

# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **Welcome to Northwest Arkansas Aquatics (NWAA)**

Northwest Arkansas Aquatics is a year round age-group competitive swimming team offering instruction, training, and competition to young people of all ages and abilities. We feel competitive swimming develops discipline, self-esteem, sportsmanship, character, and the ability to deal with success and failure, as well as being fun. It is also a wonderful life fitness activity that can be continued at any age or level of fitness.

NWAA is a non-profit organization. A parent board of directors supports the team; the Head Coach manages the team and the coaching staff.

This handbook will help familiarize you with all the facts of Northwest Arkansas Aquatics and competitive swimming in general. As you look through the following pages, you will be introduced to our history, philosophy, team policies as well as basic information concerning your day-to-day participation in NWAA's program. It is our hope this handbook will help you better understand and enjoy the inner workings of NWAA and the world of amateur swimming.

## **Northwest Arkansas Aquatics History**

The competitive swim program at the Walton Life Fitness Center (WLFC) was founded by Carolyn Haefner in the fall of 1984. Its roots began with the Bentonville Swim Team Summer Program. Initially, the Fitness Center Team was comprised of WLFC members and non-Wal Mart swimmers who had achieved an "A" summer qualifying time and desired to compete on a year round basis.

In the summer of 1989, the club expanded into a year round program adding the United States Swimming Long Course, summer season to the fall/winter schedule. From its beginnings in 1984, with approximately 30 members on the team roster, the program at the fitness center has grown to presently retain anywhere from 180 - 200 swimmers.

Northwest Arkansas Aquatics Inc. was formed in 1993 as a non-profit organization under which the Wal-Mart Swim Club would operate. Due To changes in Wal-Mart Fitness Center policy, we adopted Northwest Arkansas Aquatics as our official club name.

The NWAA is open for any interested and qualified swimmer. The membership criteria are outlined later in this handbook. The success of the program speaks for itself. Coming from a small community, NWAA is very competitive throughout the state and the states around us, which compose our region. NWAA which was formerly The Wal Mart Swim Club won back-to-back Long Course State Championships in 1992 & 1993 and in 1997. In 1994, WMSC finished 8<sup>th</sup> place in the region and has since had several swimmers qualified to swim at national levels. Recent NWAA results at the Short Course State Championship Meet have been 1<sup>st</sup> place in 2007 and 2<sup>nd</sup> place in 2005 and 2006. NWAA won back to back Long Course State Championships in 2005 and 2006. NWAA has been state champ or runner up since the spring of 2005.

## **THE NWAA COACHING STAFF**

### **Head Coach - Steve Duwel**

Steve was appointed NWAA Head Coach January 2001. Prior to arriving in Arkansas, Steve was the assistant swim coach at Northern Arizona University (NAU), a Division I college program located in Flagstaff, Arizona. During Steve's 6 years at NAU the program won team conference titles every year including many individual conference champions under his guidance. This includes the first male NCAA division 1 qualifier in school history as Senior Brian McClure went 19.89 in the 50 freestyle. In 1997 Lance Jones cracked the top 25 in the nation as a freshman with a 54.32 in the 100 breaststroke.

Prior to that, he coached 10 years for club teams in Mesa, Arizona, seeing great success with a number of Junior National, Senior National as well as Olympic Trial qualifiers. Chandler Mesa Aquatics also won the Age Group State Championship meet in 1991 with Coach Duwel as the interim Head Coach. A number of his athletes achieved state records as well as national recognition as top 16.

As an Athlete, Steve swam from the age of 7 to age 18 for the same program he coached (Mesa Aquatics Club). Steve's strongest strokes were sprint freestyle and butterfly. During his swimming career Steve achieved Junior National and Senior National level qualifying times. After having set multiple club team, High School and State records, Steve briefly swam for Arizona State University before a knee injury ended his swimming career. This unfortunate circumstance led him to the beginning of a very successful coaching career.

Since his NWAA arrival, the number of swimmers has grown steadily, going from about 60 swimmers in 2001 to approx. 150 swimmers in 2008. Steve currently is the Head Coach for the Bentonville High School Swim Team where the girl's team has won the 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 state title and the boy's team has won four state titles in a row in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008. He was also named 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 Arkansas High School Coach of the Year as well as 2004, 2005 and 2007 Arkansas Swimming Inc. Coach of the Year. Additionally, he has acted as Zone Coach for the Arkansas Zone team 4 out of past 6 seasons. Steve currently holds a position within Arkansas Swimming serving as the Coaches representative.

## **COACHING RESPONSIBILITIES**

The coach's job is to supervise the day-to-day operation of the competitive swim program. The NWAA coaching staff is dedicated to providing a program for youngsters that will enable them to learn the value of striving to improve oneself. Therefore the coaches must be in total control in matters affecting training and competition. As a staff, we are not just attempting to produce great swimmers; we are also working towards developing great young people who will be successful in life.

1. The coaches are responsible for placing youngsters in proper training groups. These groups should have a logical flow and upward mobility based on age, maturity, commitment and ability of each individual. The coach will make a decision based on each swimmers best interest in regards to which group would be most challenging.
2. The coaches are solely responsible for stroke instruction and season training plans for all groups. Each group's practices are based on sound scientific principles and geared towards the goals of each group.
3. The coaching staff will make final decisions concerning which meets NWAA swimmers will attend each season.
4. At all competitions, coaches will supervise controlled warm ups and provide important feedback to all swimmers for each race. Meet management will also include arranging relays.

The coaching staff is constantly learning and growing with the program. Coaches are looking to grow and learn as the team grows and improves. With a base philosophy of creating a positive and safe learning environment for each child, the staff is open to modifications in philosophy and policy when changes are deemed necessary.

#### **OBJECTIVES – PERSONAL & COMPETITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

- To provide a healthy and positive swimming environment so participants may explore their potential.
- To improve technical skills related to competitive swimming.
- To improve overall physical fitness.
- To understand discipline as a major factor in making and achieving goals.
- To develop strong personal characteristics that will help not only to be a quality swimmer, but a quality person.
- To compete regularly at USS meets.
- To have fun!!

#### **OBJECTIVES – COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

- To promote maximum involvement in all age group programs of all children, adults, physical educators, and others concerned with the development of young people.
- To cultivate the support of the community-oriented individuals, corporations, and foundations to help fund programs.

## **NORTH WEST ARKANSAS AQUATICS PHILOSOPHY**

The Northwest Arkansas Aquatics program strives to instill in young athletes an understanding of and appreciation for such concepts as high self esteem, personal accountability, constructive self motivation, goal setting, and goal achievement as these ideas relate to their success in training and competition. It is our belief that the process of achieving is as significant as realizing the achievement itself. "Life is a journey, not a destination".

At each level of the NWAA program, athletes are guided to strive for excellence. Excellence in this sense represents the achievement of that level at which you know that you have done your utmost to become the best you are capable of becoming. This philosophy is consistent throughout our program.

NWAA athletes are also instructed in high levels of sportsmanship, respect and discipline. Discipline in the way of showing a respect and dedication to the officials, coaches, teammates, and competitors but most importantly to ones self. Swimming is a great example of a team sport, where success often comes down to the strength of each individual. This is where personal accountability, self-motivation and goal setting play such an important role in the ability of each athlete to see long term success in a very demanding sport.

## **II. NORTHWEST ARKANSAS AQUATICS TRAINING PROGRAM**

### **TEAM STRUCTURE**

- 1. Level 1/Senior/NTG**
- 2. Level 2/Pre-Senior/Great White Sharks**
- 3. Level 3/Bull Sharks**
- 4. Level 4/Hammerhead Sharks**
- 5. Level 5/Sand Sharks**

NWAA is divided into 5 groups. Each athlete's maturity level, swimming ability and age are taken into consideration when deciding which group he or she will participate in. All groups were restructured going into the fall 2006 season. Below you will find general criteria regarding each group. It is intended to leave objectivity to the coaches regarding group assignments and movement within groups.

## **Level 1 - Senior/National Training Group (N.T.G.)**

The Senior/N.T.G. is the highest level that exists on the club. Monthly dues for this group are \$70.00 a month. (Any athlete under the age of 15 must have achieved a 13&14 AAA time. Athletes 15&over must achieve a Sectional cut in order to qualify for the NTG.) This group is designed for swimmers ages 12 and over.

### **N.T.G Objectives:**

- Continue an emphasis on technique
- Increased dedication and motivation
- Expectations of maturity and responsibility at the highest level
- Attendance of Morning training sessions
- Pursue attendance requirement of 90%
- Attend all competitions designated by the coach
- Represent Northwest Arkansas Aquatics with Maturity and good Sportsmanship
- Continue the pursuit of training and competition on a higher level
- Strive towards reaching their fullest potential in swimming
- Set an example on what it means to be an Elite member on Northwest Arkansas Aquatics
- Training = 80% conditioning to 20% technique ratio
- **Senior Group Philosophy:** Learn what commitment and dedication is required to be a part of the N.T.G. and work towards moving up. It is the goal of this group to provide older swimmers the opportunity to achieve a wide variety of goals. The Senior Group allows those who are unsure of their swimming future or those who do not wish to be in the NTG the opportunity to train at a level of commitment that equals their own personal goals.
- **N.T.G. Philosophy:** N.T.G. is all about commitment to the sport of swimming and NWAA. Athletes in the N.T.G. will be held to the highest standard of excellence at all times and all athletes realize that merely showing up to practice is not enough. The amount of effort given within each practice is as important as showing up. Athletes will attend every meet possible and attend every practice possible. Once in the NTG athletes must maintain a 90% practice attendance as well as show the highest level of dedication and commitment to the sport of competitive swimming.
- **Any athlete unable to maintain or strive towards the above objectives for the N.T.G may be moved down at any time, at the coach's discretion. The N.T.G. will be held to the highest standard, as this group is the most visible and representative of NWAA. Athletes who are willing to commit to this level of training are in this sport to be serious about their swimming. Any athlete unwilling to commit to this philosophy is only holding back the rest of the team, which is unfair to those who have made the commitment. Barring any unacceptable behavior, there will always be a place for every swimmer on this team. Swimming at the National level takes a tremendous commitment and we as a coaching staff understand that not every child will be able to make such a commitment. Therefore we will make sure they have an opportunity to get what they can out of the sport at the Senior level.**

## **Level 2 - Great White Sharks/Pre-Senior**

The Great White Shark/Senior Group is the next progression from the Gold Group. Dues for this group are \$60.00 a month. This group is designed for upper level age group swimmers ages 9-13 who are at or near the BB time standard.

### **Great White Sharks/Pre-Senior Objectives:**

- Continue an emphasis on technique
- Attend all competitions designated by the coach
- Represent Northwest Arkansas Aquatics with Maturity and good Sportsmanship
- Continue the pursuit of training and competition on a higher level
- Show a maturity and desire to joining the Senior/N.T.G.
- 70% conditioning to 30% technique ratio
- Move up to Senior/National Training Group
- Great White/Pre-Senior Group Philosophy; The Great White/Pre-Senior Group is a training ground for swimmers who aspire to actively pursue swimming as their priority activity. Swimmers will focus mainly on training and the constant pursuit of higher goals. Swimmers at this level must commit themselves to the NWAA program and strive to become a part of our Senior/National Training Group.

**Great White Shark/Pre-Senior Group philosophy;** continue to improve swimming technique, increase conditioning skills, increase level of competition and continue to emphasize having fun.

## **Level 3 - Bull Shark Group**

The next step in training structure is the Bull Shark Group. Dues for this group are \$50.00 a month. This group is designed for swimmers ages 7-11 who are able to complete a legal 400 IM.

Goals:

### **Bull Shark Group Objectives:**

- Continue a heavy emphasis on technique
- Introduce concepts of improving physical conditioning as well as basic concepts in racing strategies
- Training = 60% technique to 40% conditioning ratio
- Number of expected competitions will increase
- Learn proper stroke, start & turn technique.
- Introduction to local area competitions.
- Enjoy a fun learning environment.
- Introduction to a competitive environment.
- Introduction to basic stretching and dryland exercises.
- Introduction to the values involved with being a member of Northwest Arkansas Aquatics, such as respect, responsibility, focus, competitiveness and confidence.
- Move up to Great White Shark Group.
- Learn proper swimming technique and have fun!

**Bull Shark Group philosophy;** improve swimming technique, begin basic conditioning skills, increase level of competition and continue to emphasize having fun.

## **Level 4 - Hammerhead Shark Group**

The Hammerhead Shark Group is our 2<sup>nd</sup> level introductory group. Dues for this group are \$40.00 a month. This group is designed for more advanced entry level swimmers ages 7-12 who can complete a legal 200 IM.

### **Hammerhead Shark Group Objectives:**

- Heavy emphasis on technique
- Training = 90% technique to 10% conditioning ratio
- Attend 2-3 competitions each season
- Move up to the Bull Shark Group
- Learn proper stroke, start & turn technique.
- Introduction to local area competitions.
- Enjoy a fun learning environment.
- Introduction to a competitive environment.
- Introduction to basic stretching and dryland exercises.
- Introduction to the values involved with being a member of Northwest Arkansas Aquatics, such as respect, responsibility, focus, competitiveness and confidence.
- Learn proper swimming technique and have fun!

**Hammerhead Shark Group Philosophy:** Improve swimming technique, receive basic conditioning, introduce concepts of competition and emphasize having fun.

## **Level 5 - Sand Sharks**

The Sand Sharks Group is our 1<sup>st</sup> level introductory group. Dues for this group are \$35.00 a month. This group is designed for entry level swimmers 10 years of age and younger who can perform all 4 strokes legally.

### **Sand Shark Objectives:**

- Heavy emphasis on technique
  - Training = 100% technique
  - Attend 1-2 competitions each season
  - Move up to the Hammerhead Shark Group
  - Learn proper stroke, start & turn technique.
  - Introduction to local area competitions.
  - Enjoy a fun learning environment.
  - Introduction to a competitive environment.
  - Introduction to basic stretching and dryland exercises.
  - Introduction to the values involved with being a member of the Northwest Arkansas Aquatics, such as respect, responsibility, focus, competitiveness and confidence.
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- **Sand Shark Group philosophy;** Learn proper swimming technique and have fun!

## **PRACTICE SCHEDULE & SCHEDULE CHANGES**

Since practice schedules vary depending on the time of the year, schedules are printed and given to each swimmer as needed. Be sure to check the “SHARK BYTES” (our MONTHLY team newsletter) and pay attention to announcements made during practice. Every effort will be made to forewarn of any schedule changes. We will put weekly announcements out via email as well as post any changes on the team website ([northwestarkansasaquatics.org](http://northwestarkansasaquatics.org))

During the winter months while we train at the WLFC, our practice cancellation policy is based upon the fitness center’s policy. In other words, if the fitness center is open, plan on having practice, unless otherwise notified. Call the WLFC front desk at 204-1000 for that information. Your best bet is to call the head coach’s cell phone for up to the minute practice status (Coach Steve Duwel 479-531-2722)

Summer months we train at the Memorial Park Pool. We will do our best to update the team office voice mail (254-9190). However, weather changes occur by the minute and practices may be cancelled at the last minute. Your patience and understanding will be helpful during this time of year as it can be difficult to judge from minute to minute as to whether the weather will cause a cancellation. Once again your best bet is to call the head coach’s cell phone for up to the minute practice status (Coach Steve Duwel 479-531-2722)

## **PRACTICE POLICIES**

- Do your best to be present for practice 10 minutes early. Practice start times are posted in the “SHARK BYTES” as well as on the team website. In the event of conditions not allowing for sufficient time to make it ten minutes prior, athletes must make every reasonable attempt to be there as early as possible.
- In the event of being late or absent, the athlete should attempt to notify the coaching staff at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Swimmers are expected to show respect and support their teammates at all times during practice as well as any competitions. Working for the benefit of all individuals on the team is essential for the best possible learning environment.
- NWAA swimmers are expected, at all times, to follow verbal directions of the coaching staff. At no time will swimmers be disrespectful towards the coaching staff.

- Any swimmer showing disrespect towards any teammate or coach may be dismissed from practice. Continuing unacceptable behavior may lead to being dismissed from the team. (See disciplinary procedures)
- Abusive language, lying, stealing or vandalism will not be tolerated. These behaviors are directly in contrast with the Walton Fitness Center policies as well as not being representative of a NWAA athlete.
- Swimmers may leave practice only after having talked to a coach.
- All athletes, parents and coaches are expected to follow the Walton Life Fitness Center rules and regulations. (See Walton Life Fitness Center rules and regulations)
- Parents and athletes who **are** Fitness Center members may use the facility at any time. However, athletes over the age of 16 may only use the Hot Tub when **all** NWAA practices have ended.
- Athletes who **are not** Fitness Center members may only use any part of the facility when it is a designated team activity.
- Chewing gum is prohibited during training. Water bottles may only contain water. No food or drink is allowed on deck or in the locker rooms.
- Swimwear worn for both practice and competition, must be non-transparent and conform to the current concept of the appropriate (USA Swimming Rules & Regulations 102.9.1)
- Any athlete in the fitness center during NWAA practice times must be in the presence of their parents, the coaches or in the Cool Down area. You are a representative of the Swim Team when you are present during scheduled practice times and any inappropriate behavior will reflect badly upon our swim team and create un-needed tension between the fitness center and the swim team. Remember that whether you are a fitness center member or not, we are guests of the fitness center and we must act accordingly.

### **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**

The following outline will serve to familiarize you with steps involved with disciplinary procedures that will be followed when necessary. Hopefully you will never have to deal with any of these steps. However, it is necessary to have a consistent policy regarding discipline. Disciplinary action is at the discretion of the coaching staff and may only be instituted if the coach has a personal first hand account of the infraction. Second hand information shall be dealt with through proper communication.

Disciplinary procedures **may be** set into motion when any of the following occur:

1. Consistent or flagrant disregard of team and/or fitness center policies.
2. Disrespect towards any person while representing Northwest Arkansas Aquatics
3. Use of profanity at any time while representing Northwest Arkansas Aquatics.
4. Actions during a meet or practice deemed disruptive by the coach.
5. Any act of violence or vandalism.
6. Unlawful use of drugs or alcohol.
7. Unruly behavior at any time while representing Northwest Arkansas Aquatics.
8. Commitment of a crime.
9. Abuse of equipment.

The following will outline what may happen with repeated infractions:

Strike one: Athlete will be reprimanded by the coach and reminded that continued improper behavior may result in being dismissed from the team. At this point it is up to the coach as to whether the athlete should be sent home from a competition or practice depending on the severity of the infraction. The athlete will have to meet with the coach before he or she will be allowed back to the competition or practice.

Strike Two: Athlete will be reprimanded by the coach and reminded that continued improper behavior may result in being dismissed from the team. Athlete will be sent home and will not be allowed back until he or she and a parent meets with the coach.

Strike Three: Athlete will be immediately suspended. Length of suspension is up to the coaching staff and the severity of the inappropriate behavior will determine the length of the suspension.

Upon an athletes return from a suspension, he or she must apologize to the coaching staff and any other persons deemed offended by the persons action, as directed by the coaching staff. With this apology the athlete again has a chance to train equally with his or her peers. However, the athlete now will be on probation and only be allowed two strikes. If two strikes occur the athlete will lose the privilege of training with North West Arkansas Aquatics

It is the coaching staff's philosophy that we all make mistakes and second and third chances are sometimes needed. However, we also believe that all athletes assume responsibility for their actions and should learn from their mistakes. Every person will be given a fair opportunity to succeed, but the positive learning environment will not be sacrificed by the actions of any individual.

### III. SWIM MEET INFORMATION

#### PHILOSOPHY OF COMPETITION

NWAA engages in a multi-level competition program within United States Swimming (USS) that, like our training program, attempts to provide challenging yet success-oriented competitive situations for swimmers of all ages and abilities. The following policies outline our philosophy:

- ❖ We emphasize competition within oneself. Winning ribbons, medals, and trophies are nice, but not our main objective. Awards are a result of the goals that athletes set for themselves. Constant improvement towards one's potential is the primary goal.
- ❖ Sportsmanship is of equal importance to improved performance. Respect for officials, opponents, coaches and teammates, determined effort and mature attitudes are examples of behaviors praised and rewarded by the NWAA coaching staff.
- ❖ A swimmer is praised for improvement, whether it is time, swimming technique, attitude, or effort. It is the coach's' job to offer constructive criticism of a swimmers performance.
- ❖ It is a parents' responsibility to provide unconditional love and support that bolsters the swimmers confidence along the way. **Parents should foster a stress free environment, trying not to place undo pressure to win. Praise and encouragement is what your child needs. Parents should refrain from "coaching" as too much information from too many sources will serve only to confuse the swimmer.**
- ❖ Swimmers are taught to set realistic, yet challenging short and long term goals for meets and to relate those goals to practice to direct their training efforts.
- ❖ Swimmers are prepared and encouraged to compete in all swimming events, distances, and strokes. This policy promotes versatility and encourages the swimmer to explore his/her potential in the wide range of events offered in competitive swimming. Specificity of swimming events occurs in the latter years of a swimmers career.

## **SWIM SEASONS**

The short course season is held from September through the beginning of March, with a seasonal break during March. Times for short course are recorded in yards. The long course season is held from April through July, with a majority of the month of August being a seasonal break. Times for long course are recorded in meters.

## **THE USS AGE GROUP PROGRAM**

Classified Age Group Program – There are seven age groups in United States Swimming: 8 & under; 10 & under; 11 – 12; 13 – 14; 15 – 16; 17 – 18 (sometimes 15 – 18); and Senior. The Senior age group includes any age USS—registered swimmer who has achieved the prescribed qualifying time for the events. Age on the first day of competition will determine the swimmers age for the entire meet. Within each age group there are different ability levels. (i.e. BB, B, A, AA, AAA, AAAA) Time standards for each classification are established and published yearly by United States Swimming. In order to swim in a certain classification, a swimmer must have achieved the qualifying time for that particular classification.

Meets may combine classifications to allow swimmers to compete in a complete event schedule. For example, there may be a “B-C” meet in which the swimmer above would swim the “C” Breaststroke and the “B” Freestyle.

Meets may be timed final where each athlete swims their events once. They may also be Prelim/Final meets where athletes swim in the morning and attempt to make a consolation final or championship final heat. The number of heats swum at finals may vary from one final heat to a final, consolation and a bonus heat. Athletes who qualify for a final heat are expected to swim again that night; any swimmer who fails to show up for a final swim will be disqualified from the remainder of the meet. It is, therefore, very important that each athlete establish how he/she finished in that event before the end of the prelims session. Any athlete wishing to not swim any final must scratch from the event within the 30 minutes following the announcement of that particular events result.

Open Invitational Meets – Many of our Invitational meets in Arkansas are “open” or “unclassified”. This means there are no time standards for most events and are open to any USS registered swimmer.

Dual Meets – Dual meets may occur a couple times each year. This is a competition set up between NWAA and one other team. Dual meets promote team unity and are only one day in duration.

ASI Invitational – Swimmers participate in events, which they do not have the State Qualifying time. This meet is held a few weeks before the State Championship Meet.

Arkansas State Championship Meet – At the end of each season we have the Arkansas State Championship Meet. This meet provides an exciting conclusion to the season for all of those swimmers who have accomplished qualifying times.

Arkansas Zone Team – This competition is generally held after the Long Course Arkansas State Championships meet and is open to qualified swimmers with AAA times.

Central Sectionals Championships – This competition is generally held the weekend prior to the State Meet. Under the new proposal from USS Swimming, this meet is basically a combination of what was “Junior Nationals” and “Region VIII Championship meet”. Qualifying times standards are required to participate at this meet.

Junior Nationals – Held a couple weeks after Sectionals this is a large competition with fast time standards. Spring NCSA Juniors are generally held in Orlando Florida. Time standards are faster than Sectionals. Summer Juniors are held in random locations and time standards are slightly faster than Spring Juniors.

Senior Nationals – This is the highest level of annual competition our swimmers will be shooting for, (other than Olympic Trials and the Olympics which occur every 4 years).

### **GENERAL MEET INFORMATION**

Meet schedule – Each season’s meet schedule is distributed to the membership at the beginning of each season. The schedule is also printed weekly in the team’s monthly newsletter – “*SHARK BYTES*” and on the team’s website. Therefore, changes or deletions are made known on a timely basis.

The meet schedule has been established with the expectation that swimmers will attend as many competitions available at their classification level. The higher the group level a swimmer participates, the higher the expectations will be that they attend certain competitions. We will not schedule a meet unless we feel it is important for our swimmers to attend. On average, we would like to see all team members compete at least once every four weeks.

The coaching staff reserves the right to make final decisions concerning which meets NWAA swimmers may attend. NWAA swimmers are discouraged from competing in meets that are not on the NWAA meet schedule.

### **HOW TO ENTER MEETS**

- Meet schedules are published as far ahead of time as possible and updates are constantly announced.
- Usually about 3 weeks before the competition, meet information and fees will be posted on the bulletin board with an entry deadline. The deadline is generally around two weeks prior to the start of the meet.
- Swimmers/parents will be given meet information along with a generic meet sign up sheet (the same sheet will be used for every meet) in your

mail files, whereby swimmers will sign up for events by indicating event numbers.

- On-line entries are available at [northwestarkansasaquatics.org](http://northwestarkansasaquatics.org). Click on the “meets” tab and got to “entry instructions”.
- Make sure each athlete specifies his/her availability for relays.
- **Athletes who arrive late for warm ups risk losing their spot in a relay as quite often coaches must turn in relays prior to the end of warm ups.**
- Entries will then be processed based upon the sign up sheets that have been turned in and fees will be assessed to your monthly bill. Typical fees for a meet will include a per event entry fee and a surcharge.
- After the entries are entered into our computer we will mail in our entries as a team. Please check the website online stats to verify entries.
- With regard to which events a swimmer enters and competes, the coaching staff will have the final word.
- If for one reason or another a swimmer does not get entered in the proper event, they may “deck enter”. Deck entries are on a space available basis and entry fees are typically double the normal fee and must be paid on deck. These charges will not be billed.
- The coaches will enter relays. It is the responsibility of the coach to inform each athlete that he/she is a part of a relay. It is then each swimmers responsibility to be present for the relay event. When a swimmer does not show up for a relay the team generally is scratched and the entry fee forfeited.
- The club will pay entry fees for relays.

### MEET PARTICIPATION

- Arrive at the pool 15 minutes prior to the teams designated warm up time. This will allow ample time to change and stretch before warm up begins. (Warm up times are usually listed in the monthly “SHARK BYTES”)
- Obtain a heat sheet and make sure you are properly entered in all events. If there is a mistake, discuss it with your coach so corrective action may be taken if necessary.
- Any athlete wishing to scratch out of an event must first confer with a coach before performing that action.
- All NWAA swimmers are expected to wear the team suit for all competitions, as well as some type of team uniform whether it is a t-shirt, sweats, or a parka. (Athletes receiving awards at Championship level meets are expected to wear team sweats or a team parka when accepting awards)
- It is each athlete’s responsibility to know what events he/she will be swimming and make sure that he/she arrives behind the blocks at the proper time.
- It is highly recommended that each swimmer confer with his/her coach to go over racing strategies.

- At the conclusion of each race the swimmer should remain in the water until all participants have completed the race. This shows good sportsmanship (unless the competition is being run with “over the top or chase starts”). Shaking your opponents hand after a race is also a very sportsmanlike gesture.
- Once the race has completed and you have exited the pool it is a good idea to ask your timer what your time was.
- All swimmers are to “swim down” after a race. A proper swim down should include a minimum of a 200. Longer swim downs are necessary for longer races. This will help prepare for the next event.
- Swimmers should also see their coach after the swim to get feedback on their race. Post race analysis should occur with the coach within 5-15 minutes after the race depending on whether the athlete swims down before or after seeing the coach. If the coach is already speaking to a swimmer or watching another race, it is recommended that the swimmer swim down, then see the coach when he is free.
- In between races, swimmers are asked to sit in the designated team area and relax, staying warm in the winter and keeping cool during the summer. If swimmers must eat during the competition, a light nutritious snack is recommended.
- It is very important for parents and swimmers to check with the coach before leaving a competition. Please determine whether the child has made it back for finals in a prelim/final meet and find out if he/she is in any relays. (Any athlete wishing to opt not to swim a final must first discuss that decision with the coach)
- What to bring to a meet:
  - NWAA team suit
  - NWAA team cap
  - Goggles
  - Multiple Towels
  - A Blanket or Sleeping bag
  - Quiet entertainment (gameboy, books, etc.)
  - Food – nutritious snacks
  - Water bottle

### **BEHAVIOR AT MEETS**

- ❖ Wherever and whenever a NWAA swimmer wears any item of the team uniform, the individual should be aware that his/her actions and words reflect on the team and they should behave accordingly. Let your actions reflect the pride you have in Northwest Arkansas Aquatics.
- ❖ As a matter of courtesy to the officials and meet hosts, it is preferable that parents stay off the deck whenever possible.

- ❖ **AT NO TIME WILL ANY SWIMMER OR PARENT CONFRONT AN OFFICIAL ON DECK.** Any question that a swimmer or parent may have during the conduct of the meet should be directed to your coach. The coach will then pursue the matter through proper channels.
- ❖ As a matter of pride, leave the NWAA team area in a neat and clean condition at the conclusion of each session of the meet.
- ❖ During prelim/final meets, swimmers who qualify for finals in any event are expected to compete.
- ❖ All athletes and parents are expected to represent Northwest Arkansas Aquatics with the utmost sportsmanship and respect. Proper courtesy will be shown to all teammates, competitors, officials, coaches and other parents. Failure to do so may result in the removal of that person from the entire meet and put their team participation in jeopardy.

### **TRAVELING TO MEETS**

- ❖ Travel arrangements and expenses at out of town meets are the responsibility of each family. The team will reserve a block of rooms at hotels for each family to use. Team members are expected to stay at the designated team hotel. Hotel phone numbers, contact person, reservation deadline, cost, location, etc. are published well in advance of the meets in the *SHARK BYTES*. It is then up to each family to make its own reservations.
- ❖ For some meets, the team will arrange lodging and transportation. The expenses are totaled and billed or collected in advance. These expenses are to be paid by the swimmer.
- ❖ For team van trips or elite trips where only the coach and chaperones are available for supervision, athletes will be expected to sign a Code of Conduct prior to the trip. The Code of Conduct will be followed for the complete duration of the trip. Athletes who do not sign and return these items will not be allowed to attend the trip.
- ❖ Any number of actions might be taken in the event an athlete breaks the Code of Conduct guidelines depending on the severity of the infraction. Punishment may be as small as a room assignment or an early curfew to being sent home. In the event that a swimmers behavior is so detrimental that he/she will be sent home, parents will be notified and every precaution will be taken to ensure the athlete is returned home safely. That athlete's family will be responsible for the cost of transportation.

## IV. PARENT INFORMATION

### PARENTS ROLE IN THE NWAA PROGRAM

As with any successful youth sports program, parent involvement is required for the program to move in a positive direction. This swimming program will see the most success if the parents and coaches are working together towards a common goal. Hard work and communication are vital to the ultimate success of any swimming program. NWAA has an excellent history of positive parent support and involvement. Each time a youngster joins the team, the parents automatically become members and inherit with that membership the responsibility to participate and support the activities of the team. If you are serious about wanting your child to be a successful swimmer, you should understand that you have the ability to be a part of building an environment that is most conducive to your child's success. Your help is not only essential; it is very much appreciated by the staff, parent board and swimmers on NWAA.

### PARENTS' GUIDELINES

You have a great responsibility in raising your child and you have no doubt been a positive presence in your child's growth. The following ideas will hopefully help you continue to assist your child through another facet of their growth, being a part of a team and dealing with success as well as failure.

In order to ensure that your child is surrounded by influences which allow the best path towards success, it is very important that the parent understand where the coach is coming from philosophically in regards to the growth of each athlete as it relates to competitive swimming. The coach must in turn be in tune with the parent and what expectations they might have for their child as not every parent has the same objective for their child. Therefore parent/coach communication is essential to creating an environment that is most conducive for that child's having a positive experience on the team.

This section will attempt to outline a few areas that will hopefully allow you as a parent to better understand the method to the coach's madness.

You should be aware that competitive swimming experiences a very high rate of swimmer burnout due to many factors, which a coach will attempt to control. The main reason for athlete burnout is an inability of an athlete to cope with **pressure**. The coaching staff and parents should attempt to curb "burnout" by doing a number of things including:

1. Putting an emphasis on improvement, not winning.
2. Parents should refrain from giving stroke correction or trying to coach their swimmer. This usually will only serve to confuse the child when they are being given conflicting information. If you have questions regarding any

coaching area, please talk to the coach before or after a competition or practice.

3. Teaching athletes to set realistic yet challenging goals and base those goals on factors over which they have control. Help them realize that they have no control over how fast an opponent might swim any given race, therefore, focus on what he/she can do to be successful.
4. Parents must understand this process and try not to put undo pressure on any child to win. Your child should be praised for his/her effort when effort is given. Emphasis should be put on each child's effort to improve. Winning is a factor which we cannot control. We can, however, control our effort.
5. Being a swim parent, patience will be your greatest quality when dealing with your child. Some children will see rapid improvement immediately; some may have a more gradual rise to success. Even after a child sees success it is inevitable that he/she will hit a plateau and maybe even regress. It is very common for athletes to struggle at times, especially with the onset of puberty. Children are growing into their bodies and it can be difficult to remain at peak performance during this stage of life. Patience, encouragement, and reassurance are the essentials your child will need from you at this time.
6. From the age of 6 – 13, the most important factor in the long-term success of that child in swimming is each child's level of love for the sport. A child who may be a relatively slow swimmer, but enjoys going to practice will have a much more satisfying long term experience than a child who always wins but doesn't want to go to practice. Naturally gifted swimmers who see a lot of success as children often struggle when they get older and the field of talent starts to level out. These gifted young swimmers tend to have trouble dealing with failure. Swimming becomes more like a job as opposed to an enjoyable sport.
7. Once a child hits puberty, usually 13 years and up, it is this time when swimmers and parents need to realize that more emphasis will need to be put on training as opposed to having fun. At this point athletes need to start to decide if he/she is going to commit whole-heartedly to swimming as their sport of choice.
8. Not every NWAA athlete is expected to commit heart and soul to the swim team. Coaches realize that there will be different levels of commitment. However, **parents and swimmers must realize that their success will be directly related to their level of commitment and effort.**

Swimming is a wonderful activity for any child who has patient parents who are willing to be involved in the team aspects. Your child will receive all of the positive aspects that being a part of any organized sport will provide your child. What makes swimming special is the rare combination of an individual as well as team concepts that will last a lifetime.

### **Family Volunteerism**

Volunteerism is crucial in keeping any athletic organization running smoothly. NWAA hosts three major events each year: the NWAA Winter Invitational in January, the Colgate Memorial Classic in May, and the Shark Sprint Triathlon in the summer. Each event has upwards of 300 volunteer positions that must be filled. One person from every NWAA family is required to work two sessions at each of the three swim meets, failure to do so will result in a \$100.00 charge to that family's invoice after each event has been completed. Prior to each event, the Event Director will post a volunteer sign-up sheet and provide sign-up information on the team web site. To ensure each family receives credit for their participation a volunteer check-in area will be provided at each event.

### **Fundraising**

Over the years NWAA has been fortunate to have generous sponsors, however due to the current state of the US economy sponsorship has been less dependable. The NWAA board and coaching staff understand the financial burdens of our swim families, therefore for the 2007 - 2008 fiscal year, fund raising events has been replaced with team execution of the NWAA Sharks Triathlon. Each family is required to commit one person to a total of 4 hours to an approved pre-event job assignment or to the event itself. Families failing to meet this requirement will have a \$100.00 charge added to their invoice after the triathlon. A volunteer sheet will be provided before the Triathlon for each family to view and sign-up for jobs required. If at the end of the fiscal year the change in policy is found to place an undue financial burden on the club an adjustment to monthly dues may be needed to offset the previous fundraising monies lost.

### **Getting Involved**

**Officiating** – The team sponsors periodic clinics to certify officials in the USS program, and we encourage our parents to attend other such clinics held within the state. Levels of certification include place stroke/turn judge, starter and referee. Officiating is one manner in which parents can help our program, and we encourage interested individuals to fill these roles. North West Arkansas Aquatics runs 3 to 4 competitions annually; therefore, officials are always at a premium. Announcements of officials' certification clinics will appear in the *SHARK BYTES*. If you are interested in becoming certified as an official, contact the Head Coach or a current parent official so that you may begin the process.

**Parent meetings** – Meetings are held periodically to update parents in regard to general business. These meetings will be announced on the web site and in the team newsletter. An annual spring awards banquet is held to recognize swimmers, volunteers, and the clubs achievements during the previous year.

**Team Parties** – Team parties will be held throughout the year to celebrate special occasions. These events will be announced on the web site and in the newsletter. Your help in organizing and executing these parties is always appreciated. A contact person will be listed with each event.

At the board's discretion, and when no fundraiser is required, if there is a need for funds to supplement social activities of the club, a one time social assessment can be made of up to \$10

**Board of Directors** – NWAA has a parent-run board of directors. It is this board's mission to set the strategic direction of the club, and to ensure its continued financial health, and good standing within the community and Arkansas Swimming Inc. The board is not involved in the day-to-day operation of the club. This task is left to the head coach and his staff.

The board of directors is composed of nine members who are elected to two-year terms with one half of the board being re-elected every year. Elections take place at the spring awards banquet/annual meeting.

Board meetings are announced on the web site, in the news letter, and will be posted on the WLFC bulletin board. These meetings consist of two parts, general business is conducted first and this is open to the public. If needed, the second part of the meeting is an executive session that is closed to the public.

The board consists of a...

Head Coach, President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary,  
Meet Director, Merchandising, Publicity/Social, and Fundraising

### **Communication**

If any questions or problems should arise, the lines of communication are always open; the only exceptions are during practice sessions. Barring an emergency, please try not to attempt communication with a coach during training, as that time is dedicated to the swimmers exclusively. Feel free to call the office at 254-9190. Leave a message if there is no answer and a coach will get back to you as soon as possible.

**Shark Bytes** – This is the team's monthly newsletter. We place the newsletter onto our website where you may download the information and print it. We will continue to send out monthly emails of the team newsletter. Weekly announcements will be sent out via email and the team website will be updated daily.

**Bulletin Boards** – Meet information, important announcements, newspaper articles and any other written form of communication will be posted on the bulletin boards on deck. A calendar of upcoming events can also be found with meet dates and entry form due dates listed.

**Family Mail File** – Each family has a file folder located within a file box on deck. Meet information, newsletters, awards and other important forms of communication will be

placed in your mail file. Swimmers and parents are responsible for checking their mail file consistently to ensure that you are abreast of any announcements, which may affect you.

**Team Roster** – A team roster is kept on file in the office. It is very helpful to have current contact information for all families so coaches have every opportunity to communicate as necessary. Your contact information includes each swimmers name, birth date, parents’ names, address, phone numbers, email, etc. This information is stored on the computer and is only accessible to coaches and board members.

**Team Web Site** – Team information can be found on our website;

<http://www.northwestarkansasaquatics.org>

### **V. SUMMARY OF TEAM BILLINGS**

1. USS Registration fee – \$55.00 annually
2. Administrative fee – \$30.00 per athlete or \$60.00 per family with 3 or more swimmers. Athletes who are seasonal or take a “break” will be required to pay this fee upon their return.
3. Monthly dues

N.T.G/Senior. -	\$70.00/month
Pre-Senior/Great White Shark Group –	\$60.00/month
Bull Shark Group -	\$50.00/month
Hammerhead Shark Group -	\$40.00/month
Sand Shark Group -	\$35.00/month

\*First child full price, second child \$5.00 Off, third child 50% Off, 4<sup>th</sup> child is free.

**Monthly Billings** – Payment is due by no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of the month an “oops” note will be placed in the club member’s file. If payment is still not received by the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month, phone calls will be made to those families with outstanding debt. A late fee of \$10.00 will be assessed. If the payment is still not made it will be reflected as being 30 days past due on the next billing. A list would then be provided to the board so a decision would be made and action taken on a case-by-case basis. Action taken could result in a family not being allowed to swim until the bill is caught up. All checks should be made out to Northwest Arkansas Aquatics or NWAA.

#### **IV. GLOSSARY OF IMPORTANT TERMS**

**AGE GROUP SWIM MEET** – All USA Swimming registered swimmers 18 years of age and under, are able to participate in their age category. Age on the first day of competition will govern the entire meet.

**SENIOR/OPEN SWIM MEET** – This is an age group category that allows swimmers of any age to compete. Theoretically you could have a 10 year old racing a 44 year old. Meets such as Sectionals and Senior Nationals have open events.

**ARKANSAS SWIMMING, INC.** - The name of the local swimming committee (LSC) charged by USS swimming to govern competitive swimming in the state.

**NORTHWEST ARKANSAS AQUATICS** – Non-profit organization/corporation under which the Club operates.

**OVER THE TOP STARTS** – Often some of the larger meets will run this procedure to save time. Swimmers are asked to remain in the pool after the race is complete and not exit the pool until after the next heat has started.

**PROOF OF TIME** – A requirement at some meets (usually the State Championship Meet and Sectionals) to make certain that all swimmers have actually met the time standards for that competition.

**RACE SPLITS** – A “per lap” time that coaches will often record for the purpose of teaching race strategy and pacing. For example, in a 100 yard race a coach will usually record each 50-yard time. That time is regarded as the split. In general, and whenever possible, athletes in the Senior group and higher will receive race splits. Younger swimmers are encouraged to concentrate more on technique as opposed to their times or splits.

**REFEREE** – The USS official who has authority over all officials at the meet. He/she makes all final decisions and to insure the efficient running of the meet.

**SENIOR DIVISION/MEET** – All USS registered swimmers who have met the qualifying time standards set for each event are eligible to compete.

**SECTIONALS** – A championship meet, which evolved to replace the “Junior National” meet. (Juniors have since been reinstated) This meet requires a qualifying time, which is faster than qualifying times for State. This would be considered an “Elite Meet”.

**ZONES** – Zones is a competition that allows swimmers to compete representing their LSC. NWAA competes in the Central Zone. Athletes must achieve a AAA time standard in order to be eligible for this competition.

**SHORT COURSE** – A type of competitive pool, which measures 25 yards or 25 meters in length. The “short course” season runs during the fall and winter months (October – March). USA Swimming and the NCAA are the only entities that compete on a 25 yard course. International Short Course competitions are held in a 25 meter course.

**LONG COURSE** – A type of competitive pool, which measures 50 meters in length. The “long course” season runs during the summer months (April - August). This is typically referred to as an “Olympic sized pool”.

**TOP 16** – A tabulation of the top 16 times in every age group and every event of all USS competitors from each season. The short course “top 16 times” are published in August and long course times in December.

**USA Swimming** – This is the governing body for all amateur swimming in the United States.

**USA Swimming number** – The personal registration number of each athlete member in USA Swimming. This number is composed of the athlete’s birthdate, followed by the first 3 letters of an athlete’s first name, middle initial and the first 4 letters of the athlete’s last name.