

StingRAYS Splash

Issue 6, November 2025



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

Where RAYS are making a splash In November!

November 1

RAYS Rec Meet #2 Manta U12 only!

November 7-9

Commonwealth Cup Open to 13+ qualifiers only, Prelims/finals



November 8-9

PWSC Aquafest Open to All levels/All ages

[Click HERE for complete meet information](#)

November 14-16

Gobbler Gauntlet Open to 12 & under, Prelims/finals

Register by clicking here

RAYS Nutcracker Classic
December 4-7, 2025



Each swimmer receives the 2025 cap and t-shirt!

Congrats Mary Bornemeier, our cap design winner!

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

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



SWIM MEET INFORMATION

WAYS

Rec Meet #2

Manta U12 only!

November 1

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!

Below is the link to sign up for
this weekends Manta Rec meet.

[REC MEET #2 Volunteer sign-up](#)

WAYS

Rec Meet #3 November 22

Rec Meet #4 December 13

Manta U12 only!

Mark your calendars,
more details to follow,
watch your email!

November 7-9

Commonwealth Cup Open to 13+ qualifiers only, Prelims/finals
at Collegiate School Aquatic Center (CSAC), Richmond, VA

November 8-9

PWSC Aquafest Open to All levels/All ages
at JRSSC, Stafford, VA

November 14-16

Gobbler Gauntlet Open to 12 & under, Prelims/finals
at JRSSC, Stafford, VA

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



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

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.

Upcoming Meets, Events and Registration Deadlines

Event	Info	Dates	Deadline
Swim RVA Commonwealth Cup	Collegiate School Aquatic Center , Richmond, VA. 13 & Over Qualifiers only, P/F	November 7-9	October 17
PWSC Aquafest	Jeff Rouse Swim & Sport Center , Stafford, VA All levels/All ages (not at Commonwealth Cup)	November 8-9	October 17
Gobbler Gauntlet (Hanover Cup)	Jeff Rouse Swim & Sport Center , Stafford, VA 12 and under, Prelims/Finals	November 14-16	October 22
Thanksgiving Training	November 26-30, Adjusted schedule available by November 1	No practice November 27	
RAYS Nutcracker Classic	Jeff Rouse Swim & Sport Center , Stafford, VA All levels/All Ages, P/F	December 4-7	November 21
USA Swimming Winter Juniors EAST	IU Natatorium Indianapolis , Indianapolis, IN Qualifying times required, P/F	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	January 10-11	December 10
Hanover Duck Bowl	Jeff Rouse Swim & Sport Center , Stafford, VA All levels/All Ages	January 16-18	December 29
NOVA Long Course Invitational	NOVA Aquatics Center - Regency, Richmond, VA. Qualifiers only, P/F	January 17-19	January 2
SwimRVA Heavyweight Battle	Collegiate School Aquatic Center , Richmond, VA. 13 & Overs	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	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	February 27-March 1	January 20

The full [RAYS SC meet schedule](#) can be found on the RAYS website.
[Meet registration](#) is done through the RAYS website.



StingRAYS

SPOTLIGHT

SAFE
TRAVELS!

Our
National
Competitors!

Indiana University
Natatorium,
Indianapolis, IN

speedo
Winter
Juniors EAST

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



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, Nov. 4 at 8:00 p.m. EST | [REGISTER](#)

Athlete Trainings (13-17 years old):

- Thursday, Nov 6 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](#)

from our Executive Director...



WAYS members,

Welcome to the world of competitive swimming! As a new swimmer or family, you're likely encountering terms like "BB cut," "AA standard," or "motivational times." These are all part of the sport's time standards, which can seem complex at first. This month I have tried to break down what these standards are, why they matter, and how to use them to set goals for your swimmer.

What Are Time Standards?

Time standards are specific benchmark times for different events (e.g., 50-meter Freestyle, 100-yard Backstroke) based on a swimmer's age and gender. They serve two primary purposes:

1. **Goal Setting and Motivation:** They provide a tiered system for tracking progress and encouraging swimmers to improve.
2. **Meet Qualification:** They are often used to determine which swimmers can enter certain competitions, especially higher-level or championship meets.

In the United States, the most widely used standards are the USA Swimming Motivational Times, which are updated every four years. They are located on the RAYS website at swimrays.org

USA Swimming sets a series of time standards, typically labeled with letters, that represent different levels of achievement for each age group. These standards are tiered, with each tier representing progressively faster swimming.

Standard	Typical Meaning & Goal
B	An initial competitive time. A great first goal for new swimmers.
BB	Better than average. Often the qualifying time for local/regional championship meets.
A	A strong time for the age group.
AA	Very good national level time for the age group.
AAA	Excellent national level time for the age group.
AAAA	Elite national level time for the age group (top few percent).

Your swimmer will have different standards for every event, stroke, and distance (e.g., 50 Free, 100 Back, 200 IM).

Think of these as a ladder of achievement. A swimmer starts their career focusing on achieving the 'B' time in an event, and the ultimate goal for that age group is the 'AAAA' time. Improvement is measured by moving up the tiers (e.g., from 'B' to 'BB').

Understanding Pool Lengths and Time Conversion

A crucial factor in time standards is the length of the pool, which determines the official designation of the time:

SCY: Short Course Yards, Pool Length: 25 yards.

This is the most common pool size for practice and meets in the US, especially during the winter season.

SCM: Short Course Meters, Pool Length: 25 meters.

Less common in the US, but sometimes used.

LCM: Long Course Meters, Pool Length: 50 meters (Olympic size).

Used for major national and international competitions, and typically swum during the summer season.

Why does this matter?

A time swum in a 25-yard pool is not the same as a time swum in a 50-meter pool. Swimmers will be faster in a Short Course (SCY or SCM) pool because they get more push-offs from the walls with each lap, which is a faster part of the race. You must always know the pool length of a meet to understand the relevant time standard.

Times from different pool lengths often require an official conversion (a mathematical calculation) to be compared fairly or to qualify for meets held in a different course. Your team's coach or website usually provides access to conversion tool

Time Standards and Swim Meets: The "Cuts"

When coaches or parents talk about a swimmer getting a "cut," they're referring to the minimum time standard required to enter a specific meet.

1. **Qualifying Standards for Championship Meets (The "Cuts")**

Higher-level meets, such as State, Regional, or National Championships, use time standards—often an 'A' or 'BB' time—to limit entries and ensure a high level of competition.

- **"Making the Cut":** This means a swimmer has achieved a time that is equal to or faster than the published standard for that event.
- **Non-Qualifying Meets:** Most local or club-level meets (often called "Invitational" or "Open" meets) do not have a minimum time standard. They are open to all swimmers and are where new swimmers primarily compete to get their first official times and start aiming for the lower 'B' and 'BB' motivational times.

2. **Seeding Heats: Placing Swimmers in the Race**

Even in an open meet without minimum cuts, time standards play a role in how a race is organized. The swimmer's best official time (or an estimated time for first-timers, called a "NT" for "No Time") is used to determine which heat they swim in and which lane they are assigned, known as "seeding."

- **Fastest in the Middle:** Swimmers with the fastest entry times (the "seed time") are placed in the middle lanes (e.g., Lane 4 or 5) of the final heat, as these lanes are considered the fastest and most advantageous.

Slower Swimmers in Outer Lanes: Slower times are placed in the outer lanes and earlier heats.

Goals!: Don't let the complexity of charts and conversions intimidate you. For new swimmers, the focus should be simple:

1. **Get an Official Time:** The first step is to swim an event at a sanctioned meet to replace that "NT" with a real time.
2. **Achieve the 'B' Cut:** Set the initial goal to achieve a 'B' time in one or more events.
3. **Focus on Personal Best (PB/PR):** At every meet, the most important goal is simply to swim faster than your previous best time—this is what Personal Best (PB) or Personal Record (PR) is all about!
4. **Ask the Coach:** Your swimmer's coach is the expert on which standards to focus on and which meets are appropriate for their current level.

Time standards are a roadmap for a swimmer's journey, but the most rewarding part of the sport is the daily progress and the satisfaction of beating your own best time.

Celebrate the effort, the consistency, and the fun of being part of the team!

I hope the above thoughts help a little as we begin the competition season. GOOD LUCK AND HAVE FUN!!! Thanks for being part of the RAYS!

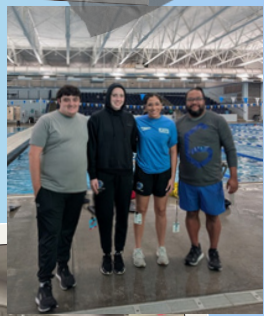
Sincerely,
Bob Herlinger
Executive Director, Stingrays Swim Team (RAYS)

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO....

Belvedere PLANTATION
Harvesting memories for over 40 years!



TRICK
OR
TREAT



☀️ 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:

- 📧 administrator@swimrays.org
- 📧 socialchairperson@swimrays.org

Let's make this season the most fun yet!

Spooky

On Deck with



RAYs Lead Silver, Lead Manta Red and Lead Manta White Coach at the Massad YMCA

Coach

Marianne Fleenor

Hometown: Knoxville, TN
after being born in
Jacksonville, FL



In your swim career;

What made you start swimming?

- My two older brothers were swimming and I wanted to do everything they got to do.

Your best stroke? Was it your favorite?

- When I started swimming I was a backstroker, but as I got older I turned to freestyle and fly.

Your highest achievement is swimming?

- District Champ in the 50 Free, Runner Up at State Championships my Senior Year.

The swim achievement you are most proud of?

- Ultimately it is using all my swim experience to help others learn to love the sport.

Favorite swim career memory?

- My relay on my summer swim team the Gators, we won at the city meet every year starting at the age of 8. My teammates Julie, Valerie and Jennifer and I held the title year after year until we graduated.

In your swim coaching career;

What made you start coaching swimming?

- I had a great coach, Don, who was my club and highschool coach. He really wanted me to continue swimming in college so I tried but I was so burnt out and decided to stop. When I went to him to tell him I was going to hang up my cap and goggles he asked me to be his assistant coach for the highschool team. I think he knew I had a love for the sport, even more than I knew it. Now I am in my 28th year of coaching!

A favorite swim coaching memory?

- In the summer of 2011 and 2012, my 2nd and 3rd year of coaching a summer league team in Salem, VA, the Stonegate Gators, I was able to lead that team to City/Co Champions, something the team had never accomplished, in the 40 years of the swim league.

Most unique swim coaching experience?

- I have had the privilege of so many cool experiences but the one that stands out the most is from YMCA Nationals, I think it was 2018 and Kelsi Worrell Dahlia was a visiting Olympian for all the swimmers to meet and greet one day during the meet. I had 5 swimmers from the club team I was coaching for at the time there, it was our first year to attend Nationals with this team. Anyway, at the conclusion of the prelim session the swimmers and I were walking back to the team area and Kelsi was just sitting in the hallway by herself at the moment. She asked the swimmers as we walked by how the morning had gone and we stopped to talk. We ended up talking with her for over an hour. It was one of those moments that you knew was unique to you and the people you were with. The swimmers being able to have an elite Olympian just sit and talk, laugh and share stories with was amazing.

Your Mt. Rushmore of swim coaches?

- Bill Stapleton. He was my first club coach. I think of him daily as I coach young kids. His patience, his smile, his ability to make swim fun and exciting are the things that keep me coaching.

Do you have a sports idol?

- Rowdy Gaines. Not only a great swimmer but the influence he has had on the swimming community is unmatched in my opinion.

What is your Favorite Sports Moment?

- I don't remember watching this moment in real time, but it is a moment I have come to love as a coach. It is from the 1988 Olympics when Australian swimmer Duncan Armstrong beat three world record holders in the 200 Free to win the gold and set a new world record.
- [Duncan Armstrong Men's 200M free '88 Olympics](#)

Favorite quote?

- I feel like my answer for this needs to be "Stuff the Silver, We come for the Gold" or "lucky lane seven" because of Duncan Armstrong's coach Laurie Lawrence's reaction after Duncan wins. He is so excited for Duncan he is a little crazy but it is so fun to watch.

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

- Before this full time position with the Rays, my coaching was always a part time gig while I was the aquatics director for the Salem YMCA full time. I loved being a part of helping people learn to swim and find healing and strength in the water. But this new full time job coaching with the Rays is my favorite!

Any other fun things we should know about you?

- I think the most "fun" thing I have done is in 2004 we moved to Australia for a season for my husband's work. We lived part of the time in Tasmania and the rest of the time in the Warrumbungle National Park of Coonabarabran. We woke up to kangaroos, koalas and cockatoos daily, just outside our front door. It was an amazing experience!

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



Class of 2027....

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



If you take photos of RAYS swimmers
at swim events,
please send them our way
so we can put them to good use!
photos@swimrays.org

