



GOWER SWIMMING 101

Swim Meet Primer – This is a lot of information, however, taking the time to familiarize yourself with this information will definitely give you a good review of how a swim meet works and what makes Gower such a special team to be a part of.

*****Gower Swim Team is a sport for the entire family. As a matter of fact, we require the parents to participate by “working” the meets. We have found that just like the swimmers, the experience becomes much more meaningful to parents when you’ve done your part in making the swim season successful.*****

If this is your first experience, here is an overview:

The children are grouped by gender – Girls/Boys, then by age. At a single meet, a child does not swim more than three individual events that are decided on by the child and coach. A dual meet (a.k.a. the regular weekly meets between your team and one other) is divided into two halves. During the first half the children swim the Medley Relay [events 1 – 10], Short Free [events 11 – 20], Individual Medley [events 21 – 30], and Breaststroke [events 31 – 40]. In the second half they swim Long Free [events 41 – 50], Backstroke [events 51 – 60], Butterfly [events 61 – 70] and finally the exciting Free Relay [events 71 – 80]. Meets start at 4 p.m. and wind up between 8:30 and 9:30 (except for when they don’t!). Each event is divided into heats. The fastest heat swims first. The slowest heat swims last. This changes at Divisionals. Slower heats swim first, the fastest heat will swim that event last.

Now this is the good part. You will have the opportunity to sign-up for a “job”. Here’s an attempt to describe a meet and the working positions at the same time:

When the children first arrive, they will go to the area designated for the team. We call this area THE PIT. **This is very much a social event so unless you have a very young child you will not want to embarrass your child by hanging around here.** The social director of this area is known as the LINER UPPER – Yes, liner upper. We can’t think of a more appropriate title. This year our liner upper is Lara Wannemacher. She will have a crew of folks helping her and they are responsible for getting the swimmers in order of heat and lane number. The liner upper will be calling out swimmer’s names in the order of events, heats, and lanes. **Your swimmer needs to know which events he is swimming, be listening out for his name, and be ready to swim (cap and goggles).** While we do try in every way shape and form to get swimmers to Clerk of Course on time, we **CANNOT** be responsible for tracking them down from restrooms, concessions, etc. Therefore, if your child misses an event, please do not blame the liner upper. It is not her fault.

They will then be escorted to Clerk of Course where they are to remain in line and in the order in which they were placed. **PARENTS ARE DISCOURAGED FROM ENTERING THE CLERK OF COURSE AREA.**

Once they arrive at Clerk of Course, each child will be given a blue card. The clerk and three or four helpers line the children up on a series of benches. The goal here is to have all the children in a single heat lined up on the same bench in lane order – teens tend not to cooperate in this style of organization. The children move up through the benches until they end up behind the starting block, hand off their cards to the recorder (hopefully still intact), and are ready to swim.

At the starting blocks you have all kinds of people. Each lane has three **Timers**. At a typical 6-lane pool that means 18 timers. Usually there is a **Recording Timer** for each lane. As if that is not enough there is a **Head Timer** to backup the timers and an **Assistant Head Timer** to back up that person.

The **Starter** stands on a pedestal and seems to be the most important person, but actually that honor belongs to the **Referee**. There may also be an **Assistant Referee**.

The starter announces each event and asks the “Swimmers, step up” on the block. When the head timer indicates they are ready and it is time to release the swimmers, the **Deck Referee** blows the whistle. This is the signal for the fans to be quiet ... the race is about to begin. The starter intones, “Swimmers take your mark,” then BEEP! goes the start signal. Once finally on the way, the **Stroke and Turn Judges** watch to make sure children employ the proper strokes correctly.

The swimmers swim their lap(s) and finish their race. The times are recorded on the cards and the children return to socialize some more, hopefully having stopped to ask their times. By now the next heat is ready to start. In the meantime, the **Runner** collects the cards and “runs” them over to **Records**. They note the “official time” on the card and pass it on to the **Computer Operator** who enters it into a software program. The cards are then passed over to **Ribbons** where each child is awarded a personalized ribbon marking time and placement.

First Swim Meet Beginner Tips

What to Expect:

Swim meets are supposed to be FUN (for child and parent)!

Dual swim meets are NOT scored (i.e., a “winning team” is not declared when it’s over).

Events are run in this order for each gender (girls first), age group:

- 8 & under, [events x1 (girls) and x2 (boys)]
- 9-10, [events x3 (girls) and x4 (boys)]
- 11-12, [events x5 (girls) and x6 (boys)]
- 13-14, and [events x7 (girls) and x8 (boys)]
- 15-18 [events x9 (girls) and x10 (boys)]

- Medley Relay (Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, Freestyle), [events 1 – 10]
- Short Freestyle, [events 11 – 20]
- IM (Individual Medley: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle), [events 21 – 30]
- Breaststroke, [events 31 – 40]
- Long Freestyle, [events 41 – 50]
- Backstroke, [events 51 – 60]
- Butterfly, and [events 61 – 70]
- Freestyle Relay (each swims free) [events 71 – 80].

This means there are 80 events in a single swim meet!! There can be multiple heats in each event. Your child may swim up to three individual events and two relays. Heat Sheets are sold at each meet and can be found at the apparel table at home meets. It is important to check the heat sheets to know which event(s) your child is swimming. Mistakes can happen and swimmers can be accidentally left out of a meet. This can be corrected, however. From the pit, the swimmers move to the Clerk of Course area (benches). At Clerk of Course, someone will hand your child her event card which lists her name, age group, event#, heat#, and lane#.

Please know that there are sometimes CHANGES made in Clerk of Course. This means that your child might move into a different heat or lane. No need to worry. These changes are recorded with the Referee, computer operator and records. Just as a friendly reminder, no parents (or coaches) are allowed in the Clerk of Course area or behind the blocks unless they are working the meet. So please hug your swimmer and do all your coaching before they move into these areas. Please be patient and help your swimmer know what she needs to be doing. Ask if you don't understand!

DISQUALIFICATIONS (DQ'S): For the first swim meet and the first swim meet only, 8 & under swimmers, just like all swimmers, WILL be disqualified if he doesn't swim a stroke legally. **8 & U Swimmers, however, will not be informed of their disqualification.** The first swim meet can be intimidating and our last intention is to discourage them. Coaches will be notified of the DQ's and will be able to work with swimmers on correcting their stroke(s). Private lessons and/or stroke clinics are good supplemental lessons to correct an illegal swim. After the first meet, however, efforts will be made to notify all swimmers if they do not swim the strokes legally. DQ's are not the end of the world. This just means that their times will not be recorded officially, and they might not receive an "official" ribbon for the event. As much as we try to explain this, please know that there might be tears. The best person to "pick up the pieces" is the coach. The child is more likely to "get back on that horse again" if the parent steps back from this situation ... its part of growing them as a swimmer. If your child does DQ (and even the 15 to 18 year olds DQ), he should be told what he did incorrectly immediately after he gets out of the water. If you need to know why, ask the coach on Friday after the meet. Do not talk to stroke and turn judges during the meet. Again, if your child repeatedly DQ's for the same reason, please consider a stroke clinic or private lessons. Information for these lessons will be posted at the pool.

What to Bring:

Swim cap (must be a Gower cap or a solid color), goggles (extra pair wouldn't be a bad idea), chair or extra towel to sit on, healthy snacks, water, Gatorade, or money to buy these at concessions, sweatshirt/sweatpants in case you get cold in between events ... and lots of patience! The swimmers sit together as a team. Please help your child get situated, and let him know where you will be. Please be mindful of the fact that we are a very LARGE team and sitting space for swimmers at meets is limited. Please use as little space as possible. Bags should hang on the swimmers chairs or be placed underneath. This will allow for more sitting space. Also, swimmers and their parents are responsible for any personal items brought to the meet. Any valuables are of your own responsibility. Please ask someone if you don't understand something or want to know more.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

What is the meet schedule and how long is the swim season?

We will swim our dual meets on the following dates:

Friday , June 2	Sugar Creek @ Gower
Thursday, June 8	GCC @ Gower
Thursday, June 15	Gower @ Devenger
Thursday, June 22	Gower @ Stone Lake
Thursday June 29	Woody Creek @ Gower
Friday, July 14	RED DIVISION at Stone Lake for 10 & under
Saturday, July 15	RED DIVISION at Stone Lake for 11 & up
Saturday, July 22	Championships at Westside Aquatic
Sunday, July 23	Classics at Westside Aquatic
Monday, July 24	Swim Team Banquet

How old does my child have to be to swim on the big swim team?

Although there is not a certain age requirement for the big swim team, parents are asked to consider the following: Events at a meet require each swimmer to swim the length of the pool. If your child is not able to swim the length of the pool, they are not ready for big swim team.

Are practices mandatory?

Yes. And No. Being a part of a team means that you do your part to make the team better. Swimming for Gower is no different. Everyone has to do their part to make Gower Swim Team the best it can be. Coaches are paid to work with each team member to help them become better swimmers. As the old saying goes, "PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT". Some strokes are harder to master. Practice will only make each swimmer better and faster! Practice is also a great way to connect with other team mates. It's just one thing that makes Gower special. We truly are a GOWER FAMILY. You get out of it what you put into it.

How many meets does my child have to swim?

We would love to see each swimmer swim in each of the 5 dual meets. However, we understand that vacations, etc. can prevent that. Each swimmer MUST swim in at least two meets in order to swim in Red Division. If there is a rain delay or a meet is cancelled due to inclement weather, your child is not penalized. That meet will count as a meet, if he or she was present and ready to swim, even if he or she never swam an event.

Do I have to volunteer at a meet?

Yes. Gower is a well-oiled machine but it takes many, many hands to run an efficient meet. We ask that at least one parent volunteer for at least one half of each home meet. Volunteer needs vary at away meets and during Divisionals. Please talk volunteer opportunities over with your family and see how you best can serve your team. If volunteering during meets is a hardship on your family (i.e. work hours prohibit you from volunteering at a meet), we can suggest other ways for you to contribute to the team.

What does SCRATCHING a meet mean?

Scratching is when a swimmer notifies a coach of an absence at a meet. Scratches must be submitted IN WRITING by the end of the day Monday prior to a Thursday or Friday meet. If the meet is being held on a Tuesday, the coaches must be notified by the end of the day on Friday. Scratches can be submitted electronically at scratch@gowerpool.com. Swimmers CANNOT verbally tell a coach about their absence.

How do I keep up with the events at a swim meet?

Heat Sheets are sold at each swim meet. The heat sheet provides an order of events and lists the swimmers by event number and by lane number. One of the easiest ways to keep up with your swimmer is to look at the events for your child's age group, find their name and highlight it with a highlighter. Please keep in mind, each meet does have scratches. Your child's heat and/or lane can be altered without you knowing.

Can I set up a chair for the swim meet?

You can. However, they cannot be set up any time prior to 3:30 on the day of the meet. It takes MANY hands to run an efficient meet. While we want you to be able to observe your child's swim, we also need at least one parent to volunteer for one half of the meet. Many hands make for light work and it will allow everyone the opportunity to see their children swim.

Where can I purchase GOWER Apparel?

Gower Apparel and other Gower items can be purchased at the ***Gower Boutique*** at every home meet, at different team functions and at some practices throughout the swim season. Credit cards are accepted!

Is there REALLY a Gower Fairy and when does she come?

Yes, there really is a Gower Fairy! She is a busy fairy ALL season long and works hard to surprise all of our Red Division swim participants with lots of GOWER GOODIES on the Friday morning of Red Division Weekend. The Team Gift is usually a part of the Gower Fairy delivery. ALL swimmers will receive the Team Gift, however, only those that swim in the divisional meet will receive the Red Division spirit gifts. So, when the fairy delivers, she only delivers to Red Division participants. The team gift for swimmers who do not swim in Red Division is distributed at a later date.

What is Red Division?

Gower is just one team in the SWIM ASSOCIATION INVITATIONAL LEAGUE (SAIL). SAIL is divided into 6 Divisions: Red, White, Blue, Green, Gold and Purple. Each Division is made up by 5 to 6 Teams. Gower is in Red Division along with Greenville Country Club, Devenger, Sugar Creek and Stone Lake.

RED DIVISION is also the name used for the meet that will be held the weekend of July 8-9. Swimmers that are age 10 and under swim on Friday. Swimmers age 11 and up swim on Saturday. The meet is where all 5 teams in Red Division compete for the Metcalf Cup (most points) and the Founders Cup (team points divided by the number of swimmers). The week before Red Division weekend is really busy. There are lots of spirit activities. You will receive an e-mail with a link to a RED DIVISION newsletter. YOU NEED TO PRINT THIS OUT AND MARK YOUR CALENDARS SO THAT YOU CAN BE SURE TO KEEP UP WITH ALL OF THE EVENTS. It is a fun week for the swimmers, and you don't want to miss any of the fun!

YOU WILL NOTICE THAT WE WILL SWIM ONE TEAM THAT IS NOT IN RED DIVISION. BECAUSE RED DIVISION IS MADE UP OF AN ODD NUMBER OF TEAMS, EACH TEAM IN RED DIVISION WILL HAVE TO SWIM A TEAM FROM ANOTHER DIVISION. THIS YEAR, WE WILL SWIM WOODY CREEK FROM THE PURPLE DIVISION.

What are Championships and Classics?

Championships and Classics are like an All-Star weekend. The meet results from all of the 6 Divisions (Red, White, Blue, Green, Gold and Purple) are combined as if it were one meet to identify the 40 fastest swimmers in each event. The swimmers that are ranked #40-#17 swim in Championships on Saturday, July 16th at Westside Aquatic Complex. The swimmers that are ranked #16-#1 swim in Classics at Westside Aquatic Complex on July 17^h.

Why do I have to complete an Intent to Swim for Red Division and Championships/Classics?

A lot of time is spent seeding the meet for Red Division and when one swimmer is pulled out of the meet, it upsets the whole apple cart and the effort that is placed into strategically seeding the meet for optimal points. We know there are unforeseen circumstances that arise. We just ask that you spend thoughtful consideration before completing your Intent to Swim Form so that we can seed an accurate meet.

Managing the Championship and Classics meets requires the cooperation of almost 4,000 participants. All swimmers who earn their spot in this meet are encouraged to participate. However, when unable to compete for any reason, we want to allow other swimmers to fill these limited spots. A scratch denies a swimmer an opportunity and leaves an empty lane diminishing the quality of the meet. Therefore, it is imperative that all swimmers make a commitment to swim (or not) in Championships and Classics by an announced date. A swimmer scratching after that date incurs a meaningful fine.

We hope this helps! We know it's a lot of information! The more you know though, the better the experience will be! If you have any questions about anything listed on here, please give one of us a call! We're here to help! And as always, GO GOWER! *Mary Margaret Bannister &*

Alison Hayes