

Swim Suit Fitting: A New Parent's Guide **By Brigitte Lemos**

I took on the Apparel Manager position before I knew a thing about suit fitting. I've learned a lot over the last few months and I get the same amazed look from parents when I tell them that their child needs a much smaller size than the one they've got on. So, I wanted to take this opportunity to educate you on suit fitting.

The Team Suit

First things first: our official team suit is a black Speedo Proback (girls), Jammers (boys) or Briefs (boys) in Lycra with the SSC logo. Typically, the team holds suit fitting days twice a year. We need a minimum of 25 for a screening run, so if you want a suit, order it during one of the advertised fitting days. If you are new to the team and don't have a team suit, a plain black suit works just fine.

How Should It Fit?

The swimmer is always the key. He or she should be comfortable in the suit. Having said that, you need to remember that Lycra and chlorine bond, and Lycra always loses. You see the suit stretch, fade and become see-through as time and chlorine take its toll.

For a proper fitting Proback, the suit should fit tight---remember it will stretch out a bit. You may want to wear it to practice a couple times to stretch it out. The straps, when pulled up, should come up to the bottom of the earlobe. Anything past that would indicate that the suit is too big. There should only be a few wrinkles when the swimmer turns from side to side. There may be some "extra" on the lower back, but it's just the way the suit is cut. Don't be afraid to try on several sizes.

For Jammers, the same things apply. The suit should fit tight around the waist, thighs and bottom, and hit the swimmer right above the knees.

Your Apparel Manager may send your swimmer back to the locker room with a size that seems impossibly small to you, but trust the Apparel Manager, you'll end up with a better fitting suit if you try on a variety.

The "Fast Suit" Question

Invariably as your new swimmer becomes more savvy, the question comes up "Mom, when can I get a Fastskin?" It's usually when your Age Group swimmer spies a Fastskin II or some other type of performance suit on an 8-year old at a Challenge Meet.

If you are not familiar with the concept of a "fast" suit, here's a quick (and very simplified) lesson: these types of racing suits are the result of technology that reduce drag and therefore, in theory make the swimmer go faster. This is important if .001 of a second is the difference between a gold medal and a silver

medal at the Olympics. Perhaps you remember the stories of Australian Olympian Ian Thorpe who had a suit developed especially for him by Adidas? It took him 2 hours and a couple of assistants to put it on. You get the picture. Not all “fast” suits are quite that intense, but there are many out there, the Speedo Fastskin II currently being the most popular.

Here’s the deal: the StingRay coaching staff strongly discourages the purchase of a “fast” suit for Age Group level swimmers for several reasons:

1. They are expensive. Here’s the breakdown: a regular Speedo Proback (Lycra) which is our standard team suit will run you about \$47. A Fastskin II Recordbreaker is \$118. That’s not a typo, it’s one hundred eighteen dollars! If you have an Age Group swimmer and are considering this type of suit, see your Apparel Manager, and I guarantee you, she will talk some sense into you. If the sheer economics don’t get you, read on, there are a couple other things to consider.
2. They are not very durable and they don’t last long. For instance if your swimmer sits on the concrete and moves her bottom ever so slightly, she will damage her FSII and you can kiss your \$118 goodbye. Yup, it can happen that quick.
3. Most importantly, and here’s the coaches talking: they are not critical for this young age. The coaching staff emphasizes that at this point in a swimmer’s development, stroke mechanics are more important than a “fast” suit.

Swimming is already an expensive sport without considering a special suit for your Age Group swimmer. However, just like everything else in life, there is a caveat: if your Age Group swimmer qualifies for a high level meet such as PNS Champs or Sectionals, the coaching staff does not mind if you purchase one of these suits as a special “reward”. Still, it is by no means a requirement for swimming in these upper level meets.

Is a “fast” suit a good investment at this stage of your swimmer’s development? Not unless your swimmer is a prodigy and nailing Champs and Sectionals time right out of the chute. Good conditioning, mental strength and awesome coaching is much more valuable than a \$100+ suit and goes a heck of a lot farther.

Questions

If you have any questions, ask the Apparel Manager for your pool or contact a member of the Mentoring Committee.