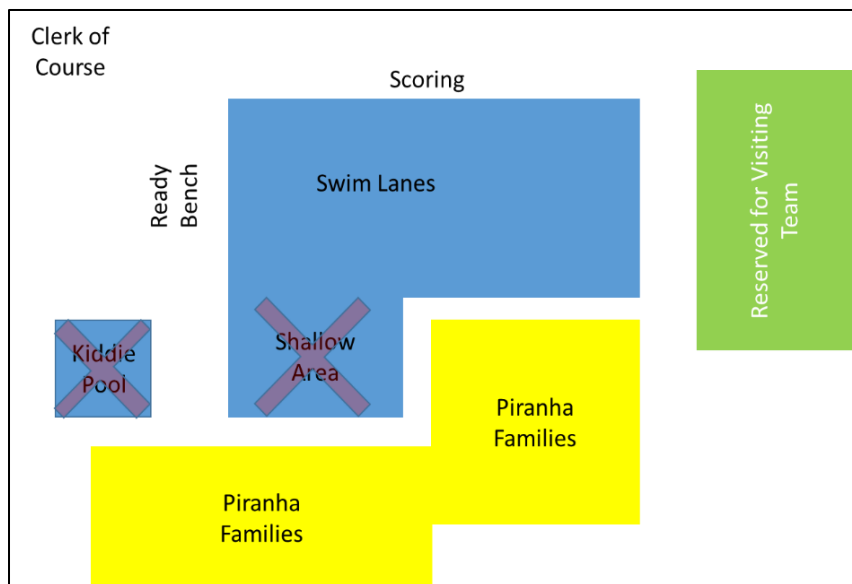
If you want to bring a canopy for shade, please remember this: Most quick shade canopies adverti se that they are 8’ x 8’ of shade, that equates to 64 sq. ft., with the flared out legs, these canopies take up a 10’ x 10’ space. That equals 100 sq. ft. Four camp chairs for your family only take up 36 sq. ft. If you want to bring a canopy find some friends to share with – we just don’t have that much space on pool deck. Yes, I live with an engineer, it’s a curse some of us have to bear. **It is also something to think about.**

Home Meet Layout

Swimming: Home meets are the only time the pool is truly closed.

This means the baby pool and the shallow "L" are closed.

Parents, please have a conversation with your children so that they are informed that there is no swimming/playing in the pool. This includes filling their swim caps with water to throw on other children. This type of behavior creates a slippery pool deck for swimmers, workers and spectators.



Sharpies: These are a must for swim meets. Most swimmers write their scheduled events on their arm or leg (event#/heat#/lane#.) For younger swimmers it is also helpful to write your child's name and age on their shoulder, this allows workers to identify them. Your swimmer's backs are a great place to show their team spirit. Slogans such as "Eat My Bubbles," "See my feet – know you are Beat" or our Piranha. Show your team spirit. A good coating of lotion sunscreen or hand sanitizer will take Sharpie off their skin.

Stay Until the End: Don't leave the meet without letting the coaches know. Even if your child is done with their scheduled events they may be needed to fill in on a relay for a sick child. If you have RSVP'd for a meet make sure you are there. One missing swimmer can have a ripple effect on the rest of the meet. Swimming is an individual sport within a team. Your time to beat is your own best time, but your team is relying on you for relays and support. Cheer for everyone!

Food: We encourage everyone to **"Eat at the Meet!"** The food trucks we have available during meets return a portion of their sales to our team. These proceeds allow our team to purchase training equipment for your children, maintain existing equipment, coaches' bonuses and other benefits that directly affect our swimmers.

Weather Delays: As I said Piranhas swim in the rain, thunder and lightning is a different story. If we hear thunder the coaches will clear the pool for 15 minutes, if we see lightning it's 30 mins. We may also clear the pool deck out of abundance of caution for your safety. **This does not mean the meet is canceled!!!!** It is extremely hard to reschedule a meet; we will wait out the weather if at all possible. Sign up for Rained Out and stay informed. Use this link [Concord Hills Piranhas RainedOut](#) Trust me, when you are sitting in your car wondering what's going on Rained Out will be your new BFF.

Away Meets: As Meet Director I work closely with the Meet Directors from other teams. I will communicate any information I have (parking, concessions, seating areas, etc.) Please comply with the requests of the other team, we want to be exceptional guests. Always park where we are told to, support their concessions for meals and do not make disparaging remarks about their pool. It will only take a few away meets for you to realize we have the best pool around.

The hardest part of anything new is learning the terminology used. Hopefully this will help.

Glossary of Terms

Heat Sheet: List of events, this is where you will find out what event your child is swimming. This will give you the event number, heat and lane information. We try to email these out before the meet, they are also posted on the kitchen windows before meets.

Event Card: This card is your swimmers ticket to swim. When your child gets to the starting blocks they will give this card to the timer/scribe assigned to their lane. Ours are pink for girls and blue for boys, they have the same event information as the heat sheet (event#, heat#, and lane#.) Your child will get their event cards from Clerk of Course.

Clerk of Course: For swimmers 9 and older Clerk of Course is located at a table to the left of the pavilion for home meets. At away meets you need to look for our Piranhas feather flag. Your swimmers will typically get their event card about 5 events before their scheduled event. Clerk of Course for 8 and Unders runs a bit differently. We have chairs set up to simulate the lanes and heats they will be swimming in. Your child will be seated according to their event card information. We then have workers take them to the Ready Bench area. **This is a great place to work if you have an 8 & Under swimmer, you will get to know a lot of the kids in your child's age group.**

Ready Bench: This is the area directly behind the starting blocks. We again have chairs set up by lane number, your swimmer will set in these chairs by their heat and lane number. The coaches are there that help swimmers make sure they are in the correct heat and lane. This area always makes me think of the Alice in Wonderlands' Mad Hatter, "Clean cups move down." Swimmers move to the chair ahead after each previous heat has left, until it is their turn to swim.

DQ – If your swimmer has been DQ'd it means they have been disqualified for that event. Most younger swimmers do not even realize they have been DQ'd. The Stroke and Turn judges will fill out a DQ slip, that is then attached to the swimmers event card. Our coaches review these after meets to see what needs to be worked on. 8 & under swimmers will still receive a ribbon for this event, however it will be a 6th place ribbon. Swimmers 9 & up will not receive ribbons for these events. It is rare that a swimmer is DQ'd on freestyle and backstroke. It is fairly common on butterfly and breast stroke.

The Ribbon Box: The ribbon box is a plastic file box that will be available during practices after each meet. Each child has an envelope containing their ribbons. Please take the ribbons and leave the envelope! We do not do ribbons for Senior swimmers (15-18), most of them are left in the box and never claimed. If you have a Senior swimmer that really want their ribbons, please email the team.

Looking forward to a fantastic season with the best swim team in town. Swim fast Piranhas!

Melissa Doerr

Meet Director and Proud Piranha Parent.