

2024

Little Falls Penguins

Handbook for Parents and Swimmers



Saturday Morning

Saturday Morning
Down by the pool
Lookin' for a team
That's really cool

Lookin' on the other side
Ain't over there
It's Little Falls, Little Falls
And we're over here

Gonna take it on down
Purple and White
Rock and Roll Penguins
Are outta sight.

Doin' backstroke, backstroke
Butterfly too
Gonna beat [opponent]
Ain't nothing new

*All: I said 1-2-3-4 come on Little Falls beat 'em out the door.
Said 5-6-7-8 come on Little Falls beat 'em out the gate.*

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
The Little Falls Penguins.....	2
Our Swim Team Goal	2
Parent Participation and Support.....	3
Swim Team Basics	3
How to join the Penguins.....	4
Practices.....	4
Coaches.....	5
Team suits and other gear	6
Supervision.....	6
Noise and parking restrictions	6
Social Events and Team Activities	7
Team Volunteer Commitments.....	8
Non-Deck Volunteer Opportunities.....	9
Deck Volunteer Opportunities	10
The Meets	11
Swim League Rules	11
Swim Assessments.....	11
Time Trials.....	12
“A” meets.....	12
“B” meets.....	15
Relay Carnival.....	16
Divisionals	17
Long Course and All-Star Meets	17
Expectations at All Meets	18
Transportation.....	19
Disqualifications	19
Ribbons, Trophies, and Awards.....	20

Introduction

The Little Falls Penguins

Team Colors: Purple and White

Team Mascot: Penguin

Team Superhero: Opus the Penguin

Membership: Open to Little Falls Pool members, 18 and younger.

- Pre-team is for children who can pass the tadpole test but are still learning the fundamentals of freestyle.
- Nestlings are children who can swim unassisted (in any manner) at least halfway down the pool but may not be able to pass the tadpole test.

League affiliation: MCSL (Montgomery County Swim League)

Swim Season: Tuesday after Memorial Day to last weekend in July.

Meet Schedule: 10 dual meets - every Wednesday and Saturday starting the third week of June. Divisional Championship – third Saturday in July. All-star events – last weekend in July. Relay Carnival takes place on a Sunday morning in July.

Other Key Dates: Sunday night after the Divisional Championship – Team Banquet

Our Swim Team Goal

The Little Falls swim team is an important part of the community. It brings neighbors together both at swim meets and at many social functions. The team is meant to be fun for kids with a wide range of swimming abilities and experience. It also helps kids build self-confidence, good sportsmanship, fitness, and self-discipline.

Many kids who are not very fast swimmers enjoy participating in the team year after year and are encouraged to do so. The happiest swimmers are usually those who concentrate on improving their own times, and who get excited to watch their progress rather than focusing on how fast or slow they are compared to other swimmers.

The team also offers opportunities for serious competitive swimmers. The Montgomery County Swim League (MCSL) is the second-largest summer league in the country and our fastest swimmers compete in All-Star meets with other top swimmers in the county.

Parent Participation and Support

Did you know it takes more than 30 Little Falls parents to run a home meet? Parent participation and support is vital to the continued success of the swim team. **Each family who registers a swimmer should volunteer for at least 3 jobs during the season—preferably 4 if you have children competing in both A and B meets.** If everyone helps a little, the summer season will be much more enjoyable for all of us.

Parents can be trained by the MCSL to officiate meets as referees, starters and stroke and turn judges. No training is required for parents to participate as announcers, runners, clerks of course, timers, ribbon writers or to keep records, set up meets, serve refreshments, and assist with social activities.

If you are not available for part of the swim season, don't worry. Many team members are away for a week or two at camp or on vacation. You should indicate through our on-line sign-up whether or not your child will be available for each of the meets. This is crucial for the coaches to know because this is how they make the meet line-ups. Indicating that you are available means you are committed to come to the meet if chosen. If you say you're available and are selected for the meet and then don't show up, it means an empty lane, no points, and a missed opportunity for another child to swim.

Swim Team Basics

How to Join the Penguins

You must register for the team (including the Pre-team and Nestlings) online. When you sign up for the swim team you will be added to the e-mail list and will receive details about registration, schedule changes, and general announcements through email updates. We accept registrations for joining the team at any time prior to the end of the season. The registration fee is not pro-rated for those who join late or are available for only part of the season. Refunds will not be given.

There are three Little Falls Penguins teams: the Nestlings for our youngest swimmers who can swim partway down the pool unassisted but do not know their strokes yet, the Pre-Team – generally young swimmers who are in the early stages of learning the different strokes (should be able to get from one end of the pool to the other unassisted) -- and the regular team. The coaches decide if swimmers are ready to move up to the next team during the season.

Like last year, our Pre-team and Nestling swimmers will be offered the same opportunities for practice as the regular swim team, and they will swim at the same practice time as the 8&U team swimmers in the afternoon. Registration prices are the same across all groups, so moving to the 8&U practice lanes will not incur additional charges.

Practices

Swimmers should come to practice as often as possible and should let coaches know when they will be absent for more than several days. Practice makes for strong swimmers, and it's a lot of fun.

Practice Times: Afternoon practices generally start the Tuesday after Memorial Day. After the public school year ends, there is both morning and afternoon practice. Swimmers may come to either one. Morning practice is usually less crowded. Practice is rarely cancelled. If the pool is open, there is practice – rain, shine, too hot or too cold! However, practice may be delayed or cancelled because of thunderstorms. On stormy days, coaches will send out an email close to the start of practice if it is cancelled.

Discipline Policy: Swimmers are expected to pay attention at practice. All swimmers are expected to abide by the Swimmer Code of Conduct for MCSL. In addition, the swimmers will work together to create a Little Falls Penguins Code of Conduct. As a general rule, the coaches will follow the procedures below if a discipline issue should arise:

Minor actions (e.g unkind comments, overly rough horseplay):

- first few times: verbal warning
- recurring actions: parent contacted
- further response if necessary

Major actions (violent verbal or physical behavior):

- immediate removal from practice, either for day, for week, or for season depending on the severity of the action
- parents contacted same day
- further response if necessary

Instruction: There are usually many kids at practice, and the coaches are not able to give kids individualized instruction. If you want instruction, most of the coaches or lifeguards may be hired for individual lessons, separately from the swim team. The cost is \$25 for 30 minutes (but can vary by coach/lifeguard). There are also many excellent swim programs in the area that give instruction and year-round swimming opportunities. A list of Little Falls instructors will be posted on our website and is also available at the Guard House at the pool.

Parents & Practice: Parents should not approach the coaches during practice unless it is an emergency. The coaches' primary focus is on the swimmers. Please wait until after practice is over to discuss any issues.

Coaches

Hiring: Our coaches are selected through an open application process conducted by FINS and the A reps.

Questions for the coaches: If there is anything special you want the coaches to know about your child, or if you have questions that this handbook or other parents can't answer, please talk to the coaches directly. You can contact the coaches at a time when they are not busy, such as before or after practice, or after meets. You can also make appointments to meet with the coaches during

the day. Please keep in mind that Little Falls coaches are generally high school and college competitive swimmers who have a long history with the team, love and know the sport, and enjoy working with kids. **It's best to let them do the coaching.** As parents, it's our job to encourage and support our kids, but it's *not* our job to coach.

If you have any questions or concerns that are not addressed by talking to the coaches, contact the "A" team representative(s) who supervise the coaching staff.

Team Suits and Other Gear

Suits: Swimmers wear racing suits. The girls wear one-piece suits and the boys wear "jammers" (bicycle shorts-like suits). At meets, team suits are optional but encouraged. Purchase information is available on our website and suits will be available for purchase at our Back to Pool Night. Many swimmers wear older models of team suits, which is fine. Swimmers may not wear a swimsuit that has the logo or name of any other team on it. Doing so at an A meet could result in disqualification. Technical suits are not permitted for swimmers 12 & under unless they are FINA-approved.

Caps: Male and female swimmers wear caps during practice and when racing. Little Falls caps should be worn at meets; caps are available for purchase during registration. Swimmers may not wear caps with the name or logo of any other team on them. As with swim suits, caps with anything but MCSL logos could result in the swimmer being disqualified.

Goggles: Swimmers should wear goggles during practice and at meets.

Supervision

All children 8 and under must be supervised by an adult when they are at the pool. This is a pool requirement and applies when children are at swim team practice or a meet or any other team event. The coaches and pool staff are not responsible for supervising children who are not in the water or are waiting to be picked up. If you have concerns about your child getting from the parking lot to the pool please walk them in. The coaches do not take attendance at practice and are not responsible for checking bathrooms or other places for swimmers who may be delaying going to practice.

Noise and parking restrictions

The pool is very close to many neighborhood homes, and we must make every effort to keep the noise within reasonable limits. Please do not bring any noisemakers to the pool grounds, such as megaphones, drums, or radios. Please do not honk horns or cheer on the way to the pool before meets. For Saturday morning meets, there is no cheering or music at the pool before 9 AM, and any activities should be kept as quiet as possible prior to 9 AM. It is also important to keep noise levels down at the pool when we have a home “B” meet, which can run into the evening.

On days of a home meet our pool parking lot is reserved for the visiting team so we encourage you to walk to the pool. If you must drive, park at the Westbrook Elementary School lot; **there is no pool-related parking on Glen Cove Parkway, Allan Terrace, Baltimore Avenue or Little Falls Drive, per pool regulations.**

Social Events and Team Activities

Our Little Falls Penguins social events and team activities are as important to our kids as practices and meets. All events are open to all swimmers. These include:

Lunch after the meet: After an away meet, the team picks a restaurant and eats as a group there. The location will be announced before the meet but is often at the Chipotle in Friendship Heights. This event is open to the entire swim family and is optional.

Team Pictures: Team pictures are for all swimmers, Nestlings, pre-team, dive team and swim team. **For 2024, picture day is Tuesday, June 18 at 5 p.m.**

Pep Rallies: Pep rallies take place Fridays before each “A” meet. There is always a “theme” for the pep rally, so all team members – whether or not they are swimming at the “A” meet -- are encouraged to come dressed up according to the theme and ready for fun. Swimmers help make banners and signs and practice their Little Falls cheers (see www.littlefallspenguins.com -tab for CHEERS)

Pasta Dinner: Usually scheduled the night before Divisionals, our pasta dinner takes place in the picnic area at the pool. Parents bring pasta, garlic bread, drinks and dessert. Fun activities such as t-shirt tie-dyeing, games and spirit-building activities are part of the dinner. Parents and siblings are welcome.

Team Breakfast: On one day during the season, everyone at morning practice enjoys a delicious pancake breakfast cooked poolside by volunteer parents.

Team Banquet: This is the end-of-season dinner, including a slide show and the presentation of pins and awards. Various special awards are also announced. All team members and their families are invited. There is a separate awards ceremony for the Nestlings and Pre-team after the Penguin Fun Night on Wednesday, July 17.

Beach Trip: Every year, the team hires a motor coach to take team members, coaches and families for a day at Rehoboth beach. Signup will be available online in late June. Children under 13 must be chaperoned. This is a fun activity but the coaches do NOT supervise the kids. Parents can come along. We leave early in the morning and come back around 7 p.m., rain or shine. The trip usually fills up! The Beach Trip for 2024 is scheduled for Monday, July 15 and there will be no practices that day.

This is not an exhaustive list – other activities are likely to be scheduled during the season. For the past several years, Little Falls Penguins have also participated in a swim “marathon” to raise money for charity. Stay tuned!

Team Volunteer Commitments

The swim team is run by parent volunteers. We welcome any and all participation. The swim team executive committee consists of two “A” Team Representatives (reps) and two “B” Team Reps. This committee meets frequently to oversee coach selection, ensure that individuals are assigned to complete essential tasks, organize upcoming events and volunteers, and recommend changes in policies and procedures.

Volunteering: We are requiring that ALL families commit to at least 3 volunteer jobs as noted on our website in order to register for the team. It takes about 36 parents from both teams to run a meet. We always need

trained officials – stroke and turn judges, starters, head timers, and referees. If you are willing to take a training course (3 hours), please tell us at the beginning of the season, and we will tell you the dates of the training courses, or you can look them up on the MCSL web site (www.mcsl.org).

There's a job for everyone! Team jobs come in two types – non-deck jobs needed to run the team, and deck (meet) jobs required by the MCSL for running the meets. Don't worry, if you're new at one of these jobs, the Reps and other experienced parents will be available to help and advise you. Most jobs are listed on our website; when you indicate availability for a meet, sign up to help out! You'll find you enjoy the season more if you're part of the action.

Non-Deck Volunteer Opportunities

- *Banquet Chair*: Coordinates the season-end banquet. May include finding someone to organize and run the slide show, recruiting volunteers to collect money and set up/clean up, arranging catering, etc.
- *"A" and "B" Meet Concession Chairs*: Coordinate volunteers to run concessions for either "A" or "B" meets; coordinate with Montgomery County Dept. of Health for seasonal inspection; set up the concessions area prior to the meet and clean up after the meet; sell food and drinks during the meets; recruit grillers; count proceeds and safely transfer them to the team treasurer.
- *Automation Chair*: Maintains team computer and database and works automation at meets. Generates the meet line-up with coaches. Works with Automation Assistants who check times at meets.
- *Concessions Supply Chief*: Checks status of available food/drinks/ice for home meets; organizes volunteers to pick up needed supplies; organizes the supply closet; helps set up concessions at home meets.
- *Costco Runner*: Buys needed supplies (food, plates, drinks, napkins etc.) at Costco and delivers them to the Supply Chief for storage before home meets.
- *Griller(s)*: Prepares the burgers, hot dogs and veggie burgers for home "B" meets.
- *Head Timer – "A" meets*: Finds and schedules timers for each "A" meet, Relay Carnival and Divisional meet. Also finds take-off judges for Relay Carnival.

“B” meets: Finds and schedules timers for each B meet. Maintains watches, clipboards and pencils needed for timers.

- *Social Events Coordinator*: Plans and staffs team social events; recruits and organizes volunteers.
- *Spirit Wear Sales*: Responsible for coordinating the sales of team t-shirts, caps, sweatshirts and other spirit wear at parties and home meets.
- *Team “A” Representative*: Represents the team at MCSL functions and “A” meets; helps hire coaches; and makes day-to-day decisions regarding the running of the team, including overall management of volunteers and coaches.
- *Team “B” Representative*: Coordinates and schedules “B” meets; helps hire coaches; and makes day-to-day decisions regarding the running of the team, including ensuring that volunteers are available.
- *Team breakfast coordinator*: Organizes volunteers and plans the team breakfast after one morning practice midway through the season.
- *Treasurer*: Collects money from sales, pays bills and prepares yearly budget.

Deck Volunteer Opportunities - Jobs needed to run “A” or “B” meets

These jobs come in two categories – those that are “certified” and those that do not require any MCSL training. MCSL rules require us to furnish all these personnel.

Officials requiring certification (mandatory MCSL training)

- Referee (home meets only) – runs the meet; final arbiter if decisions regarding rules need to be made; ensures MCSL rules are followed.
- Stroke and Turn Judges (need 2 per team at every meet) – judges swimmers’ strokes and disqualifies swimmers who are not doing the stroke correctly.
- Starter (away meets only) – ensures fair starts for all races; manages the starting equipment and ensures its function.

Jobs that do not require MCSL certification

- Automation and Data Entry – enters times after races and scores meet (we need 2 per team at every meet); prepares line-up with coaches before

the meet; shares line-up with opposing team; makes copies of line-up for sale at meet.

- Clerk of Course – organizes and checks-in swimmers before races to be sure they are ready to swim; ensures they get to the start in the appropriate heat and lane.
- Head Timer – Recruits timers; supplies stop watches, clipboards and pencils to timers; provides instructions to all timers; makes sure that timers are ready before each race; provides backup timing.
- Timer (need 9 per team) – times races and record times (three per lane).
- Announcer (home meet only) – Introduces swimmers, announces each race, announces results.
- Ribbon Writer – Sticks labels provided by data entry people on ribbons at “A” and “B” meets.
- Runner – quickly takes time cards from timers to Automation to be entered into the database.

The Meets

Swim League Rules

MCSL rules are used at all “A” meets, and are the basis for determining whether or not the strokes are swum correctly. The rules are generally similar to USA Swimming rules, with a few exceptions. The MCSL handbook lists all the rules.

The handbook is available on the MCSL web site at www.mcsl.org. MCSL highly recommends that the same rules be used at “B” meets, but the implementation is up to the teams running the “B” meets. The MCSL handbook also details how meets are scored. At “A” meets, the fastest five swimmers in the event earn scores of 6,4,3,2, and 1 respectively for the team. This means that having the second and third best swimmers is worth more than having the best swimmer. Relay events are worth more points.

“A” meets are on Saturday mornings and “B” meets are on Wednesday evenings.

There is no “A” and “B” *team* – many swimmers swim at both “A” and “B”

meets. Swimmers compete against other swimmers in their age and gender group, based on age as of June 1. The age groups are 8 and under, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, and 15-18.

Swim Assessments

If you are unsure whether your swimmer belongs on the Nestlings, pre-team or swim team, evaluations will take place before the first practice. Coaches will determine the best place for your swimmer. Pre-team and swim team registrations are the same price. Practice options are nearly equivalent and swimmers in pre-team may be moved up to the team when coaches determine they're ready. Many of our pre-team swimmers last season swam in B meets (and A meets, if eligible).

Time Trials

Time trials will be held on Saturday, June 8 in order to set the line-up for the first "A" meet. Without time trials, coaches wouldn't know which swimmers have the fastest times. We hold a fairly formal Saturday time trial (run something like a meet, but with Little Falls Penguins only) and also collect times at the first "B" meet the following Wednesday for swimmers who might have missed the Saturday trials. Time trials are a great introduction to the meet season. **Please inform the A Reps and/or coaches if your child will not be able to participate in either time trials (6/8) or the first "B" meet (6/12).**

"A" meets

The "A" meets are held against other teams in our division. This year Little Falls will be swimming in Division I. MCSL places us in a division with five other teams that have approximately the same strength. This keeps the meets competitive – there are many teams in the County that are much faster than us, and many more that are much slower. From year to year we may switch divisions, or other teams may switch in and out of our division. Team scores are kept at "A" meets. These meets also have a set line-up (e.g., list of who is swimming what) and a limited number of athletes – the ones with the fastest times for that week. The line-ups for "A" meets are exchanged with the opposing team on Fridays and may not be changed before the meet.

How to indicate you are available for an “A” meet:

Any swimmer who wants to be considered for each week’s “A” meet must complete the availability section on our website.

It is the responsibility of swimmers and parents to make sure that this information is accurate and current. If you have not specified your availability, the coaches will not put you in a meet.

IN ORDER TO INDICATE AVAILABILITY: Go to

littlefallspenguins.swimtopia.com. Click the “Swim and Dive Meets and Events” tab. Select the first green “Meet Entry Open” button on the page. Click the “Edit” button under “Your family swim meet status.” Beside each child’s name, select attending or not attending. Click “save.” Return to the main events page and go through all events.

If you have indicated that you can be in a meet and your plans change, please notify the coaches by **email or in writing** by Thursday before an “A” meet. Please do not “just tell” the coaches as there are far too many kids to keep track of verbally.

How coaches select which swimmers to enter in an “A” meet:

When doing the line-up for an “A” meet, the coach must follow the MSCL rule: *No swimmer may swim more than 5 events at a meet broken down as follows: 3 individual events and two relays (including IM) or 2 individual events and 3 relays.*

The decision regarding which swimmers to enter at each “A” meet is *solely the decision of the coaches*. The primary factor they consider is the best time a swimmer has achieved season-to-date at either an “A” meet, “B” meet, or Time Trials (the coach will have available the times from all the meets, including the “B” meet immediately preceding the upcoming “A” meet).

“A” meet swimmers will vary week to week, depending on best times and who is available that week. **You should indicate your availability *whether or not you think it’s likely your child will swim***; swimmers with faster times may be unavailable that week. (The coaches sometimes make calls to find swimmers if there are open slots, but don’t count on this -- time is very limited when the coaches are doing the scheduling).

The coaches evaluate the best strategy for maximizing points and winning meets. They must decide which events to enter swimmers in, and, if there are not enough swimmers in an age group they may ask younger swimmers to “swim up” in age (i.e., an 8-and-under swimmer may be asked to swim up in the 9-10 race, a 12 year old may be asked to swim up in the 13-14 race, etc.). Swimmers are expected to be willing to swim all of the events they are entered in and to willingly swim up when needed. Coaches always strive to fill all the lanes in a race; empty lanes don’t score points!

The most exciting parts of the meet are the freestyle “graduated” relays (i.e., with an 8-and-under, a 9-10, an 11-12, and a 13-14 swimmer per relay) at the end of each “A” meet, with an A and a B relay. The swimmers for these relays are not selected in advance of the meet. The Little Falls practice is to put the swimmers with the fastest freestyle times swum that day in the A relay and the second-fastest in the B relay. There are two exceptions: sometimes a fast swimmer who does not swim freestyle at the meet may still be used in the freestyle relay because of his or her known speed. The second exception is that coaches may spread out the fastest swimmers between the A and the B relays if they believe that we could get both 1st and 2nd place with that strategy.

Checking to see if you are scheduled to swim:

By Wednesday of each week, you must indicate your availability for Saturday’s meet. The coaches and automation chair meet on Thursday afternoon to determine the line-up. Families will receive the line-up on Thursday evening via email; all swimmers should check on Thursday to see if they are swimming on Saturday and if so, what events they will be swimming. *Don’t be discouraged if you weren’t selected to swim for an “A” meet; you may be selected for an upcoming meet, and there’s a “B” meet right around the corner!*

Please note that if you indicate that you are available for an “A” meet and are selected to swim, failure to show up at the meet may mean that you will not be scheduled to swim the following “A” meet. If for some reason your plans change at the last minute or your swimmer feels ill, contact the coaches as soon as possible so they can try to substitute another swimmer. If the coaches know before Friday morning, they will be able to change the entry list before submitting it to the opposing team. If the coaches are told after Friday morning but before the meet on Saturday, there is still some limited ability to “scratch” your swimmer and substitute another.

Checking in for “A” meets:

Home meets: Swimmers should be at the pool by 8 am ready to warm up. All swimmers are expected to warm up with the team.

Away meets: Swimmers must drive into the pool parking lot and check in by a certain time with the coach on duty in the lot. Once your name is checked off you may head to the opposing pool. Please keep noise to a minimum in the parking lot. It’s usually early and we don’t want to disturb the neighbors.

Staying for the full “A” meet: You should plan to be available continuously from the check-in time until the end time of the meet -- you could be needed for the last relay event, and cheering for (and hanging out with) teammates is a fun and important part of the meet. Meet scores are announced after the last event, usually to much cheering. Meets generally last until about 11:30 am, and may last longer if there is weather or other delays. If a swimmer needs to leave the meet before the relay, please tell the coach before leaving.

Why it is necessary to have strict procedures for “A” meets: The coaches must turn in an electronic entry list to the opposing team by Friday morning. It takes a lot of effort and strategizing for the coaches to figure out which kids to enter in which events, and then it takes time for the automation volunteer to enter the entries in the correct format, and for the coaches, computer operator, team reps, etc. to check that the entries are correct. This is why we MUST know who is available for an “A” meet by the end of the day on the Wednesday preceding the meet.

If an emergency or illness happens too late to reach a coach at the pool, send word with another swim team family, or try to reach a coach on his/her cell phone or via email.

“B” meets

“B” meets are Wednesday night meets scheduled with other teams we choose to swim against based on their proximity, past experience, available schedules, and similar philosophies. “B” meets are run much like “A” meets, but are not official meets subject to the MCSL league rules, and therefore may be less formal than “A” meets. “B” meets may be scored, but the scores do not

count toward our division standing with MCSL. "B" meets are fun; everyone enjoys cheering on teammates and eating concessions food for dinner!

All swimmers are eligible for "B" meets and are encouraged to swim. A good "B" meet time may earn your swimmer a place in the next "A" meet; more importantly, it provides the meet "experience" and helps our young swimmers see the progress they are making as the season unfolds. The team considers them as important as "A" meets and key to the development of good (and happy) swimmers.

Swimmers who have placed first, second or third in an event at the preceding "A" meet may not swim that same event at the "B" meet, but can swim other events as long as there are no other entry restrictions imposed by the host team. The coaches need to know in advance who will be coming to the "B" meets since these meets are entered into the meet database, but there will be no penalty if a swimmer does not show at a "B" meet. Swimmers should follow the standard procedure for filling in their availability for "B" meets online.

Checking in for "B" meets:

"B" meets at home: Swimmers should be at the pool by 4:50pm ready to warm up at 5pm.

"B" meets away: Swimmers should plan to be at the away pool ready to warm up by 5:15pm for a 5:20pm warmup. They do not need to check in with the coaches at the pool before heading to the opposing pool.

Parent Volunteers:

"B" meets require more volunteers because more kids swim. At least nine timers are needed for each meet, and very patient clerks-of-course to organize the young swimmers. Afternoon concessions at home meets are particularly busy, and usually include pizza. (Note that volunteers are always able to slip away to watch their kids swim and cheer them on.) If you are a new official, "B" meets are a great launching point for your new role.

Relay Carnival

This is an all-relay meet using 4-6 swimmers from each age group. You should indicate your availability for this meet in Swimtopia like any other meet. However, the final list of who will swim won't be known until the afternoon

before the meet since any best times swum in that morning's "A" meet will be factored into the decision of who will swim. The coaches make decisions after the Saturday "A" meet to figure out the line-up. The line-up will be sent to swimmers who have been selected.

There is usually a practice in the late afternoon on Saturday to practice relay starts. It is very important for all entered swimmers to attend this practice. Please tell the coaches if for some reason you can't attend.

Divisionals

This is the championship meet for all six teams in the division. Fewer swimmers are entered than in an "A" meet, as each team may enter only two swimmers per event. Divisionals starts an hour earlier than an "A" meet.

We have to submit the entry list for Divisionals a week in advance. You should indicate your availability for this meet on-line. The coaches use the same procedures for selecting swimmers for Divisionals as explained above for "A" meets, using primarily the fastest times swum in any "A" or "B" meet. Note that the times listed in the meet program for entered swimmers are only "A" meet times, due to league rules.

Divisionals is a long but fun meet, with a great deal of cheering and team coaches in funny theme costumes. Many kids enjoy coming to Divisionals even if they are not swimming in the meet. If you are going to be out of town in the week or two before Relay Carnival or Divisionals but will be back in time to swim, please tell us so we know how to contact you. If we do not know that you are available and cannot readily contact you, you will not be entered – so please keep us informed.

Long Course and All-Star Meets

These meets are for the top swimmers in the county, or the winners of the divisional relay carnival. If you qualify for these meets, the coaches will let you know. You can track your chances by looking at the top times report for the entire league on the MCSL web site.

The Long Course meet is held in the middle of the season, and the races are twice as long as the standard races and swum in a 50-meter pool. The top 8

swimmers (and alternates) with the fastest times in the county are invited to this meet. Usually only a few swimmers from the Penguins qualify for this meet.

All-Star meets are held at the end of the season, a week after the Divisional meet. Qualification for Individual All-Stars is based on a swimmer attaining the “all-star nominating time” that is established by MCSL. MCSL then takes the top 16 swimmers (plus alternates) of those who have qualified. Attaining an “All Star” time at any point is an impressive achievement but does not necessarily mean that the time will be good enough to make it into the All-Star meet.

If a relay team wins its race at the Relay Carnival (or in the case of the Open Medley or Graduated Free races, a team has the best time swum in the division during the season) it goes on to the Relay All-Star meet representing our division. A team is allowed to use any swimmers it wants at Relay All-Stars, not just the swimmers who won the relay that qualified them. However, the Little Falls practice is to use the same swimmers who swam the original relay, unless they are not available. We encourage team members to come as spectators to Long Course and All-Stars, both to support our swimmers in those meets and for the excitement of seeing the best swimmers in the county (and Montgomery County is FAST!).

Kids who do not want to swim in meets:

Some kids, especially young or newer swimmers, do not want to participate in meets. This is fine. The coaches will encourage swimmers to try a meet when they are ready for it. Usually, for Pre-team members, this happens at the last couple of “B” meets of the season.

Expectations at All Meets

Swimmers should remain in the team area during the meet. Coaches and the clerk-of-course cannot be expected to search for and track down wayward swimmers before their events. If you miss your race, that’s zero points for the Penguins!

Parents, siblings, relatives, friends, etc., are all encouraged to volunteer and watch the meets. Cheering is welcome, but spectators need to be quiet once “Quiet for the start” is announced so that swimmers can hear the starting

buzzer. According to league rules, parents who are timing or officiating are not supposed to cheer so that everyone can concentrate on officiating in a neutral manner.

The deck areas around the pool and at the ends of the pool need to be left clear for officials working the meet. Please do not stand at the end of the lanes to cheer your swimmer or allow younger siblings to run up and down the side of the pool. Officials need a clean line of sight along the pool sides and pool ends to fairly judge the meet.

Please do not use flash photography during the meet, since the flash may be confused with the flash of the starting equipment. Cell phone ringers must be turned off, because they may be confused with the sound of the starting equipment.

Transportation

Meets are held all over the county as well as at our pool. Directions can be found on the team website or the MCSL website (www.mcsl.org).

You are responsible for driving your child to and from the away meets or finding a ride for them. The swim team takes no responsibility for transportation. Meets can end early due to weather or pool breakdowns. Please make sure that you have arranged for someone to be responsible for your child at meets if you are not there, so that they are not stranded at the meet.

Disqualifications

There are four different strokes: freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly.

Freestyle is the easiest to master, and most swimmers do not disqualify in freestyle races unless they start too early, pull themselves along the lane ropes or push off the bottom of the pool. The other three strokes are more difficult, and younger or less experienced swimmers frequently disqualify because they are not doing the stroke properly. Please help your swimmer understand that strokes other than freestyle are difficult to master, and that disqualifying is frequent at first. Everyone has disqualified (DQ'd) at some point in their swim career! Disqualifications can also occur at the start of the

race if the swimmer dives in before the starting buzzer or, during relays, if one swimmer takes off before the previous swimmer touches the wall.

The standards for disqualification are the same at “B” meets as “A” meets. (This may not always be true in practice, since “B” meets are sometimes staffed by rookie officials who do not catch all of the disqualifications.) It can seem harsh to some parents that the disqualification standards are the same, but nevertheless it’s necessary: we do not want kids getting good times at “B” meets with illegal strokes, and then getting disqualified at “A” meets. This costs the team points.

Ribbons, Trophies, and Awards

Ribbons:

At “A” Meets: Place ribbons are given to any swimmer who scores points, i.e., comes in at one of the first five places in the individual events. The ribbon includes the swimmer’s time and the date of the meet. There may also be “finisher” ribbons for those who participated but didn’t score points. This is up to the discretion of the hosting team. Swimmers generally do not receive a ribbon if they DQ in a race. “A” meet ribbons are sometimes handed out after the meet at the team lunch or may be picked up at the pool.

At “B” Meets: Ribbons are given to all participants. Ribbons will say the place for the 1st through 6th place swimmer, and the other ribbons will say “participant.”

Times are written on the back of the ribbon. “B” meet ribbons may be picked up at the pool.

Trophies:

The male and female swimmer from each age group who scored the most points for the team will receive a “high point” trophy. In addition, all swimmers get fun recognition shout-outs from the coaches.

Coaches Recognition Awards:

There are three special plaques given out at the banquet. The coaches work together to determine who will receive these awards. The “Most Improved” award goes to a swimmer who, in the coaches’ opinion, has put forth a great

deal of effort which resulted in significantly faster times, usually compared to performance in previous seasons. The coaches look at times in this season and the previous season, but do not apply any specific formula or quantitative method in determining the most improved swimmer. The “Coaches’ Award” goes to a swimmer who serves as a role model for others on the team, responds willingly to coaching, and shows superior team spirit and support of the team. The “Swimmer of the Year” goes to a team member who shows particular dedication to improving themselves as a swimmer and as a Little Falls Penguin.