

COMPETITION HINTS[©]

By Joss Roffey and Anita Killmier



THE NIGHT BEFORE:

Pack your bag the night before so you don't forget anything. If you don't, you could be rushed for time, forget things and end up late to the pool. This will add to your anxiety which you want to avoid. Make a checklist that you can reuse before every swim meet. Pack plenty of dry bathers and towels (sitting around a cold, damp pool in wet bathers does NOT make for fast racing) as well as an extra pair of goggles and cap in case they break. It is very unnerving to be at a swim meet and have your goggles break just before you race. Expect the unexpected and be prepared for such emergencies. Don't forget to pack some healthy snacks and a drink bottle (See elsewhere for tips on snacks for swim meets).

It is vital that we wear our club uniform at all swim meets. This assists coaches to locate swimmers in crowded warmup conditions; assists swimmers upon arrival to find their fellow team mates and forges a stronger team spirit. We ask that all parents enforce our dress code to assist us in strengthening our club.

Try to get to bed early so you feel refreshed the next day.

DATE, PLACE AND TIME:

Make sure you know where the pool is, and the time of warm up prior to the date of competition. Please leave home in plenty of time to allow for any parking problems or traffic holdups, and be at the pool **prior** to the warm up time, which is usually 8.00 am or 8.30 am, but this can vary.

SEATING:

If you arrive with plenty of time to spare, there is usually sufficient seating space at MSAC (Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre), but at some pools there is not, and it is advisable to put fold up chairs in the car, unless you know what the facility provides. If you are going to an outdoor pool, you may need to bring some form of protection from sun and/or rain. At Haileybury, seating is always a problem and the concrete grandstand hard and cold so bring a cushion.

Upon arriving, find the rest of the club. If you are the first, find seating and save seats for the rest of the group. Try to find seats near the finish line, or if at an outdoor venue, in the shade.

AT THE POOL:

Please do your dry land training warm up (stretching and limbering) and be ready to enter the water together as a team when the pool is available for the warm up. If the meet is a targeted meet, there will be an MH2O coach there to help you. Other meets may not have a coach in attendance, so it is important to understand how to warm up adequately. (A separate handout has been prepared which we will send on another occasion). Warmups tend to get very crowded, so we like to get in early to take over an entire lane for our team, and so we get adequate practice on the starting block. Each pool has a different 'feel' to it, so warm-ups help familiarize the swimmers with the pool and its dimensions. For instance some pools have diving blocks in the shallow end so it is critical for safety that the kids get to practice adjusting their starts accordingly.

Do not leave your warm up till ten minutes before you need to marshal - this will not give your body enough time to prepare for racing, and you will not be able to swim at your best. You will usually be expected to arrive at the pool one hour before the scheduled start time to allow sufficient time for warming up. MH2O coaches will be in attendance at any of our targeted competitions. They will take all swimmers through a structured warm up plan.

Following your warm up, get dried and keep warm. It is always best to visit the bathroom at this point too. Wait for the competition to start and always make sure you know where and when to marshal for your event.

If there is another pool where you can do a warm down, please do one as your coach instructs. This will help you recover from your last swim, and help to prepare for your next swim - this is very important even if you feel good. If there is no pool, then we recommend a hot shower and some stretching - keep warm and do not get cold.

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Sit together as a team. Cheer for your fellow team members. Look and act like a team. Make sure you wear team clothes (you MUST wear your club cap so we can easily identify you when you race). Your behaviour will reflect on the team, so always display courtesy and good sportsmanlike behaviour. Please make sure everything is suitable labelled and named as lost property is a common occurrence.

If you have a long break between races, have a snack, find something to occupy yourself, or go for a walk. Bring a book, or a game boy or even a deck of cards if it is going to be a long day. Many swimmers bring an ipod and some upbeat motivational music to listen to. Just be aware of the risk of theft if you bring any electronic type devices.

FOOD:

Some events go for the whole day, and therefore you will need to bring your lunch. Some pools sell food and others do not. If they do sell food it is often expensive or not nutritious.

The following is a guide only:

- The night before a meet swimmers should have a healthy meal containing pasta, rice, noodles or potato.
- Fried food is not recommended at any time – but particularly before a competition. Full cream milk is also not recommended as fatty foods restrict digestion and can cause nausea.
- Breakfast is an essential meal for the day, cereal, toast and fruit juice is recommended at least one hour prior to the warm up.
- Lunch should consist of sandwich/s (preferably not with cheese unless it is low fat, as it takes longer to digest), or noodles, pasta, fruit, cake or cereal bar, fruit and water or sports drink. Snakes or similar form of glucose is fine in moderation. **Please DO NOT** bring corn chips, chips or similar food as these are **not** considered to be nutritious due to the high salt and fat content. Chips and chocolate are both detrimental to fast racing.

FEEDBACK:

Before every race and before you go to marshal, it is important to visit your coach for last moment reminders. Allow time to visit the bathroom if necessary. Once you have completed your race, you should also see your coach and ask for feedback on your performance. For feedback to be effective it should happen as close to your race as possible. The longer you leave it, the less effective it will be, so you should see your coach as soon as you can.

BEFORE THE RACE:

About 15 minutes before you race you get called to report to the **Marshall**. Watch and listen to the heats being called in to Marshall. They usually post it somewhere for you to see, or it will be announced. If it is posted on a board it will show

1. What race is currently in the water and
2. What race is currently being Marshallled.

You should ask someone to write on your arm in biro all your events and heats for the day so you will know when it is your turn to Marshall. Once you have had your name ticked off with the Marshall, you are NOT allowed to leave the area. You always Marshall about 15 minutes before you actually race, so allow plenty of time to see the coach and visit the bathroom.

When you are behind the blocks waiting for your race, imagine your race in as much detail as possible. Visualise your dive, how your stroke is going to feel; think through any potential problem areas and imagine doing them fast and correctly; and think positive thoughts.

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DON'T FORGET:

Wherever pool space allows, warm down immediately after every race. Generally the longer the race, the longer you need to warm down from the race you have just swum and warm up for the next race to come.

Some days you will swim well and do PB's, others you may swim poorly or make mistakes and not do so well. Accept that you cannot do PB's every time you race. Learn from your mistakes so you can do better next time. Congratulate your fellow team members and celebrate their successes too. Don't be too hard on yourself if the results are not as good as you thought. Champions display many superior attitudes. They are people who bounce back after bad swims, who can put it behind them and look forward to the next challenge. They do not dwell on the negatives, rather they try to turn a negative into a positive by looking for the lesson, so they can improve for next time. Part of learning to race is about thinking and acting like a champion.

If you have any queries, ask your coach or anyone else from MH20 to assist you.

GOOD LUCK, GO FAST AND HAVE FUN!