

## Going to Your First Meet...

*By Andy Kowalewski*

### Before you go....

#### 1. Make sure your athletes are pre-registered.

Make sure that you have sent in your forms to the Club Meets Director. (See the online registration form). PRE-REGISTER for all events; YOU CAN'T assume that you can late register the day of.

#### 2. Take a copy of the meet schedule and rules with you.

Make sure you have the forms for the meet in your bag. Find out your first event start time. Use a highlighter to mark off any events in which your athletes are registered. Look for any possible timing conflicts. Events rarely go on time at most meets; expect this as the norm.

#### 3. Prepare a bag (or bags) to take with you.

We suggest a large bag containing the following types of items:

##### a. A blanket or seating pads for the stands and maybe pillow for your athletes to rest on.

##### b. Things to read or game machines

CD player for the kids (pack extra batteries).

##### c. Healthy drinks and food for yourself and the kids.

(Concession food is OK every once and a while, but it's better to have your own food). **We suggest you take a cooler** and pack in fresh fruit and healthy sandwiches. My family likes to take pre-cooked kabobs, which are easy to eat. Always take lots of fluids, especially if a hot day.

##### d. Extra clothes.

It is important to note that in our area, meet weather can change 3 or 4 times in one day. Make sure you can stay warm -- take layers of clothing. There's nothing worse than freezing in the stands. Take extra clothing for a change after the meet, if you know athletes are going to get wet. Consider keeping towels in the car.

##### e. Uniform, Shoes, Extra spikes, spike wrench.

Make sure that you have all your singlets, shorts, and shoes packed. Always have replacement spikes and a spike wrench in your athlete's bag.

#### 4. A fully charged cell phone (if you have it) and a list of phone numbers.

Take your cell phone, if you have one. Make sure that you have important club phone numbers with you. It's very handy to call parents and give results during a meet, or for locating others.

#### 5. Some money (or your cheque book), in case you need to make registration changes. It's always good to have a little bit of cash on hand.

#### 6. Hats and sunscreen (umbrellas for high jumpers)

It's very easy to get burned at a meet, as you are there usually for many hours. Make sure everyone has sunscreen and hat. If you have a high jumper, make sure that you take a large umbrella. Jumpers can be out in the sun for hours on end, sometimes.

#### 7. Get your map and map book organized.

Get your map and exact location of the meet. I myself always have a map book in the car. I also use [www.mybc.com](http://www.mybc.com) to get a map printed and instructions if I am going someplace new. You just need to have an exact street address for the site. Make sure you know exactly where you are going the day before, at the very least. There's nothing worse than being worried that you are lost, minutes before a meet.

## **8. Make sure that you factor in prep time the morning of and travel time.**

You will need to allow enough time the day of the meet for:

1. Getting ready time
2. Travel time
3. Time to get your number
4. Warm up time; Never arrive at a meet without enough time for your athlete to do a full and proper warm up (I suggest at least one hour before). Always arrive early, so your athletes are relaxed. You don't want to arrive late with the athlete tense and worried.

If you are arriving part way through a meet day, don't assume that schedule is intact. Most meets, unfortunately, do NOT run on time. Events can go early or late, depending on the weather, attendance, and other factors. Assume the worst, and if you get anything better, count your blessings.

## **Leaving for the Meet**

### **1. Make sure you have a check list of all your stuff.**

Make sure you have the following at the very least:

- a. Uniforms, shoes and extra spikes and wrench
- b. Water (lots) in an insulated bottle for your athlete
- c. Warm up clothes, and extra clothes for possible weather changes.
- d. Your umbrella, if you have a high jumper.
- e. Meet schedule and your events list.
- f. Paper and pen
- g. Cell phone
- h. Food for the day

### **2. Have your map and instructions.**

Make sure you know exactly where you are going and your route.

### **3. Leave on time. Don't run late.**

If anything leave a bit early, in case of traffic issues, or to allow for getting lost.

### **4. Be prepared for a long day.**

Don't expect that everything will run like clockwork. It probably won't. Expect to be at the meet longer than you expected. Allow for some time to get final results and get medals or ribbons. If you do end on time, you will be fortunate.

## **When you arrive at the meet...**

### **1. Find the coaches or club director and get your number(s)...**

When you arrive find one of the coaches or directors. One of them will have numbers for the athletes.]

Look for club officials wearing the club warm up suits. Coaches usually wear the club warm up suits. Alternately, look for a parent you know, and find out where the coaches are. If rushed, go to meet registration and ask them to make an announcement for a coach from the club to meet you.

Usually, the one of the coaches or directors will arrive early and pick up a package from the meet registrar containing numbers for all athletes in our club. They will give you a number and some pins for affixing to your singlet. You should check the list of events that they have your athlete registered for, and make sure there are no changes.

If you need to make changes, tell the coach and find out what they need you to do. You may be asked to go the meet registration desk and make your changes there. Don't forget to tell coaches, if you are scratching an athlete for an event.

You can late register athletes for events at most meets, pending timing, how full events are. You will pay a late admission fee, however.

If you are the first to arrive, and no coach is there, and you need your number right away, you can go to the meet registration and pick up the package. Be forewarned that you may be asked to supply extra money to cover last minute registrations for the club; they will not release packages to you usually.

## **2. Look for the club tent and/or seating area**

Usually at most meets, club tents will be set out where you can park your gear (and siblings of athlete) in the shade and out of the weather. Alternately, usually we have an area in the stands.

## **3. Find out where check-in areas are**

It is important that you know where athletes check in. Usually there is an area in the stadium/park where athletes check in for races. However, for jumps or throws, usually check in is close to the areas where the events. Always listen for announcements.

Have your athletes check in on time. Usually meets give first, second and final check in calls over the PA. However, don't assume that you will get a check in announcement at every stage. If your athlete misses a check in, they could miss out on an event. It is an athlete's responsibility to check in on time.

Also, it is very important to let officials know if you are scratching on an event (especially in races). Let them know as soon as you can. Always let your coach know too.

## **4. Keep your ears ready for announcements**

Listen for announcements to tell what events are under way or getting ready. Assess how far in front or behind events are. Listen for schedule changes. Sometimes events are moved forward or back. Always listen to announcements for schedule changes.

## **5. Find out where washrooms are**

Always know where washrooms, especially if you have younger children with you. At some stadiums, it takes a few minutes to get there. Nobody wants an accident.

## **During the day of...**

### **1. Listen to announcements, assess schedule conflicts...**

As the day progress, event timings may slide around all over the place. Jumps may run long; there maybe timing issues for races, etc.

If an athlete is doing races or jumps, you have to watch for potential problems.

### **2. Make sure that your athlete checks in on time and warms up**

Make sure your athletes check in on time. Make sure that they take their equipment with them, if timing is critical. You don't want to be running down to the start line with spikes.

Make sure that your athlete knows how they should warm up for the event, and how long before. Make sure that they are sitting out of the sun. Most meets provide shade for athletes. Athletes should never sit out the sun for long periods of time.

Athletes must stay warm and hydrated. An athlete must remember to drink water. Dehydration is always something that should be guarded against. Athletes should wear warm up suits between events. Athletes should only be out of warm ups just prior to running, jumping or throwing.

Jumpers should have umbrellas on hand and use them on a hot day.

### **3. Handling timing conflicts...**

If an athlete is doing a race and jumps, make sure that you tell event check in of the possible problem. For example, if doing high jump, an athlete must also check in for a race. Races usually take precedence over jumps, so an athlete may have to miss a jump or two to make a race. This is awkward, but it does happen. Be prepared for it.

Always, make sure that your athlete tells check in of potential problems. Meet officials will make allowances wherever possible, if they know. However, don't assume that the meet revolves around your athlete -- it doesn't; please be reasonable.

### **4. Check with coaches on hand**

Don't be afraid to talk to your coaches about any questions you have on warm up, the condition of your athlete, and if there are concerns about anxiety. New athletes need more support than experienced ones. Remember, they don't know exactly what to expect. Talk to the coaches present (or directors, if your coach is unavailable). Don't hesitate to ask.

### **5. Check for results, but be patient**

Check for results. Usually results are posted in a central area and by age and sex.

Results usually take some time to become available, especially if a race is close. At some meets, an event posting may take over an hour to appear.

Check for accuracy. Mistakes, though not common, do happen. If you are concerned ask for a coach or director to lodge a change request. Don't wait! DO IT RIGHT AWAY. Note -- On races, if you are using a stop watch, your hand time will rarely agree with posted times. Your hand time will usually be less than the official time.

Result postings tend to take longer as the day progresses.

### **6. Getting awards and ribbons**

You will not be able to claim any awards or ribbons until final event results are posted. Do not go to the awards desk, until the event is posted officially. They will not hand out any awards, until everything is official.

When you go to the awards, you will be asked to give the event identification information and the athletes name. Athletes usually pick up their own ribbons or awards.

At the end of the meet, unclaimed awards will be sent to the club, but this may take some time.

You can get coaches or other parents to pick up for you, if you can't stay.

Sometimes, awards will be presented during the meet on a podium. This will not usually be done for all events, just selected ones.

### **7. Handling those rare situations of disputes**

If you have a situation that requires a dispute, it is important that you post a dispute right away. You must do it right away.

Disputes are rare at most meets; But they can happen. I have seen jumps run incorrectly; I have seen athletes bump other athletes off the track intentionally. They are rare, but do happen, and should be protested. Everyone wants a fair meet and a fair competition.

The best thing to do is to have your coach or a club director do it. However, if you have a problem with during a jump or throw, or during/after a race, look for the meet director or a BC Athletics official (they all wear name batches with BC Athletics clearly marked on it) and lodge your protest right away. This is especially important during a jump or throws competition. Don't wait until a throws or jump competition is

over; usually this is too late.

Just tell the coach or official that you wish to lodge an immediate protest, and the nature of the protest. DO NOT HESITATE -- if you feel you must, do it right away!

### **8. What if you need to scratch an event**

Athletes do get hurt during a meet or get sick. It is OK to scratch from an event, as long as you tell meet registration, and your coach. Always, tell the check in officials right away.

PLEASE do not just not show up, or leave the meet early, without telling anyone that an athlete has scratched. This is very poor form, and may affect other athletes.

### **At the end of the day...**

#### **1. Waiting for results and medals...**

Every athlete wants to go home knowing their results and with awards or medals.

However, at some meets, it may take over an hour at the end of the day to get results. You and your athletes can make the call. However, at some meets, you may wish to have medals sent on later.

Discuss this possibility with your athletes and make your own choices.

#### **2. Make sure you collect all your gear...**

Make sure that you grab all your gear. Usually, everyone is pretty tired at the end of the day. However, make sure that you check your seating area for all your stuff. Don't assume that someone else has it.

Our family always does a verbal talk through of all the gear to make sure that one of us has it. Even still, we have left things behind at meets (forever).

#### **3. Check for schedule changes for the next day...**

If this is not the last day of the meet, check for any schedule changes for the next day, so that you can save yourself some grief. Sometimes, events are cancelled or re-scheduled, as a meet progresses.

### **Before you go...**

Pre-register

Take a copy of schedule

Pack your meet bag

Take your cell phone

Pack hats, sunscreen, umbrellas

Have your directions and map organized

Plan to get there at least 1 hour before your athlete competes (get up early, and allow travel time)

### **Leaving for the meet...**

Make sure you have a checklist for all your stuff

Make sure you have your directions, map and cell phone (just in case)

Leave on time

Be prepared for a long day

### **When you arrive at the meet...**

Find the coach or director and get your number(s)

Look for club tent or club area in stands

Find out where check in areas are  
Listen for announcements to see how the meet is going  
Find out where washrooms are

**During the day...**

Listen for schedule changes; assess potential timing conflicts  
Make sure your athletes check in when called; listen for the announcements  
How to handle timing conflicts...  
Make sure athletes warm up on time  
Check with the coaches on hand re: any questions on warm ups, or how to compete  
Check for results but be patient; make sure that results are correct  
Getting awards and medals  
Handling those rare situations of disputes  
What if you need to scratch out of an event

**At the end of the day...**

Waiting for results and medals  
Make sure that you have all your gear  
Check for any schedule changes for the next day, if this is a 2 day meet