

GMA Team Championship Philosophies & Expectations 2006

Congratulations to our New England and Speedo Championship Qualifiers!

USA Swimming Championship Meet Structure

Swimming at an end-of-season championship meet is the ultimate goal of any competitive swimmer and competitive swim team. In the United States Swimming structure, there is a hierarchy of championship meets. The awards, benefits and recognition for competing in these meets increases as the dedication, commitment and speed of the swimmer increases. The USA Swimming Championship structure is as follows:

Level 1: New England (or other LSC) Age Group Championships

The New England 12 and Under Championships, the New England Open Championships and the New England Senior Championships, which are team scored events, are our Age Group Championship Meets. All 13 and older swimmers who plan to attend the New England Open Championship Meet must average four practices per week for the entire season. All 13 and older swimmers who plan to attend the New England Senior Championship Meet must average five practices per week for the entire season. An example of the short course yards qualifying times include: 9-10 100 Free 1:12.19 Female; 9-10 100 Free 1:15.39 Male; 11-12 100 Free 1:02.59 Female; 11-12 100 Free 1:04.49 Male; Open 100 Free 57.49 Female; Open 100 Free 53.99 Male; Senior 100 Free 55.39 Female; Senior 100 Free 50.89 Male.

Level 2: Speedo Championship Series Meets

We are in the Eastern Zone and our swimmers may attend any of the Eastern Zone Speedo Championship Series Meets. There are about 15-20 Speedo Championship Meets held throughout the country in the different USA Swimming Zones. Each meet has separate qualifying times. The Speedo Championship Meets are team scored meets. All 13 and older swimmers who plan to attend the Speedo Championship Meet must average six practices per week for the entire season. An example of the short course yards qualifying times include: Speedo Championship 100 Free 54.79 Female; Speedo Championship 100 Free 48.99 Male.

Level 3: Junior National Meet

This meet is officially sponsored by USA Swimming only in the summer long course season. There are two Junior National Meets, one short course meet in the spring that is sponsored by the National Club Swimming Association and one long course meet in the summer that is sponsored by USA Swimming and is a team scored event. All 13 and older swimmers who plan to attend the Junior National Meet must average seven practices per week for the entire season. An example of the short course yards qualifying times include: NCSA Junior Nationals 100 Free 52.89 Female; NCSA Junior Nationals 100 Free 47.09 Male; USA Swimming Junior Nationals 100 Free 51.39 Female; USA Swimming Junior Nationals 100 Free 46.09 Male.

Level 4: National Championships

USA Swimming sponsors one National Championship in the spring short course season and one in the summer long course season. All USA Swimming national and international teams are selected at this meet including the following: World Championship Team, Pan Pac Team, World University Games Team, the National A Team, the National B Team and the National Junior Team. Swimmers who place in the

top twenty-four at this meet have the best opportunity to achieve a scholarship to a top level Division 1 swimming program. The National Meet is a team scored meet. All 13 and older swimmers who plan to attend the National Meet must average eight practices per week for the entire season. An example of the short course yards qualifying times include: National 100 Free 50.50 Female; National 100 Free 44.89 Male.

Level 5: Olympic Trials

This meet is the premier meet for USA Swimming. The qualifying times are faster than the National qualifying times. The meet is offered only once every four years, is swum in long course meters and is the only meet where swimmers can make the Olympic Team. The top two swimmers in each event as well as the top six swimmers in the 50 Free, 100 Free and 200 Free are selected from this meet to represent the United States at the Olympic Games. An example of the short course yards qualifying times include: Olympic Trials 100 Free 49.91 (long course converted) Female; Olympic Trials 100 Free 44.72 (long course converted) Male.

Level 6: International Competition - The Olympic Games, World Champs, Pan Pacs, World University Games

There are a host of international meets offered, outside of the Olympic Games, which afford the best swimmers in USA Swimming to travel the world and compete against the best swimmers in other countries. Swimmers who are selected for the National A Team, the National B Team and the National Junior Team will be given the opportunity to travel and race all over the world at the expense of USA Swimming. As the season progresses, all of the swimmers get excited and motivated to “go for a New England cut”. Unfortunately, some of the swimmers do not have neither the consistent practice habits nor the USA Swimming meet experience to make the cut.

Swimmers learn how to swim fast at Championship Meets better than at any other meet during the season. They are prepared for this; they are taught this; they practice this. If a young swimmer goes to championships and is not properly prepared (because of lack of practice or meet experience), the experience can be a negative one and can affect other championships in his or her swimming career.

We, as coaches, believe that the honor of competing in a Championship Meet is earned through consistent practice habits and competitive experience at USA Swimming swim meets. There’s a big difference between “wanting” to go to the championship and “deserving” to be at the championships.

To ensure that all of our swimmers are properly prepared for their championships:

1. Meet attendance and participation throughout the entire season is important. USA Swimming meets offer the experience necessary for championships.
2. Practice habits must be within our recommendations for the group with which the swimmer trains. “Consistency” is the key word.

The New England Age Group Championship is not the ultimate goal. Age Group Championships are a seasonal goal that should lead to the Zones, Sectional, National Championship Meets, and beyond. To make the “cut off time” is simply a requirement to attend the meet. The goal is to be as prepared as possible and perform to the best of one’s ability at the meet.

Swimmers are special people and deserve to have positive experiences as rewards for their dedication and commitment. Let’s work together to make sure that parents,

swimmers, and coaches are laying the foundation for the best possible experience at the Championship Meets.

Please refer to pages 42 – 44 of the GMA Team Handbook to read more about the specifics of championship level meets.

Focusing on championship meets

The team philosophy is that swimmers should focus and attend the most challenging meet for which they have qualified. GMA encourages swimmers to challenge themselves to attend the most difficult championship meet, to learn from the challenging competition and to aspire to achieve their own personal bests with no mental performance limits.

Often, this means that swimmers must choose between two championships meets in order to best train, prepare, rest and taper to swim his or her best. Some swimmers with the proper training and commitment can swim well in multiple championship meets at the end of the season. This requires exceptional practice attendance and practice effort. Most swimmers are better served in attending one championship meet and focusing all of their efforts and energies on one challenging competition.

Expectations

As stated in our GMA Team Handbook, the coaches have specific expectations for the swimmers with regards to championship meet preparation. Please remember as you get ready for championships to do the following:

Attend practice regularly

Please maintain your normal practice schedule. You do not need to come more often and “cram” for the big meet. Simply come to your regular practices and put extra energy and focus into every workout. You do not need to come to fewer practices in order to rest yourself for the meet. The coaches have planned the season’s practices and will rest you at the practices to swim your best at the big meet.

Taper

To learn more about tapering concepts, please read the attached handout about taper.

Attend the meet, particularly for team relays

Please plan to attend the championship meet(s) for which your swimmer has qualified, even if they have only done so in one event or only on a relay. There is no better motivator for a swimmer than to attend an exciting, fast, fun meet and to race with their friends. Since the coaches always emphasize attitude, effort and personal improvement, your child is almost certain to have a positive experience at championships, even if they do not win a medal or win their heat. On GMA, placement in an event is never the most important element of the race.

Rest

Please be sure that your swimmer is getting regular amounts of age-appropriate sleep. Most active children should be sleeping at least 8 hours every night. If your child is not able to get this amount of sleep overnight, please consider having them nap before practice or on the weekends to cumulate enough sleep to race well. At the meet, please be sure that your child is RESTING when they are not swimming. All swimmers attending a trials and finals meet must sleep for at least 2 hours between trials and finals. This sleeping habit is recommended for swimmers whether or not they make it back to race at finals.

Avoid Injury

In the final month before the championship meet, please be sure that your child avoids injury, illness or additional fatigue. We recommend that your child limits his or her extracurricular activities and focuses on swimming practice, school work and light free play. This is not the time to learn a new sport or spend extra time on the ski slopes, regardless of additional energy levels thanks to the tapered workouts. Please work to stay healthy and to prepare your body for peak performance at the championship meet!

Nutrition

Nutrition plays a large role in one's performance. Please refrain from eating high fat and high sugar foods throughout the season and particularly at the championship meet. Please also be sure to stay hydrated throughout the meet by drinking plenty of water and sports drink. For nutrition during the meet, please refer to the recent nutrition handout.

Additional nutrition information is available in the team handbook.

Team spirit

One of the greatest benefits of competing on a swim team is the opportunity to engage in great team spirit activities. Throughout the season, and at championships in particular, GMA swimmers are expected to show their team spirit and team pride in several ways. First, swimmers must wear team apparel, the team suit and the team cap at all times at the swim meet. Second, swimmers are expected to organize and lead team cheers at the beginning of each session. Finally, must stay positive and enthusiastic during the meet by cheering for their teammates during the races and by approaching their own races with similar exuberance.

Return to finals to cheer

Swimmers involved in a trials and finals meet are expected to attend the finals session of the meet to cheer for their teammates, regardless if they are racing in an individual or relay event. Your teammates deserve your recognition and support and the team needs you to be present at all finals sessions to cheer and encourage your teammates.

Shaving

All 13 and older swimmers are expected to shave their legs for the championship meet. This means that the female swimmers must refrain from shaving for the second half of the season. Please remember that shaving is not allowed in any of the locker rooms.

Finish the season practices until the last practice of the season

All swimmers are expected to finish the season and train until March 31st. This is an extremely valuable time for swimmers to regain their aerobic capacity after the taper, to set new goals with one's recent performances fresh in one's mind and to prepare for the next season and ready yourself to take the next step in your training. Please be a role model for your teammates until the end of the season!

GOOD LUCK GMA!!