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# **COLE CENTER FAMILY YMCA Bluefins Swim Team Handbook**

## **Cole Center Family YMCA Swim Team Family Handbook**

**CONGRATULATIONS!** You and your child are beginning a very rewarding experience that will benefit him/her with a lifetime of excellent physical and mental conditioning—competitive swimming. This handbook has been prepared to help you better understand competitive swimming and the Y program. Additional information will be provided to you by means of monthly meetings, newsletters, and e-mails. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask a coach, the YMCA Aquatics Director, the YMCA Executive Director, or a parent representative.

**COLE CENTER FAMILY YMCA MISSION STATEMENT** “To put Christian principles into practice through programs that builds healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.”

**BLUEFINS MISSION STATEMENT** “To provide young people with the opportunity to develop swimming skills, sportsmanship, teamwork, and lifelong friends. Everyone plays and everyone wins.”

**THE YMCA PHILOSOPHY** focuses on each individual’s spirit, mind, and body. If a swimmer is having fun and getting better, then winning will take care of itself. Everybody swims, and everyone is a winner! Competition builds confidence in oneself and builds a bond with teammates as they “give it their all” toward a common goal. The Y strives to develop this team spirit and pride in one’s own achievements as well as those of one’s teammates. We believe that fair play is the very essence of competition, which should be marked by a spirit of truth and honesty, with an observance of all the rules. This implies respect for oneself, one’s opponent, and the others involved in the competition (teammates, coaches, parents, and officials). The Y hopes to provide a program that will help youth grow mentally and physically and to mature as responsible, self-disciplined young adults. It also provides a sport that can be enjoyed for many years and that can provide the regular cardiovascular exercise that is essential to continued physical well-being.

**TEAM MEMBERSHIP** on the Cole Center Family YMCA Bluefins is available to any swimmer, six years to eighteen, who can demonstrate the ability to swim freestyle and backstroke to the satisfaction of the coaches (at least 25 yards without stopping). All swimmers will have the opportunity to participate in meets, regardless of speed. The Bluefins is a competitive team; therefore, participation in meets is expected of all swimmers in order to retain membership on the team. Each swimmer must have a current YMCA membership and must have held it for 30 days prior to any dual meet and 90 days prior to any YMCA championship in which he/she competes.

### **SWIM TEAM FEES & EXPENSES**

**The team fees** vary depending on group level and season. Program fees are paid to the Cole Center Family YMCA. Program fees pay for coaches, use of the pool, equipment, etc. Any swimmer who is in need of financial assistance should contact the YMCA Membership Director, by filling out a scholarship form to see if they qualify for such assistance.

**Booster Fees:** In addition to the YMCA program fee, there will be a \$25 fee for each swimmer paid to the Cole Center Family YMCA, which goes into a reserve account for the Bluefin Boosters. This helps cover the cost of ribbons for home meets, supplies for practice and meets, invitational and state relays, parties, and season end awards. Swimmers, who qualify for financial assistance through the YMCA and need assistance with the boosters’ fee, will need to request it at the time of registration.

**EVENT FEES**--Swimmers will be responsible for paying a fee for any invitational, state, or conference meet they wish to swim. This fee will be determined by the cost of each event and any deck fees. Costs will be stated on the event sign-up sheets.

**There are also no refunds of fees, once a swimmer is registered for the meet the fees have to be paid whether a swimmer swims or not.** Relays for invitational, conference and state meets will be covered by the boosters. **If a swimmer signs up for one of these meets and gets placed on a relay team, but does not swim the relay (except due to extenuating circumstances), the swimmer will be expected to reimburse the Bluefins Swim Boosters the costs of the relay teams fees. This fee will be added to your YMCA account.**

**WORKER FINES**--Please understand that parents are needed to work swim meets. We cannot run meets without parental help. You will be asked to voluntarily sign up to work the meets; however if you do not you will be assigned. If you are not able to work a meet for some reason, you may send someone else to help, or switch with another parent. **If you fail to work a meet (or have a proxy for said meet) or are rude & discourteous to the parent who is in charge of workers sign up, you will be fined \$50 for each occurrence.** This money will be placed on your YMCA account. If this fee is not paid, your swimmer may not be allowed to swim in the next meet. If your account is not paid in full by the end of the swim season, your swimmer will not be allowed to sign up for the next season until the fees are paid. Please make sure to sign in at every meet you work. Home meets sign-up sheet will be posted at concession. At away meets a predetermined PAC member will have the sign-up sheet. Parents will be told who to see.

**THE TEAM UNIFORM** --is at the swimmer's expense and will be ordered at the beginning of the winter season. **ALL** swimmers will be required to wear the team suit at all meets, as it makes one feel more like part of the team. Speed suits, if worn, must be black with as little design as possible. (If purchasing the team suit creates a financial burden for your family, please speak with the Aquatics Director. Funds are available for such need.) It is imperative that your swimmer have a second suit for practice. Wearing the team suit for practices will quickly wear it out. Racing style suits are recommended for practices. Bikinis and swim shorts are not appropriate attire for competitive swimming.

Your child will also be supplied with a team cap, **which we recommend only to be worn at meets.** The team cap is to be worn at all swim meets with the occasional meet (such as our invite) where the swimmers may be given a fun cap, these should only be worn for that meet and then practices after that. Caps will be given every season a swimmer participates. Extra caps will be available for sale through the Aquatics Director. It is also necessary that swimmers (girls and boys) with long hair have a practice cap. Swimmers must provide their own goggles and must know how to put them on and adjust them to fit.

**SWIM TEAM SEASON**—The Cole Center Family YMCA Bluefins winter season is from mid-September to mid-March with the summer season running from mid-May to mid-July.. YMCA Indiana State Championship is held the middle of March and may be located anywhere in Northern Indiana. We encouraged all swimmers to participate in the state meet, swimmers must have times and a predetermined number of dual meets to swim state.

**THE PRACTICE FACILITY** will be the Cole Center Family YMCA competitive pool. The Cole Center Family YMCA is not responsible for lost or stolen items. It is advised that each swimmer have their own padlock in order to lock up valuables in a locker during practices and meets, both at home and away. All swim team members should use the youth locker rooms for practice and meets.

**PRACTICE SCHEDULE**—Practices are offered Monday through Thursday, with a few exceptions due to high school swim meets during the winter season. Practice time and length will be determined by swimmer's group, coach will determine what group a swimmer should practice with. All swimmers are expected to attend practices on a regular basis. Remember that practice is what makes you a better, stronger swimmer. High School swimmers may swim at practices throughout the entire Bluefins' season, please practice as your high school coach suggests. Middle school swimmers are also able to practice throughout the middle school season, but please practice as your middle school coach suggests.

During the winter or summer season, practice may be changed or cancelled due to holidays, scheduled days off (school), or high school swim meets. ***For Cancellations due to weather or other reasons, please check the website, emails, sign up for the group text, or call Cole Center Family YMCA. We will try to have cancellations on line by 4pm.***

During the summer season practices maybe added, in the mornings. If a swimmer comes to a morning practice, that will count as a regular practice for the week.

**WHAT TO BRING TO PRACTICE**—Practice suit (recommended 100% polyester), goggles, towel, practice cap, water/water bottle, gym shoes, and extra clothes (in case of thunderstorm – we will practice in the gym or on the deck), and a **POSITIVE HARDWORKING ATTITUDE.** Please remember it is not recommended to wear your team suit and cap to practice, they will last longer.

**PRACTICE BEHAVIOR**—All swimmers are expected to follow pool rules and membership rules. Swimmers are expected to treat each other, coaches, parents, YMCA employees, volunteers, members, and guests with respect. Swimmers are expected to shower before entering the pool, dive only in the deep end, not have gum, and walk on the pool deck. If swimmers must leave early, they must give notice to the coach prior to the start of practice either verbally or written from a parent. If swimmers are injured and need to leave practice or cannot continue to practice they will be asked to dress and wait in the bleachers, parents will be alerted. All swimmers must actively participate in 1 practice the week of a swim meet, unless there is a communicated acceptable reason that the swimmer cannot attend a practice, but is planning to attend the meet (coach will have will have final acceptance).

All swimmers should put forth effort to practice to their abilities and to work toward their goals. Swimmers should realize that they need to attend practices on a regular basis and that practices are set up to help them reach their goals. If swimmers do not attend practice their ability to succeed will be hindered.

**Discipline during Practice:**

1<sup>st</sup> infraction: Verbal warning with explanation for rule and safety concerns.

2<sup>nd</sup> infraction: Time out with explanation

3<sup>rd</sup> infraction: Sit out remainder of practice, parent called, and meet w/ coach at the end of practice if time allows.

If swimmer's behavior is considered extreme, is detrimental to themselves or to other swimmers, they will be asked to dress and parents will be called.

If a swimmer continues to have discipline issues, they will be called to a meeting with coaches, parents, and aquatics director. If the discipline is detrimental to the team or the swimmer, they may be suspended from the team.

**THE COACHES RESPONSIBILITIES** include all facets in the training and preparation of the swimmer for competition and in the guidance of the swimmer during competition. The responsibilities include:

1. Communication with all parties.
2. Physical training and conditioning of the swimmer.
3. Psychological conditioning and preparation.
4. Working swimmers on stroke technique.
5. Motivation

The Coach will work with the swimmer to determine the events a swimmer will swim during dual and tri meets. Coach has final say on events during dual and tri meets. Choosing relay teams is up to the coach.

Swimmers will be given the opportunity to choose all of their individual events at invitationals, conference, and state, with the coaches' guidance. All fees and forms needs to be turned in by the dead line given to the swimmer (all payments should be made to Cole Center Family YMCA, and given to the courtesy counter staff). Relays will be determined by the coach the same as dual or tri meets.

If you (the parent) need to talk with the coach, make arrangements to do so outside of the practice time. You will not be allowed on deck during practice time unless specifically requested by the coach. The coaches must be able to concentrate their efforts on the swimmers during this time. Arrangements to talk to the coach must be made directly through the coach.

**THE PARENT/COACH RELATIONSHIP** needs to be viewed by the swimmer as one of mutual respect and cooperation. There may be times that you disagree or do not understand the action of the coach. Please take time to ask the coach after practice. **MISUNDERSTANDINGS SHOULD BE HANDLED WITHOUT THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE SWIMMER.** After you have had the opportunity to discuss any differences of opinion, it is important that you support the decisions made by the coach and that you support team policies as well.

**PARENTS ARE PART OF THE TEAM!** Age group swimming is unique in that it involves the entire family. The purpose of this part of the handbook is to discuss what you, as the swimming parents, can do to best support our swimmers and this program. **NOW THAT YOUR CHILD IS A BLUEFIN, YOU ARE A BLUEFIN PARENT!** Your commitment is important. The obligations are many, but the rewards far outweigh any sacrifice on your part.

## BLUEFIN PARENT OBLIGATIONS

1. Assure that your child's membership fees are paid in full by the specified date.
2. Provide/arrange for transportation to each practice session and meets. If your child needs a ride to a meet, please ask the coach for suggestions on whom to ask. Coaches are NOT allowed to give rides to events. Encourage consistent participation, and ensure punctual attendance, and hard work at practices.
3. Provide an environment that focuses on health, rest, and nutrition.
4. Provide your child with encouragement and moral support for his/her hard work at practice and for his/her performance at meets.
5. Keep yourself informed of activities by attending meetings and reading newsletters.
6. Be aware of meet registration deadlines!
7. It is the responsibility of the parents to run each facet of the home meets and to volunteer to work at away meets. Please understand that you need to actively participate in every meet.
8. An active Bluefins' Parents Group is highly recommended and is very important for the success of our team. There are many tasks involved in running a swim team program, and it is the parents' responsibility to see that these tasks are done.
9. Some of the jobs involved in running YMCA meets require certification or training. Parents will be notified when training sessions are being held and are encouraged to participate. If you are interested in taking officials training please let us know. The more parents we have certified, the easier it will be on everybody.
10. If your child swims CONFERENCE, STATE, or SPOOKTACULAR (our invite) you will be required to work that event, no matter how many meets you have already worked.

## MEET POLICIES & INFORMATION FOR PARENTS & SWIMMERS

This section is designed to help all of us share the work, enjoy the meet, and provide each swimmer with a confident, positive experience. As long as we all work together, meets will be more enjoyable for everyone.

**DUAL & TRI** are meets that are between 2 or 3 teams. The meets are usually 2-4 hours depending on the number of swimmers. These meets can either be hosted at home or away. All swimmers are encouraged to swim at these meets, and must swim in 2 meets per season. There is no additional charge for these meets. Swimmers will be given an event sheet prior to the meet and may get to pick all but one of their individual events, as long as the sheets are turned in by the due date. Coach(es) have final say on events. If not turned in by the due date, the swimmer may not get entered into the meet. Coach will pick everyone's final event and place swimmers on relay teams.

**INVITATIONALS** are multi-team meets usually held over a 1-3 day period. These meets have additional charges that swimmers have to pay; the amount varies, and will be included on the event sheets. For any invitational we attend, you will receive a list of events for your swimmer to choose which events he/she wants to swim, the number they should pick will be on the sheet, along with the cost for the events, the number of events allowed will vary and is determined by the host. The event sheet along with entry fee payment must be returned to the YMCA courtesy counter staff by the deadline specified. The coach will choose relays depending on the number of swimmers that are registered for the invitational. Coach has final approval of events. Relay costs will be picked up by the team boosters.

**STATE & ZONES** are meets that are held at the end of the winter season. These meets have special requirements. To swim at either of these meets swimmers must have swum at least 3 (high school swimmers only need 2) dual, tri, or invitational meets during the winter season. High school swimmers; swimming meets during high school season, will need to get a waiver. This is the responsibility of the swimmer. Also, these meets have additional fees that are the swimmers' responsibility. If the qualifying event is a relay the team boosters will pick up this cost.

**NOTE:** Meet results at invitationals, conference, and state are usually posted in a hallway near the competition for parents to view during the meet. The results (on disk, or flash drive) will be sent home with the coach and will be permanently recorded on our "Team Manager" computer program. Awards will also be sent home with the coach to distribute later. There are times when awards will be mailed to the team. Your swimmers will receive their awards as soon as possible.

## SWIMMERS' RULES FOR ALL MEETS

1. Be sure to check-in with the coach.
2. Be on deck and ready for coach-supervised warm-ups at the scheduled time.
3. Know your event number, stroke, and distance.
4. Listen for your event to be called and report promptly to the clerk of course so that you are not scratched from your event. This is your responsibility.
5. Swim the best race that you can. Believe in yourself.
6. Fair play and proper conduct is expected of every swimmer.
7. Congratulate your team mates and opponents on a job well done, win or lose.
8. Swimmers should politely ask the timer for their time and then report it to the coach.
9. Remember, this is a meet and not a party. Conduct yourself properly, respect the other swimmers, support your teammates, and stay in the rest area when not swimming. And at dual meets swimmer should stay for the entire meet.
10. **No food or drink** is allowed on the pool deck. A plastic water bottle with water is acceptable. Please keep your items with you and dispose of when empty!

**HIGH SCHOOL SWIMMERS** –Remember: You can swim some meets with the Bluefins' team during your high school season, but only if you get waivers signed by your coach and processed through your school. This takes time so please work on these right away.

**WHAT TO BRING TO A MEET**—All practice items along with the team suit and cap. If the meet is an invitational, may want to bring a lawn chair, sleeping bag, pillow, word puzzles, etc. Remember that meets are a great opportunity to get involved with your child's swim team by timing or helping out.

## PARENTS RESPONSIBILITIES FOR MEETS

### HOME MEETS

The home meets require a lot of help from the parents. Listed here are the responsibilities and job assignments. We need:

1. 7-9 timers (one of these the head timer), 6 additional timers provided by the other team
2. Officials-starter/referee (training involved), stroke/turn judge (training involved), 1 additional official
3. 1 runner
4. 2-3 clerk of course, 1 additional clerk provided by the other team
5. 2-3 Daktronics Timing & Scoring operators (in house training involved)
6. 3 Concession stand
7. 3-4 families for set up & clean up
8. Hostess

### AWAY MEETS

These also require parent volunteers. Due to the nature of dual, tri, or invitational meets each team is expected to bring a certain number of parents to help with the meet. Meet assignments are worked out between the coaches of the teams involved so that each team knows how many workers they will need to supply for the meet. **Be prepared to work at the meets, and please make yourself available if someone else doesn't show up. Help is always needed!**

**According to YMCA rules, coaches are NOT allowed to transport swimmers to or from events.** Please try to find rides with other parents for you children if you cannot go to a meet. If you need help connecting and finding a ride please let coach or a PAC member know and we will try to help find a ride for your swimmer.

### EVERY MEET

Remind your swimmer to ask the timers for an approximate time and to report to the coach **IMMEDIATELY** after swimming their event. (This allows the coach to give the swimmer immediate feedback, congratulations and their Personal Best rewards if applicable.) Remind your swimmer that his time is more important than his place. We want to encourage each Bluefin to swim against himself striving for his/her personal best (PB's). **BEAT YOUR OWN TIME!**

**IMPORTANT**--If you signed your swimmer up for a meet and they are unable to attend, please notify the coach, or a PAC officer as soon as you know they will not be there. No shows hurt the entire team! If notice is given in advance, changes to relay teams can be made. If no notice is given, relays will be scratched. If your child is on the scratched relay you will be charged the cost of the relay.

## MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

**THE BLUEFIN RECORDS** are displayed in the cases along the wall at the diving end of the pool. The records list times set by past Bluefin swimmers in each age group. No split times will count towards a Bluefin record. A swimmer must be a full participating member of the team in order to be considered for a Bluefin Record (see definition of full member of the team under AWARDS)

We encourage the children to be aware of these times and to strive to break them. However, more important than any broken record are the time improvements that any swimmer makes on his/her own personal times. Our past trophies and team photos are located in the trophy cabinet in the concession lobby.

**BLUEFINS MAILBOXES & BULLETIN BOARD**—will be located in the competitive pool area. Ribbons, newsletters, notes, etc. will be placed in the designated spot for each swimmer. Swimmers should check their mailbox before leaving the YMCA.

**AWARDS**—an awards party is held after each season. This party is for swimmers and families and is usually held within one month of the season ending. Awards are given for some of the following; personal bests, swimming state, swimming longer events for the first time (500, 1000 and 1650 free and 200 IM 10 & under/400 IM 11 & over), most improved, character counts, high point, record breakers, etc. Which awards are given each season is up to coach to determine.

Awards are also given out to each swimmer who completes the season. A full participating member of the team must be a member of the YMCA for the entire season and must be a registered member of the team with booster fees being paid in full and in good standing with the YMCA fees.

- ½ year..... Swimmer Pin & Star (if summer is 1<sup>st</sup> season)
  - Year 1..... Plaque, Bluefin Patch, Y Letter, & Star (& Swimmer pin if winter is first season)
  - Years 2-4..... Star or plaque plate
  - Year 5..... Bluefins bag & Star or plaque plate
  - Years 6-9..... Star or plaque plate
  - Year 10 ..... Bluefins Towel & Star or plaque plate
  - Years 11+ ..... Star or plaque plate
  - Graduating senior..... Blanket & Star & Plaque Plate
- Winter Season= 1 year*  
*Summer Season= 1/2 year*

## **THIS PART OF THE HANDBOOK CONTAINS PERSONAL GUIDELINES FOR SWIMMERS AND FAMILIES.**

Many factors contribute to your success as a swimmer. Perhaps the most important one is **"ATTITUDE"**. How you feel about swimming will determine your success in swimming. You will either love it or hate it. Aside from attitude, an equally important factor is **"WORK"**. Just attending practice is not necessarily "work". In order to get the most from practice you must do everything the coaches ask of you to the very best of your ability. **HARD WORK PAYS OFF!**

## **PERSONAL GUIDELINES**

In addition to YMCA rules and regulations you, as a swimmer, have the responsibility to yourself to follow these guidelines:

1. Your body, spirit & mind are your single most important asset. It is yours for life. Respect and care for it.
2. It is your responsibility to eat properly. A well-balanced diet is best for you and your family. Avoid "fast food", "junk food", high sodium, and sugary foods. Swimmers need carbs! Low carbohydrate diets are not good for competitive swimmers.
3. You cannot afford to keep late hours. You are expected to be as well rested for practice as you are for meets. Getting 8 hours of sleep each night is best.
4. You have to budget your time because so much is committed to swimming. Remember that schoolwork is important and must be finished each night. Recreation time and other sports are also important and should not be forgotten.
5. As an athlete, you have the responsibility for proper care of your body. Remember...say "NO" to drugs and alcohol.
6. You are representing not only yourselves and your families, but also the swim team, YMCA, and the community. Conduct yourselves appropriately. Anything that deviates from proper sportsmanship, language, attitude, or appearance affects our reputation. Destructive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated!!!

In addition to YMCA rules and regulations you, as a swimmer, have the responsibility to yourself to follow these guidelines:

**CODE OF CONDUCT**—All members are expected to behave in an orderly, courteous, and sportsmanlike manner during all team related functions including practices and meets. At the discretion of the coaches, inappropriate, destructive, or prohibited behavior may constitute just cause for dismissing a swimmer from practice or sending him/her home from a team function at his/her parent's expense. At the request of the coaching staff, violation of the conduct code will be reviewed by the Head Coach, Aquatics Director, and Executive Director and may lead to suspension or dismissal.

The coaching staff cannot be responsible for the supervision of any swimmer who does not report to them on the pool deck. Therefore, parents of younger swimmers are strongly advised to ensure that these swimmers safely reach the pool deck. Parents should discuss with their children the importance of promptly reporting to their coaches prior to leaving a practice or meet due to illness or other problems.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**—remember the most important components of the program are attitude and willingness to work. Be aware that each swimmer goes through a period of ups and downs, as well as plateaus. Periods of fast growth tend to affect your coordination, and your strokes may even change during these periods. Younger swimmers tend to hit plateaus and no matter how hard they work, their times remain the same. The solution is to keep swimming.

As a swimmer you should always set goals for yourself that challenge you to work hard and to swim faster. You should always do your best.

In addition to regular practice, there is also time set up by the YMCA for open swim, and even lap swimming during "adult" lap. Bluefins are encouraged to practice whenever they have the opportunity.