



**HASTINGS LAKE YMCA
STINGRAYS
SWIM TEAM**



PARENT HANDBOOK

2011

YMCA MISSION STATEMENT

To put Christian Principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

HASTINGS LAKE YMCA SWIM TEAM

VISION STATEMENT

The vision of the Hastings Lake YMCA is to build a premier swim team, continuing in its long-standing tradition of team accomplishment, team pride, team unity, and team spirit. The Hastings Lake YMCA Stingrays Swim Team shall have as its members swimmers who are the best trained, all-around successful individuals; coaches who are role models, both dedicated and knowledgeable; and parents who are involved, committed, and supportive.

MISSION STATEMENT

MIND – BODY – SPIRIT

The mission of the Hastings Lake YMCA Stingrays Swim Team is to adhere to the YMCA core values of Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility, while providing a safe, enjoyable, well-organized program for age group swimmers. Qualified coaches will effectively train and motivate all team members. The YMCA, coaches, and parents will work together to nurture a quality, community minded competitive swim team, thereby achieving the goals of the entire team family.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Hastings Lake YMCA Staff

Program Director.....Anna Graham
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Swim Team Head Coach.....Darius Wolny
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Swim Team Coach.....Mary Bolton

Swim Team Coach.....Mesa Schmidt

Swim Team Coach.....Don Harper

STINGRAYS COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

One of the best ways to help your swimmer have a productive and equally fun season is to be aware of what is going on. We utilize several forms of communication.

Bulletin Board There is a bulletin board located between the men's and women's locker rooms. A variety of information will be posted, such as: meet schedules, meet sign-ups, results, qualifying times and weekly team updates.

Folders There is a file box, containing a hanging folder for each family, located outside of the double doors that lead to the pool. Swimmers should check this folder on a daily basis. This is where they will find: their awards after meets, spiritwear forms, and flyers on team parties that take place throughout the season.

E-Mail The best way to communicate questions or concerns to your child's coach is through email. The coaches have very limited time between practice groups. That time is mainly used for the swimmer to coach discussions. If you need to speak with the coach in person, please email them to set aside a time.

Guidelines for a Healthy Coach-Parent Relationship

Parents have an important role in providing a supportive atmosphere for swimmers and the coaching staff. Parental involvement and encouragement are essential ingredients in a successful swimming program. Have a positive attitude and remember that swimming is only a small part of life, not the central issue.

The coach has the responsibility and authority for conducting swim practice, maintaining discipline and motivating swimmers. Parent should not interfere in these matters! They should bring concerns to the coach by email or by giving the coach a note. Do not tell your swimmers that you have a concern. If you have a pressing problem with your child swimming, you should resolve that problem directly with the coach or Program Director, as soon as possible.

- Avoid contacting the coach with minor problems. They generally resolve themselves.
- Do not discuss problems with the coach during the middle of swim practice or during a swim meet.
- Problem resolution is part of growing up. Let your swimmer try first, if possible.
- Be polite, do not raise your voice or use foul language.
- Parents cannot be in the area designated for coaches during meets.
- All parents must be careful not to push swimmers too far, too fast. It is better to have them develop at a slower, less pressured, rate than to have "BURN OUT" or start to dislike swimming. Discipline and workout performance is a swimmer-coach matter and should be handled that way.
- The coach will bring any problems to the parents' attention if required.

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR SWIMMING PARENTS

1. Do not impose your ambitions on your child. Swimming is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Don't judge your child's progress based on what others do. Instead, keep your focus on moving towards their reasonable goals.
2. Be supportive, no matter what. There is only one question to ask your child – "Did you have fun today?"
3. Do not coach your child. You have taken your child to a professional coach; do not undermine that coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to support, love and hug your child no matter what. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. Don't compete with the coach. If the coach becomes an authority figure, then the swimmer may become confused as to whom they should take advice from.
4. Respect the lifeguards. Lifeguards are there to prevent accidents, enforce the pool rules and to keep everyone safe. Make yourself and your swimmer familiar with the pool rules so that practice will run as smooth as possible.
5. Only have positive things to say at a swim meet. If you are going to show up at a swim meet, you should cheer and applaud not criticize your child.
6. Acknowledge your child's fears. A first swimming meet, the first 50, 100, 500 free or the first IM can be very stressful. It is totally appropriate for your child to be scared. Assure your child that the coach would not have entered them if they were not ready.
7. Do not criticize the officials. Only coaches may approach an official during a meet.
8. Honor our child's coach. The bond between coach and swimmer is a special one, and one that contributes to your child's success as well as fun.
9. Help your child have goals besides winning. Giving an honest effort, regardless of what the outcome is, is much more important than winning. Swimming has other attributes...it teaches self-discipline and sportsmanship; it builds self-esteem and fitness; it provides lifelong friendships and much more.
10. Get to know the coach so that you can be assured that his or her philosophy, attitudes, ethics, and knowledge are such that you are happy to have your child under his or her leadership.

Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. Some of us can climb mountains, and are afraid to fight. Some of us will fight, but turn to jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened under certain conditions. Explain that *courage is not the absence of fear, but a means of doing something in spite of fear or discomfort.*

SWIM TEAM OBJECTIVES

The Hastings Lake Swim Team program is founded on the belief that age group competitive swimming offers an exciting and worthwhile experience in a young person's life. It can be learned and enjoyed by those with little ability and by those who are of Olympic caliber, and its values go far beyond that of learning proficiency in the water.

Practice Groups

There are four practice groups that make up the team: Little Stingers, Red, Green and Blue. Placement, in the team groups, is determined by the Head Coach. Returning swimmers will be given the color for which they need to register. New swimmers must have an evaluation, if needed, after which they will be provided with the team color to register.

Seasons

The Stingrays have two swim seasons. The fall season runs from mid-September through State Championships in early March. The summer season runs from June through early August. Please see the current most current flyer for dates, times and pricing. Please note that there will not be any credits or probations for missed practices. Returning team members are given at least one day priority registration for each season.

Stroke Clinics

Stroke clinics will be available to current Stingray members and prospective members during the off season for additional stroke work. Please see the current flyer for dates, times and pricing.

Volunteer Opportunities

There will be many opportunities for parents to volunteer throughout the season. It is highly recommended that parents/guardians volunteer to help during home meets during each season. At some away meets, we may be asked to provide parent volunteers to help with timing at their event. Other volunteer opportunities involve social events, concessions, spirit wear, ribbons, etc. Please turn in your Volunteer form to be a part of helping with any of these committees.

Coaching Philosophy

It is the goal of the Stingrays' coaching staff to provide an environment that will give athletes an opportunity to develop as individuals and prepare them for the challenges and rewards of life.

By stressing the values of discipline, commitment, hard work and taking responsibility for oneself, athletes who given an honest effort in all aspects of the program, will be enhanced in spirit, mind and body.

Working towards a goal is the key to developing the values that we are seeking to instill. There are no guarantees that a goal will be met, but it is important that the athlete take responsibility to prepare to the best of his/her ability in an effort to reach that goal. Preparation is where the lessons of life are learned. Times are not as important as learning. Our hope is that all swimmers, whether they reach their goals or not, still feel good about what they have learned, experienced and enjoyed.

Practices

Parents should not question a swimmer's placement in his or her practice group. Placements are made with the utmost scrutiny of a swimmer's age, ability, time of season, and emotional and physical development. Groupings are not reflective of status or achievement. They represent the facilitation of the best possible learning environment for your swimmer and provide a means of progression for the team. The decision to place swimmers in a specific practice group is solely that of the coaching staff. At their discretion, coaches may work on an individual basis to address scheduling conflicts.

Team Equipment

We would like everyone to take pride in our team and have a unified look at meets. This means wearing the team suit and cap. Team caps can be purchased at the front desk. Team suits must be ordered.

Optional clothing includes team warm-ups, team bags, hooded sweatshirts, sweatpants, t-shirts, parent shirts and more. Our color is mainly red with white and black accents.

Obligations of Swim Team Membership

All members of the team have several obligations. The parents and swimmers are expected to be considerate and respectful during practice and at meets as outlined later in this handbook. Each swimmer represents our team in and out of the water. Parents are responsible for deciding which away swim meets, other than the championship meets, to attend and ensuring that swimmers are dropped off and picked up in a timely fashion. Parents will also be asked to help with home meets.

Practice and Meet Attendance

Attendance at away dual and invitational swim meets is voluntary. However, we would like everyone to attend as many swim meets as possible to improve their strokes and times. All swimmers should attend home meets and championship meets, however, we do understand that circumstances arise where you cannot make a meet. Please talk to one of the coaches if there is a conflict. Please make sure your child is in attendance at the meets especially if they are on a relay.

Your family should decide what amount of time and effort they wish to put into swimming and balance this with other priorities for the best health of the swimmer. The more you practice the more you will improve.

NOTE: Little Stingers are encouraged to participate in our home meets. These meets offer a great experience for new swimmers in the comfort of their home pool. They may also participate in away dual meets if they feel ready. For invitational meets, Little Stingers will need coaches' approval to participate. They will also need to pay a portion of the entry fee for these invitational meets.

Guidelines for a Successful Practice

- Be on time for practice
- Be ready to swim when you come on deck. Have your suit, cap, goggles, and water bottle in place and ready to go.
- When the Coach asks for the team's attention, give it.
- During instruction time, keep your head out of the water so you can hear what your coach is saying.
- Washroom breaks should be done before or after practice. If needed, take emergency breaks between sets.
- Swim continuously for the full length of the pool wall to wall. Don't stop short of the wall in practice sets. After touching the wall move to the side to make room for the next swimmer to reach the wall.
- Allow someone who catches you to go ahead of you without incident.
- Treat every start, turn, and finish as an opportunity to improve your skill.
- Save dunking, splashing, and other roughhousing, for open swim on your own time.
- No degrading, abusive, or profane language will be tolerated.
- Support your teammates, do not belittle or abuse them.
- Let other swimmers swim their practice without distracting them.
- Be proud of where you are, or work to change it. Your ability level is yours. Others should not be expected to meet your standards or hold back for you.

Becoming An Official

USA Officials (Starter, Stroke & Turn, and Referee) and YMCA Officials are often parent volunteers who have undergone some simple training in the technical rules for swimming. The Stingrays have always taken a leadership role in training and providing YMCA Officials. Several clinics are held each year. We welcome new officials at all times. To begin officiating once you have passed your tests, simply show up at meets ready to work. You are always welcome.

For information about YMCA or USA Officials' training, please contact our Head Coach.

Spirit Wear

An order form for T-Shirts, hooded sweatshirts and parent polo shirts will be available for swimmers and parents to order spirit wear. We highly recommend parents to order a t-shirt, polo shirt, or warm ups to wear to meets, so the swimmers and other teams can easily identify you as a Hastings Lake YMCA Parent.

Types of Meets

As a YMCA team, we participate in the YMCA dual and invitational meets, Chicago YMCA District, the Illinois YMCA Area Championships, and the YMCA National Championships. We abide by all the rules of the National YMCA Swim Committee. An athlete's age for YMCA competition is determined by their age as of December 1 for the fall season and as of June 1 for the summer season.

We attend a wide variety of meets. Our meet schedule is developed to meet the varied needs of our athletes. Listed below are explanations of the meets that we participate in.

YMCA Invitational – This is a swim meet open only to YMCA's. Swimmers are allowed to swim 3 or 4 events and possibly 1 relay. These could be a full day or half day meets (split sessions by age groups).

YMCA Dual Meet – This is a meet of the Stingrays versus another Y team. Swimmers usually swim 3 or 4 events and possibly 1 relay. These meets usually last about three or four hours.

Chicago Classic – This is a Championship meet for those who do not meet the qualifying times for the District Meet, but have completed in at least two meets prior to the Classic.

Chicago District YMCA Championships – Our district is made up of eight local YMCA's and the meet is a prelim/final meet. Swimmers must achieve qualifying times prior to this meet to participate. Swimmers who qualify for this District Championships meet are required to attend.

Illinois Area (State) YMCA Championships – This meet includes athletes from the five districts that make up the Illinois Area. To qualify for this meet, you must make the qualifying time at the District Championships. Swimmers who qualify for this State Championship meet are required to attend.

YMCA Nationals – YMCA Nationals, usually held at the International Swimming Hall of Fame in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, is one of the most highly attended meets in the United States. Approximately 2,000 athletes from over 250 Y's gather for 4 days of high-level competition and life-long team bonding. Qualifying times may be met at any meet during the season.

Banquets & Awards

A banquet will be held at the end of the fall/winter season. All swimmers and their families will be invited to attend and trophies and awards will be presented to the active swimming participants.

Most Valuable Swimmer

Individuals who contributed significantly to the team scores at meets throughout the season and who were leaders in their respective age group (one female and one male in each age classification)

Most Improved Swimmer

Individuals who showed the most improvement from the beginning of the season in all aspects of swimming (one female and one male in each age classification)

Stinger Award

Award given to those whose perseverance and commitment to the team may not have brought the team lots of points, but served as an example of a quality attitude for their teammates (no limit)

Swimmer of the Year

A plaque is maintained from year to year listing the names of swimmers who most exemplify the success, hard work, good attitude, and dedication that are the goals of the Stingrays Swim Team. (One male and one female swimmer each year)

Meet Information

Swim meets are a great family experience. They're a place where the whole family can spend time together. Listed below are some guidelines geared to help you through your first couple of swim meets.

What to Take to the Meet

- 2 pairs of goggles (make sure they fit and are in good condition). There is no time to adjust goggles when taking the block.
- Team suit (extra suit in case one rips)
- 2 caps
- Pool deck shoes that are not slippery on wet pool decks
- 3 or 4 towels
- Something to sit on such as a sleeping bag or old blanket
- Warm-ups (it is important to keep your muscles warm)
- Team T-shirt
- Games – travel games, books, cards, anything to pass the time.
- Food – It is better to bring your own nutritious snacks, even though they are usually available at the meets. Good ideas include cereal, hard-boiled eggs, bagels, pasta salad, veggies, fruit, and crackers. Avoid dairy products as they can cause stomach cramping.
- Drinks – Water is best, however, 100% fruit juice or a sports drink (eg. Gatorade, Powerade, etc.) are also beneficial. Avoid carbonated beverages and high levels of caffeine and sugar.
- Chairs – Most meets have gyms or open spaces for swimmers and their families to hangout between swims. Most swimmers like to lounge on blankets or sleeping bags. Chairs are recommended for the parents' comfort.
- Tents – Some summer meets house swimmers and their families outdoors. Tents and canopies help provide relief from the sun.

Once you have attended one or two meets, this will all become routine. Please do not hesitate to ask any Stringray parent for information. These meets are a lot of fun. You get to visit with friends, play games and meet people from other teams. You also get to see how much improvement all that hard work has done.

Before the Meet Begins

- Arrive at the pool at least 20 minutes before the scheduled warm-up begins.
- Upon arrival, find a place to put your swimmer's swim bag, sleeping bag or blanket. Many parents also bring a lawn chair for themselves. Look for familiar faces and the team area.
- Once you are checked in, you can write each event number on your hand or arms in ink (fine tip Sharpies work great). This helps you remember what events you are swimming and what events to listen for when you are called to the bullpen.

- Get your cap, goggles, shoes and towel and report to the pool for warm-up instructions. It is very important for all swimmers to warm-up with the team. A swimmer's body is like a car on a cold day...it needs to get the engine warmed up before it can go all out.
- After warm ups, go back to the team area, dry off, and cover up to keep warm and wait until the first event is called. This is a good time for a bathroom break, getting a drink or just settling in.
- Parents are not allowed on deck unless they are serving in an official capacity. All questions concerning meet results, an officiating call, or the conduct of the meet should be referred to the coaches.
- Heat Sheets – A heat sheet is usually available for sale in the lobby or concession area of the pool. The heat sheet lists all swimmers in each event in order of seedtime. If the swimmer is swimming the event for the first time, he/she will be entered as a “no time” or NT. An NT swimmer will most likely swim in one of the first heats of the event. There is a six-week lag between meet entries being sent in and the meet starting. Please do not be surprised if your swimmer's times are “old”, so are everybody else's.

Meet Starts

- Event numbers will be called, usually over the loudspeaker, and you will report to the bullpen or staging area. Swimmers should report with their cap, goggles, and enough clothing (including socks and shoes or pool deck shoes) to stay warm. Generally, girls swim odd-numbered events and boys swim even-numbered events. For example, “Event #26, 8 & Under Boys, 25 freestyle, report to the bullpen”.
- Sometimes the bullpen operator will line up the swimmers and take them down to the pool in the correct order.
- Listen to the official for the signal to start your race.
- Swim your race; finish fast with your head down.
- After each swim, the coach will discuss your swim with you. Generally, the coach will follow these guidelines when discussing swims:
 - Positive comments or praise
 - One or two suggestions for improvement
 - Positive comments
 - Reflection on their goal(s)
- Things a parent should do after each swim:
 - **Tell your child how great they did!** The coaching staff will discuss proper stroke technique with them. You need to tell them how proud you are and what a great job they did, or that they will do better next time and it is okay.
 - Take them back to the team area and relax.
 - This is another good time to check out the bathrooms, have a light snack and relax.
- When you have completed all of your individual events, check with the coach to see if you are swimming a relay. It is very important that all swimmers stay for their relay swims and to support other team members who are swimming. It is highly recommended that swimmers stay until the meet is completed to maintain that team spirit.

NOTES