



Take Your Mark!

Potomac Valley Swimming
Parents Newsletter

November, 2018

Why Can't I be on Deck with My Child?

Parents who are not working in an official capacity (e.g., certified official, lane timer) are not permitted on deck during a PVS meet. There are at least three good reasons why:

1. Insurance doesn't allow spectators on deck. A pool deck is wet and often very slippery. It's filled with swim bags as well as little bodies—sitting, standing, moving about. Deck space is limited, so accidents can (and do) happen. For USA Swimming's insurance to be in effect, only swimmers, coaches, and officials (including timers) are permitted to be on deck.
2. Swim coaches emphasize responsibility and self-reliance. They want your child to learn to remember what heat and lane they're swimming in, to keep track of their belongings, to socialize appropriately with their teammates, to remember to eat and hydrate, etc. These lessons are less likely to be learned if the swimmer can depend on Mom or Dad being on deck to take care of everything.
3. Most importantly, it helps to keep your child safe. PVS meets are generally held at public facilities and are open to the public at large. Often these facilities have other events occurring during the swim meet. To keep your child safe, we need to have strict control over who is coming and going on the pool deck. Even if your child's coach knows you well, other adults who have responsibility for security likely do not recognize you. You're one more body on the deck and you're making it more difficult to ensure the safety of the swimmers.

Want to be on deck during the meet? Become a certified official or a lane timer!



Swimming in College

College swimming. It's exciting, it's competitive, it's spirited, it's challenging. Many high school age swimmers (and their parents) see themselves as members of the swim team while attending college. What does it take to swim in college? How do swimmers get recruited? What about scholarships?

Let's start with the scholarships. First some background. The NCAA limits scholarships for every sport, and for this purpose recognizes 2 categories of sports: head-count sports and equivalency sports. For head-count sports (typically the "revenue sports"), the stated scholarship limits are absolute: the number of student athletes receiving awards cannot

exceed the number. NCAA FBS schools, for instance, can have a maximum of 85 athletes under scholarship for football at any time. Head count sports generally award a much higher percentage of full scholarships to participants than equivalency sports.

Swimming is an equivalency sport. Equivalency sports also have a set number of scholarships, but these teams are allowed to divide the scholarships between multiple athletes. For example, a team with five scholarships available could offer a full ride to five athletes, a half scholarship to ten athletes, a quarter scholarship to twenty athletes, or some combination thereof. Full scholarships for equivalency sports are relatively rare, as coaches typically prefer to divide the scholarships and offer them to a larger number of athletes.

Current NCAA scholarship limits for Swimming:

NCAA Division 1	Men: 9.9	Women: 14
NCAA Division 2	Men: 8.1	Women: 8.1

These numbers are *maximums*, and schools can award less than the NCAA limit; less than $\frac{2}{3}$ of Division 1 swimming programs are “fully funded,” i.e. offering the maximum number. Some schools (Ivy League universities for instance) offer no athletic scholarships. Division 3 schools likewise do not award athletic scholarships. But nearly all schools offer some type of financial aid.

How many schools have swimming programs? The numbers vary from year to year, but here are the figures from 2017-18:

NCAA Division 1	Men: 133	Women: 195
NCAA Division 2	Men: 73	Women: 103
NCAA Division 3	Men: 230	Women: 259

Divisions are determined by the size of the school, the number of athletic teams, and other factors; swimming has nothing to do with it. Most college swim teams have about 20-30 male and 20-30 female athletes.

So, how do we go about learning what colleges might be a good fit for my swimmer? The experts will give you much advice. An excellent way to start is for your child to visit several schools’ websites. Look at academic requirements for admission. How do your child’s academic credentials compare? What type of programs are offered? Go to the swim team’s website and look at the high school bios of swimmers currently on the roster. How do your child’s times compare? What are the needs of the program? In other words, what swimmers are graduating from that program the year that your child graduates from high school, and what events do they swim? What strokes will that coach be looking to replace?

As per NCAA rules, college coaches cannot initiate contact with an athlete until the summer before his/her senior year in high school. But swimmers are allowed to contact any coach via e-mail at any time, and keep the coach updated on athletic and academic progress. If possible spend some time on the campus, whether on an “official” visit or a low-key unofficial visit—many college swimmers say that the campus visit was far and away the most influential factor in their decision.

Above all, never lose sight of the fact that the main purpose is to identify a school that fits your child based on educational requirements as well as swimming, so that he/she can excel both academically and athletically.

Keep in mind that swimming while attending college can be quite challenging. It's tough enough being a full-time student, but being a full-time student-athlete is even more demanding. Your child will be attending class and studying, as well as incorporating a considerable training schedule. It requires significant time-management skills.

But the rewards are plentiful. The level of competition, the camaraderie of the team, the coaching, the travel, the lifelong friendships—the overwhelming majority of former collegiate swimmers will tell you that the college experience was one of the best thing to happen to them.



Swim Talk: Prelims-Finals

A Prelims-Finals meet is a meet with two sessions daily. The preliminary heats are usually held in the morning or early afternoon. The fastest swimmers return in the evening to swim the event again in Finals. The number of swimmers advancing to Finals depends on the meet, the age group, and sometimes the events themselves. The meet announcement will indicate the number of finals heats that return in the evening to swim in Finals.

Preliminary sessions of a Prelims-Finals meet are circle seeded, a method of seeding where the fastest swimmers are seeded in the center lanes of the fastest 3 heats. The fastest swimmer is placed in the last heat, second fastest in the second to last heat, third fastest in the third to last heat, fourth fastest in the last heat, fifth fastest in the second to last heat, sixth fastest in the third to last heat, etc.

After the prelims in an event are completed, the announcer will announce the finalists, who will return in the evening Finals session. Swimmers are given a window of time to scratch, which means they declare that they won't swim that event in finals. This does happen, which is why there are always two alternate finalists listed just in case.

“What happens if my child doesn't scratch and misses his/her Finals race?” Typically he/she is barred from further competition of the remainder of the meet. “Should my child return for Finals if he/she is an alternate?” Absolutely. Crazy things happen. People slip on deck, swimmers get sick between sessions, parents don't get the message that their child made Finals. This could all mean there's an empty lane during Finals. When the Referee sees an empty lane, he makes a call for that alternate.

Making Finals in a Prelims-Finals meet is a big deal. Swimming the same event twice in one day is quite a challenge; making Finals in two events doubly so. And can you imagine qualifying for three! It happens sometimes.



Links to some intriguing articles for swim parents:

Swimmers Have Special Hydration Needs

<https://www.momsteam.com/swimming/swimmers-have-special-hydration-needs>

Reflections of a Veteran Swim Dad

<https://www.nspf.org/blog/reflections-veteran-swim-dad>

10 Essential Tips to Help You Win a College Swimming Scholarship

<https://www.swimmingworldmagazine.com/news/10-essential-tips-for-winning-a-college-swimming-scholarship/>

3 Reasons Why Swim Parents Are Happy and Positive

<https://swimswam.com/3-reasons-why-swim-parents-are-happy-and-positive/>

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Jack Neill, Editor: jjneill@gmail.com

Potomac Valley Swimming

Tom Ugast, General Chair: tugast@nationscapitalswimming.com