



Parent & Swimmer Handbook

Gananda Racing Aquatic Team, Inc.

The Gananda Racing Aquatic Team (GRAT) is a competitive swim club consisting of swimmers between the ages of 6 and 18 years. We are based in Walworth, New York and serve the Wayne county area. We compete against other swim clubs in the local area and are a part of the Niagara District Local Swimming committee (www.niagaraswim.org).

Mission Statement

The Gananda Racing Aquatic Team encourages growth and improvement in the sport of swimming through consistent practice, engaging the teaching of our coaches and belief in a positive, winning attitude. It is our belief that through these simple philosophies our team will win not just in water, but more importantly, win in life.

Philosophy

The Gananda Racing Aquatic Team program is a USA Swimming team dedicated to educating and developing swimmers into the best that they can be and want to be, in the sport of swimming. In the process of doing so, we also teach the athletes the life values of teamwork, sportsmanship, goals, respect, responsibility, hard work, dedication, and self-discipline through their experiences in practice and competition.

This team was created for the sole purpose of establishing a strong foundation of the skills and techniques required to succeed at both High School and College level swimming. We exist to aid in the growth, development and education of every team member.

Our goal is not to create elite athletes but maintain a strong focus on technical improvements and becoming “mindful” swimmers resulting in every individual on the team achieving personal success. Success for our team is not solely defined by faster times but by how thoughtful each athlete can be in practice and during competition.

Our goal is to foster a love of swimming through education about the sport and teaching healthy lifestyle choices to every individual whether their future includes laps for fitness as a lifetime swimmer or Olympic level competition.

Organization

GRAT is a non-profit organization with a coach run, Board assisted, swimming program. We operate via our by-laws and have an elected Board of Directors that meet monthly to manage and direct our club’s operations. Most board meetings are open to the public, for those who wish to attend.

Our club is a small-size program of approximately 50 swimmers. This size enables us to conduct practices with adequate attention by the coaches. We are also large enough to effectively run fundraising events to help to minimize membership cost. If membership grows to a level of pool crowding, we may temporarily restrict new membership.

Facilities

Our pool is located at the Richard Mann Elementary School, 1366 Waterford Road, Walworth, New York 14568. Having been built in 2002, our pool is a 25 yard, 6-lane pool with a diving board area in the deep end. A complete locker room is located within the

pool as well. GRAT has access to a 6 lane Colorado Timing System, as well as other equipment.

Practices

GRAT typically run 2 to 3 sessions per year. Each session will last approximately 12 – 15 weeks and will consist of various practices running Monday – Friday evenings. Monthly schedules will be posted on the GRAT website (www.gratswimming.com).

At the beginning of each session, coaches will evaluate swimmers on various skills and divide them into groups by age/ability. Attendance is not mandatory, however, the GRAT coaching staff recommends 2 -3 practices per week for 10 year olds and under, and 3 -5 practices per week for swimmers 11 years old and older.

Swimmers should arrive about 15 minutes early for practice. Show respect to ALL of your teammates by refraining from making disrespectful remarks and playing in the locker rooms. Swimmers should arrive at practice with a full water bottle and an empty bladder. If your swimmer wants to eat prior to practice, it is imperative that they have at least 1 hour between meal time and the start of practice.

Arrival and Departure

Parents are encouraged to assure that swimmers arrive on time for practice, in their suit and ready to swim. Swimmers must be picked up promptly at the end of each practice session. Coaches cannot leave until the last swimmer is picked up, so please be on time.

Swimmers are not allowed to leave the pool without a parent/guardian or designated ride. Parents or drivers must come into the pool area to pick-up swimmers. Furthermore, upon arrival, swimmers should be accompanied into the pool area in case the coaches are inadvertently delayed, or practice is delayed because of school or other functions. Occasionally we may have to cancel practice at the last minute due to pool conditions or other reasons. Although the coaches all feel a strong sense of responsibility for our swimmers, they are NOT babysitters.

In the event that the coaching staff is late, parents must wait with their child on the bleachers and/or parking lot if building is locked, until a coach arrives. No one is to be admitted into the water without a member of the coaching staff on duty!

During Practice

Provided they are not disrupted during practice, and the pool facility has sufficient space, parents are allowed in the bleachers during practice. Due to USA Swimming regulations, and the safety of the swimmers, parents cannot be allowed on the pool deck. If there are any disruptions, coaches may ask the parents to clear the pool area.

Parents should NOT interrupt coaches during practice. Our coaches are generally available briefly before and after practice to discuss a swimmer's progress, etc. If a longer discussion is desired, coaches and/or Board members are available by appointment.

Chair Duty Responsibility

Many clubs in USA Swimming use parent volunteers to assist in watching the pool area, which in turn helps to offset the costs of paying lifeguards during practice. **This volunteer is responsible to watch over the pool, keeping it a safe environment for all.** We as a

Board/Coaching staff require an extra set of eyes on deck to ensure the safest environment possible.

A list of Chair Duty Responsibilities and schedule will be posted at the pool and via e-mail. **YOU WILL NOT BE A LIFEGUARD!** Your main duty will be to “watch” the pool and if someone is in need of assistance, you will blow your whistle and the coaches will then aid the swimmer. This is not only a fun way to get involved with your child’s swim team; you will also be able to watch practice from a different perspective.

Mail Folders

Each family will have a mail folder with their name on it. These folders are located in the pool area near the coach’s offices. Our primary method of communication is to place information in these folders. Please be sure to have your swimmer check these folders at EVERY practice so that you receive up to date information.

Snow Days and Other Cancellations

NO SCHOOL, NO POOL!

When the Gananda Schools are closed, or closed early for snow days, etc., there will be NO practice.

If we get advance notice of a pool problem or other reason for practice cancellation, a representative will make every attempt to **e-mail** notification to you. Cancellation will also be posted on our website (www.gratswimming.org).

Meets

Western New York is home to many swim clubs who host numerous meets. As such, meets are scheduled monthly. At meets, swimmers compete by age group and are seeded by previous best times. Our coaching staff will decide which meets our team will attend. Information regarding these meets will be posted on the bulletin board as well as put on the monthly calendar on our website well in advance. Your coaches will signup swimmers for the meets, it’s up to the parents to review the meet signups and remove your swimmer(s) from a meet. Meets are NOT mandatory, however, meets are a fun social event where team success is achieved and team spirit is built. Meet information will generally be posted on the GRAT bulletin board at the pool and on our website. Please pay attention to the dates posted.

Meet Expectations

- If you are not a USA insured Coach, Official, or Athlete then you are not allowed on the deck with the exception of any volunteer position you may be filling to help run the meet (ex: timing).
- If our team has timing responsibilities, parents are required to time a minimum of 1 hour per session attended.
- All swimmers should be to the meet 15 minutes prior to warm-ups and be ready to swim.
- All swimmers are required to remain in the team area throughout the meet. If you need to go anywhere you must notify a coach first.
- **Our team policy is that there will be no scratching of events (Prelims and/or Finals), except for extraordinary circumstances. In some cases, there may be a fine assessed for unauthorized scratches in accordance with the Niagara**

District Swimming Rules and Regulations. Scratches must be approved by the coach on duty.

Procedure for signing up for Meets

- Meet Packets and Swimmer Entries will be posted on the GRAT bulletin board and also sent out in an e-mail to everyone on the team.
- Please check the dates of the meet to make sure there are no conflicts with your schedule and also check what events your child is entered in. If there is a conflict with the days, a problem with how many events your child is swimming, or an issue with an event(s) your child is in please notify a coach so changes can be made and/or discussed.
- Based on a swimmers ability and practice group, our coaching staff will determine which event any given swimmer is capable of entering. If your child is not signed up for a meet, or you have a question regarding the events your child is entered into, please contact the coaching staff. Swimmers are not required to swim the events they are signed up for, but they are encouraged to do so.
- Parents & Swimmers please note next to your name, or by e-mailing a coach, if you will not be able to participate in any or all relays. If you do not note that you will not be able to participate in any relays then the coaches will make up the relay teams assuming that you are able to swim in any relays we assign to you. Sometimes there might not be enough swimmers to make a relay or your swimmer maybe be an alternate and may be put in a relay at the last minute, so, if you do want to participate in a relay and are not entered in one, be prepared to swim in one if a situation arises.
- All sign-ups are final by the due date that is posted and the meet packet and in the e-mails sent to you. At this point, you will be responsible for paying all meet fees. ***All meet fees are non-refundable.***
- Money for meets is due by the Friday of that weekend's meet. Place the money in an envelope provided with meet fee bill and place it in the GRAT Meet payment box.
- Once the meet events are finalized, they will be posted to the GRAT bulletin board and will be sent out via e-mail.
- After meets are finished, you can view the results usually in a few days after the meet on the Niagara District website found at www.niagaraswim.org (select "Meet Results" on the left hand side bar).

Seeding, Programs, Lane Assignments

Most large meets have several heats of each event. Entries are normally required well in advance to allow the host team to seed the meet, publish a program, and list lane assignments. Programs are published showing the order of events. Many swimmers will write their event #, heat #, and lane # on their hand to have easy access to this information. ***If we are asked by the hosting club to do lane timing, every swimmer's family must share in this duty. NO EXCEPTIONS!***

Short Course vs. Long Course

The "short course" season runs from September through April. Meets are swum in 25-yard pools and are generally shorter events. The "long course" season runs from April through August. Meets are in 50-meter pools. Each season has its own series of championship meets.

Swimmer Achievements

The GRAT coaching staff will track and recognize each individual's achievements. Some of these achievements will be in the form of best times, reaching personal goals, or mastering a new technique.

Coaches

GRAT currently employ several coaches. We typically have 2 coaches and a parent chair person on deck at each practice. All coaches are USA Swimming and Lifeguard certified.

Cost

Dues are set each year by the Board of Directors based on attendance and various fees. Fees may vary from session to session.

- 10% Discount for each additional child per family
- Annual non-refundable USA Swimming Fee*

Club costs are non-refundable. If you drop out, you are legally obligated to pay any remaining meet fees, dues, etc.

*USA Swimming fee is subject to yearly change by USA Swimming, Inc. We have no control over the cost.

Fundraising

Dues only pay a portion of GRAT operations. The rest is raised through various fundraisers, for example: Car Washes, Candy Sales, Spaghetti Dinner, etc. Team members are all **required** to participate in every fundraiser throughout the swim season. A buyout may be offered **per** fundraiser. See your fundraising packet for more information.

Practice Wear

Girls must wear a proper fitting one-piece suit for practice and meets. Boys should wear a comfortable suit as well (jammers are recommended for competition). Swim caps are highly recommended. Goggles are mandatory for both boys and girls.

Team Wear

Swimmers are encouraged to purchase a team suit, cap and swim equipment (goggles, etc.). The typical expenditure is \$50 – 100 dollars. Additional GRAT apparel (warm-up suit, t-shirts, shorts, swim bag, etc) may also be available. Purchasing these items is completely optional, but fun to have while representing our team at meets.

Other GRAT Events

Gananda Racing Aquatic Team is a family oriented organization, with strong friendships among swimmers, parents and coaches. We have several social events planned each year to promote team spirit and unity. For example: Family Fun Night, GRAT vs Grown-Up Swim Meet, Fun Meets with Newark & Pal-Mac Swim Clubs (a no cost event), and Year End Awards Celebration.