

MACR Sharks
YMCA of the Cedar Rapids Metropolitan Area

**Parent/Guardian
HANDBOOK**

2009-2010

YMCA Mission: To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

**WELCOME
TO THE MACR SHARKS
A YMCA COMPETITIVE SWIM TEAM!**

We are delighted that you have joined this season's edition of our competitive youth swim team.

Swimmers will enjoy a happy, healthy, and challenging swim season together. They will build skill, speed, stamina, and sportsmanship as they learn, or build on, to skills already developed in the water.

Parents, we invite all of you to get involved! Your involvement is one of the best ways to ensure that your swimmer(s) has/have a satisfying and successful season. There are many ways to become involved, and you will find your involvement to be both pleasant and enriching!

This handbook will help you to understand much of what goes on during the YMCA swim season, and where and how to get further information.

Please make sure that we have a current, and often checked, e-mail address for you. E-mail distribution is one of our best tools for distributing information to the team as a whole. If you do not have access to e-mail, then please make sure we have a way to get in touch with you so that you stay in the loop of current information being distributed.

Don't hesitate! Please ask us about any issues that have not been covered in this handbook.

Thank you and welcome to the MACR Sharks organization!

Paul D. Brown
Aquatic Director
Helen G. Nassif YMCA
Head Coach – MACR Sharks

Parent Committee

Ken Cochrane	President
Kim Urbi Lori Knutson	Vice Presidents
Tona Coleman	Secretary/Treasurer
Kathy Scharmer	Webmaster
Matt Ramsey	Advisor

Coaching Staff

Paul Brown	Aquatic Director Head Coach
Donald Pirrie	Assistant Head Coach
Jason Bleadorn Melissa Miller Jim Herman Scott Weinheimer	Assistant Coaches

MACR SHARKS PRACTICE SCHEDULE

Mondays and Wednesdays

10 & under	6:00p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
11 & 12	7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
13 & older	8:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Tuesdays and Thursdays

10 & under	7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
11 & older	8:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Fridays

10 & under	5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
11 & older	6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Please note that all practices will be at the Helen G. Nassif YMCA

Age breakdowns may be adjusted according to ability levels as assessed by coaches. Adjustments will be made as soon as possible. Most of these adjustments will involve having some of the 11 & older group come to the first practice session each evening. We are not making these adjustments to embarrass anyone. We do feel that those swimmers that these adjustments affect will have a better chance at success in learning proper stroke mechanics, which will lead to greater competitive success.

There will be evenings when we do not have practice. Some of these dates are known and some are not (i.e. they will be weather related cancellations). As of right now the known dates are as follows:

Thu, Nov 26 – Fri, Nov 27 - Thanksgiving Holiday

Thu, Dec 24 - Fri, Dec 25 - Christmas Holiday

Thu, Dec 31 and Fri, Jan 1 – New Year Holiday

Friday, Mar 5 – The day before State Meet weekend

The Friday before Regional Meet weekend in Minneapolis

As far as the weather related cancellations are concerned, as a YMCA program we will adhere to the program cancellation policy of the YMCA. Typically, YMCA programs are cancelled if schools either let out early or are cancelled due to weather related reasons. The governing school district for the HGN YMCA is the Cedar Rapids School District. There may be instances where we will decide to have practice regardless of the school districts decisions to close. There may also be instances where we decide cancel practices even though schools did not cancel or close early. We will always communicate via e-mail to confirm whether or not practices will be cancelled on a given day for weather related issues. Please make sure we have an e-mail address for you and your family that you check often enough to make that information useful to you. The front desk of the HGN YMCA will be advised of what our plan is. The Helen G. Nassif YMCA phone # is 366-6421.

2009 – 2010 SWIM MEET SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>Time</u>
Nov 21	Turkey Meet vs. Stoney Pt	St Pt Y	1 PM
Dec 5	Dubuque	Dubuque Y	TBA
Dec 12	Waukee	HGN Y	1 PM
Dec 19	Marshalltown/Walnut Cr.	Marshalltown	TBA
Jan 9	Dubuque	HGN Y	1 PM
Jan 16	Open date – possibility of a fund raiser on this date		
Jan 23	Muscatine/Wilton	HGN Y	1 PM
Jan 30	Ankeny	Ankeny Y	TBA
Feb 14	Northeast Sectionals	TBA	TBA
* Much more information concerning this meet as season progresses			
Mar 6, 7	State Championships in Marshalltown		TBA

I do not have information as far as dates for the Regional Meet in Mnpls

Information concerning this meet will be forthcoming. Typically it is posted to the Minnesota Youth Athletic Web Site before it is communicated to teams. That site address is www.myas.org

SWIM MEETS AND ACTUAL LENGTH OF THE SEASON

There are always many questions from parents concerning how long the actual season lasts. There are actually three different times that a swimmer's season may conclude. These times are explained below.

First I will give you some background information about swim meets and requirements to swim in particular swimming meets.

First and foremost, I do not require any swimmer to participate in any of our swim meets. I would like for all of my swimmers to participate in as many meets as possible, but I will not make that decision for anyone. That is a decision that needs to be made by the individual swimmer and his/her family.

As indicated on the meet schedule we will have eight scheduled dual/triangular swim meets. Any and all members of the swim team are eligible to swim in any and all of these swimming meets.

In order to compete in the Northeast Sectional meet a swimmer is required to have swum in at least three of our dual/triangular meets. This requirement is made by the State Rules Committee and is not negotiable. The definition of competing in a swim meet is to successfully complete at least one event in that meet. This means that a swimmer does not have to swim in a full slate of events at a swim meet. It also means that if he/she chooses to swim in only one or two events, they must successfully complete at least one event. Successful completion means having a recorded time on the final results for the event swum in. You cannot scratch an event or be disqualified in an event and have that event count towards the qualification criteria spelled out above.

The Northeast Sectional meet is where every swimmer will qualify for the State Championship meet. A swimmer may only qualify for the State meet at the Sectional meet. You qualify for State in one of two ways. Either you win your event outright at Sectionals or you swim a time better than the qualifying time published by the State Rules Committee. These qualifying times will be included in everyone's dual meet entry packets that will be distributed at the beginning of the season.

The Midwest Regional swim meet that we travel to every year is also a qualification only swim meet. This meet is not a YMCA swim meet. It is hosted by the Minnesota Youth Athletic Services. Typically it is sometime towards the end of March. A swimmer may qualify for this swim meet at any of our meets – dual, Sectionals, or State (providing entries to the meet are not due before our State meet). The qualifying times for this meet are not established by our State Rules Committee and in many cases are faster (sometimes slower) than our State meet qualifying times. Information concerning this swim meet may be found at the MYAS web site: www.myas.org

OK – I gave you all of that background because, depending on how much competition a swimmer chooses to attend and what meets he/she qualifies for, it will all have a bearing on the length of a participant's season. If a swimmer does not compete in any of the scheduled swimming meets, then that swimmer's season will be over after the Sectional meet. If a swimmer completes the requirement to qualify to swim at Sectionals, swims at Sectionals, but does not qualify for the State swim meet, then his/her season is also complete after the Sectional swim meet. A swimmer that qualifies for State, but not Regionals, has his/her season conclude after the State meet. A swimmer that qualifies for State and Regionals, and chooses to compete in State and Regionals, has his/her season conclude after the Regional meet.

I do not have this policy to be prejudiced against those that do not wish to compete or do not qualify for certain swim meets. I have this policy so that the swimmers that are competing at various meets get the best possible training for those meets. Training will change at different times during the season and it changes to specifically help swimmers attain the best possible results in competition. This is an all-inclusive program. Any swimmer that wishes to compete has the opportunity to compete. But there are certain meets that require qualification to compete in. I ask that if your swimmer has not qualified to swim in a meet such as State or Regionals that they do not continue on with

practices after the Sectional meet. Hopefully everyone understands this policy and I have not offended anyone by spelling it out.

COMMUNICATIONS

In a program of this size good communication is essential to make things run as smoothly as possible. The team has a number of ways to communicate and we do utilize all of them.

- 1) Swimmer/family folders – Each swimmer or family of swimmers will have a folder. These folders will be in plastic milk crates and will typically be at every practice session throughout the season. The folder crates will always be out on the pool deck at the Helen G. Nassif YMCA right by the door of the Aquatics Office. The folders will contain written communication (i.e. the swim meet entry packets and other important items) and also serve as a way to distribute ribbons and other awards swimmers will win during the course of the season. Please make sure your swimmer(s) are checking their folders often for any communications they may contain.
- 2) Parent Board meetings – These meetings are designed to help keep parents informed and in the loop. We are going to try and hold at least 3 of these meetings during the course of the season. Meeting dates have not been established at this time and will up to the discretion of the Parent Board. These dates will be communicated via e-mail as soon as they are available.
- 3) Swim team web site – Our team site is at www.macrsharks.org. There are many items posted to the site over the course of the season including meet schedules, directions to away meets, and results of our meets. Please check out the site and if you have any suggestions to make it even better let us know.
- 4) E-mail – Our favorite way of drowning you with information is the use of e-mail. It is our fastest and most efficient way of getting information out to the masses. Please make sure we have an e-mail address for you and that it one that you actually check on a regular basis. If you do not have access to e-mail, please try to make arrangements with someone so that you get the information in a timely manner. That someone could be another swim family or by letting the coach know. We will try and work with you to get written communication put in your folder as outlined in #1 above.

- 5) Word of mouth – Many times information will be given to the swimmers on deck before practices begin. Please make sure you check with your swimmer(s) for anything the coaches may cover in these pre-practice meetings.

GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

As with any program, goals are an important aspect to the success of an organization and of its participants. The following goals have been central to this program for many years and continue to be the foundation it is built on.

In order of importance they are:

- 1) **FUN** – The coaching staff wants to make this experience fun for all participants and their families. I recognize that there can be many definitions of fun. The YMCA works hard to make all of its programs “all inclusive”. The swim team is no different. Some swimmers participate for the social aspect of the sport, some for fitness and health reasons, and still others because they are serious about competition. We work hard to achieve a program that speaks to all of these levels. No one is required to compete in swim meets, and there is no set number of practices that swimmers are expected to attend. More on the subject of practices and attendance later in this handbook. For a coach, the fun of swimming comes from watching all of the swimmers improve throughout the season. Whatever the reasons are for your participation, the #1 goal of this program is to provide enjoyment for all participants. Remember if you’re not having fun, chances are the coaches are not having fun – then where are we?
- 2) **STROKE TECHNIQUE IMPROVEMENT** – While I do not want to downplay the importance of training and yardage swam at workouts, etc, etc – I do want everyone to understand that the coaches believe that yardage and repetition alone will only take a swimmer so far in terms of improvement. The real, long term improvement comes from perfecting strokes, stroke technique, starts, turns, and finishes. We will, as we have over the last ten years, work on technique drills throughout the season. The payoff for all of this technique work will come at Sectionals, State, and Regionals, as well as throughout your swimmer’s career.
- 3) **GOAL SETTING** – Swimming is one of the sports that lends itself exceptionally well to goal setting and attainment. Since long term improvement requires

dedication, perseverance, and hard work; learning to set attainable goals, as well as updating those goals, is an important component of the process. The coaches are available to help each swimmer set and work towards specific goals. We are here to help you in whatever manner that we can. All you need to do is ask.

- 4) **MOVING ON TO OTHER PROGRAMS** – While we feel very strongly that we have a very good YMCA swimming program, we are also realistic and know that YMCA swimming is only going to take a swimmer so far in their competitive career. The last goal of this program is to prepare swimmers to make that next step in their competitive career. Be that high school swimming or club swimming or whatever. I want anyone that desires to take that next step to feel confident in his/her abilities, and to know that they are prepared to meet the new challenges of a different program. It is the mark of a successful program when its participants move on to a new level of competition and do well at that new level.

SOME COACHES RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

While the coaches all want our swimmers to have fun, there are some rules and expectations that we must ask every swimmer to adhere to. There are no set number of practices that a swimmer must attend each week. That being said we would like to see all of our swimmers at least two to three times per week if at all possible. What we do ask is that swimmers show up for practice on time and prepared to swim. If practice is scheduled to begin at 8:00 p.m., then be on deck and ready to get in the water by 7:55 p.m. Late arrivals do nothing except disrupt practice and cause confusion for everyone. Please do not wander out on deck, wait for practice to begin, and then start fiddling with swim caps, suits, goggles, water bottles etc, etc, etc. We also ask that all swimmers swim for the entire practice. I know that may sound a little strange, but we have seen an increasing number of swimmers excuse themselves to go to the restroom or stop in the middle of sets to stretch, rest or for some other reason. Injuries are one thing, but disappearing because the set is a little too difficult and then reappearing sometime later during the practice is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. In order to combat these instances, we are going to attempt to keep track of who is doing what and when and then we will be e-mailing parents directly to inform you that there may be some problem with your swimmer.

Now, I would like to expand on some of the topics touched on above.

- 1) While we do not set a number of practices that we expect each swimmer to attend, I want to be clear that swimming is a sport that requires dedication and hard work in order to see real improvements. With the season plan that the coaches have been working on, there are going to be times during the season that we would like to see swimmers four times per week. One important time of the season will be the mid – January through February period. The coaches are setting some lofty yardage goals for the team's season plan. We hope that by increasing our yardage and maintaining our emphasis on technique work, our team will perform better than ever at Sectionals, State, and Regionals.

- 2) Punctuality – Every year we have noticed an increase in the number of people showing up late for practice and then being unprepared to start the practice in a timely fashion. I cannot emphasize enough what a disruption this causes for that practice session. I understand that occasionally life gets in the way. It is the constant late arrivals that we would like to eliminate. Please make every effort to have your swimmers at the practice location early so they have a chance to get ready and be prepared to get into the water when practice begins and not 5, 10, and I have seen as late as 30 minutes after the session begins. We have limited amount of time for each and every practice session and need to make the most of the time that we do have.
- 3) Swimming the entire workout – Over the years the coaches have noticed that “when the going gets tough” we tend to, in general, wilt. From frequent visits to the bathroom, to stopping to stretch, to needing a drink of water-the excuses can seem endless. Each swimmer needs to decide for themselves what they hope to attain from their participation. One analogy for training is to look at coming to practice as going to the bank. Each time you practice you are, in effect, making a deposit in your training bank. These deposits will all add up so that you will be able to make the big withdraws that will be necessary at the end of the season. If you cheat yourself on the deposit end, then the amount you will be able to withdraw will be diminished. It is our hope that if we e-mail parents concerning swimmers training habits (or lack thereof) that parents will discuss the matter with their swimmer(s) and there will be a change of attitude and effort level.

We also ask that all swimmers obey all YMCA rules for conduct at all times. This request is regardless of which YMCA we may be at. Obey rules for footwear, rules as to where you may have food and where you may not, and general conduct. Please shower and exit the building as soon as possible after the end of late practices. When we visit other facilities for swimming meets please be sure to remember that we are all representatives of our families, our swim team, and of the Cedar Rapids YMCA's.

ADVICE FOR PARENTS

The MACR Sharks coaching staff encourage parents to watch training sessions from time to time. It is probably not the best idea to watch practices every evening, but then again it is also not the best idea to never attend practice sessions. We understand the realities of life, economy, and carpooling and that some parents may be present at every practice their child(ren) attend. However, you do not need to watch every minute of every practice. Here are some important guidelines to keep in mind when observing practice sessions.

- 1) Young swimmer's want the approval of their parents more than anything. If they know you are watching, then it is only natural that some of their attention during practice will be directed toward you. However, for the swimmers to learn as much as possible during their training sessions, it is imperative that the coaches have every swimmer's undivided attention during practice. We ask that you try

not to communicate with your child during practice and compete with the coaches for his/her attention.

- 2) We insist that parents do not interrupt the coaches on deck while they are coaching. If you need to communicate with a coach, please do so before or after practice (if they are not coaching another group) or communicate with them by phone or e-mail. We appreciate your cooperation in this important matter.
- 3) The coaches have spent and will spend a considerable amount of time planning weekly training sessions for each of the groups. Each training set or instructional drill has a purpose and one practice and/or practice set often builds on another throughout the week and the course of the season. If you have not attended all of the training sessions, you may not understand the purpose of what the swimmers are doing on any given day.
- 4) Please do not try to coach your child based on what you see (or think you do not see) him/her do. Many times when teaching stroke skills, coaches ask swimmers to do things that may not look correct or might actually be illegal according to competitive rules. Rest assured that the drills and skills we will be teaching and executing will all work to make your child a better swimmer.

Please, if you are observing practice sessions, let the coaches coach. Your cooperation and support in this matter is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact the head coach or your child's coach.

EQUIPMENT AND SWIMMING SUITS

At registration everyone was given a packet of order forms for different items and apparel we are offering this season. Among those order forms there is one for our new team suit. This year we have decided to go with a solid black suit that will have our team logo imprinted on it. Please note the due dates for orders and where to place the order forms for collection. If for some reason you did not receive this order form packet, let Paul know and he will make sure you do get one. Now this part is important – no one is required to buy a team suit. Obviously it would be great if everyone did, but it is not a requirement. You do, however, need to have a swim suit ☺. If you decide not to purchase a team suit, please buy a black suit as that is our main team color. Ladies, please try to stay away from the suits with the spaghetti shoulder straps. They wear out rather quickly, particularly if your training suit doubles as your competition suit.

I strongly recommend that every swimmer also have a pair of competition type swimming goggles. There are plenty of goggle manufacturers out there so finding a pair should not be a problem. Please do not buy the cheap kind that you can get at the drug store. Those are generally for recreation use and will not work well for your swimmer. Also make sure that you purchase goggles that will fit your swimmer's face. They do come in adult and children sizes. Lastly, please come to practice with your goggles ready to be worn. Adjust the nose pieces and straps at home before you come to practice. The coaches do not have time to adjust goggles and coach at the same time. It's kind of like walking and chewing gum at the same time – just not possible for some of us more challenged individuals.

The last piece of equipment is optional, but is also definitely recommended. As in the past we will be using fins during practices for kicking sets as well as some of the swimming sets. We won't use them everyday, but we will use them throughout the season. Speedo, Kiefer, TYR, and I am sure there are others, all manufacture suitable fins for our use. Either short blade or long blade fins will work. Please make sure that the fins are the type that fit over your entire foot. The fins that have straps around the ankles are not going to work for our purposes. If you have any questions about fins, please ask. As stated above, they are not necessary, but are recommended – particularly for the 9 & 10 age group and up.

A couple of local retailers that supply competitive swimming apparel and equipment are Dick's Sporting Goods and Scheels All-Sport. There are also many swimming apparel magazines that can be utilized. As always if you have questions, please ask. I am sure that someone will be able to help you out and point you in the right direction.

Welcome again to another year of MACR Sharks swimming. We hope you find your experience fun, educational, and worthwhile.

Practices begin on Monday, Nov 2. The coaches all look forward to seeing our seasoned vets as well as meeting and getting to know all of our new swimmers and their families.