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SWIMMING RADIO

GRAND RAPIDS AQUATICS

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DATES TO REMEMBER

- **Apr. 8:** 1st Day of Season III
- **Apr. 15-19:** New Swimmer Tryout Week (*Both Sites*)
- **Apr. 20:** Freestyle Starts Clinic (*Ottawa Hills*)
- **Apr. 22 or 23:** Season III Parent Meeting (*Both Sites*)
- **Apr. 26-27:** Calvin Early Bird Meet (*Calvin College*)
- **May 4:** Backstroke Turns Clinic (*Ottawa Hills*)
- **May 25:** JAWS 1st Chance Meet (*Jenison*)
- **May 31-Jun. 2:** MLA Big Red Challenge (*Holland*)

SHORT COURSE SEASON RECAP

Our sport is not an easy one. It takes countless hours of and dedication and hard work, made on the part of athletes, coaches, and families alike. For the past seven months, the Grand Rapids Aquatics team has been working tirelessly at both the East Kentwood and, at times, City pools, striving towards better looking strokes, time drops, and the lifelong lessons that come from a sport built on long haul commitment.



Elliott Austin, August Le, & Ana Smith take their marks at the 2023 Rock the Blocks Winter Invite.

With the reboot of our learn-to-swim program this past winter, the team has grown in its ranks at the developmental levels. Numerous athletes have also jumped up training groups this season. And in competition, we have seen many 1st time

qualifiers to the WMSL A, Regionals, & State Meet level meets (10 & Under, MAGS, & ULTRA).

As a team, GR Aquatics placed **5th** at the *WMSL A -Meet* (our local league championships), **3rd** at the *Michigan Swimming Regionals Meet* (our statewide intermediate group), **19th** at *10 & Under State Championships*, **27th** at the *MAGS (11-14) State Championships*, & **21st** at the *ULTRA (Open) State Championships*. We also saw six team records broken, had two swimmers representing us at the *Speedo Sectionals Meet*, sent our coaching staff to the *ASCA World Clinic* in Dallas, and signed a partnership contract with Arena Swimming.

We would like to congratulate all GR Aquatics athletes on their performances in the Short Course Season (SCY), which ran these past seven months (Season I & Season II). Looking ahead to the Long Course Season (LCM), which runs over Spring & Summer (Season III), we want to continue to build on that progress. Please enjoy these two weeks off (we don't shut down the shop that often) and we hope to see you all back next season, on April 8th, excited and ready to go!

UPCOMING TEAM PARENT MEETINGS

On April 22nd & 23rd, we will be holding two Season III Parent Meetings (one at each site), in order to go over the upcoming season. We are asking that every family have at least one adult representative at one of these, in order to go over important dates, let families meet each other, and ask the coaches any questions you may have.

Topics we plan on covering include: the different training

standards & goals of each training group, the different levels of meets in the competition pyramid (www.graquatics.com/time-standards), how to sign up for swim meets online, age group through senior development, and how to maintain a balanced lifestyle, while striving to be a high level athlete.

This will also be a great time for parents to get to know one another and for anyone with schedule concerns to coordinate car pooling with another family (which we always highly

recommend). We will serve refreshments and hold a general meeting, before splitting off into separate groups (12 & Under and 13 & Over).

Additionally, we be holding two stroke technique clinics - the kind we ran over the fall and spring times years ago - and a New Swimmer Tryout Week (April 15-19). If you know anyone from your scholastic team (high school or middle school) who would like to attend, feel free to bring them to a clinic or to practice for a week!

SPRING READING LIST

“Dedicated: The Case for Commitment in an age of Infinite Browsing”

(Pete Davis)

“Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen”

(Christopher McDougall)

“The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intention and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure”

(Jonathan Haidt, Greg Lukianoff)

STATE QUALIFIERS

Caileb Austin (17)
 Elliott Austin (9)
 Lilianna Austin (14)
 Samantha Blaauw (10)
 Wyatt Cooper (15)
 Taylor Duffey (10)
 Nolan Fitzgerald (14)
 Aliyah Garcia (15)
 Cormac Jacques (11)
 Ewan Jacques (13)
 Cady Kehr (14)
 August Le (10)
 Amelia McCann (14)
 Stefanie Merida Robles (12)
 Isaiah Moss (10)
 Suriaya Moss (12)
 Adwika Nadgauda (14)
 Rutaja Nadgauda (17)
 Yvan Nguyen (12)
 Amelia Peterson (10)
 Quinn Potvin (10)
 Matias Rizkalla (18)
 Jackson Roman (14)
 Danica Sadowski (17)
 Cora Sawyer (12)
 Ana Smith (10)
 Elliott Spry (10)
 Gabriel Van (14)
 Henry Wells (13)
 Teague Westra (17)

GROWTH OF THE GRAND RAPIDS OPEN

Our biggest annual team undertaking most years is the first invitational we introduced to the Michigan Swimming SCY Calendar: our very own Grand Rapids Open. This two-day short course meet was set up to fulfill a couple of team goals.

First, and foremost, it gives our athletes a chance to swim really fast in their home pool. Knowing every tile and backstroke flag is a huge advantage to the experienced athlete, and historically, we have always performed well in our own house (we also appreciate being able to pick the event order). This meet serves as a last chance meet before the gauntlet of

championship meets begins. We strive for 100% team participation in this meet as we pull all the stops, chasing various time standards, before the end of the short course season.

Second, hosting meets has been a great way to fund our program and keep our training



Stefanie Merida Robles, Yvan Nguyen, Suriaya Moss, & Cora Sawyer

costs low. It is no secret that this sport has grown considerably in cost over recent years. We strive to keep our training

groups at an effective coach-to-athlete ratio and to maintain a highly skilled and consistently educated staff. An advantage for teams who are able to host quality meets is that they can pass some of that cost on to other teams. With 16 teams & over 600 athletes in attendance this year, we ran our largest Grand Rapids Open ever!

And finally, the Grand Rapids Open gives our team parents and families a chance to meet and get to know one another (especially across the different training groups), as we showcase our program’s team culture in front of the rest of the swimming community. You all help to define who we are as a team, and this goes beyond just how fast we swim.

COACH’S THOUGHT

“Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.”

- John Wooden

ARENA PARTNERSHIP

This past season, our team partnered with Arena Swimming. Going forward, we have official team suits, which are available online through our team store, that should be worn for all mid season meets. Additionally, GR Members have access to new team-branded gear.

In exchange for joining the Arena family, we will also have free gear & apparel provided by Arena to all athletes who qualify to Sectional level meets and higher, as well as various other team contributions and incentives.

All athletes on the team should have the following training gear for practice:

GREEN/BLACK GROUPS

- Mesh Bag
- Kickboard
- Long Fins

WHITE/BRONZE GROUPS

- Mesh Bag
- Kickboard
- Long Fins
- Front Loaded Snorkel

BLUE/SILVER & GOLD GROUPS

- Mesh Bag
- Kickboard
- Long Fins
- Front Loaded Snorkel
- Pull Buoy
- Hand Paddles



Netta Hall, Taylor Duffey, Judah Moss, Elliott Austin, & Elliot Spry

Team suits, team apparel, goggles, & training gear may all be purchased online through our local vendor (Xtreme Swim) at: xtremeswim.com/collections/grand-rapids-aquatics. Enter the team code “GRA” for access to the full inventory of Grand Rapids Aquatics gear!



SWIMMING...IT'S THE JOURNEY...NOT THE DESTINATION.

THE IMX CHALLENGE

This Long Course Season, we will be holding an IMX Challenge. Swimmers will receive an exclusive Hot Pink Team Cap for completion of all the IMX events in their age Group:



The IMX Events are:

10 & UNDER

- 200 Freestyle
- 100 Backstroke
- 100 Breaststroke
- 100 Butterfly
- 200 I.M.

11-12

- 400 Freestyle
- 100 Backstroke
- 100 Breaststroke
- 100 Butterfly
- 200 I.M.

13 & OVER

- 400 Freestyle
- 200 Backstroke
- 200 Breaststroke
- 200 Butterfly
- 200 I.M.
- 400 I.M.

All events must be completed within the long course season. Upon achievement, each swimmer will receive an IMX score & certificate from USA swimming, including a rank on the team, the LSC, and the nation.

WHITE NOISE

Cut straight from the crypt of GRNSA Newsletters from more than a decade ago, my column on Age Group development is back! There was a time straight out of grad school (from 2011-2013), when I actually published these newsletters monthly - we had fewer swimmers then (and the rent was a lot cheaper).

In this new quarterly instalment of the "Swimming Radio" newsletter (a much more sustainable pace), I am also resurrecting the "White Noise" station. This is where we break through all the

static and exclusively talk about all things to do with intermediate age group swimming.



Ana Smith competes in the 200 I.M. in the 2024 Michigan Open.

Coach Amber has done an amazing job running this level with the Bronze Group (the 2024 10 & Under States results speak for themselves), and as we re-open our fulltime second

site at the Ottawa Hills location, each day after the Gold Group, I will join her as the assistant at this level, and again be coaching the group that I have worked with the longest in my time on this staff.

I'll keep this first one brief, but our theme for the White Group next month will be working on tight streamlines and VERY fast flutter kicks. There is a window in both age and ability, where ankle flexibility can be learned far easier. And there's a reason this radio station got its name!

- Coach Alex

THE BALANCING ACT: HOW DO SWIMMERS DO IT?

In the four year leadup to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Michael Phelps & his coach, Bob Bowman, agreed to meet each other on Sundays, to put in "52 workouts a year that other athletes weren't doing." That might sound excessive to most, but let's remember one important detail...smart phones didn't exist until 2007.

How do we, in today's fast-paced world, maintain the expectations of morning practices, weekend-long meets, and the rigors of feeling run down all the time? Well...it helps if your friends are on your team. The reality is, your social life is going to largely be composed of the people that you get your heart rate up with, as you work towards



The 2024 Short Course MAGS Team gets fired up on for relays on the final day of the State Meet!

goals. So this season, let's all try to put down our screens more and simply live in the moment.

THE GR AQUATICS LEARN-TO-SWIM PROGRAM

No competitive swim program succeeds long term without a strong lessons program. In addition to offering training groups at a second site again, with the reopening of the Ottawa Hills pool, our swim lessons program is going home again! Parents, if you or anyone you know, has a

child looking to learn this life-long (and potentially lifesaving) skill, please sign them up at: www.graquatics.org/lessons, as spring classes are now open and space is filling up fast!

We would like to also take this opportunity to welcome Katie Smith to the GR Aquatics staff as our new swim lessons coordinator! Katie is a team parent, a teacher in the KPS district and

has previously managed Richmond Pool in, where she oversaw the largest swim lessons operation in Grand Rapids.

Athletes, if you are looking for a job this spring that runs right after we get out of the pool (must be 15 years old or older), be sure to contact Katie at:

Katie.Smith@kentwoodps.org
616-320-4491

