

# ZAGS

## ZEELAND AGE GROUP SWIMMING

Zeeland Age Group Swimming, or ZAGS, is a competitive swim team designed for swimmers new to competitive swimming as well as experienced swimmers who want to continue to improve their skills and gain additional competitive experience.

“Together our coaching philosophy is centered around fostering a positive environment. One where young swimmers can thrive through learning, enjoyment, and cultivating meaningful relationships with peers and coaches alike.” -*Coach Alyssa and Coach Jon*

## **MEET THE COACHING STAFF**

### **Alyssa Zapata, Co-Head Coach**

Coach Alyssa is back coaching ZAGS for a third season and is excited to be heading up the program with Coach Jon. Alyssa has taught swim lessons and coached swimming in West Michigan for over 10 years. Alyssa also coaches for WMS throughout the year, and loves coaching the 9-10 group where her 10 year old son Joaquin swims as well. She really wants to help the ZAGS program grow and be more known in the Zeeland community.

### **Jon Vos, Co-Head Coach**

Coach Jon has been coaching in Zeeland since 2022 for WMS and both the boys and girls varsity swim programs. Aside from coaching Jon continues to show his love for swimming by competing in Masters swim competitions and triathlons. Jon also organizes the annual Mackinac Island Swim event, which features over 400 athletes swimming 8.2 miles around Mackinac Island each August. Jon is thrilled to be teaching our young athletes how to become better swimmers and teammates this coming season.

### **Libby Nelesen, Assistant Coach**

Coach Libby cannot wait for another ZAGS season! This is Libby's third year with the ZAGS program. Libby excels at coaching our youngest swimmers where she loves introducing these new athletes to love the sport of swimming. Libby is also a head coach for the Unity Christian girls varsity swim team, and teaches math at Grand Rapids Christian HS.

### **Sara Keen, Assistant Coach**

Coach Sara will once again be coaching for ZAGS this year. Sara leads our preseason ZAGS programs and we are thrilled to have her back for a fourth season as an assistant coach! Sara has been a lifelong swimmer; while in high school Sara swam on both the club and varsity teams. Since 2007 she has worked with many non-competitive and competitive swimmers through swim lessons and coaching.

### **Tanner Barber, Assistant Coach**

Coach Tanner will be joining us again this year. Tanner has been swimming for 9 years and was a great addition to ZAGS during the 2023 swim seasons. Tanner's love for the water and the sport of swimming shows. He is excited to help this new generation of swimmers find a passion for the pool and become successful swimmers.

### **Emily Pyle, Assistant Coach**

Coach Emily is a newcomer to ZAGS. Her love for the water sprouted from her own ZAGS experience, something she is excited to instill in the new swimmers of this community. Emily has been swimming for 8 years and is coming off of a successful senior season on the Zeeland HS swim team.

## **ROOKIE NIGHT: Tuesday, November 12**

Rookie Night is for swimmers joining ZAGS for the first time. It provides an opportunity for the coaches to see your swimmer's comfort in the water and determine their correct practice group. Swimmers 8 years old and younger should be able to swim one length, or 25-yards, of the pool freestyle and one length backstroke. Swimmers 9 years old and older should be able to swim two lengths, or 50-yards, of the pool freestyle and at least one length (50-yds) of the pool of backstroke or breaststroke.

- 6:00-6:30pm: Last names beginning with A-M
- 6:30-7:00pm: Last names beginning with N-Z

## **MEET DESCRIPTIONS**

Each season there will be one invitational meet, 2-3 dual meets, and a championship meet. Swimmers must compete in at least one dual or invitational meet to be eligible to swim in the A or B championship meet. Descriptions of each meet is below.

- **Invitational:** Several local swim clubs come to one location for a large meet
- **Dual and Tri Meets:** Meet vs. one (or two) local age group swim clubs
- **A and B Championship Meets:**
  - **A Meet:** Swimmers must qualify for this meet based on their times in duals or invitationals. Guidelines for A meet qualifying times can be found @ <https://www.zps.org/z-recreation/youth/competitive-aquatics>
  - **B Meet:** Open to swimmers who do not qualify for the A meet

## **MEET SCHEDULE**

### **Invitational**

Saturday, January 11: Zeeland Winter Classic @ Zeeland (3390-100th Ave, Zeeland)

### **Dual and Tri Meets**

Saturday, January 18: Zeeland @ Rockford (4100 Kroes St NE, Rockford)

Saturday, January 25: NKAT + Ludington @ Zeeland (3390-100th Ave, Zeeland)

### **Championship Meets**

Friday, February 7: 11&O A Championship @ Northview (4365 Hunsberger Ave NE, Grand Rapids)

Saturday, February 8: 10&U A Championship @ Zeeland (3390-100th Ave, Zeeland)

Saturday, February 8: B Championship @ Hamilton (4845 136th Ave, Hamilton)

## SWIM MEET VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Parent volunteers play a huge role in the success of the ZAGS program. Listed below is a brief description of the positions that need to be filled at every home meet. Let us ensure that our swimmers feel supported by signing up to help. Volunteer sign up information will be sent out prior to all home meets. Training is provided as needed.

- **Announcer (1 volunteer needed per meet):** Announces each heat and event, starts each race, and makes various other announcements during the meet, as needed
- **Awards (1-2 volunteers needed per meet):** Label ribbons, medals, and/or other event awards and sorts them by team (or as directed). Job done during the meet, often as results become available.
- **Heat Sheets and Admissions (1-2 volunteers needed per meet):** Responsible for collecting the spectator entrance fee. At some meets, heat sheets may also be sold at the admission table.
- **Hospitality (1-2 volunteers needed per meet):** This position maintains the food hospitality room where the coaches and officials eat and break. Volunteers set-up, prepare, replenish, and clean up.
- **Lane Timer (20 volunteers needed per meet):** One-three timers work each lane and record the swimmer's time with hand-held stopwatches.
- **Marshal (2-3 volunteers needed per meet):** Supervises the waiting area of a particular age group during the meet, marks the arms of each swimmer with their event/heat/lane, and helps swimmers get to their lane on time with caps and goggles.
- **Team Spirit Coordinator (1-2 volunteers per season):** Organize ways to show our team spirit at home meets; plan and organize the End of Season Celebration for the team.
- **Volunteer Table (1-2 volunteers needed per meet):** Check in volunteers and direct them to the area where they will be working. Help fill volunteer needs at the swim meet when necessary.

## **EQUIPMENT**

A competitive swimsuit (no board shorts), ZAGS swim cap, and goggles are necessary. Each swimmer will receive one latex swim cap. Extra swim caps, including silicone, are available for purchase. Team suits (optional) and other ZAGS gear are available to purchase online at the [SwimOutlet.com](http://SwimOutlet.com) team store.

### **Caps**

Each swimmer will receive one latex swim cap on the first night of practice. Extra swim caps, including silicone, are available to purchase at each practice for \$10. Please bring the exact payment. Change is not available.

### **Goggles**

- **Stores to Shop:** “Dick’s Sporting Goods” (Holland), or “SwimOutlet.com” (online)
- **Suggested Brands:** TYR Tracer Racing; Aqua Sphere Kayenne; Speedo Speed Socket; Speedo HydrospeX; Speedo Vanquisher

## **PHOTO USE DISCLAIMER FOR ZAGS EVENTS**

Please be aware that images taken during ZAGS events may be used for promotional purposes, including but not limited to print publications, online publications, websites, and social media platforms. If you do not wish for your swimmer to be included in these photos, kindly contact Coach Alyssa or Coach Jon to opt out.

## **PARENT, SWIMMER, AND COACH EXPECTATIONS**

### **As a Swimmer, I will...**

- Value and respect all of my teammates
- Cheer for my team
- Give my full effort & attention at all practices
- Respect and listen to all coaches

### **As a Parent, I Will...**

- Encourage my child with positive feedback
- Support our team and our program
- Celebrate my child's success and help them take responsibility for weaknesses leading to constructive feedback
- Conduct myself in a way that positively reflects well on the ZAGS program

### **As a Coach, I Will...**

- Give my full effort to developing my swimmers and invest in my team
- Have a fully developed and focused plan for each practice
- Treat my swimmers and parents with respect
- Encourage my swimmers with praises
- Correct and provide constructive feedback
- Conduct myself in a way that positively reflects on the ZAGS program

### **As a Swimmer I Will Not...**

- Take constructive feedback personally
- Disrespect my coaches, teammates, or other teams
- Make excuses for my failures or weaknesses

### **As a Parent I Will Not...**

- Coach my swimmer or other swimmers outside of practice
- Speak negatively of the coach or other swimmers in my child's presence
- Address concerns with the coach in the presence of other parents or swimmers
- Engage in negative conversation with other parents in the program

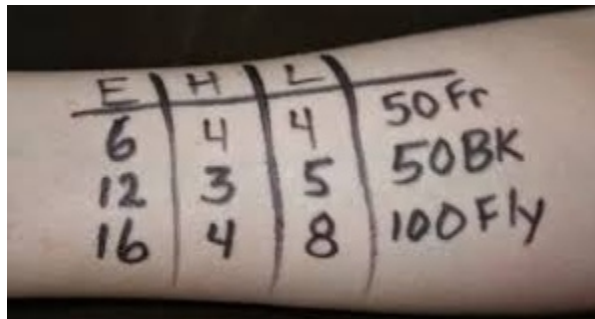
### **As a Coach I Will Not...**

- Degrade my swimmers
- Allow negativity to foster among teammates or families
- Discuss concerns in the presence of other swimmers or families
- Be unprepared for meets and practice

# A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SWIM MEETS

## Planning for the Meet:

1. Bring cash. You may be charged admission as a spectator (usually under \$5 per head); you may not. It depends on the meet. Most meets also sell "heat sheets", which are a kind of program for the swim meet. More on that later. It can be helpful to purchase one, especially for your first meet, so you can decide whether or not it's useful to you for future meets.
2. Bring a pen to write times on the heat sheet and a highlighter. More on what to do with the pen and highlighter later.
3. Spectator seating is usually in bleachers. If you want or need some cushioning or back support, you'll want to plan to bring yourself a stadium seat.
4. Don't plan for your swimmer to sit with you. Swimmers belong with their teams.
5. Don't plan on going over to where the team is sitting to visit with your swimmer. Only coaches, timers, officials, and swimmers are allowed "on deck" at meets.
6. If you want to take pictures, keep in mind that the flash from cameras interferes with the timing equipment, so flash photography is not permitted at starts.
7. Swimmers need to stay hydrated and fed during meets. Pack protein and high quality carbs. Those bodies are working hard. Water bottles are necessary.
8. You may be walking on wet tile floors; wear shoes that will help keep you surefooted. Keep that in mind for your swimmer, too.
9. It can get pretty warm and humid at meets. Wearing layers is a good idea. Even better! Wear layers in our team's colors, yellow and black! Go ZAGS! Your swimmer needs to have warm clothes to wear between their swim events, too. Don't forget a towel or two!
10. Be prepared for down time between events. If you have children who need to be entertained, you may wish to have sleeping bags or blankets for them to sit on out in the hallway, behind the bleachers, etc. Plan for needing more entertainment than you think.
11. Swimmers don't have heat sheets, so how do they keep track of what events they are swimming in? By writing on themselves, of course. Each swimmer will need to have a grid on either their arm or leg showing the event number, the heat number, the lane number, and the stroke/distance. See below. An event sheet will be sent out before the meet. **If possible, please show up to the meet with the event name and number already written with Sharpie on your swimmer's arm or leg.** This will save coaches a lot of time because we will only have to fill out the heat and lane.
12. Let the coach know if you can't make the meet after you've signed up.



## Getting Ready for the Meet to Start

1. Be on time. Coach will send out an email a couple of days before the meet with warm-up times. Please plan to arrive 15-minutes before the scheduled warm-up time. This is so your swimmer will have time to mark their events, find a place for their bag, and get ready to get in the water. The coach will decide if the swimmers will be swimming the entire warm-up period or for a shorter time; whatever the decision by the coach, swimmers should be available to swim when warm-ups begin.
2. Most invitational meets (not dual meets) are generally divided into morning and afternoon sessions. Morning start times are much more dependable than afternoon start times. Afternoon starts often depend on when the morning session wraps up. Be prepared to be flexible if your swimmer is participating in the afternoon session. Also be prepared to be a bit flexible about when the morning session ends... sometimes things can run late.
3. OK, back to that heat sheet and the highlighter. Heat sheets list the individual swim events, the participants names, the heat, what lane each swimmer will occupy, and if the swimmer has a history of swimming that event, what his/her previous best time swimming in that event was. To keep track of when your kid is swimming, going through the heat sheet and highlighting each of your swimmer's events can be useful.

## During the Meet:

1. Record the time your swimmer achieves in each of the events they swim on the heat sheet. Your swimmer can use this information to assess their performance in the meet. The scoreboard will show lane number and time. There is also a mobile app (Meet Mobile) which records all meet results. You can search by swimmer name to view all past meets and events.
2. Be prepared for hearing that your swimmer has "DQ'd" or disqualified. The people you see walking around the pool with clipboards wearing white shirts and navy bottoms are swim meet officials. One of their jobs is to make sure the swimmers follow the rules, such as swimmers only are to use dolphin kicks during butterfly events, that the swimmers actually use the correct stroke (i.e. no freestyle during a breast stroke event); the proper turns are performed at the end of the pool, etc. When a swimmer is disqualified, this means the swimmer is not eligible for an award in that event, and their time is not recorded. Usually an official will tell them when they get out of the water and try to explain what happened. Hearing that they have DQ'd can be really tough news, especially for a new swimmer. However, this is very common! Almost every competitive swimmer will get DQ'd at some point in their swim career. Coaches will remind all swimmers that this is a chance to learn what we need to work on in practice.
3. Do cheer on your swimmer and their teammates! Your swimmer probably can't hear you, but a high-energy crowd keeps the team's energy pumping, which is a good thing. Remember, swimmers need to be able to hear at the start though, so shhh at the start, then go ahead and show them your support!
4. At each meet, there are different awards structures. All finishers above a certain place may receive ribbons; those in the top may get medals.