

StingRAYS Splash

Issue 7, December 2025



We go **ON DECK** with this Coach, do you know who this is?

Where RAYS are making a splash In December!

December 4-7 (Thursday-Sunday)

RAYS Nutcracker

Open to all levels/ages, Prelims/finals

Classic

[Click HERE for complete meet information](#)



December 10-13 (Wednesday-Saturday)

Speedo Winter Junior

Qualifiers, Prelims/finals

Championships

December 13, Saturday

RAYS Rec Meet #4 Manta U12 only!

Register by clicking here



Have you done your SafeSport training?
Read on for how to complete that required training.

RAYS Nutcracker Classic
December 4-7, 2025

Need a NEW practice suit, racing suit, equipment, RAYS team gear?

Our vendors will be at the RAYS Nutcracker Classic December 4-7!



Each swimmer receives the 2025 cap and t-shirt!

Congrats Mary Bornemeier, our cap design winner!



December 10 - 14
Thursday - Sunday

**Open to ALL levels/ALL ages, Prelims/finals
at JRSSC, Stafford, VA**

Meet Timeline

Thursday, 12/4

Warmups - 3:30pm Competition - 5pm

Friday, 12/5

13 & Over Prelims Warmups - 6:30am Competition - 8:15am

12 & under Prelims Warmups - 11:30am Competition - 12:30pm

FINALS Warmups - 4:00pm Competition - 5:00pm

Saturday, 12/6

13 & Over Prelims Warmups - 6:30am Competition - 8:15am

12 & under Prelims Warmups - 12:00pm Competition - 1:00pm

FINALS Warmups - 4:15pm Competition - 5:15pm

Sunday, 12/7

13 & Over Prelims Warmups - 6:30am Competition - 8:15am

12 & under Prelims Warmups - 12:30pm Competition - 1:30pm

FINALS Warmups - 4:00pm Competition - 5:00pm

[Psych Sheet here](#)

[Heat Sheets here](#)

&



[Results on](#)



A note about FINALS

ALL Swimmers who
qualify for Finals are
expected to swim Finals.

Any scratch from Finals must
be approved by your Coach

PARENTS!

[JOB
SIGN-UPS
HERE](#)

[\\$
DONATIONS
HERE](#)

[Thursday
Food
HERE](#)

[Friday
Food
HERE](#)

[Saturday
Food
HERE](#)

[Sunday
Food
HERE](#)

Hospitality

Check out these spots as you are looking to refuel between races!

Mention
RAYS
Swim Team
and earn money
for the team

**Swim
Eat & Earn**

December 4th-6th, 6AM-10PM

Support your favorite team competing at Jeff Rouse! Place your order through the Drive-Thru or inside the restaurant and tell a Burns Corner Team Member your swim team's name at checkout. Each team will receive 10% of eligible sales. Mobile orders do not apply.

Participating Teams:

- Team Nova • Team Tide
- Team Rays • Team Quest
- Team Hanover

Chick-fil-A
BURNS CORNER
We are located at 30 WYCHE RD, STAFFORD VA 22554

Only at Chick-fil-A Burns Corner between 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM on 12/4/2025 to 12/6/2025. In restaurant or dine-in only. Mobile or 3rd party orders do not apply.

CRIMSON COWARD
NASHVILLE HOT CHICKEN
STAFFORD

SPIRIT WEEKEND
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5TH
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6TH

A PORTION OF SALES WILL BE DONATED TO THE STINGRAYS SWIM TEAM! 11 AM - 10 PM ON IN-STORE ORDERS.

JUST MENTION SPIRIT WEEKEND WHEN YOU PLACE YOUR IN-STORE ORDER.

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE STINGRAYS SWIM TEAM!

825 WONDER RD, #100M STAFFORD, VA 22554

WWW.CRIMSONCOWARD.COM

Watch our girls
Ava,
Savannah
and
Sidney
swim fast in Indy!

Click below to download



OR

Watch on  YouTube

December
10-13



StingRAYS

SPOTLIGHT

Our
National
Competitors!

SAFE
TRAVELS!

Indiana University
Natatorium,
Indianapolis, IN

December
10-13

Go
RAYS!

HAVE
FUN!

Sidney Johnson
King George site

Ava Eddy
Massad YMCA site

Savannah Duffy
Jeff Rouse Swim &
Sport Center site



SWIM MEET INFORMATION

WAYS

Rec Meet #4

Manta U12 only!
December 13

Warm-ups: 9:30-9:50 AM

Each swimmer will swim 3 events
chosen by their Coach of the following:

25 free, 25 breast, 50 free, 25 back,
25 fly, 50 back

Open to 12 & under swimmers from any
Manta White, Red and Blue at any location

13 & over RAYS will be Clerk of Course &
Timers. Coaches will be officials/starters.

Parents will be the cheering section!

WAYS Gold and Silver Families,

We NEED volunteers
to make this meet work just like any
other meet, but we are offering the
opportunity to our older swimmers.

This will be great for the young
competitors to meet some of our older
competitors and start that bonding
experience.

If Volunteer hours are needed, this
is a great opportunity!

Watch your email for the link to
sign up for the next Manta Rec
meet.

WAYS

RESULTS for **Rec Meets 1, 2 & 3** are found at the link below

[REC MEET RESULTS](#)

Checklist for the swim meet!

- ☐ swimsuit
- ☐ extra swim suit
- ☐ Two caps
- ☐ Two pair of goggles
- ☐ Closed toed shoes (not crocs)
- ☐ two towels
- ☐ extra set of clothes
- ☐ refillable water bottle
- ☐ water
- ☐ healthy snacks



Pre-swim snacks (for energy)

- Fresh fruits: Bananas, apples, grapes, oranges, and berries are great sources of quick energy and potassium.



- Dried fruits: Dates, raisins, and dried apricots are convenient and provide a quick energy boost.



- Fruit smoothies: A good option for getting both carbs and nutrients.



- Granola bars: Choose options with whole grains and minimal added sugar.



- Crackers or rice cakes: Pair with a topping like nut butter or honey for added energy.



Post-swim snacks (for recovery)

- Chocolate milk: A great source of protein and carbohydrates for muscle repair.



- Protein shake: A convenient way to replenish protein after training.



- Yogurt: Low-fat or full-fat yogurt can be paired with fruit or nuts.

- Hard-boiled eggs: A simple, protein-rich option.



- Hummus with whole-wheat pita: Provides protein and fiber to help you feel full.

- Trail mix: A mix of nuts, seeds, and dried fruit provides a good balance of protein, carbs, and healthy fats

from our Executive Director...

Swimmers,



It's that time of year for the first taper and mid-season meet.

You may have heard the word "Taper" used more often.

A taper means cutting down your training miles but making workouts a bit tougher, so you recover and have more energy for big competitions. It lets athletes rest and get ready to do their best. Swimmers swim less during this time but focus on technique and speed.

The goal is to help your muscles recover from months of hard work, so you're stronger and faster for races. Most swimmers who are twelve or younger might not see all the benefits of taper because they're still growing. No matter your age, it's important to talk openly with your coach. Tell your coach how you feel, what you hope for, and what your body is doing, so you get the most out of each meet.

Here are some tips to get the most out of your taper and meets.

Physical Management Strategies

Get Enough Sleep:

- Sleep is very important during taper. Try to sleep 8–10 hours every night. This is when your body heals and gets stronger.

Nutrition and Hydration:

- Stick to What Works: Don't change your diet suddenly. Eat enough complex carbs for energy and lean meat or other protein for muscle repair.
- Drink Plenty: Keep drinking water and drinks with electrolytes, so your body can fix itself and avoid feeling tired.

Active Recovery:

- Do gentle stretches, foam rolling, or light yoga to loosen up sore muscles. Don't start new tough exercises—they can make you tired or hurt.

Mental Preparation and Management

Visualization Techniques:

- Good mental habits help you handle stress. Picture yourself doing well in your race and practice getting ready in your mind—from walking to the blocks to swimming and finishing.

Focus on the Process:

- Try not to stress about your final time or place. Instead, focus on small goals, like starting strong, kicking underwater fifteen times, or breathing evenly. This helps keep your nerves calm.

After the Race:

Listen to your coach after each race—they can tell you what you did well and what to work on. Think about the feedback quickly, then focus on your next event by saying "reset" or "next event" to yourself.

It's normal to feel nervous or restless as you get ready to compete—your body is gearing up. Breathing slowly and visualizing your success can calm you down.

Trust your training, focus on what you can control, and you'll grow as a swimmer. Every race helps you improve, no matter the result. Talk to your coach after each race for advice and confidence. Remember, each race is a step forward on your journey.

Good luck to everyone at the Nutcracker Classic and Speedo Winter Junior Championships!

Sincerely,

Bob Herlinger

Executive Director, Stingrays Swim Team (RAYS)

Upcoming Meets, Events and Registration Deadlines

Event	Info	Dates	Deadline
RAYS Nutcracker Classic	Jeff Rouse Swim & Sport Center , Stafford, VA All levels/All Ages, P/F	Thurs - Sun December 4-7	November 21
USA Swimming Winter Juniors EAST	IU Natatorium Indianapolis , Indianapolis, IN Qualifying times required, P/F	Wed - Sat December 10-13	November 29
Holiday Socials	Watch your email for more Information and how to be involved In the FUN!	Any day, December 15 - 23	
Winter Training	December 20-January 5 (Adjusted schedule available by November 1)	No practice December 25-28 & January 1	
RAYS Jeff Rouse Invitational	Jeff Rouse Swim & Sport Center , Stafford, VA All levels/All Ages	Sat - Sun January 10-11	December 10
Hanover Duck Bowl	Jeff Rouse Swim & Sport Center , Stafford, VA All levels/All Ages	Fri - Sun January 16-18	December 29
NOVA Long Course Invitational	NOVA Aquatics Center - Regency, Richmond, VA. Qualifiers only, P/F	Sat - Mon January 17-19	January 2
SwimRVA Heavyweight Battle	Collegiate School Aquatic Center , Richmond, VA. 13 & Overs	Sat - Sun January 31-February 1	January 2
District Championships 12 and unders	PWAC (Prince William Aquatic Center) , Prince William, VA 12 and unders with event times less than Senior and/or Age Group Champs Times - P/F	Fri - Sun February 13-15	January 12
RAYS Hosted! District Championships 13 and overs	Jeff Rouse Swim & Sport Center , Stafford, VA 13 and overs with event times less than Senior and/or Age Group Champs Times - P/F	Fri - Sun February 27-March 1	January 20
Senior Championships 13 and overs	Collegiate School Aquatic Center , Richmond, VA. 13 & Overs with Qualifying Times - P/F	Thurs - Sun March 5-8	February 20
Age Group Championships 12 and unders	Collegiate School Aquatic Center , Richmond, VA. 14 & unders with Qualifying Times - P/F	Thurs - Sun March 12-15	February 20

IMPORTANT!!



ALL registration for USA Swimming will be done by RAYS
This is included in your registration fee.

The full **RAYS SC meet schedule** can be found on the RAYS website.

Meet registration is done through the RAYS website.

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO.....

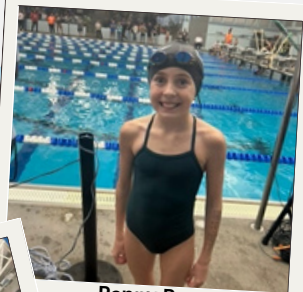


Grace Colson
Age Group Qualifier!

CONGRATS!



Emmi Hamilton
Age Group Qualifier!



Penny Pryt
Age Group Qualifier!



Coach Paige (KGY)
got married!
(here with Coach Connor
and Coach Mike)

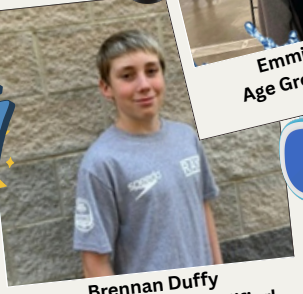


Ava



Sid

Class of 2027
off to study
and swim in
college!



Brennan Duffy
NCSA Age Group Qualifier!

COOL



Aurora Shipley
Senior Champs Qualifier!



Noah



Savannah



Cheyenne Hernandez
NCSA Age Group Qualifier!



We swam
at some swim meets!!



Pancakes
post practice at JRSSC!

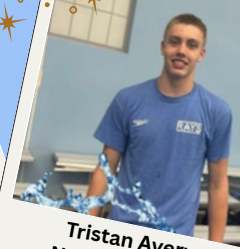


Zeke Hamilton
NCSA Age Group Qualifier!

Congratulations



Charlotte Kay
Age Group Qualifier!



Tristan Avery
NCSA Qualifier!

On Deck with

WAYS Lead Manta Red and Lead Manta White Coach at the Jeff Rouse Swim & Sport Center

**Coach
Tracey Watterson**

Hometown: Portsmouth, NH



In your swim career;

What made you start swimming?

- My parents put me in Summer Swim in Sterling when I was 8, I only swam a few years before we moved and I did not get involved in swimming again until high school.

Your best stroke? Was it your favorite?

- My favorite stroke and best stroke is breaststroke.

Your highest achievement is swimming?

- Making the top 10 at 2003 USMS Short Course Nationals in the 50 and 200 breaststroke.

The swim achievement you are most proud of?

- Making the top 10 at 2003 USMS Short Course Nationals in the 50 and 200 breaststroke.

Favorite swim career memory?

- My favorite swim memory was when I did my first triathlon in a lake (all the other ones I had done were in a pool so they were backward; run, bike swim.) I was the third female out of the lake. We won't talk about what happened on the bike.

In your swim coaching career;

What made you start coaching swimming?

- I love working with kids. I teach students with Autism during the day and the clubs I am involved in are geared toward students with special needs so I when I was offered a chance to work with kids in a different capacity, I jumped at the chance. Being around swim the majority of my life, through my own experiences and my own children swimming year-round, I was able to combine my swim knowledge and my teaching skills.

A favorite swim coaching memory?

- When Colonial Forge won both the Boys and Girls district titles last year. It was my first experience coaching high school and it was my youngest son's senior year so it made it even more special.

Most unique swim coaching experience?

- I loved when Coach Patrick and I had the Saturday Swim Clinics with the Manta swimmers and the Gold swimmers would volunteer. It was fun to watch the friendships being formed with the younger and older swimmers.

Your Mt. Rushmore of swim coaches?

- I love the energy Todd Desorbo, Head Coach at UVA brings to his practices. I love a coach with good energy!!!!

Do you have a sports idol?

- I am a huge San Francisco 49er fan so it would have to be Joe Montana or Jerry Rice!

Do you also work a full-time job, what do you do and what interests you most about this other job?

- I am a Level 2 Special Education Teacher at Colonial Forge High School. Last year I had the honor of being named Stafford County Schools Teacher of the Year. At Forge I sponsor the Buddy Club, advise the Asian Heritage Club, help new Special Educators in the Mentor 360 Program, and Co Head Coach for the Varsity Swim Team.

Any other fun things we should know about you?

- I attend Forge Fit Monday-Thursday before school and workout with other Stafford County Schools staff. I enjoy running, swimming and exercising.
- My husband and I have three children, two of which are RAYS alumni.



★Want to Be a Site Liaison?★

We're looking for Site Liaisons for this season and next!

As a Rays Site Liaison, you'll work closely with our awesome coaches 🗨️ and Social Chairperson 🗨️ to help coordinate:

🎁 Holiday parties 🏆 Championship Goodie Bags 🎉 Other site-specific team events
We've got a winter holiday party 🎄 coming up at each site — and we'll be here to help you plan it!

👉 Interested?

Reach out to us at 📧 socialchairperson@swimrays.org OR 📧 administrator@swimrays.org

Let's make this season the most fun yet!

INTERESTED IN SERVING AS A USA SWIMMING CERTIFIED OFFICIAL?

We would love for you to join us as a RAYS Official.

You will be making an important commitment to your swimmer's activities, ensuring that you have a prime spot on deck when they swim, and completely satisfying the RAYS volunteer requirements for parents in a way that you control. Additionally, the RAYS will pay for the annual renewal of your USA Swimming membership and bi-annual background check. All that plus, free food and good socialization at meets. You will definitely be getting more involved and more in tune with the team, while receiving appreciation, respect, and acknowledgement that what you're doing is important.

Everything you need to know to get started can be found online on the officials training page at the Virginia Swimming website:

<https://www.gomotionapp.com/team/va/page/officials/training-for-officials>

Start there with the link for new apprentice officials. From there you can choose between either a Stroke & Turn Official or an Administrative Official. Both positions are equally important. It only takes four training sessions where you will be paired up with a certified official to be a certified official.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Our next RAYS-hosted meet will be the Great Pumpkin Splash in mid-October.



Thank you!

Bill Fairfax, RAYS Officials Chair
540-940-5423



SAFE SPORT is an Abuse Prevention program.

USA Swimming is committed to providing a healthy and positive environment free from abuse for all its members. USA Swimming's Safe Sport program, a comprehensive abuse prevention program, consists of a multi-layered approach to keep kids safe, including: required policies and best practice guidelines; mandatory screening, including criminal background checks and employment screening; training and education; monitoring, supervision and mandatory reporting. These measures are informed by experts in the field of child safety and are among the strongest safeguards found in youth-serving organizations.

As part of the RAYS' continued effort to be a Safe Sport-recognized club by USA Swimming, we need both parents and swimmers to (re)take the Safe Sport training. There are Zoom trainings coming up for both parents and minor athletes (13-17) that fulfill this.

The next upcoming date and time is as follows:

Parent Trainings:

- Tuesday, Dec 9 at 8:00 p.m. EST | [REGISTER](#)

Athlete Trainings (13-17 years old):

- Thursday, Dec 11 at 8:00 p.m. EST | [REGISTER](#)

If you prefer to complete this on your own time follow the appropriate Instructions linked here:

[Parents Instructions: SAFE SPORT](#)

[Athletes 13-17yo Instructions: SAFE SPORT](#)

Do you think you want to swim in college?

[Guide to being a Student Athlete](#)

Make sure you have registered with [NCAA Eligibility Center](#)

What to expect

[A guide for Swim recruits](#)

Sample Questions for Coaches
Here's a list



What are the different Meet Formats?

That’s an excellent question!

Understanding the meet format is key to knowing what to expect on race day.

Swim meets generally follow one of two formats: Timed Finals (the most common for new and young swimmers) or Prelim/Finals (used for higher-level championship meets). Here is a simple breakdown of the two formats:

Timed Finals Meet (The Standard Format)

The Timed Finals format is straightforward and is used for almost all local, invitational, and "B/BB" level meets.

Feature	Explanation
How it works	Every swimmer swims each of their entered events only once.
The Result	The swimmer's place in the event is determined by their time, regardless of who they swam against in their specific heat (race). All times from all heats in that event are merged, and the fastest time wins the event.
Schedule	The meet is typically a single session per day (e.g., a Saturday morning meet). Your swimmer arrives, warms up, swims their events, and then is done for the day.
Swimmer Focus	Focus is on getting a Personal Best (PB) time.
Common at	Dual meets, club invitationals, Novice/Rookie meets, and most events for swimmers aged 12 & Under.

Your Swimmer’s Experience:

Your swimmer will be placed in a heat with other swimmers of a similar speed (based on their entry time).¹ If there are 10 heats of the 50 Freestyle, the winner of Heat 1 is simply the fastest swimmer in that particular race, but their overall place in the event is determined only after the 10th and final heat is swum. They only need to focus on one great swim.

Summary:

Format	Swimmer Races	Experience
Timed Finals	Once per event	Single, shorter session. Good for setting PB's

For your new swimmer, almost every early meet will be a Timed Finals. When you see a meet is structured as Prelims/Finals, it's a sign that your swimmer has reached a higher level of competition!

Prelims/Finals Meet (The Championship Format)

The Prelims/Finals (or "P/F") format is designed for higher-level competitions where the goal is to determine a single, definitive winner in a head-to-head race. It requires a significant commitment, as it is a two-session day for qualifiers.

Feature	Preliminary Session (Morning)	Final Session (Evening)
How it works	All entered swimmers race their event to get the fastest time possible.	The top 8, 16, or 24 fastest swimmers from the morning return to race again.
The Result	The morning times are used only to qualify for the final session.	The places (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) and medals/points are determined <i>only</i> by the times swum in this session and from the A (top 8) final.
Schedule	The day is split: Morning Session (Prelims) and Evening Session (Finals).	Qualifiers often have a long break between the two sessions. Qualifiers are expected to compete in finals. Non-qualifiers are done for the day
Swimmer Focus	Morning: Swim fast enough to make the cut for finals. "Qualify!" However, a PB is also a great accomplishment.	Evening: Swim even faster to place, win a medal, or a better PB. "Race!"
Common at	State/LSC Championships, Sectionals, Junior Nationals, and meets for older age groups (13 & Over).	

Your Swimmer’s Experience:

- Morning Prelims: Swimmers race hard, trying to finish in the top positions (e.g., top 8 or top 16).
- Making Finals:
 - If they finish in the top 8, they usually make the "A Final" (or Championship Final).
 - If they finish 9th through 16th, they may make the "B Final" (or Consolation Final).
- Evening Finals: They return to the pool.
 - Swimmers in the A Final compete for 1st through 8th place.
 - Swimmers in the B Final compete for 9th through 16th place.

Why is this format used? It rewards swimmers who can perform well under pressure and race a fast time twice in one day. The Final race in the evening is the true head-to-head competition for the title.

Summary:

Format	Swimmer Races	Experience
Prelims/Finals (P/F)	Twice per event (if they qualify)	Full-day commitment, High pressure, high reward championship racing.