



GATORS PARENT'S HANDBOOK

2019

We hope this parent's handbook helps answer some of your questions. We can't cover everything here, but hopefully it will take some of the anxiety out of the season. You will find swimming is a great sport that your kids can do for the rest of the lives and they will be having a great time hanging out with other great kids on the swim team!





INTRODUCTION

Every swimmer's parent has experienced that first Swim meet (gala) where they wonder "what am I doing here and what's going on?" We've all been there before and, hopefully, this handbook will enlighten you in your quest to understand the world of Swimming. It can be a little overwhelming at first, but don't worry; you and your kids will have a great time.

Please remember that if you have any questions, the coaches and fellow swim parents are all very willing to answer your questions. Our team philosophy is that having fun and personal development is the most important thing we can do. We believe that if we can establish a healthy environment that encourages the kids to do their best, recognizes their contribution, and is fun for the entire family, then we will have met our goals.

Welcome to the DMSS Gators. We're glad to have you with us.

THE CLUB

Gators Swimming Club, formally registered on the 14th July 2016 and informally running as an entity for the past 10 years is the Competitive swimming body of DMSS, the swim school. Whereas DMSS is the swim school focussed on providing lessons to students of DMSS, Gators SC is focussed on providing competitive opportunities for DMSS students who enroll as members with the club. Governed by a constitution, an executive committee, a general membership duly registered with the Botswana Registrar of Societies (Reg no. CR 12359).

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to students of DMSS swim school interested in participating at galas on behalf of Gators Swimming Club. An annual membership fee (set by the executive committee) is payable and then formal registration is required of at least one gala in the season. An AGM is held once per year where members are invited. Swimmers who are 18 years and under can be represented by their parents.

THE TEAM

Once in squads, swimmers may participate in various meets (explained below). Learn-to-Swim students may from time to time be selected to participate in galas. Entry forms for galas are made available through announcements from DMSS. Participation at meets (galas) is optional.

GALAS PARTICIPATION & THE CALENDAR

Participants who choose to compete with the DMSS Gators Swim Team must make a season long commitment. The swimmer must try to compete in as many BSSA League galas as possible, and attend the BSSA National Gala usually in December, and very importantly our very own annual gala, the Gators Gala usually in April - in order to be eligible for National Team selection. They must also be in "good standing" with the team, which means all league and entry fees have been paid. Remember "Team Work" is essential for a successful year.



There are basically two types of swim meets: the league and championship meets. League meets are local Botswana events and usually take place over one day. The championship meets can be quite large and usually run over 3 days – including Nationals and Gators galas. All galas are generally divided into sessions with various age groups swimming either in the morning or afternoon. League meets offer individual ribbons, and championship are medal galas. The yearly fee to compete at these gala is set by the Gators SC executive committee, around BWP 110 per year. This is usually payable along with the first gala of the season. In addition, Gala organizers usually charge a fee per event (race), approximately P15 per race.

In addition, the DMSS Gator's also look to travel abroad and compete at other events such as Sasolburg Winter Champs in South Africa. Other such galas and events are on offer as well and depend on our local calendar.

The calendar for the upcoming year is usually made available around July of every year, emailed and posted onto the DMSS website: www.dmss.co.bw

PRACTICE ATTENDANCE & BEHAVIOUR

The Gator's are expected to attend as many practices as possible under the umbrella of Darrell Morton's School of Swimming. All practices are mandatory! We recognize that there may be occasional conflicts (sickness, excessive homework, out of town and so forth) but if a swimmer will be out of the water for a period of more than a few days, please notify the coaching staff of DMSS. Parents please keep in mind that we need your help in seeing that children are at practice and on time. The more you practice the better the swimmer will progress.

On the poolside and in the water we also expect that swimmers conduct themselves in a sportsman like way at all times and display the utmost sportsmanship toward one another as well as their rivals and fellow competitors come race day. The attached code of ethics is required by every member of Gators SC – swimmers and parent representatives.

PARENTS

It is important to participate with your child on the swim team. The swimmer must be delivered to practice on time with constant encouragement and positive reinforcement. Once at practice the coaches have sole responsibility for the swimmer's training during practice. To discuss your child's progress please contact the Site Supervisor to set up a convenient time to meet. Although our swim program has an open door policy for spectators, practices seem to go smoother and we keep the swimmers attention better throughout the practice if parents are not in pool area. Please no children or parents on pool deck during practice times hovering over the swimmers. This principle applies at Galas – during warm up and when race strategies and feedback are being discussed.



AWAY MEETS

Gators will make every effort to travel as a team to all away meets, with appropriate staffing i.e. team manager, chaperones and coach. However, should financial constraints or insufficient support prohibit this Gators will look to the parents to be responsible for arranging transportation and motel/hotel accommodations to away meets. We want to encourage parents to attend these meets, as we are responsible for providing timers, judges and officials.

TEAM EQUIPMENT

Team uniformity is important for team spirit. Team kit may be ordered from the DMSS office

TEAM ACTIVITIES

From time-to-time, we try to schedule special activities throughout the swimming season e.g. the swim-a-thon and your suggestions are always welcome.

COMMUNICATION

Gators members are required to register online with our DMSS booking software. Even if you have not booked classes with DMSS, to be registered with Gators SC you will need to register online.

To register - Click on the following link: JR - **Online Registration form** - <https://app3.jackrabbitclass.com/regv2.asp?id=523124>

Complete the registration form and then access your very own portal. From there you can contact, register for galas, view your statements etc.

Emails are the primary way in which we communicate information to all of our swimmers and parents. We need your help and cooperation in making sure you are informed about all aspects of the team activities. Please check your emails regularly to ensure you are up to date.

PHONE CALLS

Feel free to call anytime. Gators can be reached on the DMSS phone line 716 19 388 (during office hours only)



SWIM MEET PROCEDURES

1. **Warm-up:** The warm-up is an important part of successful swim meet and individual performance. Ordinarily warm-ups will begin 45-60 minutes before the actual start of a meet. Parents need to plan on having their child/children here 15 minutes before warm ups. Swimmers should be dressed, have all equipment and be ready to swim!
2. **Team Area:** It is customary for the Gator's to have an assigned "team area" at meets and to stay together as a group. Swimmers are not to be in unauthorized areas of the pool deck or area. It is important for the swimmers to stay with the group so the coaches will not have to search for the child when it is time for them to swim. Parents please do not let your children over eat during a swim meet. Appropriate snacks while at a meet would be, fruit, pro-vitas, fruit roll-ups, or any other low fat, high carbohydrate, low in sugar snacks. No sodas at least one hour before events. Water is a good choice. (Being hydrated is more important than snacks! Drink, drink, drink).
3. **Heat Sheets/ Programmes:** Heat sheets are normally available at the Meet office at a gala or sometimes posted on a wall in the team area that shows what events in which your child is entered. They are always emailed ahead of the gala. Parents of younger swimmers may wish to write the event number on the child's hand. This helps to remind them when to report to the marshalling area. We like swimmers to learn self-management and so do not micro-manage their reporting to marshal.
4. **End of Race:** At the conclusion of each race, all swimmers should ask the timers for his/her unofficial time. The swimmers should next come to the coaches so they can offer comments and feedback. This is very important!

ETIQUETTE GUIDELINES FOR SWIMMERS, PARENTS AND COACHES

Proper sportsmanship behaviour is expected of all swimmers, parents and coaches at all practices and meets. The following behaviours are considered UNACCEPTABLE by DMSS and the BSSA.

- Use of and/or possession of any drug, alcohol, or tobacco product.
- Use of foul or inappropriate language.
- Non-compliance to directions or instructions given by a coach or an assigned representative at any organized function.
- Behaviour considered demeaning or rude directed at any teammate, coach, official or representative of the BSSA.



FACILITY USE

DMSS facilities are made available for training and preparation for events – but all arranged through the swim school. Gators SC does not provide any training.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SWIMMERS

To ensure a successful program, swimmers have the following responsibilities:

- To be part of this team because your goals and ambitions are the same as those established by the coaching staff
- To attend the designated number of practices as determined by the DMSS coaching staff
- To follow the rules established by the coaches
- To arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of practice or the meet warm-up time and get ready immediately so you may begin on time (unless it is just impossible because of school)
- To make sure handouts and announcements are delivered to your parents at home
- BE PREPARED – bring all appropriate/required equipment or training aids to each practice
- To come to practice with a positive, appropriate attitude conducive to the DMSS Gator's Swim Team. No disruptive behaviour! (any disruptive behaviour will result in swimmers being asked to leave the session)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

To ensure a successful program, parents have the following responsibilities:

- To take an interest in your child's swimming and to support him/her emotionally by attending meets (Maybe you can't attend all meets, but at least one parent should be present at most of them)
- To praise your child when he/she is successful (an improved skill, an award, etc.) and to comfort, not scold, them in their moments of disappointment. Make sure that your love for them is not dependent on how well they perform and that they know it. You must never bribe your child for a performance.
- To pay dues and fees on time
- To provide transportation for the swimmer to and from practice and to and from meets. The swimmer should arrive about 15 minutes prior to the start of practice or warm-ups
- To participate in team functions
- To check your emails for team correspondence
- To help staff the swim meets in these areas: TIMEKEEPERS, STROKE JUDGES, TURNS JUDGES, STARTER, RECORDERS & OTHER SUCH OFFICIATING
- To stay away from gossip and rumours. If you don't understand something concerning the coaching, ask the coach before or after practice (NEVER DURING) or email/call the office during the weekday mornings. One of the most destructive things to a team is prolonging rumours rather than getting to the bottom of them



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- To support the DMSS Gators philosophy with thoughts, words and actions during practice, at meets and at home. Believe it or not, our kids do learn from watching and listening to us
 - Not to be on deck during swim practice

RESPONSIBILITIES SHARED BY SWIMMERS AND PARENTS

The swimmer and the parent share some responsibilities. They include the following:

- To check with Coaches for special announcements, upcoming meet notices and entry information
- To contact coaches with your plans regarding meets and make sure you have filled out all the right entry forms or other information in good time (if you plan on going or not). They cannot read minds

A strong triangle emerges when each party (swimmer, parent and coach) does its part and collapses when one party neglects its responsibilities or tries to assume those of another party. The latter situation usually arises with the very best of intentions. To avoid this, it is important that each party know the responsibilities of the other two and then avoid assuming them.

One of the pitfalls that parents fall into is coaching their child. This situation usually arises after a parent has observed some coaching instruction or attended a meet. He or she notices a shortcoming in his/her child and attempts to correct it. It is the responsibility of the COACH to critique the swimmer's skills and not the parents.

As to the reason why the swimmer was not doing a skill better, there may be several. First of all, there are many, many skills to be learned in swimming, and they can't all be taught at the same time. Furthermore, there is a progression of skills, some need to be mastered before others can be learned. Some skills cannot be learned in a week, two weeks, a month, or even six months. It may take years to entirely develop a stroke because the swimmer may need to develop more strength to acquire the next building block. Skill development will be something a swimmer will be working on during his or her entire swimming career. Once a skill has been learned, it will have to be practiced correctly to be maintained. Furthermore, skill techniques are continually evolving and faster techniques are continually being developed.

VOLUNTEERS – VOLUNTEERS – VOLUNTEERS

Have we driven you crazy yet with all this talk of volunteering and why are all those people wearing white shirts? Why do we talk about this so much? The answer is pretty simple. Unlike football, basketball, and the other recreational leagues, it takes A LOT of parent volunteers to run a swim meet. For example, for a normal meet, it will take at least 40 adults to properly run the meet. Below is a very brief description of the various volunteer positions so you can get an idea of what might interest you. There is obviously more to each position that can be summarized in a sentence or two, but you will get the idea. By the way, the "uniform" for the referee, starter, stroke and turn judges, timers, table workers, team reps, and clerk of the course is white shirts. This makes them easily identifiable during the meet.



Referee – The Referee is the chief official for each swim meet and is responsible for the conduct of the meets and is the final authority on the interpretation and enforcement of all swimming rules – he/she runs the meet. You must attend BSSA training to be a referee and have experience as a Starter and Stroke and Turn Judge.

Starter – The Starter is responsible for ensuring that all swimmers are given a fair and equitable start. They are the folks who announce the “take your marks”, and start the race. You must attend BSSA training to be a Starter and have experience as a Starter and Stroke and Turn Judge.

Stroke and Turn Judge – They are responsible for insuring that all swimmers obey the rules for the stroke they are swimming. You must attend BSSA training to be a Stroke and Turn Judge. Generally, you are a Stroke and Turn Judge for a few years before you become a Starter or Referee.

Clerk of the Course – This parent(s) is the “gatekeeper” for all swimmers in the meet. They get the swimmers to the right lanes for the correct race.

Head Timer and Timers – Timers are the most important people to every swimmer because they determine each swimmer’s official time for the race. There are three timers for each lane (a mix of home and away team parents). The Head or Chief Timer collects the time cards from the timers, reviews them for accuracy and completeness, and forwards them on to the table workers.

Marshall – These parents are responsible for preparing swimmers for their race in the call area before sending them off to wait at the pool deck.

Table Workers – The time cards from the timers and any disqualification slips (a little more on this later) go the Table Workers who determine the order of finish for each event, score the meet, and prepare ribbons/medals for the participants. Several people from the BSSA and other teams perform these functions to ensure that errors are caught before the results are announced.

Concessions – These important people sell the food to all the hungry parents and swimmers at the swim meets. This is a critical volunteer position because it helps the team/BSSA raise money.

Set-up and Take-Down Volunteers – These parents arrive early to meets and put up the tents, run the wire for the sound system, arrange the chairs, and the host of other things that have to be done for a swim meet. As the name suggests, the take-down volunteers take all the equipment down and put it back, put the chairs back around the pool, and get everything ready.

Other – There are lots of other very important volunteer opportunities. Arranging for the trophies, being the meet announcer and many other key jobs are just some of the other things parents can help out with.

We need the help of all families in order to have a successful and, and more importantly, fun swim season. Don’t worry, like we mentioned earlier, many experience parents have been in your position before, so don’t hesitate to ask another swim parent any question you might have about volunteering.

DISQUALIFICATIONS - DQs



What do you mean my kid was disqualified? Just a few words on disqualifications or, in swimming jargon, DQs. Most young swimmers disqualify several times during the course of learning how to “stay legal” in the various strokes. Coaches expect this and will simply work with the children to help them understand the reasons for the DQ.

The following are the most frequent causes that a swimmer is disqualified:

Freestyle:

- Propelling by use of the lane ropes.
- Pushing off the bottom of the pool.
- Exiting the pool before swimming the specified distance.

Backstroke:

- Turning over before touching the wall at finish.
- Flipping over too early on the turn and needing to kick or take additional strokes to reach the wall.

Breaststroke:

- More than 1 underwater pulls & breast kick at start.
- Incorrect kick, such as a Scissors kick or Flutter kick. A single fly kick is permitted during the start and turn before the first pull is completed.
- Failure to simultaneously touch the wall with 2 hands. One-arm pull.
- Pulling down past shoulders except of course after first stroke in start and turn.

Butterfly:

- Flutter kick. Non-Simultaneous stroke.
- Failure to simultaneously touch the wall with 2 hands.

False Start:

- Forward motion before the starting signal. A false start disqualifies a swimmer unless the referee attributes it to something outside the swimmer’s control.

When a Stroke and Turn Judge observes a violation, he writes it up on a DQ slip. The judge then takes the slip to the referee, who verifies that a rule has been broken and can question the Stroke and Turn



Judge to ensure that he was able to see the violation that was cited. The referee then gives a copy of the DQ slip to the Table Workers.

Why do we mention this? It might be a little traumatic (for both the swimmer and parent), but don't worry even the best swimmers DQ'd at some point. It is all part of learning how to swim the strokes properly.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Ribbons: BSSA ribbons are awarded at league meets for 1st through 3rd place only.

Medals: The BSSA awards medals at its major national championship meets – Gold for first, silver for second and bronze for third position.

Please note that all swimmers need to be properly dressed when receiving medals or ribbons i.e. Tracksuit bottoms, DMSS shirt, preferably track shoes if not then slops, and no caps or hats.

You will find that all kids – yes, even the big kids – will cherish their trophies and ribbons. Why? It is a great reminder of the great times they had during the season and recognition for all their hard work.

CONCLUSION

So, enjoy your time with DMSS Gators Swim Club. We hope that you will learn many values and a great life skill.

THE GATORS SWIMMING CLUB COMMITTEE



SCHEDULE 1 - CODE OF CONDUCT

Proper sportsmanship behaviour is expected of all swimmers, parents, officials and coaches at all practices and meets.

The following behaviours are considered UNACCEPTABLE by DMSS Gators swimming club:

1. Use of and/or possession of any drug, alcohol, or tobacco product.
2. Use of foul or inappropriate language.
3. Non-compliance to directions or instructions given by a coach or an assigned representative of the swimming club at any organized function.
4. Behaviour considered demeaning, racially discriminatory or rude directed at any teammate, coach, official or representative of the BSSA or affiliated body.
5. Any legal felony conviction in the community will constitute a violation of the Code of Conduct.