An Introduction to High School Swimming in Virginia

Introduction

If you are new to high school swimming and diving, it may look a little bit confusing. It is different from club swimming or summer swim and dive. High school swim and dive has the structure of a collegiate sport. The team is divided by gender and each team is scored separately. Both swimming and the diving events for each team are added together to determine the score of the meet. At the end of the meet, the girls, the boys, both or neither may have won the meet. Below is an overview of season expectations.

Swimming Dual Meets

The high school season begins with seven dual meets against the other schools in Conference Five – Centreville Wildcats, Chantilly Chargers, Herndon Hornets, Oakton Cougars, Robinson Rams and Westfield Bulldogs. These meets form the core of the high school season.

Traditional meet sheets or scoreboards won’t be seen at these meets. The coaching staff will post the names of the swimmers by event in the team area. Swimmers can be changed on these entry lists almost up to the moment that they swim, so don’t be surprised if last minute changes take place.

Swimming Events

High school swim meets have eleven swimming events -- eight individual events and three relays. Diving counts as the twelfth event in the meet. For dual meets, each team enters a maximum of four swimmers per event and four relay teams per relay. A swimmer may be entered in up to four events, including relays, but no more than two individual events. Swimmers are selected for events by the coach or team captains based on their times in those events and the coach’s goals for the meet. Lanes are assigned with the fastest swimmers generally getting the inside lanes. Relays are labeled A, B, C and D, usually with the fastest competitors being assigned to the A relay.

Order of Events for High School Swimming (11 Events)

- 200 yard medley relay
- 200 yard freestyle
- 200 yard individual medley
- 50 yard freestyle
- 100 yard butterfly
- 100 yard freestyle
- 500 yard freestyle
- 200 yard freestyle relay
- 100 yard backstroke
- 100 yard breaststroke
- 400 yard freestyle relay
Scoring

-- Relays are scored 10-5-3-0, with only the first two relays scoring for a school. So if your school happens to finish 1-2-3 only the first and second place relays will score points for the school (10+5=15 pts).

-- Individual events are scored 8-6-5-4-3-2-1-0.

Boys' and girls' events alternate during the meet with the boys going first. There is usually a 10-minute break following the 50 freestyle. The diving events are held either before or concurrent with the swimming events, depending upon whether the pool has a separate diving well. Points from the diving events are added to the points from the swimming events to determine the total team scores. Meets are won or lost based on total points, and sometimes the diving results can determine the outcome of the meet. That's why it is important for the swimmers and their parents to support the divers, too.

Don't be surprised if you don't know the score of the meet as it ends. By the time the swimmers emerge from the locker room, the word should begin to filter out. There are no ribbons or awards for the dual meets, only the opportunity for the swimmers to better their times, or qualify for the championship meets at the end of the season.

Volunteers

Like summer and USA swimming the ability to hold a swim meet is directly related to the involvement of parent volunteers. Each team must provide timers, stroke and turn judges, table workers and other meet officials in order to run the meets. There are normally three timers for each lane (normally eight lanes are used), four table workers, four stroke and turn judges, a starter and a referee for each meet. We also try to have a computer operator at the table to enter times for our swimmers. Positions like stroke and turn judges, starters, and referees require training and in some case certification. Training sessions and clinics are normally held before the swim season starts for those positions. Depending on the location of the swim meet, it may be possible for the swim team to run a concession stand which requires additional volunteer support. Please support the swim team by volunteering.

Championship Meets

There are three levels of championship meets - Conference Five, Northern Region meet and the Virginia AAA meet or “States.” The championship meets are swum as preliminaries and finals over multiple days. The team with the most points at the district meet is the Conference Five Champion regardless of the outcomes of the dual meets during the regular swim season.

Conference Meet

Each high school in the Conference may enter four swimmers in each individual event and one relay team per relay event. Like dual meets swimmers can only be entered in up to four events including relays, but no more than two individual events. Diving is generally the first two nights of the District tournament with Girls one night and Boys the other. Individual events are swum as preliminaries on the third night with the eight fastest swimmers qualifying for Finals and the next eight fastest swimmers qualifying for the Consolation Finals. The 17th and 18th qualifiers will be alternates for the finals. Finals, Consolation Finals and Relays are swum on the last night of the meet.

Swimmers swimming in the Consolation Finals can only finish as high as ninth place regardless of whether they swim a faster time than one or more finalists. Circle seeding is used for the preliminary events where the fastest seeded swimmer is placed in the fastest heat, the second fastest swimmer is placed in the second fastest heat,
the third fastest swimmer is placed in the third fastest heat and the fourth fastest swimmer is placed in the fastest heat, etc.

The district meet is scored through 16 places and the winning team, the Conference Five Champion, is the team that has accumulated the greatest number of points at the end of the meet, including diving.

Advancement to the Regional meet. The top six finishers in each event will advance to the Regional Meet. Any competitor meeting the Regional qualifying standards during the Conference or at a regular season dual meet will also advance to the Regional Meet.

Regional Meet

The Northern Region Swim & Dive Champion is determined by points scored at the regional meet. The regional meet is very similar to the Conf. meet with competitors coming from the four Conf. in the Northern Region. Like the Conf. meet swimmers can only be entered in up to four events including relays, but no more than two individual events. The Region tournament is typically run over five nights with Boys and Girls diving the first two nights – Girls one night and Boys the other. The third and fourth nights are the Boys and Girls preliminary sessions with Girls one night and Boys the other. Relay prelims are swum these nights just like individual events. The last night of the Region tournament is the swimming finals session for Boys and Girls. Finals for both individual events and relays are swum the final night.

Advancement to the State Meet. The top 8 finishers in individual events at the Regional Meet will qualify to compete in the State Championship Meet. The top four relay teams from the Regional Meet will also qualify for the state meet. Individual and relay teams can also qualify for the State Meet by swimming a qualifying time during the regular season, the District Meet or the Region Meet. The qualifying time must be achieved during a High School competition. USA Swimming and YMCA times are not allowed. The Virginia State AAA Swim and Dive competition rotates among the four regions in the state so travel to Virginia Beach or Richmond may be necessary to compete. Occasionally the State meet will be held at a short course meter (25 meter) pool and separate records are maintained for meter pools.

Diving Dual Meets

The diving format for dual meets can be confusing. Divers are required to perform one voluntary dive and five optional dives for a total of six dives for the meet. Voluntary dives are the simpler ones, such as a front dive, a pike dive, a reverse dive, or an inward dive. Optional dives can be any dive except the one performed for the voluntary dive. Each week, the voluntary dive that must be performed changes. For the first meet, a front must be done for the voluntary; at the second, a back; at the third, a reverse; at the fourth, an inward; at the fifth, a twister; and the cycle continues until the dual meet season is over. There are only five groups, but the divers are required to complete six dives. Therefore, the divers must perform five optionals from only four groups without repeating the dive they did for their voluntary. While this can be confusing, the coach understands the format and continues to teach the divers throughout the season.

For those who are familiar with the judging format of NVSL diving, it is the same in high school diving. There are five judges (parents), two from the home team and three from the visiting team. For each dive, each judge gives one score. The high score and the low score are dropped in an attempt to eliminate any biases. The remaining three are added together and multiplied by the dive’s degree of difficulty to obtain the score. The more difficult the dive, the larger the multiplier that will be applied, giving an incentive to attempt more difficult dives.