

**Annex E – Swimming: The Sport****1. The Skills:****1.1 The four competitive strokes are**

- a) freestyle
- b) backstroke
- c) breaststroke, and
- d) butterfly.

**2. The Competition:**

2.1 Participants compete in different age groups and meets, depending on their achievement level and how old they are — usually on the first day of the meet. Provincially recognized age groups are 11 & under, 12-13, 14-15, 16-17, and Senior. Local meets may also offer 10 & under events.

**2.2 Freestyle Events**

- a) In the freestyle, the competitor may swim any stroke he or she wishes. The usual stroke used is the front crawl. This stroke is characterized by an alternating over-hand motion of the arms and an alternating up-and-down flutter kick. The freestyle is swum over 50, 100, 200, 400, 800 and 1500 metre distances.

**2.3 Backstroke Events**

- a) In the backstroke, the swimmer must stay on his or her back at all times. The stroke is an alternating motion of the arms with a flutter kick. At each turn a swimmer must touch the wall with some part of the body.
- b) Swimmers must surface within 15 metres after the start and each turn. Backstroke race distances are 50, 100 and 200 metres.

**2.4 Breaststroke Events**

- a) Perhaps one of the most difficult strokes to master, the breaststroke requires simultaneous movements of the arms on the same horizontal plane. The hands are pushed forward from the breast on or under the surface of the water and brought backward in a heart-shaped pattern in the propulsive stage of the stroke simultaneously. The kick is a simultaneous, somewhat circular, motion, similar to the leg action of a frog's. No flutter, scissor, or dolphin kick is permitted.
- b) At each turn a swimmer must touch with both hands at the same time. Breaststroke races are distances of 50, 100 and 200 metres.

**2.5 Butterfly Events**

- a) The most physically demanding stroke but the most beautiful of all four strokes, the butterfly features the simultaneous overhead

stroke of the arms combined with an undulating dolphin kick. The dolphin kick features both legs moving up and down together. No flutter kicking is allowed. The butterfly was born in the early 1950s due to a loophole in the breaststroke rules and became an Olympic event in Melbourne, Australia in 1965. Butterfly races are swum in 50, 100 and 200 metre distances.

#### 2.6 Individual Medley

- a) The individual medley, commonly referred to as the I.M., features all four competitive strokes. In the I.M., a swimmer begins with the butterfly, changes to the backstroke after one-fourth of the race, then the breaststroke for another quarter and finally finishes with the freestyle. The I.M. is swum in 100, 200 and 400 metre distances.

#### 2.7 Medley Relay

- a) In the medley relay all four strokes are swum by four different swimmers. No swimmer may swim more than one leg of the relay, which is swum in backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle order. The medley relay is 200 or 400 metres -or four by 50 or 100 metres.

#### 2.8 Freestyle Relay

- a) The freestyle relay events consist of four athletes, each swimming one-quarter of the total distance of the event.

#### 2.9 Starts and Turns

- a) Many races are won or lost by a swimmer's performance on the start or turn. On the start, the swimmer is called to the starting position by the starter, who visually checks that all swimmers are motionless. When all athletes are set, the gun or starting horn is sounded to start the race. If the starter feels that one of the swimmers has moved, left early, or received an unfair advantage, the race continues and the offending swimmer is disqualified upon finishing.
- b) Quick turns are essential to a good race. In all events the swimmer must touch the wall, but in the freestyle and backstroke the swimmer may somersault as he or she reaches the wall, touching only with the feet. In the other two competitive strokes, the swimmer must touch the wall with both hands before executing the turn.

### 3. The Strategies

- 3.1 The sprint races (50 and 100 metres) are an all-out burst of speed from start to finish. The slightest mistake can cost precious hundredths of seconds -and the race.

- 3.2 The 200 metre events require the swimmer to have a sense of pace as well as the ability to swim in a controlled speed.
  - 3.3 The 400, 800 and 1500 metre freestyle require the swimmer to constantly be aware of where they are in the water and how tired they are becoming. Swimming the first portion of the race at too fast of a pace can sap a swimmers strength and cause a poor finish. Swimming the first portion of the race too slowly can separate the swimmer from the pack and make catching up impossible.
  - 3.4 There are two ways to swim a distance race. Swimmers may elect to swim the race evenly (holding the same pace throughout the race) or they may negative split the race. A negative split occurs when the swimmer covers the second half of a race faster than the first half.
4. The Racing Course
    - 4.1 Competition pools may be short-course (25m) or long-course (50m). The international standard is 50 metres. World, national, as well as provincial records are accomplished in metre pools (SC and LC). Although some Canadian and many US pools have been constructed in the imperial measuring system (yards), meets and records in Canada are only sanctioned and recognized in short-course or long-course METRE pools. Converted yard times are inaccurate and not allowed in Canada. The water temperature must be kept at 26 degrees Celsius.
5. The Rules
    - 5.1 The technical rules of swimming are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition and to promote uniformity in the sport. Each swimming stroke has specific rules designed to ensure that no swimmer gains an unfair competitive advantage over another swimmer. The technical rules for each stroke may be found in the Swimming/Natation Canada Rule Book.
    - 5.2 Trained officials observe the swimmers during each event to ensure compliance with these technical rules. If a swimmer commits an infraction of the rules, the result is a disqualification from that event, with no official time for the race, and no opportunity to receive an award/score for the team.
    - 5.3 Disqualifications may also result from actions such as not getting to the starting blocks on time, false starting, walking on or pushing off the bottom of the pool, pulling on the lane lines, or unsportsmanlike conduct.
    - 5.4 Some common rule violations per stroke:
      - a) Freestyle: walking on the bottom; pulling on the lane rope; not touching the wall on a turn; or not completing the prescribed distance.
      - b) Backstroke: turning past the vertical onto the stomach and gliding or kicking into the wall on the turn (the roll to the stomach must be a

part of a continuous turning action); pushing off the wall on the stomach after a turn; not remaining on the back throughout the race; turning on the stomach before the finish.

- c) Breaststroke: an illegal kick such as flutter, dolphin, or scissor kick; alternating movements of the arms; taking two arm strokes or two leg kicks while the head is under water; touching with only one hand at the turns or finish.
- d) Butterfly: alternating movements of the arms or legs; pushing the arms forward under instead of over the water surface; a breaststroke kick; touching with only one hand at the turns or finish.

## 6. The Officials

6.1 Officials are present at all competitions to implement the technical rules of swimming and to ensure that the competition is fair and equitable. Officials attend clinics, pass written tests, and work meets before being certified. All parents are encouraged to get involved with some form of officiating. If you are interested, contact your club's officials' chairperson.

- a) Timekeepers: operate timing devices (stopwatches or automatic timing equipment) and record the official time for each swimmer in their lane.
- b) Turn judges observe from each end of the pool and ensure that the turns and finishes comply with the rules applicable to each stroke.
- c) Stroke Judges: observe from both sides of the pool, walking abreast of the swimmers, to ensure that the rules relating to each stroke are being followed.
- d) Relay Take-off Judges: stand beside the starting blocks to observe the relay exchanges, ensuring that the feet of the departing swimmer have not lost contact with the block before the incoming swimmer touches the end of the pool.
- e) The Clerk of Course: arranges the swimmers into their proper heats and lanes.
- f) The Starter: assumes control of the swimmers from the Referee, directs them to take their mark, and sees that no swimmer is in motion prior to giving the start signal.
- g) The Referee: has overall authority and control of the competition, ensuring that all the rules are followed; assigns and instructs all official; and decides all questions relating to the conduct of the meet.

6.2 Violations of the rules are reported to the Referee, and the rules require that every reasonable effort be made to notify the swimmers or their coaches of the reasons for any disqualifications.

6.3 If your child is disqualified (DQ'd), in an event, be supportive rather than

critical. For newer swimmers, a disqualification should be treated as a learning experience, not as punishment. A disqualification alerts the swimmer and coach to what portions of the swimmer's stroke need to be corrected. It should be considered in the same light as an incorrect answer in schoolwork: it points out areas, which need further practice.

- 6.4 The disqualification is necessary to keep the competition fair and equitable for all other competitors. A supportive attitude on the part of the official, the coach, and the parent can also keep it a positive experience for the disqualified swimmer.
7. Swimming/Natation Canada
  - 7.1 Swimming Canada (SNC) is our national sport organization, and its mission statement reads as follows: "to provide opportunities for every individual in the sport of swimming to reach his or her maximum potential in fitness and excellence."
  - 7.2 SNC is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and its professional staff carries out its policies. Swim Ontario is directly affiliated with Swimming Canada, and our athletes are also registered with this organization to allow them to compete in sanctioned swimming events not only on the local level, but also nationally and internationally.
8. The Equipment:
  - Practice suits: suits worn by swimmers during practice sessions. They are generally made of nylon, lycra, or other synthetic fabrics. These suits are usually loose fitting, and many older swimmers train wearing several suits for the purpose of creating drag.
  - Caps: latex swim caps used during a race and/or practice, to cut down resistance and to protect swimmers' hair from the effects of chemicals.
  - Competition suit: a team-racing suit may be required for competitions. This suit is usually 2 or 3 sizes smaller than the practice suit to reduce resistance when racing.
  - Fins: flippers worn on the feet, used for stroke technique and speed-assisted training.
  - Kickboard: a device usually made of plastic or Styrofoam, used to work the kick portion of a stroke.
  - Pull buoy: usually made of Styrofoam, this device is placed between the legs to isolate the use of the arms. The pull buoy is used to strengthen the arms and is sometimes used for stroke work.
  - Tracksuit: some type of warm-up or sweat suit should be worn at meets and to and from practices during cool weather.
  - Towel: a thick, large beach towel is usually preferred by swimmers. A minimum of two of these towels is recommended for meets.

Team uniform: a team uniform is generally made up of the following: suit, cap, T-shirt, sweat suit, parka. Each club has a uniform, which is usually a requirement and is unique to the team.

## 9. Guidelines for Parents

### 9.1 A Swimmer should have:

- a) The right of the opportunity to participate in sports, regardless of ability, gender, or ethnicity.
- b) The right to have qualified adult leadership.
- c) The right to participate in a safe and healthy environment.
- d) The right to play as a child as opposed to as an adult.
- e) The right to proper preparation for participation in the sport.
- f) The right to be treated with dignity by all involved.
- g) The right to equal opportunity in striving for success.
- h) The right to have fun through sport.

### 9.2 Your Role as a Swimming Parent

- a) Competitive swimming programs provide many benefits to young athletes. They develop self-discipline, good sportsmanship, and time management skills. Competition allows the swimmer to experience success and to learn how to deal with defeat, while becoming healthy and physically fit.
- b) As a swimmer's parent, your major responsibility is to provide a stable, loving, and supportive environment. This positive environment will encourage your child to continue. Show your interest by ensuring your child's attendance at practices, and by coming to meets.
- c) Parents are not participants on their children's teams, but contribute to the success experienced by the youngsters and their teams. Parents serve as role models and their children often emulate their attitudes. Be aware of this and strive to be positive models. Most importantly, show good sportsmanship at all times toward coaches, officials, opponents, and teammates.
- d) Be enthusiastic and supportive!
- e) Remember that your children are swimmers. Children need to establish their own goals, and make their own progress towards them. Be careful not to impose your own standards and goals.
- f) Do not overburden your children with winning or achieving best times. The most important part of children's swimming experience is that they learn about themselves, while enjoying the sport. This healthy environment encourages learning and having fun, which will

develop a positive self-image within each child.

9.3 Let the COACH coach!

- a) The coach is the only one qualified to judge a swimmer's performance and technique. Your role is to provide support. The best way to help children achieve their goals and reduce the natural fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make a mistake. If your child does make one, remember that this is a learning experience. Encourage all efforts, and point out the things done well. As long as the best effort was given, you should make the child feel like a winner.

9.4 Are YOU a pressure parent?

- a) The following survey has been taken from the Amateur Swimming Association of Great Britain. If you answer "yes" to one or more of these questions, you may be in danger of pressuring your child. It is important to remember that the parent's role is critical, and should be supportive at all times to ensure that positive experience for your child.

- Do you want your child to win more than he does?
- Do you openly show your disappointment if she has a poor result?
- Do you feel that you have to "psych" him up right before a competition?
- Do you feel that your child can only enjoy the sport if she wins?
- Do you regularly conduct "post mortems" immediately following a competition or training session?
- Do you feel that you have to force your child to go to training?
- Do you find yourself wanting to interfere during training or competitions, thinking that you could do better?
- Do you find yourself disliking your child's opponents?
- Are your child's goals more important to you than they are to him?
- Do you provide material rewards (e.g., money, toys) for good performances?

9.5 10 Recommendations for Swimming Parents

- a) Do not impose your ambition on your child.
- b) Be supportive no matter what.
- c) Do not coach your child.
- d) Only have positive things to say at a swimming meet.

- e) Acknowledge your child's fears.
  - f) Do not criticize the officials.
  - g) Respect your child's coach.
  - h) Be loyal and supportive of the team.
  - i) Your child shall have goals besides winning.
  - j) Do not expect your child to become an Olympian.
- 9.6 Some children become so involved in athletics that they neglect studies, families, and social responsibilities. Both you and your child need to remember that swimming is only part of life.
- 9.7 Sometimes children overemphasize sport because their parents do. Ask yourself if you're giving unbalanced attention to your child's "swimming career." If so, slack off and show interest in other areas of your child's life. Otherwise you risk giving your child the impression that swimming is the most important thing in life.
10. Glossary of Swimming Terms

**Age Group Swimming:** This is the program through which SNC provides fair and open competition for its younger members. 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 11-12, 13-14, 15-17, and Senior. Local meets may also include events for 10 & under swimmers.

**Block:** The starting platform

**Bulkhead:** A wall constructed to divide a pool into different courses, such as a 50m pool into two 25m pools.

**Circle Swimming:** Performed by staying to the right of the black line when swimming in a lane to enable more swimmers to swim in each lane.

**Coach:** A person who trains and teaches athletes in the sport of swimming.

**Cut:** Slang for qualifying time. A time standard necessary to attend a particular meet or event.

**Distance Event:** Term used to refer to events over 400 metres.

**DQ (Disqualified):** This occurs when a swimmer has committed an infraction of some kind (e.g. one-handed touch in breaststroke). A disqualified swimmer is not eligible to receive an award, nor will there be an official time in that event.

**Drill:** An exercise involving a part of a stroke, used to improve technique.

**Dry-land Training:** Training done out of the water that aids and enhances swimming performance; usually includes stretching, callisthenics, and/or weight training.

**Entry Form:** Form used by the coach to enter swimmers in a competition.

**False Start:** Occurs when a swimmer is moving at the start prior to the signal.

**Final:** The championship heat of an event in which the top six or eight swimmers from the preliminaries compete for awards, depending on the number of lanes in the pool.

**Finish:** The final phase of the race — the touch at the end of the race.

**Flags:** Backstroke flags placed 5 metres from the end of the pool. They enable backstrokers to execute a backstroke turn more efficiently through being able to count the number of strokes into each wall.

**Goal:** A specific time achievement a swimmer sets and strives for; can be short- or long-term.

**IM (Slang for individual medley):** An event in which the swimmer uses all four strokes in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle.

**Lap Counter:** A set of plastic display numbers used to keep track of laps during a distance race. The person who counts for the swimmer is stationed at the opposite end from the start.

**Long Course or LC:** a 50-metre-long pool.

**Long Distance:** Any freestyle event over 1500 metres, normally conducted in a natural body of water, such as a lake, river, or ocean.

**Meet:** Competition designed to be a measure of progress and a learning experience. By implementing what has been learned in practice, the swimmers test themselves against the clock to see how they are progressing.

**Middle Distance:** Term used to refer to events of 200 to 400 metres in length.

**Negative Split:** Swimming the second half of the race faster than the first half.

**Official:** A judge on the deck of the pool at a sanctioned competition who enforces SNC rules.

**Official Time:** A time achieved in a race during a duly sanctioned competition.

**Pace:** The often-predetermined speed with which a swimmer completes each segment of a race (e.g., 25 m, 50 m).

**Pace Clock:** Large clock with a large second hand and a smaller minute hand, used to check pace or maintain intervals in practice (may also be digital).

**Prelim:** Slang for preliminaries, also called heats — those races in which swimmers qualify for the championship and consolation finals in an event.

**Q-Time (Short for Qualifying Time):** Qualifying time necessary to compete in a particular event and/or competition.

**Relay:** An event in which four swimmers compete together as a team

**Safety Procedure:** Safety procedures are designed to prevent accidents, and

must be followed to the letter.

**Sanctioned Meet:** All competitions in which records may be set and official times may be obtained must be sanctioned (approved officially) by a Swim Ontario Sanctioning Officer.

**Scratch:** To withdraw from an event in a competition.

**Short Course or SC:** A 25-metre-long pool in which most competitions during the winter are held.

**Split:** A swimmer's intermediate time in a race. Splits are registered every 50 m and are used to determine if a swimmer is on a planned pace. Under certain conditions, initial splits may also be used as official times.

**Sprint:** Describes the shorter events (50 and 100 m); in training, to swim as fast as possible for a short distance.

**Streamline:** The position used to gain maximum distance during a start and/or push-off from the wall in which the swimmer's body is as tight and straight as it can be.

**Taper:** The final preparation phase. As part of this phase, and prior to major competitions, older and more experienced swimmers will shave their entire body to reduce resistance and heighten sensation in the water.

**Time Card:** The card issued to each swimmer prior to each race, on which splits and the final time are recorded.

**Time Trial:** A practice race, which is not part of regular competitions. Time trials may be sanctioned and used to qualify for specific meets.

**Touch Pad:** A large sensitive board at the end of each lane where a swimmer's touch is registered and sent electronically to the timing system.

**Warm-down:** Low-intensity swimming used by swimmer after a race or main practice set to rid the body of excess lactic acid, and to gradually reduce heart rate and respiration.

**Warm-up:** Low-intensity swimming used by swimmers prior to a main practice set or a race to get muscles loose and warm, and to gradually increase heart rate and respiration.

**Watches:** Stopwatches used to time swimmers during a competition. When totally automatic timing equipment is used, watches serve as a back-up method.