



WARNING: LONG POST, BUT NECESSARY IF YOU WANT TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT SWIM MEETS!

Hi, I'm Mary! I've got swimmers at FMS and FHS, and I am one of the Booster parents. Here's what I wished someone had told me about the controlled and tightly choreographed chaos called a Swim Meet -- Grab some coffee....☺

The first FMS Home Meet is 12/5 and the first FHS Boys Home Meet is 12/15. Home Meets take many 'hands on deck' to run smoothly. Home Meets need Volunteer Timers (12, to be exact) to ensure we have a backup for our computer timing system.

Swim scoring has a three-prong approach to ensure the most accurate times are collected: (1) Touch pads for the swimmer at end of the race which record to the computer desk behind the pool and display on the timing board; (2) The "plunger", which is a hose with a push switch at the end that runs from the immersed touchpad system and is pressed by one of the timers when the swimmer touches the touchpad (just in case the swimmer has a light touch); and (3) Two backup timers with stopwatches who record their times on paper/clipboard, and a runner collects these papers and delivers them to the computer desk on the side of the pool.

The meet has about 10 events. Any given event may have one or more heats. When an event has more swimmers than the number of lanes (we have 6 lanes), then there are multiple heats. The order of swimmers and which heat they will swim depends on "seed time", meaning the fastest swimmers who have a historical seed time already recorded in that event will be in the final heat and can place in the event. Earlier heats allow swimmers to practice and gain faster times in an event to get better seed times and move them forward to later heats at future meets.

At the start of any given race, the announcer will announce the current event/heat. The official will then say: (1) "Timers, check your watches." (This gets your attention to make sure your watch is reset from the last event); (2) "Swimmers, step up." (The swimmers can step onto the dive blocks, stand near the side of the pool if they are not yet ready to dive off the blocks, or they get in the pool to set up for backstroke); (3) "Take your mark." (the swimmers get into their diving/starting position); and (4) The official engages a strobe/sound device to indicate the start of the race. As a timer, you should be looking at the official at this point, not watching your swimmer. When you see/hear the strobe/sound, you start your watch, not when your swimmer dives. When the swimmer comes back and touches the pad at the end of their race, you stop your stopwatch (and the timer with the plunger also presses that button). The writer timer will write down both times on the sheet which will be collected periodically by a runner.

Two final notes before some FAQs: (1) It is important before the start of an event to read what the event is so you know the distance the swimmer will be going. If it is a "50", they will swim to the other end and back. If it is a "100", they will swim there and back twice, and so on. If it is a relay, you need to be aware of the distance for each swimmer and not stop your watch until all four swimmers have completed their relay leg; (2) The timer with the time sheet should ask the swimmer their name to make sure they are the correct swimmer for that event/heat. If they aren't, wave to the official so they can sort it out. Your sheet will only have the name of the swimmer swimming in your lane for that event/heat.

FAQs

IS IT FUN? Reading this will make it seem a little overwhelming, but if you simply pay attention and can use a stopwatch, you can do this. The best part is being in the middle of the action and seeing your child swim up close! The meets go by lighting fast, as well. I will make you this promise, once you time one or two events, you will feel at ease. P.S. - You will get splashed a bit (especially your feet) and it will be toasty. Dress accordingly.

DO I USE MY PHONE TO TIME OR BRING MY OWN STOPWATCH? You will be provided a stopwatch when you check in at the computer desk before the meet. The meet announcer will make an announcement that there is a timers' meeting with the official before the start of the race, so please make sure you are there at least 15 mins before the start of the meet.

HOW CAN WE DO TIMING, PLUNGER, AND WRITE ALL AT THE SAME TIME? There will be two timers per lane! Writer Timer and Plunger Timer. You have a buddy. It's fun to sign up and coordinate with someone to time a lane together. Looking for some "together time" with your partner, here's a great opportunity! Writer Timer will time and write on the clipboard. Plunger Timer will time and press the plunger at the end of each race. The Writer Timer will write both your times on the paper and then a runner will come periodically and collect the papers from you.

WHAT IF MY TIME IS DIFFERENT FROM MY TIMING PARTNER OR THE TIMING BOARD? Here's a secret, the times rarely ever all match up. If they do, go buy a lottery ticket!! Don't worry about not matching times. Also, write the complete time, down to the hundredth of a second. So Suzy-Q got a 35.29 in the 50 Freestyle, not a 35.3 or a 35.

WHAT IF I FORGOT TO SET MY WATCH AT THE START OF THE RACE? You are a back-up, a second opinion. If you miss a race, you still have a partner and the touchpad/computer in the mix. Sometimes we have someone being a back-up, back-up timer at the computer desk. If we have one for the meet, we'll let you know at the official's meeting. You can raise your hand if you forgot to set your watch, and they will give you theirs which will already be timing the race.

HOW WILL I SEE SWIMMERS TOUCH THE TOUCHPAD IN THE POOL?

When the end of the race is nearing, make sure you lean over to watch the swimmers approach and when they touch. This is a great time to cheer them on for that last bit of effort to a great finish!

WHAT IF THERE ARE TOO MANY SWIMMERS IN THE WAY WAITING ON DECK FOR THEIR TURN? Say, "Excuse me, folks!" in your grown up voice and move past. They will move. They get excited about the races and jam up the deck, but they know how important timing is more than anyone else at the meet!

WHAT IF I FREAK OUT OR NEED HELP OR JUST NEED SOMEONE TO CHECK IF WHAT I'M DOING IS RIGHT? Ask a nearby timer. There will be experienced timers on deck to turn to.

WHEN CAN I SIGN UP FOR THIS AMAZING JOB? We'll let the dust settle on the start of the seasons, but look soon for a Sign Up Genius to be sent that will allow you to sign up for this and other self-explanatory jobs such as "Announcer", "Concessions", and the all important "SNACK SIGN UP" - swimmers are always famished.

ANY MORE QUESTIONS? You can email me at marefore@gmail.com or call/text to 586-419-0962.

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