



Swim Team 101

Welcome to the Braemar Blasters!

Included in this handbook you will find information about our swim team, swim meets, and swimming in general.

PWSL

The Braemar Blasters Swim Team swims in the Prince William Swim League (PWSL). The PWSL was founded in 1972 to encourage the sport of swimming in Prince William County and follows USA Swimming rules.

There are currently 24 teams:

Ashland Stingrays	Old Bridge Breakers
Ben Lomond Flying Ducks	Piedmont Tsunamis
Braemar Blasters	Ridgewood Barracudas
Bridlewood Bridlewaves	Southbridge Sharks
Brookside Hurricanes	Stonewall Park Explosion
Dale City Frogs	Sudley Seahorses
Dominion Valley Sharks	Urbanna Otters
Kingsbrooke Sea Lions	Veteran's Park Marlins
Lake Manassas Blue Dolphins	Victory Lakes Piranhas
Lake Ridge Lancers	Virginia Oaks Sea Devils
Meadowbrook Woods Makos	Wellington Dolphins
Montclair Seahawks	Westridge Waves

Volunteers

Swim meets cannot happen without parent volunteers. The Braemar Blasters require that one parent from each family volunteer weekly. Sign-ups for volunteer positions are done at the registration open houses. If you have any questions about your position, ask the 'head' person in your group or the Volunteer Coordinator.

If you will not be able to attend a particular swim meet, it is important that you contact your position's "head" person and/or the Volunteer Coordinator and let them know as soon as possible so they can schedule someone else to take your place.

The following volunteer positions are part of the Blasters team:

Referee	Heat Ribbon distributor
Starter	Computer representative
Announcer	Scorers
Stroke and Turn judges	Ribbon writers
Timers	Marshals
Runners	Concessions
Clerk of Course	Set Up/Clean Up
Pep Rally Coordinator	Team Photographer
Social Coordinator	Floaters

Swimming Basics

The pool is 25 meters in length, and most pools have six lanes. The type of swimming done in this league is called 'short course' swimming, as opposed to 'long course' that takes place in a 50 meter pool.

There are four recognized strokes- **freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly**. Each stroke has a set of standards that must be followed in order for the stroke to be considered legal.

In addition to the four strokes, there are other events:

The **Individual Medley (IM)** includes 25 meters of each stroke, in this order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle.

The **Medley Relay** includes, in this order: backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and freestyle. Swimmers 12 and under swim 25 meters per leg; 13 and over swim 50 meters per leg of the relay.

The **Freestyle Relay** is all freestyle. 12 and under swimmers do 25 meters per leg. Swimmers 13 and over do 50 meters per leg of the relay.

A swim team can enter an A, B, and sometimes even a C relay team in a relay event. The 'A' relay team has the fastest time; the 'B' and 'C' relay teams would be the second and third fastest relays, respectively. Relay team members are selected based on the individual times of the swimmers. The coach wants to arrange the swimmers so that they have the best relay combinations possible. Relays change throughout the season, and positions on a relay can change, too. A swimmer who usually swims the first leg might be moved to the third, if that makes for the fastest combination. Even though the 'A' relay might be the favorite to win, it's possible for the 'B' or 'C' relay teams to have a great swim and take first place.

Swimming is both a team and an individual sport. A swimmer should be concerned about how he or she places for the team, but should be just as focused on the improvements he/she made in each event. If you drop time, you are a winner!

Practices

Swimmers are expected to attend practices regularly. Swimming is a team sport, and it is important that the team practice together, under the guidance of the coach. It's also very important that relay teams get to practice together.

Swimmers should arrive at practice at least five minutes before practice starts so that they can be ready on time. All swimmers should have goggles and fins. Girls should wear caps. Swimmers should go directly to the coaches at practice and should wait for instructions.

Swimmers need to look at the coach when instructions are being given. They should not play around while at the wall. Safety is important and swimmers are not to push their teammates into the pool before, during, or after practice. Horseplay is not tolerated at the Braemar pool.

Swimmers should drink water before and after practice since they can get dehydrated even in the water.

Some practices may focus on one stroke while others may cover multiple strokes. The team has weekly **clinics** to focus on specific things like kicks, starts, turns, relays, etc. Sometimes it may be for a specific age group. Clinics are optional to attend, but if your swimmer needs help in the area the clinic is focusing on, it is a good idea to attend. The Head Coach will let you know in advance what will be practiced at the upcoming clinic.

If a swimmer will miss a meet, please make a note of that in the **team book** that is located in the team file box. The coach has to know if your swimmer won't be at a meet when organizing the individual events and relays. You should give at least a week's notice (or as soon as possible). Each family has a folder in the above-mentioned file box. Please check it regularly for various updates, newsletters, and ribbons.

Occasionally swimmers have to miss practices because of vacations or camps. Be sure to let the coach know if this is going to happen, again, by using the team book.

It is important that parents do not approach the coaches during practice. If you need to talk to a coach, leave a message in the team book. Parents should not 'coach' their child from the side of the pool during practice or during a meet.



Social/Team Events

The Braemar Blasters sponsor quite a few social events throughout the swimming season. The point of these events is to emphasize that the swim season is not just about competition; it is also about having fun and making friends. Check the calendar on the website www.braemarblasters.com for upcoming social events.

There are always **Pep Rallies** the Friday night before meets. Often these are potluck dinners. These dinners are a great way for your children to make friends and, just as importantly, it offers parents a chance to meet people, too!

The Blasters also hold an annual **Family Relay Night**. Teams are made up of parents and swimmers and a variety of fun relays are used in the competition.

In the past there have been other events like movie or golf outings. It's up to you what you attend, but be sure to RSVP on time if a response is required.

The team has an annual **Swim-A-Lap** which is both a social and fundraising event. Each year the team has to replace or purchase items key to running a swim team like backstroke flags, pace clocks, and kickboards. Our Swim-A-Lap helps cover these expenses.

Team pictures are taken in June or July. Swimmers can take an individual picture, and then the entire team has a group photo taken. You can purchase picture packages and order forms for these are distributed a week or so before picture day.

Usually the night of, or the day after, Divisionals, the Braemar Blasters have an **Awards Ceremony**. The team celebrates the season and trophies and honors are given out. Every swimmer will receive a participation trophy. Other trophies awarded are Most Improved, High Point Earner, and Coach's Award. Each of these trophies is awarded to a girl and boy in each age group.

Team Communication

Once the meets start, a weekly **newsletter** is distributed to each family via email and posted on the website.

This newsletter will keep you up to date on upcoming events. The newsletter also has information about the upcoming meet (for example, directions to the away meet and what time you should arrive). Finally, the newsletter highlights the accomplishments from the last week. The newsletter is used to recognize swimmers and volunteers.

Email is the primary form of contact between the Board/coaches and the parents. Please check your email regularly and make sure your Blasters updates aren't going in your spam folder.

As mentioned before, information will be placed in the family folders in the team box. The **team box** is usually located in the 'dining' area of the Iona Sound pool and at the Rob Roy pool. Check it frequently for important information.

www.braemarblasters.com

Bookmark this site! This is the team website and is full of great information. Among other things, you can find the league and team by-laws, information on upcoming meets and events, and the team records. Check it out!



Time Trials

Time trials are swum the week before the first meet. They give the coach an idea of where each swimmer is, and they give the swimmer a valid time so he/she can be appropriately seeded in the first meet. Time trials are run just like a regular meet, though there are no relay events.

Swim Meets

Please check out the PWSL By-Laws on the team website for more detail about meets. Swim meets are won by the strength of their swimmers, the placement of swimmers strategically in the meet, and by the number of swimmers each team brings to the meet. Swim meets are sometimes won/lost simply because one team had a few more swimmers missing than the other team. Attendance at swim meets is a vital component to doing well during the meets.

Swim meets start at 7:00 am. You have to arrive well before that because each team has warm-ups. You can expect to arrive at a meet (home or away) around 6:00 am. It can take time to travel to away meets. Make sure that your swimmers go to bed early the night before so they are well rested.

Swimmers must check in with the coach and relay coordinators when they get to the meet. This is especially important for swimmers who are swimming in a relay because if they aren't checked off as being there, they will get scratched (eliminated) from their relay. Swimmers may be told prior to the meet if they are part of a relay team but changes can be made the day of the meet so it is **VERY IMPORTANT THAT ALL SWIMMERS CHECK IN WITH THEIR COACH AND, IF THEY ARE ASSIGNED TO A RELAY TEAM, WITH THE RELAY COORDINATOR!**



What to bring to a meet:

1. Team suit, team cap, and team t-shirt
2. Goggles (plus an extra pair since they are easily lost or broken!)
3. A Sharpie marker to record event #'s on the kids' arms/hands (this helps the kids remember their events and what they are swimming)
4. Sweats and sweatshirt for those cool early mornings
5. Two or more towels
6. A folding chair per person, or something comfortable to sit on
7. A hat and plenty of sunscreen
8. Games such as cards, coloring books, or things that aren't very valuable
9. Lots of water and/or sports drinks
10. Healthy, low-sugar, snacks or money to buy healthy items at the concessions stand
11. Small bills or change to purchase a heat sheet

Swimmers are divided into **age groups** based on their age on June 1st:

Microblasters are non-competitive team members who are at least four years of age, developmental level, who do not qualify for the regular team. They are included in all social events and activities but may not participate in PWSL Saturday meets. One to two mini meets will be scheduled during the summer season. The Microblasters' season is shorter than the Blasters' season due to pool temperature and coaching staff requirements. It's at the coaches discretion to move a Microblaster up to the Blasters' competitive team.

Blasters are competitive team members who compete in PWSL Saturday meets.

- 8 and under
- 9-10
- 11-12
- 13-14
- 15-18

In the 8 and under category, swimmers who are 6 and under can compete for ribbons with other 6 and under swimmers.

Each swimmer can swim up to three individual events plus two relays. The coach will select the best events for each swimmer and will place the swimmers in relays according to their times at time trials or, later, on their personal best times swam at the meets.

At a swim meet you have events and they are swum in the same order each time. Boys swim before girls; younger swimmers go before older swimmers.

The **events**, in order, are:

- 15-18 freestyle relay
- Medley relays (8 and under swim a mixed boy/girl relay, 12 and under swim a 100 meter relay, 13 and over swim a 200 meter relay)
- Freestyle (8 and under swim 25 meters, 9 and over swim 50 meters)
- 100 meter Individual medley
- Backstroke (same as Freestyle)
- Breaststroke (8 and under swim 25 meters, 9 and over swim 50 meters)
- Butterfly (10 and under swim 25 meters, 11 and over swim 50 meters)
- Freestyle relays (except for the 15-18 year olds who go at the beginning of the meet)

A **heat sheet** is sold at each meet and it lists all the events in order and the swimmers swimming that event. For example, if you look at *Event 15 Girls 11-12 50 SC (short course) meter Freestyle* you will see a numbered list of girls with their name, age, team, and best time. A swimmers personal best swim time is always used to 'seed' the swimmers (the personal best swim time, their "Seed Time" will remain the same for all meets until the swimmer beats their personal best time and then their "seed time" will change).

Heats are formed by the Clerk of Course. PWSL "deck seeds" all their swimmers. This means that swimmers are entered into an event, and then, the morning of the meet, the Clerk of Course manually creates the heats for the swimmers. The Clerk of Course begins with the slowest seed times, plus swimmers who have no time (NT), in to the first heats. The last heat in each event will have the six fastest swimmers.

The winner of each heat, regardless of whether it is one of the first or last heats, gets an orange heat ribbon. This does not mean he/she has won the race, but it does mean the child has won the heat, which is very exciting for the swimmer. Once all the heats have

been swum, all the times are entered and the event results are eventually posted. A swimmer from any heat can win the race since it's the fastest time that wins. Please remember that this is a parent volunteer run meet and the Clerk of Course does its best to fill all the heats in proper order.

***Stay hydrated during a meet! It is important that swimmers drink plenty of fluids during a meet. They aren't 'quenched' just because they are in the water!
This goes for parents, too. Bring water and drink, drink, drink.***

Results are posted at each meet. It can take some time for events to get entered into the computer, but when that is done, they get printed and posted in a central location. You will be told where these results will be posted prior to our home meets. If you are at an away meet and want to see the results, a general rule of thumb is to look for a large group of people all crowded up in a small area; that's probably where the results are posted!

Sometimes a swimmer enters a race without having swum it before. This swimmer will be entered as a NT (no time) and will go in one of the first heats.

At a dual meet (meaning two teams competing) the top twelve finishers earn ribbons. PWSL has a rule that states: "The same team cannot score **points** for more than 6 places." This means that the seventh fastest swimmer on one team can earn a **ribbon**, but he/she might not earn points.

For relays, in a dual meet, the first place team earns 47 points and the second place team earns 32 points. The same team cannot earn both first and second place points. One team might get first and second place, and first and second place ribbons, but the opponent will get the second place points.

You might notice that some swimmers have an A or a B next to their times on the heat sheets or the posted results. PWSL has time standards that are reviewed and changed annually. An 'A' time correlates to the top 20% of swimmer times in PWSL. A 'B' time falls in the next top 40%.

DQs

A 'DQ' stands for a disqualification. There are stroke and turn officials on deck evaluating each swimmer as they race. When they see a swimmer do something that is not part of the stroke standard, or if they have an illegal start, turn, or finish, it will get turned into the referee, who then turns it over to the scoring and computer team.

Parents are not to challenge the stroke and turn officials during a meet. They are impartial judges whose job is to help the swimmers improve. If you are not sure why your child was disqualified, contact the coach after the meet.

Please don't fret if your child gets a DQ. Getting a DQ can be part of the learning process and can happen to any swimmer, no matter how good they are. No one swimmer is "perfect" all the time. No swimmer should be condemned for getting one. It is very common, especially with the younger or newer swimmers.

PWSL is discouraging in order to speed up meets. It shows good sportsmanship if each swimmer remains in his/her lane and does not exit the pool until all swimmers have finished the race. It's also good to shake hands with the swimmers on either side of you after the race.

Ribbons are handed out on the Monday or Tuesday after each Saturday meet. Not every swimmer gets a ribbon. As a swimmer develops skills and improves, he/she will start to receive ribbons. What is most important is that the swimmer is improving.

At several different times throughout the season, PWSL posts the top swimmers/times to date in each event.

Divisionals

PWSL groups teams into a division of teams with similar strength. If you have a really strong season one summer, you will move up into a harder division. It's important that each team is challenged, and this is why this is done and why you don't swim the same teams at Divisionals each year.

Divisionals are the last meet of the season. This is often a tri or quad meet (meaning three or four teams) and therefore the scoring is a little different. More swimmers can earn points and ribbons at Divisionals. You can check the PWSL By-Laws on the Braemar Blasters website for details.

A swimmer must have a legal time in an event in order to swim it in the Divisional meet. Additionally, a swimmer must have competed in two (2) league sponsored meets to be eligible for the Divisional meet.

Right after the Divisional meet ends, PWSL takes the times from all the divisional meets and enters them into a database. This generates the **PWSL Cyber Meet**, which is a league-wide 'virtual' meet based on all the kids swim times achieved at the Divisional meet. Ribbons are given for the Cyber Meet winners through 24 places (this means that the swimmer placed in the top 24 of all swimmers in the PWSL (ie. Prince William County). It is a great accomplishment for a swimmer to place in the top 24 in this cyber meet.