

Dear Future Braddock Heights Barracuda's!!!!!!,

My name is Chris Coghill, and I will be the head coach for Braddock Heights this year. For all the returning families, I'm excited to have you back, and for the new ones I am extremely looking forward to working with you this summer. I wanted to go over a couple of things that will be going on this spectacular summer and what to expect during practices and meets and also what goes on during a meet for you.

First, I wanted to introduce myself. This is my second summer as head coach for the Braddock swim team. I was an assistant coach for two years before I became Head Coach. I swam for Braddock Heights from when I was 11 till 18. I went to Brunswick High School, and I swam all four years. I was team captain for three years, and I broke four school records in my high school career. I am currently attending St. Mary's College of Maryland, studying Economics and Political Science, as well as a minor in Mathematics. I am also a member of the varsity swim team, and just finished a very successful sophomore season. This spring, I was voted team captain for St. Mary's team this coming year, and am looking forward to leading that team to new heights as well.

Now let's discuss practices, since they are the majority of time we'll spend together during the season. The 8-9 am practice is the younger kids' (under 11 years old) practice and the 9-10 slot is for the older kids (12 and up). When the swimmers arrive at practice, there will be a table with a sign-in form in a binder next to a box with everyone's 'mailbox' folder. This is where you will find ribbons from the last meet, the team photo (which will be taken later in the summer), as well as occasional team announcements. It is important for everyone to swim in their correct time slot because if the younger kids swim with the older kids they won't be able to keep up because they aren't as experienced as the other kids, and the opposite is true for the older swimmers. This is important because, while it may not seem like it, we work together in practices to push our own abilities, which in turn inspires others to work hard as well. Hard work is contagious, but most effectively at an even experience and skill level. I ask that all parents stay behind the glass of the baby pool because we have found that if your child sees you on the side of the pool, they want to pay attention to you and not the coaches on the deck. Practice is a time for the coaches to work with the swimmers on most effectively improving the swimmers skill set, and that is best done if both groups are solely concentrating on that objective. If you need to talk to me, I'd be glad to talk to you, but only before or after practice (I will usually get to the pool at 7:30 and leave around 10:15). Or if you can't talk to me during those times, you can email me with any questions you have, at the email address provided in your parent folder. If you have a scheduling conflict and you can't make it to your child's appropriate practice, please let me know in advance, if possible, so we can plan accordingly for your child's needs. For every practice, we will swim a warm up, and then get into our set for the day, followed by a cool down. If a child is having particular difficulties with their stroke technique, one of the assistant coaches or I will work to help them correct what they're doing wrong. This season, I am going to place a huge emphasis on developing the right stroke techniques in all our swimmers, particularly our more inexperienced athletes. I believe that developing a good stroke is the best way to improve one's self as a swimmer. No matter how strong or fit you are, you can only go so fast without proper technique, and that is how we are going to take this team to the next level. By ensuring that everyone has a proper stroke, we will open the door to a whole new threshold of swimming speeds, while making practices more effective, easier (in the long run), and most importantly, fun. Also, developing good strokes now will help prevent injury in the future. I also recommend that our swimmers stretch before they come to practice, or while they wait for their practice to

start. Since our practices are only an hour long, we don't have time to dedicate to stretching as a team, but it would be highly beneficial to our success if the swimmers stretched on their own, since flexibility is a much underrated component of swimming.

Now let's talk about the fun part of the season: meets!!! During swim meets there are certain guidelines that all families will need to follow. During the season, each swimmer will have to fill out a meet form, which will include your child's name, age, gender, which meet the form is for, and which events your swimmer feels comfortable swimming, and which they don't. For the first couple of weeks, I will be getting used to everyone's experience, and this is just a tool to help me out. As the season progresses though, I will get to know everyone's swimming capabilities personally. Throughout the season, it will be at my discretion what events the swimmer will compete in during the meets. I will make these decisions based on what I feel is best for your swimmer's experience and enjoyment, as well as where the team needs swimmers, based on everyone's skills as a whole. The meet entries have to be dropped off at the meet box (which is on the table next to the sign in binder) no later than Tuesday of each week. If you turn in your meet entry late, then your child won't be able to participate in the meet. Please make sure to turn in all of your meet entries on time. If you email me saying that you want to participate in the meet that weekend without turning in your form, then I will not be able to accept it as all entries must be provided to the opposing team prior to the weekend.

The meets usually run from 8am-12pm. Warm-ups depend on who is hosting the meet; I will tell everyone our warm-up time each Friday, and what time everyone needs to be there. I want everyone to try to be there before warm-up because the volunteers will have a check in table to make sure that everyone is there. If you are not there on time and fail to check in with one of the volunteers, make sure that you see one of the coaches before the meet starts. Before the meet, I have a coaches meeting with the coach from the other team and the IT person (this person will be managing the meet for scoring). Both coaches will provide their scratches (this is a list of swimmers that were previously shown as swimming but will not be participating in the meet). Once a child is shown as scratched, they cannot swim that day. Be sure that you check in on time and are there for the warm-ups.

The way that the meet is run is the oldest swimmers, 15-18 years old, will swim each event first then each progressively younger age group after that, ending with the 5-6 year olds. There are two relays during a meet; the first one is a co-ed medley relay, and is swum in the middle of the meet. This relay will consist of 2 or 3 girls and 1 or 2 boys, all from the same age group. The order of the medley relay is Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, and Freestyle. The second relay is a crescendo freestyle relay, and is at the end of the meet. This relay consists of 5 boys or 5 girls, with a swimmer from each of the age groups. The first 2 swimmers will each swim one lap (25 meters) across the pool. The remaining 3 swimmers swim 2 laps (50 meters) each. Even if your child is not swimming in the last relay, we still ask that you stay for the entire meet because it is encouraging to the other swimmers to have a big support group when they are swimming their last event. Swimming IS a team sport, after all!!! If you cannot stay for the whole meet (or for some strange reason don't want to???) and your child is in the last relay, please don't leave without telling a coach. If you do this, your child won't be there to swim in the relay, and we won't have known in order to find an alternate to swim on the relay, potentially causing the relay to have to be scratched. This will cause the rest of their relay team to not be able to swim either their event, and will also lose the team points for the meet. If there is a scheduling conflict talk to me personally about it or send me an email before the due date for the meet entry forms.

At the conclusion of the season there is an End-of-Season Picnic and Celebration which will be held at the pavilion behind the Braddock pool. The specific date and time will be given out later when the date gets closer. We will have a picnic style lunch and the coaches will talk about the successes and progress of the season and then we will give out trophies to the swimmers. After all the swimmers have their trophies, everyone who wants to use the pool can. This is where the swimmers get to push the coaches into the pool one last time!

I hope this letter will serve as a good introduction to how the team works and to know what my expectations are for the season. If you have any questions, please feel free to talk to me or email me, I am more than glad as much as I can. I am looking forward to coaching your children this summer and I know it is going to be a great summer for everybody. Last year we had an extremely successful season, on the team level and for all individual members too! However, I'm hoping to trivialize last year when compared to the successes of this coming summer! Let's see what we can do guys! Despite these goals, remember that the most important thing is to have fun, for everyone swimmers, coaches, and parents alike. Let's go Barracuda's!!!

Thank you for listening and let's have a great summer!!!,

Chris Coghill ☺