



**Badger Age Group Team
Parents Handbook**

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September 2005

For more information please visit: www.badgeragt.com

Welcome to the Badger Age Group Team and U.S.A. Swimming!

We would like to welcome you to the exciting world of swimming. The sport of swimming has many benefits, including the people you and your child will meet. The camaraderie among swimmers is unique; many swimming buddies become lifelong friends.

In addition to being around fine people, swimming provides one of the most beneficial forms of exercise for cardiovascular and overall fitness. This exercise can be enjoyed throughout one's entire life. Possibly the greatest benefits of participating in an organized swim program are the life skills your child will develop. These skills include time management, self-discipline, and sportsmanship. Your child will reap the benefits of swimming long after their competitive participation ends.

This handbook has been prepared to help you help your child succeed in swimming. Remember not every swimmer becomes a world record holder, but everyone gains from the swimming experience. Supporting your child in swimming can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life. You may soon find yourself cheering at competitions, timing during meets, or even going on to become a certified U.S.A. Swimming official.

Whatever your role, your child's experience in swimming has much to do with your positive support. Please ask questions of your coaches, officials, and fellow parents. We all have the same goal; to provide your child with the best possible experience in swimming.

“Growth Through Good Sportsmanship”

The Badger Age Group Team has set a mission to provide children with a positive swim team experience, which incorporates the development of good skills, team participation and fun. It is hoped each child will develop self-confidence, appreciate team cooperation, and respect teammates, opposing swimmers, coaches and officials.

Children should learn to value the ability to win and lose graciously. “Growth Through Good

Sportsmanship” is the “life lesson” we hope to impart to our swimmers - a lesson which can only be taught by the behavior of all participants, coaches, officials, parents and other spectators.

Sportsmanship 1st

Through a partnership with YouthSportsUSA, the Center for the Study of Sport in Society (CSSS) promotes the message of putting sportsmanship first in youth sports. These two organizations seek to use the Internet and the program, Sportsmanship 1st, to spread a set of universal guidelines for sportsmanship throughout the country.

Children, parents and coaches in all youth sports organizations will be asked to sign a one-page contract stating that they will exhibit good sportsmanship, and before each game players, coaches and referees will shake hands and recite a pledge vowing to put sportsmanship first.

Sportsmanship 1st Pledge

- I pledge to respect myself
- I pledge to respect the sport
- I pledge to respect the officials
- I pledge to respect the opponent
- I pledge to respect all spectators
- I pledge to put sportsmanship 1st

“Of the 40 million kids who participate in youth sports, 70 percent quit before the age of 13,” says former Harvard basketball coach Peter Roby, the director of CSSS. “And the Number 1 reason they give is that it’s no fun.”

Badger Age Group Team Training Guidelines

Swimmer Responsibilities

10 Training Habits

In addition to developing the swimming skills of the athletes, the coaches strive to help the athletes develop a sense of respect for their teammates, their coaches and themselves. We do this by emphasizing 10 specific training habits. These training habits are used for all of our training groups.

1. **Support Your Teammates:** Not just by not being negative, but also by being actively positive. In doing this, swimmers learn that it feels great not just to receive praise and support, but to give it as well.
2. **Positive Personal Attitude:** “I can’t”, “I won’t”, and “That is too hard” are unacceptable statements on the Badger pool deck. Positive self-talk leads to positive behaviors and to positive self-esteem.
3. **Effort:** This means swimmers trying to do things as they are asked to do them.
4. **Listening:** Really listening to the coaches and each other. Listening to the coach is an obvious necessity. Learning to listen to each other is an important life skill. Learning from your peers is a lifelong and sometimes difficult process. If you learn to do it at 6 years old, all the better.
5. **Be On Time:** This means swimmers on the deck, in their suits, with their caps, goggles, water bottle, and equipment, ready to go when practice begins. This teaches responsibility and respect for their time and the time of others.

6. **Be informed:** Each swimmer is responsible for getting the information they need to participate in Badger events. Please check the web site regularly. We want the swimmers to take responsibility for getting the information provided them, but feel free to remind your swimmer to check, because we certainly wouldn’t want you to miss something important!

The remaining four training habits are specific swimming skills. These are skills that are worked on in all training groups. The important thing when working on a habit is that the swimmers at least attempt to do it correctly at every given opportunity. Eventually, they won’t be able to do it incorrectly if they try. Please remember, Practice doesn’t make perfect...Practice makes habit. Only perfect practice makes perfect.

Habits #7 through #10 are for Age Group Teams A&B and Gold A&B Teams only.

7. **Streamlines:** Every push off the wall is to be in a tight streamline position.
8. **Turns:** Fast, legal turns at every wall.
9. **Finishes:** Good, reaching finish at the completion of every swim.

10. **Wall to Wall:** Swimmers complete each swim using the prescribed stroke without putting their feet down until they have executed a proper finish.

All Badger swimmers, from the newest to the most experienced, are expected to follow some basic training guidelines. All swimmers are expected to arrive at the pool completely dressed with top, bottom and shoes. They should not leave the pool until they are again completely dressed. All swimmers are expected to have cap, goggles, water bottle, and a towel with them. All swimmers should have a spare set of cap and goggles in their bags in case of loss or breakage.

Swimmers are expected to take care of their bodies. This includes eating enough of the proper foods, dressing appropriately and getting enough rest. This also means that the athletes are not to take unnecessary risks, such as rollerblading and biking without protective gear. **Parents, please help the coaching staff help your swimmers. Be supportive of the swimmers' efforts to adhere to the 10 Training Habits.**

Communication

Effective communication between parents, swimmers, and coaches is essential to maintaining a successful team and meeting the goals and expectations of all concerned. The Badger staff uses a variety of methods to establish and maintain communication with parents and swimmers. We always have the best intentions of keeping all members up-to-date and informed of all club activities. However, we sometimes fall short in our efforts to communicate with so many people. The more active a role the parents take in assuming responsibility for keeping informed, the more successful we will all be. Ask lots of questions, use veteran parents as a support system, and reach out a helping, informed hand to novice swimming parents. In matters of communication, as in everything we do, teamwork is the name of the game.

**The
Effort
Always
Matters**

Badger Web Site and Email

Our most important communication tool is our web site, www.badgeragt.com. The web site is updated regularly. It is the best way to get the latest information on practice schedules, meet, results, and other events and news. Click on www.badgeragt.com daily and weekly.

Email is a great way to communicate with your coach. Email is especially good for asking questions about results and meet entries. Your coach will be sitting in front of the computer when the question is read. The answers are readily available on the computer. Usually a coach is unable to answer such questions on the pool deck because the data is not available there.

E-mail Alerts

You can add your name and e-mail address to our e-mail alert list on our Badger website at www.badgeragt.com. You will become part of a distribution list that will be used whenever important information has to reach everyone as quickly as possible, for example, notification of cancelled practices and programs due to inclement weather.

On the Deck

During the period of time your child is practicing, the coach is supervising your child. The coach knows the limitations and needs of your child so respect the coach for that knowledge. The level of respect and courtesy with which you treat the coaches on deck directly influences the behavior of the swimmers. Please refrain from approaching the coaches on deck during practices. For this period of time the coaches are preoccupied with the training of your swimmers and should not be distracted. If you have things to discuss with the coaches, send an email note to make an appointment. We do want you to talk with us about anything you need. It is just impossible to handle anything else (no matter how trivial it may seem) during practice time.

Information for the Coaches

Please be sure to write down anything that you need the coaches to know and put your note in the Badger Drop Box or email your coach. If you tell us something, or ask us for

something on deck we will not remember unless you write it down for us. This is a very important part of club communication. We hate to let people down by forgetting, so please help us by writing things down.

Coaches & Parents:

We need each other, but we can't be each other!

Taxi driver, meet official, fund-raiser. Without your participation there would be no Badger. The people who volunteer their time and energy to make Badger an effective organization do so in the belief that they are helping to provide a positive activity for young people. However, your most important role in our club is to be loving, supportive, parents to our athletes.

Coaches and parents, together we make up the support team for the swimmers. It is very important that we work together as a team so that the experiences the swimmers have at Badger are positive ones. Each of us has an important role in the development of your child as an athlete. The coach's job is to be the manager of the swimmers competitive careers. It is our job to make sure that the swimmers are getting everything they need to be successful athletes. We work with them on stroke technique, strength training, nutrition, as well as goal setting, and mental training. We ask that you give your child unwavering love and support, without giving stroke or training advice.

We ask that you consistently remind your swimmer that this is supposed to be fun. Try to remember to ask them if they had fun rather than if they swam fast. Let your swimmer bring up the results of their performance, and please don't judge or criticize, just be supportive. It is very easy for a swimmer to take their swimming very personally, many times feeling that his/her self-worth hinges on their swimming performance. Help them dilute pressure with perspective. Success is measured in many ways, not only in coming in first. Winning and success should be measured in involvement and improvement. Swimming is a great way to improve a child's self-confidence and self-esteem. It is important that you let your child know that you love them regardless of how they swim. Don't just assume that they know!

Parents and coaches need to always remember the importance of their roles in the lives of the children. The swimmers are always looking to both of us to see how to behave. They are modeling their behavior after the way we act. The respect and courtesy with which we treat each other, and the respect we have for the position the other serves, will be reflected in the attitudes and actions of the swimmers. If you, as a parent ever have any questions about what or how we are teaching the swimmers, please feel free to make an appointment to discuss it with us. Please do not second guess the coaches or question our behavior to, or in the presence of, the swimmers. If you promise not to coach your children, we promise not to tell them that they shouldn't have to make their beds, clean their rooms or be nice to their little sisters.

Parent Viewing Area

Practice time is the swimmers' time with the coaches. The Badger athletes are all great kids and the coaches appreciate the time you are giving us with them. If you stay to watch practice, please know that you are welcome. Parents are invited to watch practices from the spectator gallery.

Discipline

It's a tough job, so we try to very rarely have to do it. The 10 Training Habits listed in this handbook are explained to the swimmers and they are reminded of them throughout the season. The only time a swimmer ever gets "in trouble" with a coach is when they show disrespect for the team by breaking one of these training habits. Our only form of punishment is removal from practice. If a swimmer is behaving in a way that shows a coach that they do not want to be a part of the team today, the coach will just tell them to leave and come back next time ready to swim.

We try to keep these problems just between the swimmer and the coach. If your swimmer wants to tell you what happened, by all means let them tell you, but try to just listen and not judge or punish. If they are willing to tell you, just be happy that they trust you and love you enough to share the good and the not so good things in their life. All swimmers have a bad day now and then, and even the most dedicated get booted from practice. Please let us do the

disciplining in matters concerning the club. We promise to come to you if there is an ongoing or severe problem and we will all sit down and work on it together. Above all, remember that the motivating factor for children entering youth sports, particularly at the younger levels, is their desire to have fun. With the right attitude and a good understanding of what is involved, everyone will have a pleasant and rewarding experience.

Team Equipment & Apparel

Wearing the team uniform displays pride in the program and promotes each individual who participates in the program. Wearing the team uniform enhances team spirit and affects the competition.

Suits

All swimmers should have several practice suits and a good suit for meets. Practice suits are those worn by a swimmer during practice sessions. They are generally made of nylon, lycra, or stretch nylon. These suits are usually loose fitting. Some swimmers may train wearing several suits for the purpose of creating drag. The Badger Team Suit is a solid black one piece suit for girls and a solid black racing suit for boys. Suits used for competition are often worn in a smaller size than practice suit to reduce resistance. ***Swimmers should wear a team suit for all meets.*** Swimmers participating in championship meets may wear high-performance suits

Cap and Goggles

Swimmers should also have at least two pairs of goggles and two caps (so they will always have a spare). We strongly recommend and may at times require that swimmers wear a swimming cap and goggles during practice. ***All Badger swimmers are required to wear a Badger cap during all competitions.***

Water Bottle

As part of ensuring proper hydration, all swimmers are expected to bring a water bottle to every practice.

Other Equipment & Supplies

The team racing suit and cap are required parts of the team uniform to be worn in competition. The purchase of all other Badger apparel is optional. Badger team apparel and equipment in the form of parkas, t-shirts, sweatshirts, baseball caps, swim caps, towels, bags, and sweatpants are available for purchase by team members by our parents committee. Apparel information will be distributed by the end of September and will also be available on the team website.

Weather

Any discussion of our inclement weather policy always begins with this statement:

Parents, use your best judgment.

In fact, if you call prior to practice on a bad weather day and ask if there will be practice, the answer is always the same. “Yes, we have practice. Please use your best judgment when deciding whether to attend.” Now that you have read this section you know that you do not need to call. If you can’t drive your car through the four foot puddles, or the four foot snow bank, or around the downed power lines and trees in your street, then you should probably not drive to practice. Stay home and be safe. However, the coaches will always be at the pool for all scheduled practices.

Having said that...**if Rye City Schools and/or New Rochelle Schools close due to weather, then the decision has been made for us, and the swimming programs will be suspended as well.** Please watch the television reports and listen to the radio for school closing announcements.

We also have an Announcements section on the top page of the team web site. This page is most often used during the winter season. But we will post all weather related announcements on that page as information becomes available.

Swim Meets

Meets are an important reason we practice so hard. They are intended to be fun and challenging. Swimming fast is fun. Remember our motto is “*We swim for good times!*”

Attendance at meets is optional, but the coaching staff will encourage swimmers to attend the meets scheduled for their groups. The meet schedule that is established each season gives each swimmer the chance to race and to measure their performance level. It is also an opportunity to be evaluated for technique and conditioning effectiveness.

A swim meet packet will be distributed in September for the Fall meets and again in January for the Spring meets. In addition, this information will be posted on our website (www.badgeragt.com). All information and meet signup procedures will be distributed at that time. Any changes, additions, or deletions to the schedule will be announced and posted on the team website. The coaching staff reserves the right to make the final decision concerning which meets the Badger swimmers may attend.

USS Meets

Refer to the meet schedule and the calendar for information about USA Swimming (USS) meets. Swimmers should use the Badger Meet Entry Forms to enter meets. The coaching staff will make the decisions as to which events will be entered. An important job of the coach is to manage a swimmer's competitive career. That is why we feel so strongly about the coaching staff choosing the events for the swimmers. We believe that swimmers need to compete in a wide variety of events (both strokes and distances). Only by having the coaching staff enter the swimmers can we ensure that the swimmers are provided with the opportunity to swim appropriate events.

Relay Events

The coach will select the relays from the roster of swimmers attending the meet. If you sign up for a meet that has relays, your swimmer should be ready and willing as part of the team to participate in these relays. Being a member of a relay team is an honor and should not be missed. The coaches designate relay teams. Their decisions will be based on many variables, including best times that day, lifetime best times, attitude of swimmer, etc. The coaches' decisions regarding relays are final.

Meet Fees

Entry fees for meets vary from meet to meet, and are used to pay for facilities, equipment, awards, coaching fees, travel expenses, and as profits for the host club. These fees are then forwarded to the host club and are not refundable. Meet entry fees must be paid in full before the entry deadline for a swimmer to be entered.

USA Swimming Fees

Each member of the Badger Age Group Team is required to join the Badger Swim Club, which is a United States Swimming Competitive Team. The team website has more information. United States Swimming requires this membership for insurance and competition purposes. **There is an annual USA Swimming membership fee of \$51.00 per team member. This fee is made payable to USA Swimming and is forwarded directly to USA Swimming. USA Swimming (www.usaswimming.org) is the national governing body for amateur competitive swimming in the United States.** USA Swimming is made up of 59 Local Swimming Committees (LSCs.) The Badger Swim Club belongs to the *Metropolitan Swimming* LSC. Your USA Swimming fees pay for insurance coverage and for program administration at the National and LSC levels. USA Swimming cards (noting the swimmer's USA Swimming ID number) are assigned to all swimmers when they join USA Swimming. Your swimmer will also receive informative periodicals from USA Swimming, including *Splash* magazine.