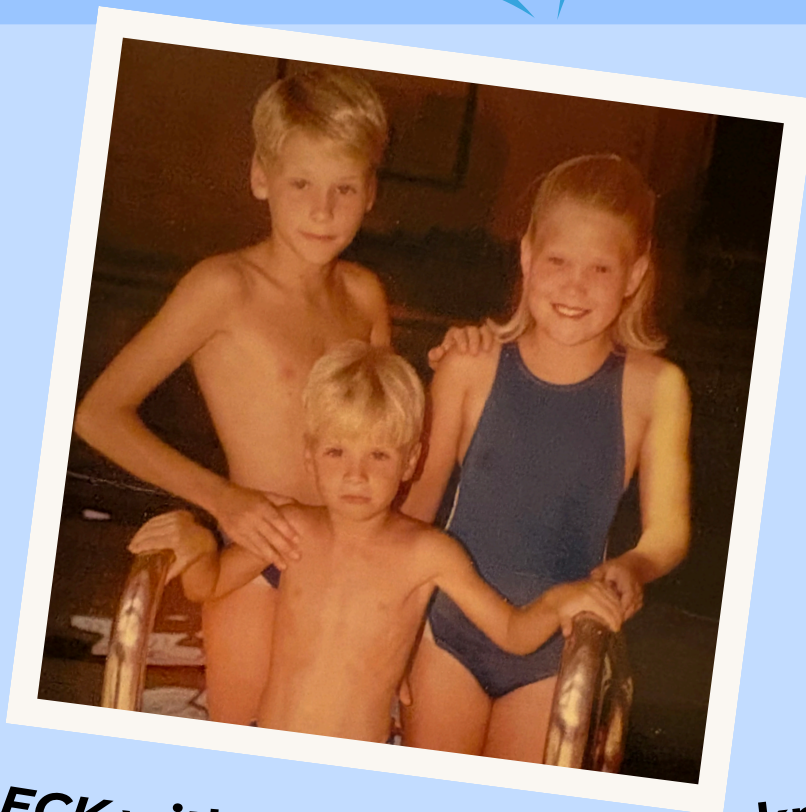


StingRAYS Splash

Issue 8, January 2026



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

Where RAYS are making a splash in January!

January 10-11 (Saturday & Sunday)

RAYS Jeff Rouse Invite Open to all levels/ages

[Click HERE for complete meet information](#)



January 16-18 (Friday-Sunday)

Hanover Duck Bowl All Levels/All ages
(those not competing at the LC meet)

January 17-19 (Saturday-Monday)

NOVA Long Course Invite Qualifiers - Prelims/Finals

January 31-February 1 (Saturday-Sunday)

SwimRVA Heavyweight Battle 13 & Overs



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

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

Our vendors will be at the RAYS Jeff Rouse Invite January 10-11!



CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON BEGINS
February 13!

Register by clicking here

12 & under District Championships

February 13-15
Friday - Sunday

or Here!

13 & over District Championships

February 27-March 1
Friday - Sunday

SWIM MEET INFORMATION

JEFF ROUSE INVITE

January 10 - 11
Saturday - Sunday

Open to ALL levels/ALL ages
at JRSSC, Stafford, VA

Heat Sheets on here



Results on



Meet Timeline

Saturday, 1/10 - AM (13 & over)
Warmups - 7:00am Competition - 8:10am

Saturday, 1/10 - PM (9-12 yo)
Warmups - 11:00am Competition - 12:00pm

Saturday, 1/10 - PM (8 & unders)
Warmups - 3:20pm Competition - 4:00pm

Sunday, 1/11 - AM (13 & over)
Warmups - 7:00am Competition - 8:10am

Sunday, 1/11 - PM (9-12 yo)
Warmups - 12:15pm Competition - 1:15pm

PARENTS!

JOB
SIGN-UPS
HERE

Hospitality

Watch your
email to
sign up for

Saturday
Food

Sunday
food






Just
\$\$\$

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...
Bob Herlinger

Happy New Year! Welcome to 2026!



RAYS has had notable success this past year. Not only have we grown as a club, we have added another training site, the Caroline YMCA, and we continue to produce swimmers who enjoy competing at the top USA Swimming level. How did we get here?

Most swimmers join the RAYS through word-of-mouth recommendations from their local summer or high school teams. These athletes often discover a deep passion for the sport and a desire to take their performance to the next level. While many of our swimmers continue to enjoy the camaraderie and team-scoring focus of their seasonal teams, year-round swimming offers a different path: a dedicated focus on skill development, disciplined goal setting, and individual achievement.

Our Journey and Expansion

The RAYS have come a long way since our early days. When I first started, we operated exclusively out of the Massad YMCA, with occasional sessions at Mary Washington and summer practices at Curtis Park. Over the years, we have strategically expanded to better serve the Fredericksburg area:

- 2003: Added the Rosner YMCA
- 2016: Expanded to the Jeff Rouse Swim and Sport Center (JRSSC)
- 2017: Launched our King George location
- 2025: Opened our newest site at the Caroline YMCA

Watching this team grow from 60–70 swimmers at a single pool to over 500 athletes across five year-round locations (plus our summer sessions at Curtis Park) has been an incredible journey.

Understanding the Competitive Path

Since you have joined the RAYS, it helps to understand the broader landscape of competitive swimming. Below is an overview of how USA Swimming is structured as you progress through your athletic career.

1. Local / Club Level

- Entry level for most competitive swimmers – like our Manta program.
- For beginning swimmers, competitions start with our Rec Meets to get you acclimated with how meets are set up to get you ready for local meets.
- Meets are often divided by age groups (10 & under, 11–12, 13–14, 15 & Older).

2. LSC (Local Swimming Committee) Level

- The U.S. is divided into 59 LSCs – the RAYS are in the Virginia LSC (VSI).
- Swimmers compete in
 - LSC Championships - we are in the Northern District of VA Swimming.
 - For the Short Course Season – 25 yards, we have the 12 & Under Champs; 13 & Over Champs and for the Long Course Season – 50 meters, we have the District Champs for all age groups.
 - Age Group Championships – for 14 & Under swimmers who make the qualifying standards. These championship meets are in SC and LC seasons. We had 23 SC & LC qualifiers in 2025. In 2024, we had 17 SC and 16 LC qualifiers.
 - Senior Championships – for all swimmers who make the qualifying standards. These champs are also in the SC and LC seasons. We had 41 SC and LC qualifiers in 2025. In 2024, we had 39 SC and 29 LC qualifiers.
- This is the main competitive level for most swimmers.

3. Zone Level

- LSCs are grouped into 4 Zones:
 - Eastern – we are in this zone.
 - Central
 - Southern
 - Western
- Top swimmers from LSCs qualify for:
 - Zone Championships – 14 & unders swim in summer zone champs. We had 2 swimmers in 2025; 4 swimmers in 2024.

4. Sectional Level

- Regional meets above LSCs that require faster qualifying (Q) times.
 - Sectionals
- First level where competition becomes nationally competitive.

5. National Level

- Elite domestic competitions:
 - NCSA Nationals – 5 LC swimmers and 16 SC swimmers in 2025; 6 LC swimmers and 18 SC swimmers in 2024 and 6 LC swimmers in 2024.
 - NCSA AG Nationals – only in Spring – 12 swimmers in 2025; 11 swimmers in 2024.
 - Junior Nationals (top age-group swimmers) 1 LC swimmer and 3 SC swimmers in 2025;
 - Nationals (swimmers of all ages who meet Q standards)
 - U.S. Open (same as above)
 - Olympic Trials (same as above) – 1 swimmer – Kyle Peck – in 2024.
- Swimmers here are among the best in the country.

6. International / Team USA Level

- Selected by USA Swimming
- Includes:
 - Junior National Team
 - Senior National Team
- Compete at:
 - World Championships
 - Pan Pacific Championships
 - Olympic Games – July 14-30, 2028 in LA

GOGGLES ON AND KEEP SWIMMING....

CHAMPIONSHIP MEETS BEGIN NEXT MONTH!

Upcoming Meets, Events and Registration Deadlines

Event	Info	Dates	Deadline
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
12 and unders District Championships	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
13 and overs District Championships RAYS Hosted!	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
13 and overs Senior Championships	Collegiate School Aquatic Center , Richmond, VA. 13 & Overs with Qualifying Times - P/F	Thurs - Sun March 5-8	February 20
12 and unders Age Group Championships	Collegiate School Aquatic Center , Richmond, VA. 14 & unders with Qualifying Times - P/F	Thurs - Sun March 12-15	February 20
NOVA Season End Meet	NOVA Aquatics Center - Regency, Richmond, VA. All levels, All ages	Sat - Sun March 20-21	February 20
NCSA Spring Junior National Championships	Rosen Aquatic & Fitness Center , Orlando, FL 13 & overs with qualifying times - P/F	Tues - Sat March 17-21	February 20
NCSA Spring Age Group Championships	Rosen Aquatic & Fitness Center , Orlando, FL 14 & unders with qualifying times - P/F	Tues - Sat March 25-28	February 20

LET LONG COURSE SEASON BEGIN!



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....

CONGRATS!



Samantha Engel
VSI Age Group Qualifier!



Lizzy Struder
NCSA Qualifier!



Emily



Ava



Sid



Javien Draper
Age Group Qualifier!



Keni Bukarau
VSI Age Group Qualifier!

COOL



Chase Miller
VSI Senior Champs Qualifier!



Chloe Kennedy
VSI Age Group Qualifier!



Noah



Savannah

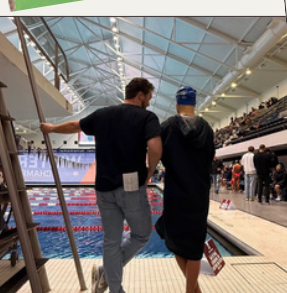
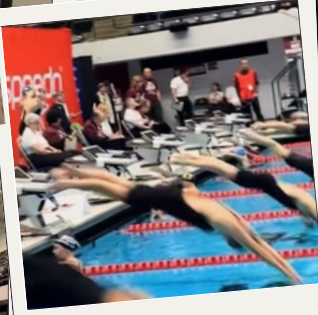
College Commits!

GREAT JOB!

Congratulations



We competed at



On Deck with

WAYS Lead Coach for
High School Performance
at the Rosner YMCA

Coach
Karl Anderson

Hometown: Montclair, VA



In your swim career;

What made you start swimming?

- My brother and sister both swam, so my parents wanted to have a single activity that we all did; thus I was put into water babies and the rest is history.

Your best stroke? Was it your favorite?

- My best and favorite stroke is freestyle. I was a sprint freestyler (50 free, 100 free and occasionally 200 free).

Your highest achievement is swimming?

- My highest achievement in swimming was scoring points in college and being a part of a few record setting relays, those records are all gone today. I also was a part of several RSL record setting relays for the Curtis Park team.

The swim achievement you are most proud of?

- Breaking a minute in 3 of the 4 strokes; never got close in breaststroke though.

Favorite swim career memory?

- My final meet in college at Mary Washington College. There is something about knowing the end is happening and having that closure. I also went personal bests in all of my events so that was very satisfying. I tell the kids I coach that I want their last swim that I coach them to be their best. I use my experience in that as an example.

In your swim coaching career;

What made you start coaching swimming?

- I have always been involved with swimming and then when my kids started swimming I was lucky enough to have a work-from-home job that allowed my schedule to coach.

A favorite swim coaching memory?

- Several instances of a swimmer making finals for the first time. I remember my own son not wanting to swim again at night and then when they said his name before he swam, he loved it. I tell the kids I coach that story when they tell me they are nervous for finals.

Most unique swim coaching experience?

- Before coaching at the WAYS, a new swim family showed up at finals without having swam in prelims that day. It was an interesting conversation, but they had heard the entire week that you MUST show up to finals... they heard the first part, but didn't hear the "if you qualify" part. Communication is key, but so is comprehension.

Your Mt. Rushmore of swim coaches? Have you met them?

- In this day and age, online swim influencers are my inspiration, because of the ease of accessibility. In no particular order, they are Andrew Sheaff, Gary Hall Sr., Ryan Woodruff (SwimmingWizard) and Fares Ksebati. All of them are so skilled at explaining things simply, like I am five years old. I have never met any of them in person, but have exchanged emails with all of them, again the digital world. However, Ryan Woodruff was the meet director at last summer's Age Group Long Course Champs, so I assigned one of my parents to meet him and thank him, for me, in person. Thankfully, Ryan was very nice to this parent and her daughter, all while passing along my thanks.

Do you have a sports idol?

- Growing up a Washington sports fan, the only reliably good team during that era was the football team and the fastest player on the team was Darrell Green (#28). I have vivid memories of watching him run down opposing players to save a touchdown being scored.

What is your favorite sports moment?

- My favorite sports moment is the 2008 Men's 4x100 Free Relay at the Olympics. It is simply the greatest relay race that will ever be swum. I watch the race at least once a year and marvel at the anchor leg by Jason Lezak. I have also watched it so many times that I can quote most of the commentary, my favorite being Dan Hicks' call of "... and Lezak is going to have to make up some ground on Alain Bernard, who stands six feet five and can absolutely FLY!". If you watch that race and do not get chills, then I can't help you.

Favorite quote?

- While coaching the Bronze group at Rosner, my weekly emails always had a quote, but my favorite was the one I used when I told them I was going to coach another group; "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened." (attributed to Dr. Seuss). I learned something from each of those kids I coached and I hope I taught them something. So I am sad that I don't get to see some of those people as often as before, but I remember the experience like it was yesterday.

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

- I work full-time as a software engineer, AKA technology nerd. I enjoy finding different ways to solve a problem. I am always looking for ways to incorporate technology into coaching my swimmers.

Any other fun things we should know about you?

- I am a roller coaster enthusiast. I have been on over 100 roller coasters in the United States. My favorite was Volcano: The Blast Coaster (RIP). Despite being scared of heights (I can't climb a ladder to get on my own roof), I am a thrill seeker when secured to the seat of a ride.

★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.