

THE FIREBIRD STANDARD

Rise Up To The Challenge

The Official Family Handbook and Team Guide

"Champion swimmers are not built on race day. They are built every day a swimmer chooses commitment over comfort."

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SECTION ONE

Welcome

A Letter from Coach Zion

Dear Firebird Family,

Welcome to another year of the Firebirds.

Whether this is your first season or your third with us, we are honored that you have chosen to become part of our flock.

The Firebirds are much more than a swim team.

We are becoming a community built around pursuing discipline, resilience, commitment, and the belief that every child deserves the opportunity to discover what they can become in and out of the water.

Swimming is one of the most demanding youth sports. It requires athletes to wake up early or stay late, push through difficult practices, compete against the clock, and continue working even when improvement seems slow.

And I have found personally in my own life that these lessons extend far beyond the swimming pool.

- Swimming teaches responsibility.
- Swimming teaches confidence.
- Swimming teaches perseverance.
- Swimming teaches young people that success is rarely instant, but always worth pursuing.

The staff and I believe meets are not won because of natural talent. In fact, talent has little to do with winning. Winning is earned through consistent effort, coachability, teamwork, and families who believe in the process.

That is why The Firebirds place such a strong emphasis on culture.

Every swimmer matters!

Every family matters!

Every practice matters!

This handbook explains who we are, what we believe, and the standards that guide our program.

Thank you for trusting us with your child.

We are excited to watch them grow.

See you on deck.

Zion Hall

ED | Head Coach

Champion's Coaching Inc.

The Firebirds Swim Team



Our Mission

Firebirds develops confident swimmers, exceptional competitors, and outstanding young leaders through high-quality coaching in a positive, disciplined, and supportive environment.

We are committed to:

- Teaching lifelong water safety
- Reducing drowning rates in underserved communities
- Building disciplined, confident athletes
- Creating opportunities for swimmers to compete at their highest potential
- Developing character, resilience, and leadership

Our Vision

To become one of North Carolina's premier competitive swim programs by building a culture where commitment, discipline, integrity, and diversity are valued as highly as performance.

We strive to develop swimmers who are:

- Technically skilled
- Mentally resilient
- Academically responsible
- Respectful teammates
- Confident leaders
- Lifelong advocates for water safety

The Firebird Standard

Standards create consistency. Consistency creates excellence.

We expect:

- Integrity over excuses
- Effort over comfort
- Progress over perfection

- Commitment over convenience
- Team before self

These standards apply to swimmers, families, and coaches.

CHAMPIONSHIP CULTURE

What Makes Firebirds Different

We don't recruit talent — we recruit **committed families**. We measure success by growth, discipline, leadership, consistency, and character. We intentionally build culture; it does not happen by accident.

Every decision answers one question: “**Does this help us build championship people?**”

Championship Swimmer

A championship swimmer:

- Arrives prepared and on time
- Works hard through difficult practices
- Accepts correction with humility
- Encourages teammates
- Respects officials and competitors
- Takes responsibility for effort
- Understands improvement takes time
- Represents Firebirds with integrity

Championship Parent

A championship parent:

- Prioritizes attendance
- Arrives on time
- Encourages perseverance
- Trusts the coaching staff
- Celebrates effort more than medals
- Volunteers when able
- Supports every Firebird
- Communicates respectfully

Parents support. Coaches coach. Swimmers thrive.

Championship Family

A championship family understands:

- Improvement requires consistency
- Difficult practices build confidence
- Commitment requires sacrifice
- Every family contributes to team culture

THE FIREBIRD WAY — Core Values

- **Commitment:** We show up.
- **Discipline:** We choose what is right over what is easy.
- **Coachability:** Feedback is an opportunity.
- **Consistency:** Excellence is built daily.
- **Team First:** We support one another.
- **Excellence:** We pursue continual improvement.

EXPECTATIONS

Attendance

Swimming builds skill through repetition. Missing practice affects technique, conditioning, endurance, confidence, and safety.

- **Attendance Expectation:** ~80% attendance per week

Excused absences: illness, injury, emergency, school function, religious observance, planned vacation, coach-approved.

Unexcused Absences: forgetting practice, optional activities, no communication, “not feeling like it”.

Tardy Policy

0–5 minutes: join practice 5–15 minutes: tardy recorded 15+ minutes: coach decides safest entry 3+ tardies → parent conversation

Meet Participation

Meets teach:

- Race strategy
- Mental toughness
- Sportsmanship
- Confidence

Beginners (Orange Group) is expected to attend the 3 mandatory meets during the short course season and 2 mandatory meets in the long course season. These meets will be marked as “mandatory” on the team meet calendar on our website.

Communication Standards

Families must:

- Notify coaches of absences
- Inform coaches of injuries/illness
- Respond promptly
- Ask questions respectfully
- Address concerns privately

No gossip. No sideline coaching.

One Voice on Deck

Parents cheer. Coaches coach.

Parents should avoid giving technical corrections before, during, or after practice or meets.

Best encouragement:

- “Work hard.”
- “Trust your coaches.”
- “Have fun.”
- “We’re proud of you.”

Parents should be their swimmer’s biggest fan, **not their second coach.**

Outside Lessons

Outside coaching is allowed, but families must communicate with the Head Coach to avoid conflicting instruction.

If outside coaching replaces team practices, coaches may discuss whether Firebirds fits the family’s goals.

Trust the Process

Improvement is not linear. Some practices feel hard. Some races don’t go as planned. Growth takes time.

Firebirds coaches design training with long-term development in mind. Consistency builds confidence and results.

Swimmer Expectations

Every Firebird swimmer must:

- Arrive prepared and on time
- Bring required equipment
- Listen the first time
- Complete assigned sets
- Encourage teammates
- Represent Firebirds with integrity