



MUSKEGON FAMILY YMCA SWIM TEAM HANDBOOK

2007-2008 SEASON

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

PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE

Statement of Policy

The primary purpose of the Y is to promote the spiritual, mental, and physical well-being of all persons. A sport in the Family YMCA has never been an end in itself, but rather a vehicle for achieving the more global purpose of values education.

Developing caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility as elements of character is the goal within the venue of competitive Family YMCA sports. The values of fair play are strongly emphasized along with a respect for oneself, for the opponent, and for official game rules. All of these fair play values contribute to an attitude toward sports which keeps winning in perspective, that is, only one goal among other important ones.

Central themes in the Family YMCA sports philosophy are : teaching fundamental skills, encouraging lifetime involvement in physical activity, and strengthening the values of group cooperation, health, fitness, self-respect, and respect for others.

Program Purpose

1. The purpose of the Family YMCA competitive sports program is to use competition as a tool for learning the life- long values of goal setting and hard work for intrinsic rewards. The participant should learn to accept winning with humility and defeat with dignity, and to constantly strive to improve under all circumstances.
2. Family YMCA competitive sports are an outgrowth of the National Family YMCA progressive skills programs.
 - a. To emphasize values education and personal development
 - b. To aid in physical skills and development
 - c. To promote teamwork and good sportsmanship
3. Family YMCA competitive sports teams are a small but integral part of a complex membership organization. As such, team members, parents, volunteers, and staff must abide by all policies set forth by the Y for the greater good of the total association membership.

Program Objectives

The Family YMCA seeks to help individuals:

1. Develop self-confidence, self-respect, and an appreciation of their own worth as individuals.
2. Nurture a personal faith which will help them achieve their highest potential.
3. Grow as responsible members of their families and citizens of their communities.
4. Appreciate that health of mind and body is a sacred gift and that physical fitness and mental well-being are conditions to be achieved and maintained.
5. Recognize the worth of all people and work for multi-cultural understanding.
6. Develop a sense of world-mindedness.
7. Develop capacities for leadership and use them responsibly.
8. Appreciate the beauty, diversity, and interdependence of all forms of life and natural resources.

COACHES= PHILOSOPHY

Swimming is an excellent activity in which to build strong foundations for future experiences. As individuals, swimmers learn to set personal goals and to dedicate themselves to achieving them. Confidence, self-respect, commitment to personal and community growth, and personal fitness are all by-products of the process. However, more important is the structure within which these swimmers grow and accumulate these experiences; the team.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION ON THE MUSKEGON Family YMCA SWIM TEAM

1. A current, full privilege membership in good standing at the Muskegon Family YMCA.
2. Current registration on the Family YMCA team.
3. An emergency medical form on file with the Aquatics Director.

TRAINING PROGRAM

Practice Groups

Each swimmer is placed in a training group with other swimmers of similar age, commitment, skill, and goals in order to facilitate better instruction and training. Assignment to both training groups is done by the coaching staff. The following criteria are used to evaluate each swimmer for his/her best placement:

- Age and maturity
- Skill level
- Ability to handle training demands
- Level of commitment to team
- Lane space and group loads

RED – 8 & under

BLUE – Experienced 8 & under* & 10 & under new swimmers

SILVER – Experienced 9 & up* & new 11 & up swimmers

GOLD – Experienced 11 & up*

**Levels could be changed at the discretion of the Head Coach*

Racing speed and meet achievements are important, but are not an accurate reflection of a swimmer's ability to handle the demands of practice.

HOW WE PRACTICE

POLICIES AND RULES

Time. Practice times are listed and designated by practice groups and pool space and time. Any changes in practice times, dates, or location will be announced by the coach and posted in the Family YMCA on the bulletin board by the pool. Each swimmer is expected to report to his/her appropriate practice on time, ready to swim - already stretched and dressed. Late swimmers disrupt practice flow and thus, punctuality is the rule.

Attendance. Attendance will be taken daily because consistent attendance is critical for improvement and used in meet line-up decisions.

Behavior. Membership on the Family YMCA Swim Team is a privilege maintained by good behavior and hard work. As a member of this team, swimmers represent not only themselves, but their parents, coaches, team, and our Family YMCA.

Locker rooms. Each swimmer should leave his/her belongings in a locker with a lock during practice. Good behavior and respect for the property of others is expected while using the facility at the Family YMCA & at the Muskegon High School. Swimmers should also use the restroom before practice begins.

Equipment. Take care of it. All swimmers are expected to help set up and take down lane lines and to put away all equipment after practices and meets. Any swimmer who intentionally damages or abuses any Family YMCA or MHS equipment will be held responsible for his/her actions.

Attire. The only personal equipment needed at practice is a suit, pair of goggles, swim cap, towel, and water bottle.

Belongings. It is not a good idea to bring any valuables to the pool, it is too easy to lose them or have them stolen. All personal belongings should be clearly and permanently marked with your name. The team, the Y, or MHS cannot be responsible for belongings left unattended in the locker rooms or on the deck.

Bulletins/Newsletters. Swimmers need to be sure to pick up all hand-outs at practices and get them to their parents. Usually, copies will be posted on the pool hallway bulletin board.

Parents. The help of the parents is an invaluable aspect of the team and its many activities. Parents are welcome on deck while practices are in session, however, we do ask that you don't distract your child or interfere with coaches.

Emergencies at Practices/Meets. In the case of fire or other emergency requiring evacuation from the pool or building, swimmers will follow directions posted at the door of the natatorium and follow the explicit directions of the coaching and/or lifeguard staff.

HOW PRACTICES WORK

Contrary to the popular saying, practice itself does not make perfect. Practice only creates and maintains habits. ***Perfect practice makes perfect.***

Although the coaches will help swimmers work on their skills, ultimately a swimmer's performance is his/her responsibility. Good concentration and maximum effort is a personal choice- but to improve they must be done.

Here is what the coaches expect of the swimmers at a typical day's practice:

- Swimmers arrive for practice on time, stretching quietly.
- Swimmers listen for announcements.
- Swimmers begin their workout with a warm-up assigned by the coach in their assigned lanes.*
- The largest portion of practice time is devoted to distance training and/or technique drills.
- The workout concludes with a warm down swim, which is mandatory before any swimmer leaves the pool.
- Practice ends with putting equipment away and picking up any handouts.

**Each swimmer is assigned by the coaches to a lane with teammates in the same training group of about the same ability. This lane assignment usually carries over from day to day.*

We swim in a circle pattern in order to maximize practice efficiency. Each swimmer after that leaves five (5) seconds later in succession. Turns are made at the wall and swimming is resumed on the right side of the lane, as if riding a bicycle on the street. Swimmers who need to, pass in the center of the lanes without obstructing the path of oncoming swimmers. Stopping, walking, talking, or any disregard for the workout set not only disrupts your workout training, but disrupts others in your lane--don't do it.

Every swimmer is responsible for counting his/her laps and knowing his/her times for each set and intervals during practices. Newer swimmers will be instructed how to use the pace clock as a part of their training.

Coaches reserve the right at anytime during practices or meets to ask a swimmer to exit the water and/or leave practice for inappropriate behavior.

It begins with you.

The coaches do not and cannot review all skills everyday for every swimmer. Here are things you can do individually to sharpen your habits and swim with deliberate excellence:

Technique

- Push off from every start in a hard, streamline glide.
- Make every turn as quickly and as legally as possible--flip turns and level two handed touches for the appropriate strokes.
- Finish fast and hard in to the wall at the end of each turn.
- Concentrate on performing, making the body do what the mind knows it should be doing. Swim deliberately instead of going through the motions.

Speed and Endurance

- Use the pace clock to time your swims. With practice, knowing your time for every swim becomes easy and can enhance the control you have over your pacing and meet performances.
- Set goals that challenge you, but choose ones you can realistically achieve on a daily and weekly basis.
- Put forth 100% effort.
- Swim the workout sets as instructed by the coaches.

Practice is where champions are made, meets are only where some are discovered.

COMPETITIVE OPPORTUNITIES

Meet Descriptions

A varied and progressive competitive program is offered to the swimmers at every level on our team. To provide fair competition, most meets are conducted by age and sex categories. The schedule of meets is announced and distributed early in the season and is updated as necessary. Swimmers compete in all Family YMCA meets under the age category they fit into as of December 1. The following types of competition are provided during our season from October through April:

Dual (conference) Meets: These meets offer good competition with other members of the Michigan Family YMCA cluster. Typically, our dual meets are held on Saturdays in the late morning or early afternoon. There are no entry fees for dual meets. Rules of the NCAA are followed with a few Family YMCA modifications. The coaches select the entries for each meet, attempting to involve as many swimmers as possible. Team members are expected to attend all dual meets. Times are subject to Zone Meet qualification.

Family YMCA Invitational: These are optional, coach endorsed meets where swimmers represent our team in events they choose to swim. Each event costs the swimmer a nominal fee. The entries and fees must be turned into the coach by the date designated on the informational flyer in order to be entered. Times are subject to Zone Meet Qualification.

District Championships: A Michigan Family YMCA League Championship meet for swimmers who have less competitive times (AB@ or slower). Held near the end of the season, it is a good competition opportunity for swimmers in their off strokes and for middle of the road athletes who want a chance to really shine and earn awards for their efforts. Times are subject to Zone Meet qualification.

Conference Meets: A meet for which a swimmer must be eligible by having competed in at least three dual meets or Invitational Meets and have been a full Family YMCA member for at least 30 days. Swimmers compete for team and individual honors. Swimmers compete with all other teams in the Michigan League. Those who make qualifying times may progress to the State Meet. Times are subject to Zone and National Meet qualification.

YMCA Zone Championships: This is a meet in which swimmers from teams in Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and West Virginia compete for team and individual honors. Swimmers must qualify in specific events by meeting or surpassing strict cut-off times set for every event. Qualifications can be made at any of the inter-association meets & NSS Meets listed above. It is a three-day meet that moves its location annually. Time cut-offs for each event may change yearly as well, ask for a list of Zone Qualifying times if you do not have one. Additional events are available to swimmers 12 years and older that are not offered as normal meet events. Times are subject to National Meet qualification.

Family YMCA National Swimming and Diving Championships: This is the top line competition and season finale for the nation-wide competitive swimming program. Swimmers from all across the country qualify with very strict cut-off times. Swimmers must be at least 12 years of age to participate in this meet. It is a week long event where the best Family YMCA swimmers compete together and is usually held in Florida. Nationals are in Fort Lauderdale during Spring Break.

YMCA State Meet: Must make qualifying times to be eligible, swimmers must have competed in three (3) YMCA meets. Location alternates years between East & West side of Michigan. YMCA 8 & under STATE is open to all swimmers 8 & under prior to December 1st. No qualifying times – location is opposite of the older swimmers' State Meet.

USS Meets: These are optional meets – available to all swimmers who are interested in additional competition & willing to pay for membership into USS and entry fees by event.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF COMPETITION

1. Swimmers are expected to uphold their commitment to the team by attending all scheduled meets appropriate to their training group.
2. At all dual and Championship meets, every member of the team will stay until the last event has been swum and the natatorium has been restored to its original clean condition. Swimmers must secure permission from the Head Coach to leave a meet early, because situations arise where event substitutions are made and all swimmers should be on hand.
3. At all meets, there will be no parents on deck for any other reason but timing, scoring, running, officiating, and other official meet responsibilities.
4. All swimmers sit together at meets, on deck when possible, and are to always remain in the pool area.
5. All meet events will be swum as posted. Any changes that must be made should be requested of the Head Coach whose decision is final.
6. All swimmers are to check in with the coaches after every event at every meet.
7. Swimmers need to arrive at all meets on time for warm-ups and check in with the coaches prior to getting in the water. Swimmers and parents must make all travel arrangements in advance so that no one is left behind. Please stop or call in at the Family YMCA before leaving for away meets so that transportation and line-up problems can be resolved.
8. Swimmers should eat a light meal or snack before their competitions. Candy, junk food, desserts, and sodas are not permissible items at meets. Focus on healthy eating by supplying swimmers with bagels, crackers, cheese, vegetables, fruits, juices, and lots of water. Healthy diets should be encouraged and enforced by parents in order to facilitate better performances. Diet questions should be directed to the coaches.
9. Whenever or wherever a MYST swimmer wears any item of the team uniform, he/she should remember that his/her actions and words reflect upon the entire team and the YMCA. Therefore he/she should always act appropriately. Let your actions reflect your pride in your team.
10. Wear the team uniform in all competitions.

Team Uniform

Our suits and caps are our team uniform. Suits should be purchased at the outset of the season and to increase their longevity, save them for meets only. Swimmers should wear old suits to practice. Team suits, caps, and other items are ordered in bulk by a parent representative in an effort to cut costs. Please see that individual if you need any of those items or would like to lend a hand.

Relays

- I. Four swimmers make up a relay. If there are more than four swimmers but not enough to fit evenly into several teams, the four fastest swimmers will be selected for AA@ relay, and the next fastest four for the AB@ relay, and so on. Relay composition is not solely based on times. Other determining factors may include attendance and dedication at practice. A swimmer who has attended all practices will be given consideration over a faster swimmer who has been absent.
- II. During October and November, relay positions are flexible. They will be comprised of swimmers who have shown motivation and team spirit, as well as ability. During December and January, relay positions will be solidified, due to the upcoming championship meets.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Racing is fun; it is the spice of the sport. However, only one person can place first in each race so we provide other

ways of measuring success. We believe that winning is progressing beyond what has already been accomplished with honest effort and determination.

On our team, honest effort and personal improvement are the most important criteria for performance evaluation. We ask two questions of every swimmer after a race; A) Did you try your very best? and B) Did you improve your time? Positive answers to these questions tell us that swimmers are winning when faced with their most formidable opponent-themselves.

We ask all swimmers to keep track of and to know their racing times. Keeping a log book of personal best times in each event is the easiest way to do this. This process allows you to chart your personal progress throughout the season, meet by meet, and helps with choosing entries.

Team Recognition Banquet At the conclusion of the dual meet season, the swimmers and their families and the coaches gather together to celebrate and recognize individual and team achievements. Recognition given to: A) Those who earn most points by age group & gender. B) Most improved swimmer, also receive trophy for each age & gender. Recognize team record breakers.

Ribbons Awarded Ribbons awarded to all swimmers for all dual meets.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

MYST Parents Association

The MYST Parents Association is the not-for-profit booster organization to promote and foster competitive swimming in Muskegon in both the winter Family YMCA program and the summer recreation program. This group supports the team in two major ways. It lends assistance for all team events such as meets, banquets, parties, and other functions. It also provides financial assistance for team needs. Without the support of this group, swimming in Muskegon would be a pale shadow of its current status.

Membership in the Association is automatically granted to any parent with a child or children on the team. A general membership meeting is held twice each year. A Board of Directors is elected annually from the membership to provide leadership and direction for the Association's activities. The Association Board of Directors meets monthly. Meetings are open to all interested parents.

Becoming involved in the Association is an excellent way to foster a fun and worthwhile program for the swimmers and parents. Networking of parents on the team not only creates an atmosphere of community effort and teamwork which enhances the swimmers experiences, but also contributes to a successful season and sets an excellent example for the children.

What can parents do to help?

As parents of swimmers on the team, your job is to encourage and reinforce the commitment your child has made to the team. Not only do we need the dedication of the swimmers to succeed, but the active involvement of the parents

is equally vital to the program.

Our team could never attempt such an ambitious program for so many athletes of such a wide range of experience and ability without the active participation and support of the parents. Here are some of the ways in which parents can help to make participation in our program one of the highlights of their children's lives:

- Help your children meet their commitment to themselves and the team. This means encouraging them to attend their practices each week, ready and on time.
- Attend the meets and help them to keep a record of their performances. Encourage their team spirit and interaction with their coaches and teammates. Your support means a great deal to your child(ren) and shows how much you value their efforts, participation, and growth on the team.
- Encourage your swimmer to set realistic goals for themselves and help them forge the path towards these goals. Reward their achievements, keeping in mind the importance of the inherent value of participation and accomplishment within the sport, avoiding material or conditional awards that displace the philosophy of the program and cause them more harm than good.
- Help run our meets. Usually, we need a starter, stroke and turn judges, timers, scorers, marshals, and runners. These jobs are fun, provide the best view, and typically require very little training, which the team provides. The Family YMCA offers a certification program for parents who wish to volunteer as officials for meets. Please speak to the coaches or Aquatic Director if you have any interest in becoming a certified official.
- Get involved with the Association's support programs and committees in a capacity which suits your talents, interests, and personal time constraints. Our Parents Board have several committees which always need help, such as: Concessions, Meet Administration, and Fundraising. If there is a way in which you feel you can offer a valuable service or talent to the team, get involved! Parents not only need to support and communicate with their swimmers, but need to do the same for each other as well.
- Communicate with your child's coaches at the appropriate times. Tell them special details that you think they should know about your child. Ask about your child's progress periodically. If you have any questions, or concerns, take them promptly and directly to the coach. Also, let the coaches know in writing when your child will be out of practice or meets due to illness, injury, or family commitments.

GLOSSARY OF SWIMMING TERMS

Age Group Swimming The program through the Family YMCA and USS that provides fair competition for youth. It is designed to encourage maximum participation, provide an educational experience, enhance physical and mental conditioning, and develop a rich base of swimming talent. Nationally recognized age groups are: 10 and under, 11 -

12, 13 - 14, 15 - 18 year olds, and Seniors. USS and local meets also recognize the * and under category and often create other age groups to suit the needs and direction of a meet.

Anchor The last leg of a relay

Blocks Starting platforms. It is not mandatory for swimmers to start from blocks, however, it gives the swimmer the advantage of a stronger start if they do.

Check-in At practices or meets, swimmers check in with the coaches to ensure proper attendance records are kept and for efficient execution of a meet line up.

Converted Time The changing of a time made in a meter pool into its equivalent in a yard pool and vice versa.

Meters to yards = time X .901. Yards to meters = time/.901

Cut Slang for an event qualifying time.

Dolphin Kick The kick used in the Butterfly stroke. The feet move up and down together, simulating the movement of a dolphin.

D.Q. Disqualified. Swimmer performs an illegal variation of a stroke or rule during competition. Result is loss of placement in standings and the time is not official.

Entry Form On which a swimmer enters a competition, to be returned to coaches when complete along with entry fees.

Exhibition Heats run after the official heats at a meet in which swimmers may swim for times but not points

False Start An error when a swimmer leaves the starting platform too early and may be disqualified or receive a warning.

Finals The championship heat of an event in which a selected number of top finishers compete.

Flags Backstroke flags placed 5 yards or 5 meters from either end of a competition pool.

Flip turns done at the wall only for Freestyle and Backstroke which involve a somersault turn into the next lap.

Flutter kick The kick used in Freestyle and Backstroke events. The legs alternate, moving up and down while pressing the water downward with the foot.

Goal A specific achievement a swimmer set and strives for.

Heat In a meet, it is a shift of swimmers in an event that compete against each other. Numerous heats are often needed to accommodate all of the swimmers entered in an event and are arranged to fill the lanes of the pool efficiently. Heats run from slowest to fastest entry times.

Heat Sheet A listing of all swimmers by event number and heat in a meet.

IM Slang for Individual Medley, an event in which the swimmer performs a predetermined distance of each stroke in the following order: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle.

Interval Timed pace cycles in a practice set. An interval is a repeating window of time that a swimmer is allotted to swim a stroke and distance before repeating it.

Invitational Meets organized and attended outside of the dual and championship meet schedule. Attendance is optional but encouraged. Swimmers may choose their own events.

Jump An error in which a swimmer leaves the platform too soon in a relay race, before the incoming teammate touches the wall. The consequence when witnessed by officials is disqualification of that relay team.

Lap One length of the pool

Leg One of the four equal portions of a relay that is swum by different swimmers.

Long Course A pool that is 50 meters in length, Olympic sized pool.

Marshaling Area An area at meets where swimmers report before their event to be arranged into their heats and lane assignments.

Medley Relay A race in which all four competitive strokes are swum, each one is one fourth of the total yardage of the event, swum by a different swimmer in the following order: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, and Freestyle.

Meet Competition designed to be a learning experience. By implementing what has been learned in practice, the swimmers test themselves against the clock to see if they are improving.

National Time Standards Time standards for each event derived from previous years= results that are broken down into divisions of sex. These are used as qualification standards into the annual National Family YMCA Swimming and Diving Championship meet.

National Family YMCA Age Group Top 16 Times Time standards set for both short course and long course based on the previous years times. Coaches submit times for consideration that make the cut. The top 16 swimmers in each event are published in the fall.

Official A judge on the deck of the pool at a meet who enforces league and NCAA rules of competition. There are

stroke and turn judges, administrative officials, starters, and referees.

Pace Clock Large clock used to check pace or maintain intervals in practice.

Parents Association Parents organization with membership open to any swimmers parent(s) that fosters the swimming program year round in Muskegon.

Personal Best The best time ever achieved by a swimmer in any event.

Prelims Slang for preliminaries, also called trials or heats. These are races in which swimmers attempt to qualify for the championship or consolation finals in each event.

Proof of Time A requirement at some meets to verify that all swimmers entered have legally met the time standards of the meets.

Pulling A training technique that uses the arms only in order to strengthen the strokes or to stretch out the arms.

Recovery The sweep of a swimmers arms over or under the water as he/she begins to reposition for the pull or power phase of the stroke.

Referee The head official at a meet. She/he has all the authority over other officials at a meet. She/he makes the final decisions and sees to the efficient progress of the meet.

Scissors Kick An illegal variation of the Breaststroke kick in which the legs do not move in tandem and is cause for disqualification in a race.

Scratch To withdraw from an event. Must notify coach.

Seed Times The times a swimmer uses to enter a meet. These times, which are written on an entry form, determine a swimmer=s position by heat and lane for each event entered.

Senior Events Different events from the usual menu that are offered at some meets for swimmers who are at least 12 years old the day of competition.

Short Course A pool that is 25 yards or 25 meters in length.

Split A time taken per lap or lap breakdown that coaches use to teach the principle of pacing. Also used in meets to show where an increase or decrease in speed is needed to more successfully swim a race.

Sprint A short distance race in which all out speed is used to compete.

Starter The official at a meet who is responsible for starting each heat and instructing swimmers on the stroke and distance of each heat.

Streamline The position used to gain maximum distance during starts, push-offs, and turns from the wall in which a swimmers body is as tight and fully stretched out in length as it can be.

Stroke Judge A certified official who determines the legality of swimmers= strokes in a race and disqualifies those who do not comply with the standards.

Time Trials Meets run solely for the purpose of trying to establish new or better times. Can be official or unofficial.

Taper The final preparation phase of a practice prior to a major competition in which practice yardage is decreased.

Touch Pad The part of an electronic timing system that rests in the water at the end of the lane. Swimmers times are recorded when the pad has been touched.

USS Abbreviation for United States Swimming

Warm-down Low intensity swimming prior to a practice or after a race to rid the body of excess lactic acid and to gradually decrease heart rate and respiration.

Warm-up Low intensity swimming prior to a practice or race to warm and loosen the muscles and to gradually increase heart rate and respiration.

Wash The surge of water created at the wall caused by the motion and turning of several swimmers in a pool.

Zone Times Time standards derived from previous year=s Zone Meet results that are broken down into age and sex categories for each event. MYST is a part of the Great Lakes Family YMCA Zone which includes teams from Family YMCA=s in Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and West Virginia. Swimmers must equal or surpass the times in order to qualify for participation in the annual Zone Championship meet.