

Fair Oaks Sharks

Swim Team Handbook



2025 Edition

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome! Every Fair Oaks Sharks parent has experienced that first day of swim practice or that first swim meet and wondered, “Why am I here and what is going on?” This handbook will attempt to guide you in your quest to understand the world of summer swimming.

Your swim team reps, coaches, swim team committee, and fellow swim parents all want you to understand and enjoy our summer swim program. Please do not be afraid to ask questions!

Welcome to the Fair Oaks Sharks!

CHAPTER 1: ABOUT THE SWIM TEAM

Our Philosophy

The philosophy of the Fair Oaks Sharks is to have fun while discovering a love for the sport, developing advanced swimming skills, learning about teamwork, and practicing good sportsmanship. The Sharks believe in establishing a healthy environment that encourages swimmers to do their best and reach personal goals, while being recognized for their contributions to the team.

Swimming is a unique sport in that swimmers from age six to eighteen belong to the same team and participate in the same events. Swimmers of all ages are equals on the team. Swim team should be fun for the entire family!

Expectations

Although swimming is considered an individual sport, our summer league is structured with an emphasis on the *team*. Our expectations are simple:

- Support all swimmers, help swimmers learn about the sport, and promote leadership.
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship and respectful behavior as specified in the Sharks Code of Conduct.
- Keep commitments, as the team is counting on your family to show up to swim and volunteer.
- Do your best! It's much more important than being the best.
- Have fun!

Code of Conduct

Fair Oaks Sharks swimmers are leaders in promoting good sportsmanship. Parents are expected to support the team by demonstrating similar behavior throughout the swim season. The Code of Conduct is intended to be positive, however parents and swimmers need to know that failure to uphold the Sharks Code of Conduct could result in a warning, and repeated failures or a particularly egregious incident could result in suspension or disqualification from participation in swim team activities, including meets. Every family is responsible for reading and accepting the Code of Conduct upon registration.

The Code of Conduct has two parts - one for swimmers and one for parents.

Fair Oaks Sharks swimmers:

- demonstrate positive and appropriate behavior at practice, meets, other swim team events, and on social media.
- know that profanity and intimidating or humiliating remarks will not be tolerated.
- promote team unity and spirit through active participation in practices and spirit events.
- watch and cheer for teammates during meets.
- assist new and younger swimmers.
- choose positive cheers and applaud the efforts of all swimmers AND teams.
- graciously accept both wins and losses.
- keep the swim ladder confidential, so as not to provide a competitive advantage to our opponents.
- show respect to coaches by listening attentively to instructions, discussing concerns directly with staff, supporting coaching decisions, and maintaining flexibility as swimmers.
- show respect to officials and volunteers at all times by supporting their decisions and assisting when needed.
- show respect for the Fair Oaks community and other host communities by keeping the team area clean and using equipment and facilities safely and appropriately.

Fair Oaks Sharks parents:

- are supportive of all swimmers and coaches.
- never correct or criticize the coach in the presence of children, as the bond between coach and swimmer is important.
- speak directly to a Swim Team Committee member if they have any issues with the coaches, procedures, or policies.
- stay in the grassy area behind the fence during practices and never interrupt the coaches or swimmers.
- remain in established viewing areas during meets and do not encroach upon space needed for swimmers, coaches, and officials.
- do not engage in disrespectful, intimidating, or negative behavior towards officials, swimmers, coaches, volunteers, spectators, or lifeguards.
- keep the swim ladder confidential, so as not to provide a competitive advantage to our opponents.

CHAPTER 2: THE BASICS

Registration and Assessment

Fair Oaks Recreation Association (FORA) membership must be obtained and paid in full before registering swimmers for the Sharks or Jr. Sharks team. All new Sharks swimmers, including those moving up from Jr. Sharks, must participate in the skills assessment on the Tuesday following Memorial Day.

Swim Practices

Practice times are posted on the Fair Oaks Sharks website.

- After-school swim practices begin the Wednesday after Memorial Day and continue on weekdays through the end of the school year.
- Morning practices begin after school ends and continue on weekdays through July.

Swimmers should arrive early for practice, allowing time to put on swim caps, adjust goggles, etc. before the practice begins. To be early is to be on time!

NO lifeguards are on duty during morning swim team practices. All children and adults not engaged in practice must remain behind the fence in the grassy area for the duration of the practice time.

Attendance

Practices

Swimmers are encouraged to attend practice every day. 14-and-under Sharks swimmers must swim at least two practices with the team each week in order to be eligible to swim in the next NVSL-sponsored event. Each swimmer is allocated one week of vacation or camp without jeopardizing their chance to swim in the following meet. If you have an unusual circumstance, please contact the A Team Rep.

Meets

Each team member must confirm their attendance for every meet. Sign in to the Sharks website and declare whether or not your swimmer will be attending.

- A meets: Declare by midnight on the Sunday prior to the meet.
- B meets: Declare by 5:00 p.m. on the Saturday prior to the meet.

Failure to notify the team of an A meet absence could result in your swimmer being scheduled to swim, thus preventing another swimmer from participating. This is not only unfair to other swimmers, but could possibly cost our team points needed to win the meet.

If a swimmer becomes ill on the morning of an A meet, please call or text the A Team Rep by 7:00 a.m.

Apparel & Accessories

Practices

- One-piece bathing suit, preferably tight-fitting
- Swim cap
- Goggles (an extra pair is a good idea too)
- Water bottle
- Sunscreen
- Towel

Meets

- Sharks team suit is highly encouraged for TEAM SPIRIT
- Sharks swim cap
- Goggles (an extra pair is a good idea too)
- Sharks t-shirt
- Water bottle
- Healthy snacks
- Sunscreen
- Towel
- Folding chair, if desired

Spirit wear and other team items may also be available for purchase at the beginning of the season. Every registered Sharks swimmer will receive a free latex team swim cap and team t-shirt.

NVSL rules state that no school, club, or other organization attire should be worn at A meets. The Sharks make every effort to find a reasonably-priced team suit and keep the suit design for two seasons, which is typically the longest that any design is available from the manufacturer.

Coach Conversations

Coaches' responsibilities include helping swimmers to improve their strokes, teaching race strategies, and ensuring team members enjoy a fair and fun season. During practices and meets, they are busy devoting their full time and attention to the team and should not be interrupted.

Swimmers are responsible for listening to information given by the coaches during practice. During meets, swimmers should check in with the coaches after each race to get feedback on their performance. Immediate feedback helps swimmers improve!

If you have questions such as whether or not your child is legal in a stroke, emailing the Head Coach directly is encouraged. Please also cc the Assistant Coach as they may also be able to address your question.

Communications

Throughout the swim season, parents, coaches, and swimmers will share information in several ways.

- **Website:** www.fairoakssharks.com - Our website contains a wealth of important information and resources. The swim ladder will be posted on the website and updated after each meet. Visit the website often!
- **Email:** You must enroll on the website in order to be placed on the email distribution list. A correct email address is essential for all team families, as meet information will be sent weekly through email.
- **Text:** Sign up for text alerts on the website. This is the most efficient way to communicate last minute decisions to the team, including practice cancellations or meet delays due to weather.
- **Family folder:** Each family will be assigned a folder in the swim team file drawer at the pool entrance. Flyers, ribbons, and other communications are distributed into folders. Please check your family folder often!

If you have questions or concerns related to team policies or procedures, please reference the Sharks website under “Contacts” to get in touch with the appropriate person. You will need to be signed in to see the Contacts tab.

Swim Meet Logistics

All meets are held as scheduled, rain or shine. The only exception is lightning at the host pool, which may result in a delay.

Swimmers compete in age groups based on their age as of June 1st.

Swimmers must know what events they are swimming prior to arriving at the meet and should be ready when each of those events are called. Swimmers should stay in the team area during the entire meet so that coaches can find them when necessary.

Time Trials (The First “Meet”)

After approximately three weeks of practice, time trials are held at the Fair Oaks Pool. The purpose of this event is to provide an opportunity for swimmers and parent volunteers to participate in a trial run of a meet. The goal is for each swimmer to obtain times in all four strokes. These times will be recorded on the swim ladder. Swimmers who are not yet proficient in all four strokes at time trials will still have an opportunity to swim new strokes in B meets once the head coach has granted permission.

Time trials must be conducted prior to the first meet to obtain an official baseline time for each swim team member in each individual event/stroke. These times are then used to select swimmers for the first A meet the following Saturday. Any swimmers who miss the time trials will need to swim in the following Monday’s B meet in order to get times to qualify to swim in the next A meet. Since swimmers are only allowed to swim two events plus IM in a B meet, they will not have times in all four events unless they swim in the time trials.

Swim Ladder

A swim ladder is a record of each swimmer’s official best time listed by age, gender, and event. The swim ladder begins with times from time trials and is updated after every A and B meet. It will be posted on our team website. If a swimmer DQs (is disqualified), the time for that race is not considered an official time and is not listed on the swim ladder. The coaches seed an A meet using only times from the swim ladder. Team members and families must keep the ladder confidential. Sharing the ladder with anyone outside our team may provide a competitive advantage to our opponents.

CHAPTER 3: A MEETS

The “A Meets” referred to in this handbook are meets that are part of the **Northern Virginia Swim League (NVSL)**. The NVSL began in 1956 and is now the largest summer swim league in the United States. Teams are seeded into 17 divisions of 6 teams each by overall speed, rather than by size or location, with the fastest teams in Division 1. The NVSL reseeds teams each year to keep each division as competitive as possible.

NVSL Events

- 5 weekly (Saturday) A Meets
- Divisional Relay Carnival
- All-Star Relay Carnival
- Divisional Individual Championships
- All-Star Individual Championships

A meets are held on Saturday mornings from 9:00 until approximately noon. There are five of these meets and they are conducted only against teams in our Division. Two or three of these A meets will be held at the Fair Oaks Pool each season.

A Meets consist of 40 individual events and 12 relays. The events for each stroke and age group are shown below.

Age Group	Freestyle	Backstroke	Breaststroke	Butterfly	Freestyle Relay	Medley Relay
8 & Under Boys	25 M	25 M	25 M	25 M	100 M	
8 & Under Girls	25 M	25 M	25 M	25 M	100 M	
9-10 Boys	50 M	50 M	50 M	25 M		100 M
9-10 Girls	50 M	50 M	50 M	25 M		100 M
11-12 Boys	50 M	50 M	50 M	50 M		100 M
11-12 Girls	50 M	50 M	50 M	50 M		100 M
13-14 Boys	50 M	50 M	50 M	50 M		100 M
13-14 Girls	50 M	50 M	50 M	50 M		100 M
15-18 Boys	50 M	50 M	50 M	50 M		200 M
15-18 Girls	50 M	50 M	50 M	50 M		200 M
Mixed Age Boys					200 M	
Mixed Age Girls					200 M	

Each team fields three swimmers per age and gender in the four individual strokes (freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly). Relays are swum in each age group plus one with mixed ages at the end of the meet. NVSL rules allow swimmers to swim a maximum of two individual events, participate in one age-group relay team and the

mixed-age relay team, if selected. Beginning with the youngest age group, boys swim first, followed by girls. NVSL events are swum in the following order: freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly.

Swimmers are expected to stay at A meets until the last race is finished, to cheer on their teammates. If a swimmer needs to leave before the meet is over, they must first notify the Head Coach. Use of any electronic device by a swimmer in the team area is prohibited.

Swimmer Selection

Swimmers are selected for A meets by the Head Coach, based on swim ladder times. Since our goal is to win the meet, the Head Coach will review the opponent's previous meet sheets in order to place our swimmers in individual strokes and relays where their previous times indicate that they should help gain the most points for the team. This may mean that a swimmer is placed in a stroke that is not their strongest or favorite, or even placed in an older age group event ("swimming up"). Stroke assignments may change weekly, as our team is matched up against a new team with different strengths and weaknesses. *Parents and swimmers need to understand that coaching decisions are made to benefit the team as a whole and are asked to support these decisions.*

Meet sheets (the official list of swimmers for each event) are approved by the A Team Rep and are typically emailed to families on Thursday evenings before each Saturday A meet. *Any issues regarding the meet sheets must be brought to the attention of the Head Coach or the A Team Rep by Thursday evening.*

Scoring

Individual events in A meets are scored on a 5-3-1 point basis for first, second, and third place. Relay teams earn 5 points for first place only. Points are based on swimmers' times in each event with the total points scored determining the winning team. The outcome of these meets determines a team's division standing.

Ribbons are awarded for 1st through 6th place finishes. The swimmer's time, event and age group are recorded on the back of the ribbon. At the completion of the A meet season, the NVSL awards a trophy to the team with the best win-loss record in each division. Also, each NVSL division will award a trophy to the team that best demonstrates good sportsmanship throughout the season.

Divisional Relay Carnival

The Divisional Relay Carnival is held on a Wednesday evening in early July and is a highly spirited and competitive meet. The Sharks may enter one relay team per event to compete against all five other teams from our division. There are medley and freestyle relays for each gender and age group, as well as boys and girls mixed age relays. The Head Coach selects swimmers for relay teams based on fastest times. Swimmers must swim in their own age group. For each event, points are awarded as follows: 1st place - 14 points, 2nd place - 10 points, 3rd place - 8 points, 4th place - 6 points, 5th place - 4 points, and 6th place - 2 points. A trophy is awarded to the team accumulating the most points at the end of the meet.

All-Star Relay Carnival

The eighteen fastest relay teams in each event from all divisions in the NVSL compete against each other the Wednesday following the Divisional Relay Carnival. The Division Coordinator represents the six teams at the seeding meeting and notifies the A Team Rep of any team qualifications. One alternate team is selected for each event. There is one substitution allowed for each relay team only for illness, injury or absence.

Divisional Individual Championship Meet

On the Saturday following the last A meet, each division conducts a Divisional Meet consisting of the fastest swimmers from all of the teams in the Division. Swimmers may compete in only two events. The individual medley (IM) event is included in this meet. There are no relay events.

Each team may enter their two fastest swimmers in each event. If a swimmer is first or second on the swim ladder in more than two events, that swimmer will need to choose only two strokes to swim in the divisional meet and the next person on the ladder will have a chance to swim the other event.

All-Star Individual Championship Meet

After all of the divisions in the NVSL hold their Divisional Meets, the eighteen fastest swimmers and two alternates in each event are chosen to compete in the All-Star Individual Championship Meet. *These selections are based solely on times posted from Divisional Individual Championships.* This meet is held on the Saturday following the Divisional Meets. Medals and ribbons are presented in award ceremonies following each event.

CHAPTER 4: B MEETS

The “B Meets” referred to in this handbook are meets that are a part of the **Fairfax Developmental League (FDL)**, a group of local teams. Its purpose is to provide a similar, but less competitive environment than the NVSL, so that all swimmers have the opportunity to swim, compete, and measure their progress. This league also allows some experienced swimmers to try new strokes, and allows new officials to learn their responsibilities. Generally, all NVSL rules are followed for B meets.

FDL Events

- 4-5 weekly (Monday) B Meets
- Individual Medley (IM) Carnival (may be replaced by a Sharks-only IM event)
- Developmental Relay Carnival (may be replaced by a Sharks-only relay event)

B meets are held on Monday evenings from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Depending on the schedule and calendar, there are four or five of these meets during the season and they are conducted against other teams from the Developmental League. Two or three of these meets are held at Fair Oaks Pool.

B meets do not affect our NVSL standings or what NVSL division we compete in. However, they are a crucial component of our summer swim program, allowing swimmers the opportunity to improve times in individual events. The format is mostly the same as A meets, with a few key differences:

- There are multiple heats of most events
- There are separate events for 6 & Under swimmers when applicable
- IMs (individual medleys) are included at the end of most B meets

Swimmers are seeded into heats with other swimmers based on their previous times whenever possible. Place ribbons are awarded for 1st through 6th place in each event. Participant ribbons are given to all other swimmers in the event, including disqualifications and time-only races. The swimmer’s time, event, and age group are recorded on the back.

Swimmer Eligibility Guidelines

Swimmers who are NOT selected for a Saturday A meet should plan to participate in the B meet held on the following Monday evening. Swimmers participating in B meets can make their stroke selections for up to two strokes (freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly) and an Individual Medley (IM) with approval by the Head Coach. A swimmer

shall not compete in breaststroke or butterfly until the coaches have determined that the swimmer has a reasonable chance to swim a legal stroke without being disqualified.

Swimmers must have times in all four strokes on the swim ladder before swimming an IM event. Since IM is included in the NVSL Divisionals Meet, swimmers are encouraged to swim this event as often as possible. The youngest age group designation for IM is 10 & Under.

Swimmers who participated in two or more events in the previous A meet are only eligible to swim in two events total at the next B meet (2 strokes OR 1 stroke plus IM). A meet swimmers who placed 1st, 2nd, or 3rd the previous Saturday will be in time-only heats and are not eligible to receive a place ribbon in any event except IM.

Developmental Relay Carnival

This meet is open to any swimmer who did not participate in the Divisional Relay Carnival. There are medley and freestyle relays for each gender and age group, as well as mixed-age relays, which match up boys and girls of different ages together in one relay.

**The relay carnival may be replaced by a Sharks-only relay event.*

Developmental Individual Medley (IM) Carnival

Swimmers may participate in the Developmental IM Carnival, which is held on a weekday evening during the season.

**The IM carnival may be replaced by a Sharks-only IM event.*

CHAPTER 5: PARENT PARTICIPATION

It takes a village... and YOU are the village! The success of the Sharks swim team is largely due to the dedication and commitment of all our parent volunteers. Did you know that summer swim meets and events are 100% run by volunteers? Or that it takes more than 40 people to smoothly run a single swim meet? There are officials, timers, ribbon writers, scorers and a host of other volunteer positions. ALL families are needed to help out at meets.

Requirements

Each Sharks family is required to sign up for a set number of volunteer positions throughout the season. The required number of volunteer positions changes from year to year, depending on registration.

Sign-Up

The volunteer sign-up will be open for a short window in late May or early June. Please keep in mind that sign-up is first come, first served. If you have not chosen your required positions by the deadline, jobs will be assigned to you.

Leadership

Leadership positions are also important! If you are asked to step up into a position to coordinate some aspect of the team, or to be part of the swim team committee, know that it is because you are truly needed and please consider saying YES! This is a great way to get to know other parents on the team, and a great way to show your support, particularly if you have multiple swimmers in your family.

Changes

We understand that complications arise, so if you need to make any changes and are unable to find a solution, email the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible. The Volunteer Coordinator will work with you to find a replacement, as well as to find another volunteer position replacing the one you missed.

No-Shows

If you choose not to show up or find a replacement, there will be consequences that the swim team committee will evaluate on a case-by-case basis, which may result in your swimmer being ineligible to swim the next meet. The swimmers and the team are all counting on you!

Meet Attire

Why are all the adults dressed in blue and white? This makes it easier to distinguish the officials and volunteers from the spectators. NVSL rules require white tops and navy blue bottoms (no denim) to be worn by all deck officials and parent volunteers during meets.

CHAPTER 6: WHO'S WHO OF VOLUNTEERS

Swim Team Committee

The Swim Team Committee is comprised of 5-7 members who work closely with FORA regarding matters relating to the pool and the swim team calendar. The Committee meets throughout the year as needed to plan for each upcoming swim season and serves in an advisory capacity during the summer season.

Responsibilities include:

- Long-range planning
- Developing and approving the annual team budget
- Hiring coaching staff
- Developing and disseminating team policies and procedures
- Assisting in dispute resolution regarding policies and procedures

Team Reps

The Team Reps are volunteer parents who were once new to swimming just like many of you! They are part of the Swim Team Committee and represent the Fair Oaks Sharks to other swim teams and the leagues to which we belong. The coaches are responsible to the Team Reps for the swimming portion of the swim team program.

A Meet Representative

The A Meet Rep serves as Meet Manager for home A meets and represents the team at away A meets. They also represent the swim team at all NVSL meetings and provide requisite information to the NVSL. The A Meet Rep coordinates NVSL meet activities with the Swim Team Committee and ensures all meet Officials are NVSL- or USS-certified. The A Meet Rep is the designated recipient of all DQ slips for the team and is the only person with any official standing to challenge any decisions made by the Referee.

Developmental B Meet Representative

The B Meet Rep serves as Meet Manager for home Developmental meets and represents the team at away Developmental meets. They also coordinate Developmental meet activities with the Swim Team Committee and serve as liaison to the Fairfax Developmental League. The B Meet Rep is the designated recipient of all DQ slips for the team and is the only person with any official standing to challenge any decisions made by the Referee.

NVSL-Certified Meet Officials

The referees, starters, and stroke & turn officials working at swim meets are certified by the NVSL. Most of them started by serving in entry-level volunteer positions on deck before being trained to serve in an official capacity, and most are familiar Fair Oaks faces. How can you become an NVSL official? Training for officials is typically offered in May. Dates and further details are available at mynvsl.com.

Referee (1 per meet)

The Referee (NVSL-certified) is the chief official for each meet. His/her principal function is to ensure that the meet is properly conducted within NVSL rules and that swimmers have uniformly fair competitive conditions. The Referee serves as the final authority on the interpretation and enforcement of all swimming rules. Prior to the start of each race, the Referee sounds a whistle to advise swimmers to get ready and listen to the Starter.

Starter (1 per meet)

The Starter (NVSL-certified) is the only official who has direct contact with the swimmers. The Starter makes sure that all swimmers are given a fair and equitable start. The Starter informs the swimmers of the stroke and distance to be swum, then says “Take your mark” and sounds the electronic starting device to start the race.

Stroke and Turn Judge (4 per meet)

The Stroke and Turn Judges (NVSL- or USS-certified) ensure that swimmers obey all the rules for the stroke that they are swimming, including the appropriate turn and finish. If a Stroke and Turn Judge sees a violation of the rules, he/she initiates the disqualification process. Stroke and Turn Judges will be assigned to work a combination of both A *and* B meets.

Other Meet Volunteers

Set-up/Breakdown Team (5-6 per home meet) *great for new Sharks families

Arrive 2 hours prior to the start of the meet. Report to the set-up/breakdown team lead. Set up everything required for the meet, including chairs, tables, bleachers, benches, stanchions, time boards, drain covers, signs, etc. After the meet, put all swim team equipment away and return all pool furniture to its original place.

Marshal (2 per meet) *great for new Sharks families

The Marshal is charged with maintaining order at the meet among swimmers and spectators. The Marshal monitors the team during warm-ups. Marshals **MUST** arrive early to the meet location, as they are required to be on deck to enforce safety for the entire length of the meet. Warm-ups cannot begin until the Marshals are present.

Chief Timer (1 per meet)

The Chief Timer assigns Timers to their lanes, provides a briefing for Timers prior to the start of the meet, and assists Timers as necessary. The Chief Timer collects the time cards from the Timers, reviews them for accuracy and completeness, and forwards them on to the table workers. The Chief Timer acts as Assistant Chief Timer at away meets.

Timers (5 per A meet, 9 per B meet) *great for new Sharks families

The Timers are the most important people to every swimmer. They are the people who determine the swimmer's official time for each race. A Timer is a good entry-level position for new swim parents, however some parents have been Timers for years and wouldn't want to see a swim meet from any other viewpoint. If you can start and stop a stopwatch, you can be a Timer. We'll even provide the stopwatch! There are three Timers per lane and all three times are recorded. The middle time is the Official Time.

Timer & Relay Take-Off Judge (4 per A meet)

Four timers from each team will also be Relay Take-Off Judges. Relay Take-Off Judges ensure that each relay swimmer touches the wall prior to the next relay swimmer leaving the deck. There are two judges at each end of the pool in each relay lane and both judges must observe an early take-off for a disqualification to occur.

Clerk of Course (1 per A meet; 2 per B meet)

The Clerk of Course is responsible for assembling swimmers in the order of events and ensuring all swimmers step up to swim their race at the correct time. They communicate with the Referee and Table Chief/Verifier if there is a problem. At B meets, the Clerk of Course also ensures the Announcer and time Heat Board Attendant know how many heats are needed for each event.

Clerk of Course Runner (2 per home meet) *great for new Sharks families

The Clerk of Course Runner takes swimmers from the Clerk of Course to their assigned lanes.

Announcer (1 per home meet)

The Announcer is important for meet management and control. He/she announces the events and the swimmers, as well as provides the names of the winners and other pertinent information.

Card Runners (2 per home meet) *great for new Sharks families

The Card Runners are charged with taking completed time cards from the Chief Timer to the time recorder at the table.

DQ Card Runner (1 per home B meet) *great for new Sharks families

The DQ Runner follows the Referee during a DQ and takes the DQ slips from the Referee to the table workers, who then match the DQ slip with the swimmer's card. This eliminates extra time taken for each DQ. At a B meet, there can be lots of DQs!

Heat Board Attendant (1 per home B meet)

The Heat Board Attendant updates a large Heat Board with each event and heat number, so that the Stroke & Turn Judges know what event/heat numbers to write on their DQ slips. The board also assists the Announcer in knowing what event/heat to announce next. It is helpful for the heat board attendant to already have a basic understanding of swim meet event and heat structure.

Team Area Parent (1 per meet) *great for new Sharks families

The Team Area Parent patrols the team area, encourages swimmers to cheer on their teammates, and assists swimmers as needed.

Table Chief (Table Worker)

The Table Chief requires previous experience. This person gets the ordered cards from the Card Clerks and works with the other team to determine the order in which swimmers from both teams finished each event, writes the places on the time cards, and records disqualifications on the time cards. The Table Chief then gives the cards to the DQ writer. The Table Chief is also responsible for answering questions and handling issues at the tables.

Card Clerk (Table Worker, 1 per meet) *great for new Sharks families

Receives our team's cards from the runners. Double-checks that the median time is circled on the card and that the correct time is on the card. Takes DQs from runners and ensures each DQ is with the correct card. Puts events in time order. Clips all the cards for each event and gives to the Table Chief.

DQ Writer (Table Worker, 1 per meet) *great for new Sharks families

Writes DQ notifications for each DQ. Copies the DQ information to the Coach Communication Log, alphabetizes all cards, and hands them to the Data Entry Coordinator to be entered into the computer. Alphabetizes DQ notifications to be placed in the swimmers' folders.

Data Entry Coordinator (Table Worker)

The Data Entry Coordinator inputs the times and places of each race from the time cards. All information needed for NVSL is compiled at the end of the meet.

Data Entry Reader (Table Worker, 1 per meet) *great for new Sharks families

Reads the times from the cards to the Data Coordinator, who then enters the times into the system.

Awards Clerk (Table Worker, 1 per meet) *great for new Sharks families

Receives the place labels from the Data Coordinator once they have been printed. Selects the appropriate award (place, participant, DQ), places the label on the back of the award in the appropriate spot, and alphabetizes all awards to be placed in the swimmers' folders.

Floater (1 per meet)

Assists where needed, particularly if another volunteer has an emergency and cannot complete their job. A family can sign up for a maximum of ONE floater position per season and should be prepared to do ANY job needed.

Non-Meet Volunteers

Pep Rally Volunteer (for single event) *great for new Sharks families

Arrives early to the pep rally to assist with setup, helps run the event, and stays until the pep rally is over and everything is cleaned up.

Social Event Volunteer (for single event)

Plans all aspects of a team social event. Gathers/purchases supplies needed, reserves location(s) if necessary, communicates event details to families. Arrives early to set up for the social event, runs the event, and stays until the event is over and everything is cleaned up.

CHAPTER 7: THE FOUR STROKES (+ IMs AND RELAYS)

Unless you are a swimmer or former swimmer, the strokes and their rules can be a source of bewilderment. While the basic stroke rules are simple enough for a seven year old to understand, most people do not have an understanding of all the specifics. The rules below are the USA Swimming rules as modified for use in the NVSL. Teams in other leagues may have slightly different rules.

Freestyle

Freestyle is defined as any means of swimming across the pool. Any stroke and kick are acceptable, although swimmers typically use the front crawl. There are, however, a few “don'ts” associated with this stroke. You cannot touch the bottom of the pool or pull yourself along using the lane lines. In a 50-meter race (two pool lengths) you must touch the wall at the 25 meter end before touching the wall at the 50 meter end (This may seem obvious, but sometimes swimmers miss the wall during a flipturn).

Backstroke

Like freestyle, almost anything goes with backstroke, as long as you stay on your back. Swimmers start the race in the water, which is different from the other strokes. At the start, the swimmer's feet are planted against the wall, with hands holding on to the lip on the pool or another swimmer's legs. Legs must be grabbed below the knee and anyone serving in an official capacity (such as timers or coaches) may not serve as “legs”. The backstroke flip turn is the one exception to staying on your back and can be used only at the turning end of the pool (not at the finish).

Breaststroke

Breaststroke has two components, the kick and the arm pull. The pull and its recovery must both be under the breast and cannot extend further back than the waist area. The kick is a frog kick and the toes must be pointed outward during the propulsive part of the kick. The arm pull and kick must be in an alternating sequence and the elbows must stay below the water except for tagging the wall at the finish. Breaststroke turns and finishes require a simultaneous two-hand touch.

Butterfly

A well-executed butterfly is the most beautiful exhibition of power you'll ever see in a swimming pool. Quite frankly, the fly is the hardest stroke for most swimmers to perfect and while they are learning it, many look like they are drowning. There are two components of the fly; the arm pull and the kick. The arm pull must be an over-the-water recovery (from wrist to shoulder breaking the water surface) with the arms moving

simultaneously. The kick is a dolphin-style kick with both legs moving simultaneously. Unlike breaststroke, there is no requirement to alternate the kick and pull. Turns and finishes require a simultaneous two-hand touch at the wall.

Individual Medley

The individual medley (or IM) is when an individual swims each of the four strokes in the following sequence: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle. We swim a 100 meter IM, which includes 25 meters, or one pool length, of each stroke. In a 100 meter IM, every turn is a stroke change and stroke finish rules apply. This means no backstroke flip turns.

Relays

There are two kinds of relays, the freestyle relay and the medley relay. Both involve a team of four swimmers, each swimming one quarter of the total distance. In the freestyle relay, each swimmer swims freestyle. In the medley relay, the sequence is backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle. In all relays, each swimmer must wait until the previous swimmer touches the wall prior to leaving the deck. Running starts and pushes from teammates are not allowed.

CHAPTER 8: DQs - THEY HAPPEN TO EVERYONE

In swimming, the rules must be followed in total or else a disqualification (DQ) is committed. The first time a swimmer is DQ'd for just one mistake can be traumatic, but it happens to everyone at some point and is necessary in order to run a fair meet.

What is a DQ?

A DQ is any violation of the rules observed by an appropriate official. Every official on the deck will always give the benefit of the doubt to the swimmer. Sometimes the decision to DQ can be tricky, but be assured that any violation called by an official is an "I saw", not an "I think I saw". Below are some of the more common reasons for DQ'ing.

Freestyle

- Failure to touch the wall at the turning end of the pool
- Walking on the bottom of the pool or pulling on the lane lines
- Exiting the pool before swimming the specified distance

Backstroke

- Past vertical towards the breast at any time except during a flip turn
- Leaving the wall after a turn past vertical towards the breast
- Improper flip turn

Breaststroke

- Incorrect kick, such as a scissor kick or flutter kick
- Non-simultaneous two-hand touch or one-hand touch at turn or finish
- Toes not pointed outward during the propulsive part of the kick
- More than one stroke underwater with arms fully extended at start or turn
- Arm recovery past waist except on first stroke after start or turn
- Head didn't break surface by end of second arm pull underwater after a start or turn

Butterfly

- Non-simultaneous or one-handed wall touch at the turn or finish
- Non-simultaneous leg movement during kicks
- Arms don't break water surface during recovery (judged at the elbows)
- Non-simultaneous arm movement during recovery

Relay Races

- A swimmer leaves the deck before the previous swimmer touches the wall or deck

False Start

- A swimmer starts the race early

How will I know a DQ occurred?

During the meet, you may observe a Stroke & Turn judge raising a hand to signify an observed rule violation, a discussion between NVSL-certified officials, and/or a long pause between events. However, it may not be clear to spectators which swimmer has been disqualified or why.

The Head Coach will notify swimmers about DQs and follow up later in the week with instruction on how to correct strokes, turns, starts, or finishes. There will also be a DQ notification form in your family folder a day or two after the meet. The form will show the reason the DQ was called. If you still have questions after reviewing your child's form, please email the Head Coach.

False Starts

A false start occurs whenever a swimmer moves towards the pool after having assumed a still position (taking his/her mark) and before the Starter has started the race. When this occurs, a swimmer is usually trying to anticipate the starting signal and beat the other swimmers into the water. If the false start is detected before the starting signal is sounded, the offending swimmer can be removed from the race prior to it starting. If a false start occurs, but the starting signal has sounded, the race will not be stopped. Instead the false starting swimmer(s) will be notified of their false start at the conclusion of the race. The use of a recall signal is now limited to a bad start (i.e. not all swimmers were ready) or for a safety reason. If the starter sounds the recall signal, no swimmer can be removed for a false start.

Protesting Disqualifications

The Team Rep is the only person who can officially question a disqualification or any other call by an official. If something happens involving your swimmer which you do not think is right, talk to the Head Coach or the Team Rep. The Team Rep will initiate action in accordance with NVSL rules, if thought to be appropriate.

CHAPTER 9: JR. SHARKS & MINI SHARKS

Programs

The Jr. Sharks and Mini Sharks programs are intended for children ages 4-8 who can swim, but do not yet have the endurance and/or stroke technique required for the Sharks competition team. At the start of the season, Jr. Sharks must be able to swim one length of the pool, while Mini Sharks are only required to swim $\frac{1}{4}$ length. Coaches and volunteers provide individualized stroke instruction, teaching young swimmers to be competent and comfortable in the water. The Jr. Sharks and Mini Sharks programs are managed by an adult coordinator who acts as a liaison between parents and coaching staff and coordinates all program activities including the end-of-season Lollipop Meet.

Goals

The end-of-season goal for Mini Sharks swimmers is to compete in two events at the Lollipop Meet (choice of kickboard, freestyle, backstroke, or breaststroke). The goal for Jr. Sharks is to begin participating in Sharks Developmental B meets as soon as they begin demonstrating a more advanced skill level in one or more strokes. Jr. Sharks will also participate in the Lollipop Meet.

Practices

Jr. Sharks and Mini Sharks practices begin in mid-June, after the school year ends, however there will be a required assessment on the Tuesday following Memorial Day. The season is typically 4-5 weeks long, ending on the day of the Lollipop Meet.

While there are numerous coaches and volunteers in the water during Jr. Sharks practices, there are NO lifeguards on duty. A parent or designated person (age 13+) must be present on pool grounds to be responsible for your swimmer for the duration of each practice.

Attire & Accessories

- Comfortable bathing suit, preferably one-piece for girls (team suit NOT required)
- Goggles (an extra pair is a good idea too)
- Sunscreen
- Towel

Social Events

The Jr. Sharks and Mini Sharks are part of the Sharks Swim Team and are encouraged to attend pep rallies and cheer on the Sharks swimmers at meets. The Jr. Sharks & Mini Sharks Coordinator may also decide to schedule an additional social event.

CHAPTER 10: TEAM SOCIAL EVENTS

At Fair Oaks, we love to swim, we push ourselves to win, but even more importantly, we enjoy spending time together as a TEAM. The Sharks are an active social group. Throughout the season, a wide variety of fun activities are planned to help unify the team.

Pep Rallies

Themed pep rallies are held at the pool on Friday evenings before every home A meet. Activities may include playing games, eating, swimming, making posters, going on a neighborhood scavenger hunt, or learning cheers. All team members are encouraged to join in the fun!

After-Meet Celebrations

Win or lose, we always find things to celebrate! Be on the lookout for information about ordering lunch after home A meets or gathering somewhere offsite after away A meets.

Picture Day and Team Breakfast

One morning during the season, we will have team and individual pictures taken by a professional photographer. There is no obligation to purchase photos, but all swimmers are requested to participate in the team photo. Individual photos and packages with the team photo will be available from the vendor. This event is often in combination with a team breakfast.

Dining for Dollars

This is a great way to give back to the team, while eating and having fun with other swim families! At the end of the night, each restaurant donates a portion of their proceeds to the team. Past Dining for Dollars events have taken place at MOD Pizza, SweetFrog, Panera, Piero's Corner, and Bruster's.

Other Social Activities

The swim team committee may organize social activities such as bowling, ice-skating, laser tag, mini golf, trampoline park, or movies. In addition, there are usually some other creative events held closer to home, like the donut run and progressive dinner. Attendance is always optional, but Sharks social events are tons of fun and a great way to bond with teammates!

End-of-Season Potluck Banquet and Awards Ceremony

The end-of-season banquet celebrates the season and all that the swimmers have accomplished. Families gather to share a meal and have fun. The coaches present awards, including the highly anticipated paper plate awards, and announce our All-Star swimmers. The event ends with a slideshow highlighting all the great memories of the season.



GO SHARKS!