

# The A, "B", C's

of

# Developmental Meets



## **What's a "B" Meet?**

"B" MEETS are also referred to as DEVELOPMENTAL MEETS. They are just what the name implies. Because there is such great interest in the sport of swimming especially in Northern Virginia, there are simply not enough opportunities for all swimmers to swim in the Saturday "A" meets that are sanctioned as official Northern Virginia Swimming League (NVSL) events. So, "B" meets are for swimmers to gain experience in swim meets. Gaining experience and developing means gaining skills to compete (learning to race with people cheering on the side) and improving individual performance in one or more of the four strokes.

Many teams in the NVSL have separate "teams within their teams" that only participate in these developmental meets. It has been the Forest Hollow tradition that our developmental meets are open to all of our swimmers – but we do have some rules and guidelines that allow for competitive fairness for our team and efficiency in the timeliness of these meets.

Please read this short guide to understand the "A, **"B"**, C's" of these meets...

## **When is a "B" meet held?**

Developmental, or "B" meets are held on Monday nights. Forest Hollow is not part of a "B" meet league. We do try to swim local swim teams that are in close proximity to Forest Hollow to allow greater participation.

Our first "B" meet usually is held before our first "A" meet and most of the time before Fairfax County Schools are out for the summer. Forest Hollow tries to schedule a minimum of 5 "B" meets a season. The most "B" meets we hold will be 6 based on the calendar availability. Sometimes, when scheduling issues arise and we are "short a team", we might get creative and schedule an inter-squad event. We also hold a Mini Gator Meet in late July on a Sunday morning to allow more Mini Gators to "catch the spirit" of a meet.

## **What happens at a "B" meet?**

While you will see similarities in all of our "B" meets in how each is set up and run, there are a few differences that are easiest to explain in relationship to an NVSL "A" meet. It is also important to note that the hosting team "B" meet rep has the discretion to establish some rules for operating their hosted meets. These are usually communicated in advance, but parents and swimmers need to remain flexible as the meet manager – the "B" Meet Rep – has discretion to change some items and practices. Some of these are explained below.

## **Meet Set Up – the Look and Feel of a "B" Meet**

"B" meets are run very similar to "A" meets.

- The pool will be closed so no one outside of the swimmers will be in the pool. (This includes the baby pool area.)
- A lifeguard will be in the chair for added safety of our swimmers.
- The six lane lines and lane line numbers will be in place.
- We will have officials – a Referee who runs the meet; a Starter; Stroke and Turn Officials; Timers; a Clerk of Course; a Team Rep; and cheering fans.
- Only officials working the meet and swimmers are allowed beyond the spectator areas.
- We will start with the national anthem.
- The “team area” is the place for all swimmers; parents are welcome to help supervise the younger ones if you feel that is necessary. Before taking your child home, you should let the coaches know.
- The Clerk of Course will make every effort to have heats of 6 & under, 8 & under, and 9/10 swimmers competing against one another. Generally, boys swim against boys and girls against girls. Sometimes, for the efficiency of the meet we may have mixed gender (or age) swimmers in a heat.

### **Events at the Meet**

- “B” meets include the same individual events as “A” meets – freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly.
- These events are held for the same age groups as an “A” meet: 8 & Under, 9/10, 11/12, 13/14, and 15 and Over.
- There are some new events at “B” meets.
  - If the meet is at Forest Hollow and most of the locations we swim against, our tradition is to have “kickboard” races for those Mini Gators that want to race but are not yet able to swim 25 Meters on their own. Kickboard races are not held until Mini Gators have been at practice – so after school is out and morning swim has begun. (See the Appendix for further information on **Swim Meet Opportunities for Mini Gators.**)
  - If the meet is at Forest Hollow, we also normally offer “assisted freestyle” races. This event is where a Mini Gator no longer needs a kickboard, but is still uncertain in the water and wants a coach or older team member to be with them in the water. (See the Appendix for further information on **Swim Meet Opportunities for Mini Gators.**)
  - 6 & Under Events are also normally offered. The lowest age grouping in an NVSL event is 8 & Under, which means just that. If a swimmer is one of the fastest three available on that meet AND they can swim across the pool for 25 Meters unassisted, they can be any age under 8 and be legal for the meet. In reality, many 6 year olds are not as strong as the 7 and 8 year olds. So, at “B” meets we try to group them more by their age to give them extra

incentive for ribbons and placing. (See **Forest Hollow Ribbon Policy** below.)

- For all age groups, the "B" meet provides the only opportunity to swim the Individual Medley (IM). The IM consists of all four strokes. Swimmers swim one lap (25 Meters) of fly, back, breast and freestyle (in that order) to complete a 100 Meter IM. IM's are not swum at Saturday "A" meets, but they are swum at our Todd Potts IM Carnival and at the NVSL Divisional and All Star meets at the end of the season. (Note: This is a great opportunity for our traditional "A" meet swimmers to swim a different event but still participate in the "B" meet to support the Gators.)
- There are no relay events at a "B" meet.
- There is no team "score" at a "B" meet. Everyone "wins" as everyone that wants to swim gets to swim and develop.
- Your child will normally swim against children of the same gender, but not always. Why you ask? The Clerk of Course does everything possible to make each race competitive and the meet efficient so we are not there too late in the evening. So, sometimes, based upon the number of kids for an age group or similarities in times or maybe a missed event, the Clerk of Course has the discretion to group kids in the best manner possible. This will not harm your child – they get to swim. They should simply be reminded to swim their very best no matter who they race.

## **Order of Events**

The normal order of events will be:

- Kickboard and assisted freestyle
- Freestyle (youngest to oldest; boys followed by girls)
- Backstroke (youngest to oldest; boys followed by girls)
- Breaststroke (youngest to oldest; boys followed by girls)
- Butterfly (youngest to oldest; boys followed by girls)
- Individual Medley (youngest to oldest; boys followed by girls)

Since these are not official "NVSL" meets, the order of events can be rearranged by the "B" Meet Rep for the hosting pool for a number of reasons. Generally speaking, kickboard and assisted freestyle are always done at the very beginning of the meet. These swimmers are only swimming this one event and are our youngest swimmers. They are welcome to stay and watch more of the meet, but many parents want to get them home and relaxed before bedtime.

The most common "rearranging" of the meet may occur based on forecasted weather conditions for the night and the "need" for some swimmers to get an official IM time. So, you may see IM being swum right after the kickboard/assisted freestyle events, followed by the normal order of the meet of freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly.

## **Disqualifications**

As you have read numerous times in this guide, "B" meets are developmental meets. This means we want your swimmer to improve his/her time AND their technique. That means having trained officials viewing the swim and identifying "disqualifying" strokes that are not correct is part of the process.

Disqualifications are not punitive – but a learning experience – that will help the coach and the swimmer improve. It doesn't mean that it won't bring tears or frustration, but it is a learning experience. And, even our most experienced swimmers sometimes make a mistake – when they do – their disqualified swim will be noted by an official..

When a swimmer disqualifies, the Stroke and Turn Official alerts the Referee (and sometimes a Chief Judge) by raising their hand. The Referee or Chief Judge then talks to the Stroke and Turn Judge and asks them to describe exactly what the infraction was and what they saw. Should the Referee agree, a "DQ" slip is written up and taken to the table workers. Following the meet, the Team Rep (A or B) collects these DQ slips and provides them to the Head Coach or Assistant Head Coach so they can help your swimmer understand what happened and begin to correct that mistake.

It is Forest Hollow's practice that the Head Coach and Assistant Head Coach will review the DQ and discuss it with the swimmer during practices. They may not say "hey, you DQ'd" but they will work with that swimmer to understand the issue and perfect their technique. The DQ's will be worked on for correction either in a group setting or in individual breakouts during regular practice times. DQ's are not provided for assisted or kickboard swimmers as there are no "rules" for completing these events.

## **Ribbons...Ribbons...Ribbons**

Ribbons awarded for each "A" and "B" meet are some of the most loved possessions of our swimmers, especially the youngest and developing "B" meet swimmers. For that reason, Forest Hollow's "B" meet ribbon procedures are generous and designed to continue encouraging the swimmers to keep getting better.

The NVSL policy for "A" meet ribbons is to give ribbons to the first, second and third place swimmers for each event. In some years, the division Team Reps will decide to award ribbons for all 6 places, but this is not a normal practice. This must be decided before the season in order to have the correct number of ribbons to award. In 2013, Division 6 will be awarding ribbons to all 6 places.

For "B" meets, it is up to the home team to determine the ribbon policy. For all Forest Hollow home meets, as well as most of our away "B" meets, our table workers work diligently to award ribbons as follows:

### Kickboard, Assisted Freestyle:

- For HOME meets at Forest Hollow: Ribbons are awarded 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> place for each HEAT.
- Gender and whether someone was “alone” on a kickboard or swimming with “assistance” during the race are ignored. (The Clerk of Course will do their best to have “like” swimmers together, but this is difficult for this type of racing.) It is impossible for the table workers to do anything BUT award each HEAT based upon the time that is written down.
- For AWAY meets at other pools: Forest Hollow’s B Meet Rep and Head Table Worker will request that we are allowed to follow our policy. If the host team objects, we follow their rules. Forest Hollow is a polite and pleasant guest.

### Age groups up through 9/10:

- Ribbons are awarded by HEAT, not EVENT.
- The table workers place the cards in time order first through sixth based upon the timers’ record. Ribbons are awarded based upon that order by each HEAT.
- Should a swimmer be swimming the event as a “time only” (see Selection for “B” meet below), the table workers will attempt to pull out “time only” cards and eliminate them from place order. (Meaning that time only swimmer will not get a 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> place ribbon.)
- Gender is ignored by the table workers – the ribbons are awarded based upon the heat swum and the outcome of that race.
- Should a swimmer be disqualified, a competitor ribbon is given. For simplicity, Forest Hollow also gives a competitor ribbon to any “time only” swimmer.

### Age groups 11/12 through 15/18:

- Ribbons are awarded by EVENT, not HEAT.
- The table workers hold all cards until all heats for that age, gender and stroke have been completed.
- Should “time only” swims be identified on the card, an attempt to pull these from the place order will be made.
- Ribbons are awarded first through sixth;
- Competitor ribbons are awarded for remaining cards in the event.
- Competitor ribbons are also given if the swimmer DQs or swims a “time only.”

Should the “B” Meet Team Rep and Referee approve in advance a special “Time Only” heat, Exhibition heats, or “for fun heats”, no ribbons will be awarded.

## **Trophies**

Similar to our generous B meet ribbon practices, Forest Hollow recognizes that our youngest swimmers love recognition in many forms. Our policy for granting

a team trophy at the end of the season remains generous. Your Gator or Mini Gator must swim in at least one B meet (or the Mini Gator meet) to be eligible for a trophy – any event will qualify.

## **How are swimmers selected for “B” meets?**

“B” meets are designed to give developing swimmers a chance to compete in a meet and improve their skills. These meets offer all swimmers, regardless of age or ability, the opportunity to swim. Swimmers are not “selected” to swim; Forest Hollow encourages all swimmers on the team to participate and build the team environment.

Swimmers are allowed to swim a maximum of TWO events plus the Individual Medley (IM) at any given “B” meet. Based upon the efficiency of the meet, there will not be exceptions to this rule.

The process that is followed is as follows:

- The Head Coach and Assistant Head Coach are responsible for ensuring the “B” meet roster is filled out on Monday mornings no later than 11:00 and provided to the “B” Meet Rep or a designated volunteer.
- The Head Coach and Assistant Head Coach will work with the swimmers, generally in a consultative manner to “choose” the events for that evening’s meet. (See below.)
- The “B” Meet Rep or a volunteer fills out the cards for that evening’s meet based upon the roster from the coaches. Extra cards will be available should a swimmer miss Monday morning’s practice – the cards can be filled out by the coaches at the meet.
- Should exceptions to the policies outlined below for “time only” or “swim ups”(when a swimmer swims an event in a higher age group) be granted, the cards must be clearly labeled.

## **Participation by “A” Meet Swimmers in a “B” Meet**

First – a common sense rule. Swimmers who participate in “A” meets are strongly encouraged to use the “B” meet to swim the individual medley or swim their “off events” (events they normally do not swim in the “A” meets). If a swimmer placed first, second, or third in an “A” meet in that event the previous Saturday/A Meet, they are **not allowed** to participate in that event at the following “B” meet. Because we encourage our swimmers to be well-rounded and participate from a team standpoint, the “ban” from the “B” meet swim does not preclude a swimmer from swimming an event just because they placed in that event sometime throughout the season.

Exceptions to this policy for “A” meet swimmers must be cleared by the Head Coach/Assistant Head Coach and approved by the A Meet Team Rep. Exceptions will be rare. “Time Only” swims will normally only be allowed in the “B” meet

preceding the year-end Divisional meet. "Time Only" events are not allowed for swim offs for relay placements. The Referee and "B" Meet Rep have the ability to allow or disallow "Time Only" and "Fun Events" based on the efficiency or other conditions of the meet.

Coaches, with Team Rep concurrence, may allow "swim ups" during a B meet. These situations should be rare, but may occur for some strong swimmers who are not experiencing sufficient competition in their age group. For their developmental purposes, should the coach agree, they could swim up one age group. Forest Hollow records must be met by swimming in the swimmer's appropriate age group, not a swim up event.

### **The "B" Meet Event Choice**

Forest Hollow uses a coach and swimmer partnership process, where your swimmer and coach will consult about what is best for the swimmer to swim at each meet. With the encouragement of the coaches and discussion with the swimmer, our goal for all B meet swimmers is to swim as many of the four strokes as they are physically capable of during the season.

The "choosing of the events" is typically done during Monday morning practices where the coaches fill out a checklist that indicates the events the swimmer will swim that night. Parents may be involved in this process by either talking to their swimmer before/after practice OR talking to the coach before or after practice. Swimmers should normally be told which events they will be swimming prior to leaving practice; please be reminded that this is an inexact science as some kids won't remember what they were told by the time they see their parents. There is flexibility built into the process and the parents are encouraged to solicit feedback directly from the coaches prior to leaving the pool that morning or prior to the swim meet beginning that evening.

While we encourage the swimmer – young and old alike – to be involved with their coach to select their events, the coach must also use his/her discretion to determine if that swimmer is "ready" for the stroke mentally and physically. The coach also considers where, from a team perspective, it might be beneficial for a swimmer to swim a different stroke to increase confidence or potentially help the team for the next "A" meet selection process. So, you may hear your swimmer saying "but I don't want to swim that"; please work with the coaches to solicit their rationale for the swim. Remember it is a partnership for the benefit of your swimmer's development. Our goal is to build beyond "one stroke wonders" and become well-rounded swimmers!

The coach will never "force" a young swimmer to swim something they are not ready to swim. The coach may balance their sheer nervousness versus what their capability is to try this new or "not loved" event.



Swimmers must work to be a well-rounded swimmer. It is not beneficial to always and only be a "breaststroker". We encourage the ability to swim all four strokes, and when ready, to combine those strokes into the 100 IM.

Parents must remember that the coaches are working with their children daily and see and feel where the swimmer is developmentally. Parents are encouraged to question a choice, but sometimes that swimmer may do something for that coach they wouldn't tell you they are ready for. Remember our coaches put safety of the swimmers first.

## **Appendix - Mini Gators**

At Forest Hollow we encourage all of our swimmers to gain comfort in swimming in meets. The opportunities for Mini Gators are limited, but we work to ensure they get some "meet" opportunities. When the calendar or weather fail our best attempts, we make every effort to find ways in practice or on other occasions to get them a memorable meet experience. Forest Hollow established a new tradition in 2011 – an inter-squad Mini Meet. This opportunity is described below.

As explained above, "B" meets generally allow us the opportunity to have kickboard and assisted freestyle events for our Mini Gators. Here is an overview of each. For further information on Mini Gators and Forest Hollow's program for Mini Gators, see the **Mini Gator Guide**.

### **Mini Gator "B" Meet Events:**

#### **Kick board events:**

Forest Hollow has a tradition of supporting and encouraging swimmers development as soon as they are comfortable in the water. To the extent possible, kickboard events are offered at B meets to allow Mini Gators the opportunity to experience a meet/competition, while gaining comfort in the water. Kickboard events are available to those swimmers who are uncomfortable with swimming without any form of assistance (kickboard or coach). The goal is to gain comfort in the water and to experience a competition. Note: kickboard events are not offered at B meets until after Mini Gator practices begin.

Kickboard events are not official NVSL events, have no specific rules for disqualification, and can be swum assisted or unassisted. They will be listed in Forest Hollow's records/on-line computer system as disqualifications (DQ) without times.

Forest Hollow's Clerk of Course will make every effort to swim "assisted" swimmers with other "assisted" swimmers and "unassisted" with "unassisted". The Clerk will also normally try to follow NVSL processes and swim boys versus boys and girls versus girls. However, for the speed and efficiency of B meets, both of these standards may not be possible. The rule of thumb is we focus on getting the swimmers in the water, versus worrying about who they swim against or how they get across the water.

It is also important to remember that there is no way to "control" whether an "assisted" kickboard swimmer got more assistance from their coach/swimmer than another. This level of assistance is not monitored – these are unofficial events for your child's water development – and will not be considered in the assigning of ribbons. Remember – this is for gaining comfort and swim

development in the water; not for recognizing who came in first or last in the HEAT.

**Assisted Freestyle:**

As Mini Gators progress in their confidence and skills, Forest Hollow will allow them to move from kickboard events to “assisted” freestyle. This is where a coach walks beside them in the pool as they swim across. The coach is allowed to help support them, speed their efforts, or simply walk along beside them. Because the coach is with them, it will result in a disqualification in our records/on-line system. Forest Hollow’s Clerk of Course process and ribbon process will be the same as for Kickboard.

Please also note – some swimmers may not go through the “assisted” freestyle stage. Each swimmer develops at their own pace – allow the development that is right for your child.

**Forest Hollow Mini Meet:**

Forest Hollow will once again host a Mini Gator Meet at Forest Hollow. This is a meet designed to give a special opportunity for our Mini Gators to participate in a meet environment with a smaller and Gator-friendly only crowd. The meet will be held on a Sunday late July. Look for additional details as the season progresses on the website.