

# SHAQ FAQs

*Sep. 2013*

## **Is there a trial period available?**

Yes! Any swimmers considering joining the team are encouraged to take advantage of a two-week trial offer. There is a minimal fee (\$6) which will then be applied to membership if you decide to join the team.

## **Do you have to go to Sweet Home Schools or live in the Sweet Home District??**

No! Our swimmers come from Lockport, Grand Island, Buffalo, the Tonawandas, Cheektowaga and throughout Amherst. However, there is a discount for Sweet Home district participants.

## **How many swimmers are on the team?**

The team has approximately 60 members ranging in age from 8 to 18.

## **Must you do the Learn-to Swim program with SHAQ to be on the team?**

No. The Learn-to-Swim program is available to those interested in improving basic swimming skills from age 5 and up. It is available in the fall, winter and spring. It teaches kids who don't know how to swim at all as well as those who want to learn the competitive strokes. We have had kids "graduate" to the swim club after completing Learn-to-Swim sessions. The Learn-to-Swim program and the Swim Club are totally different programs. You do not have to participate in the Learn-to-Swim program to join the team.

## **How many levels are there?**

The team is made up of roughly three levels. The youngest or "Little Blues" are coached by Jen who works on developing swim technique and acclimating the swimmers to a competitive environment. The middle group or Blue group is coached by Dan who works with swimmers to develop the strength, discipline and confidence necessary to compete at the higher levels. Usually at around age 13 or 14 and based on ability, swimmers will move up to the Gold group, coached by Vince who helps swimmers attain their personal best while reinforcing proper stroke and turn techniques.

## **Where & when is practice?**

Unlike teams that use various pools, practice is always at Sweet Home High School. It is one of the newest pools in Western New York and is an outstanding facility. An observation balcony is available for parents during practice. The schedule for the month is posted on the website and remains fairly consistent throughout the year. We are a year-round swim team. We take a two week break in April and roughly a three week break at the end of August to early September.

**How often is practice?**

Our practice schedule is here on our website. We offer practice six days per week (slightly lighter in the summer). The Blue group swims for 90 minutes per practice while the Gold group swims for 2 hours per practice. There is no attendance requirement for practices, however, the more the swimmer attends practice, the more improvement they will notice. Attending a regular swim routine will not only improve swim technique but help to develop a strong lung endurance. Weight training is also available for Gold level swimmers.

**What about suits or other gear?**

All swimmers practice in racing suits or “jammers” for the boys. They should have good goggles and a spare pair is recommended. At meets, only a blue suit is required. The team does not require that you purchase a special suit for meets each year. SHAQ caps are given to each team member. Swimmers are not required to purchase flippers or any other gear.

**Does the team have other social activities?**

There are several social activities for the swimmer throughout the year. They have included Lasertron, bowling, picnics, a Christmas party, and the swim banquet. The banquet is the culmination of the year’s efforts with awards and a photo-filled memory book for each swimmer. SHAQ, while emphasizing each swimmer attain their personal best, truly has a supportive team environment.

**What about meets?**

Swimmers are invited to participate in various meets throughout the region. There are only usually two to three mandatory swim meets per season. These are also based on the swimmers readiness. All swimmers participate in the SHAQ meet in November. The swimmers skill level will determine the meets attended for the season. Any meet attendance is always open for discussion with the swimmers coach.

**What if a swimmer transfers from another team?**

The Niagara District maintains a policy that a swimmer cannot compete for one team within 120 days of having competing for another team. Swimmers are welcome to join SHAQ at any time. They may participate in meets but, within that 120 day window, may not participate in relays and will be listed as “unattached.”

**SHAQ has been described as an “endurance team.” What does that mean?**

Many teams build skills with extensive use of drill – working repetitively on parts of a stroke. Our underlying principle is to give swimmers the strength and skill they need to complete an event. Rather than have numerous swimmers work on details that may or may not be a problem for that particular swimmer, the low coach-to-swimmer ratio allows stroke and turn corrections are done on a more individual basis.

**How much parental involvement is required?**

The family’s primary role is to encourage and support their swimmer. Parents are encouraged to participate in the monthly parent meetings to stay informed of upcoming events and meets. SHAQ parents are also expected to help at the SHAQ meet in November. We do minimal fundraising which each family participates in.

**How experienced are the coaches?**

As you can see if you read the biographies in the "Coaches" tab, all of our coaches have numerous years of experience.

**How much does it cost?**

Swimming is a year round sport and swimmers are welcome to join anytime. Cost will depend on when a swimmer joins the team and their level (blue or gold). If you join the team after our season begins in September, you will be given a one-time courtesy of prorated dues for that season. Sweet Home School District residents receive a discount.

**What is a GSB Meet?**

A GSB meet welcomes swimmers of all levels: Gold, Silver, and Bronze. Gold swimmers are those who have times that are faster than the "A" time standard. Silver swimmers have times faster than the "B" time standard. "BB" or Bronze times have no speed requirement. Beginning swimmers participate in GSB or ABC meets. These time standards change year to year and with the age of the swimmer. On the swimmers birthday, they "age up" to the next appropriate time standard even if it's during a meet.

**What should a swimmer bring to a meet?**

1. Extra towels and/or something to put over their suit between heats.
  2. Extra goggles! Be prepared in case they are dropped, lost or broken.
  3. Competition suit. (Navy blue)
  4. Cap. Identifies you as a SHAQ swimmer and reduces resistance in the water.
  5. Fluids. Water and or sport drink.
  6. HEALTHY snacks (prepare for a minimum of 4 hours). This would include oranges, bananas, granola bars, trail mix, bagels. It does NOT include candy or soda or caffeinated beverages which will not provide a steady energy source.
- Optional: Something for your feet and money for the vendors.

**What should an observer bring? (You will not be allowed on deck with your swimmer.)**

1. It will be VERY warm in the stands. Wear layers of clothing so you can adjust easily to the temperature.
2. Money for parking and/or program. The programs can be as much as \$10-12. You'll need one or to share one in order to find out when your swimmer is competing.
3. Something to pass the time. Typically, there is a hour or so between events for each swimmer.
4. Something for seating comfort - you'll be on bleachers for hours. Some purchase stadium chairs, bring collapsible chairs or a pad to sit on. The bleachers can be very hard on the back.
5. You'll want beverages and snacks or money to purchase some.
6. I recommend a highlighter and pencil or pen. I like to highlight the program for the events your swimmer is participating in and record their time and place.