2026 SLAP pre-HPS Program

"Where fun meets focus—and the HPS journey begins."

Mission & Vision:

The SLAP Pre-HPS program introduces athletes aged 10+ and their families to the training culture and expectations of the SLAP High Performance Squad. The SLAP coaches use a fun and supportive environment to help the pre-HPS athletes build strong technical fundamentals, healthy training habits, and a love for the process. The program gradually introduces structure, accountability, and responsibility. Pre-HPS serves as a clear pathway into HPS and helps athletes and parents understand the physical, mental, and time demands of high-performance triathlon so they can decide together if they are ready to commit to the next level.

Staff:

- **Head Coach: Sara McLarty** – Former USA Triathlon National Team member, multiple World Championship swimming medalist, Olympic team leader/coach. Background as an NCAA swimmer (University of Florida) and youth & junior triathlete.
- **Coach: Jodie Stimpson** – Commonwealth Games Champion, WTS podium finisher, and professional triathlete across short- and middle-distance racing. Specialist in running performance.
- **Assistant Coach: Omar Rodriguez** – USAT Certified Coach with a long history of athlete development in Puerto Rico. Father of SLAP HPS athlete.
- **Team Manager: Amanda McKnatt** – Oversees operations, logistics, and athlete-family communication. Triathlete and passionate supporter of the SLAP Tri Team.

Qualifications & Readiness:

Pre-HPS is a coach-guided, invitation-based program designed for young athletes who show a strong interest in training and racing. Athletes considered for pre-HPS demonstrate self-motivation, passion for the sport, and a willingness to commit to regular practices and continued skill development. They enjoy the challenge of racing, learning, and improving, and are eager to push themselves in a positive team environment.

To ensure athletes are prepared for the physical demands of the program, participants should:

- be active members of a swim team
- swim 100 yards freestyle in under 2:00
- run 1 mile in under 10:00
- ride a road bike with clipless pedals & tri-specific cycling shoes

Standards are used as guidelines and may be adjusted at the discretion of the coaching staff based on athlete development and readiness.

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The pre-HPS Season:

The SLAP pre-HPS season typically runs from September through December, aligning with the HPS off-season. The program includes 6–8 in-person weekend sessions, each approximately two hours long, designed to introduce athletes and families to the training environment, expectations, and structure of the HPS. Sessions focus on skill development in all three disciplines, basic race skills, and learning how to train with purpose in a fun, age-appropriate setting. When possible, the season builds toward a simple end-of-season challenge or event to practice preparation and execution, even when formal racing options are limited for younger athletes.

Training Structure:

Pre-HPS pricing is determined each season based on the total number of scheduled sessions and will be communicated prior to registration. The program includes coach-led in-person training sessions and a structured introduction to the HPS training model. Athletes are onboarded to TrainingPeaks and receive simple weekly workouts to learn how to follow a schedule, use their Garmin, and complete additional swim, bike, and run training outside of group sessions with parent support as needed.

Coaches provide guidance and feedback throughout the program to help athletes build accountability, consistency, and basic training independence. Pre-HPS is designed to prepare athletes and families for the communication, responsibility, and commitment expected at the HPS level, without the full scope or intensity of the year-long HPS program.

Family Involvement & Obligations:

Parents play an important role in the pre-HPS experience and will be learning alongside their athletes. One session will include a Q&A with the coaching staff, and another will feature a Q&A with experienced HPS parents who can share real-world insight from years in the program. Families are encouraged to attend as many pre-HPS sessions as possible to support athlete connection and communication, though attendance is not mandatory, and we fully understand conflicts and absences.

Athlete safety is our highest priority. Parents are strongly encouraged to complete USA Triathlon SafeSport training as an added layer of protection alongside our certified coaching staff. By working together, families and coaches help create a positive team culture where athletes feel supported, protected, and empowered to thrive. Families can complete the online course HERE.

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Wellness & Academic Balance:

At SLAP, we recognize that pre-HPS athletes are young students first, with school, family, and social responsibilities that come before sport. Our goal is to help athletes build healthy habits and a positive relationship with training while protecting their long-term physical and emotional well-being. Athletes are encouraged, with parent support, to prioritize sleep, nutrition, recovery, and fun as part of their overall development.

We also value strong school engagement and open communication. Families are encouraged to share academic or scheduling conflicts in advance, so training expectations remain realistic and supportive. Mental well-being is just as important as physical readiness, and athletes should feel comfortable talking with coaches or parents if they feel overwhelmed, tired, or frustrated. By promoting balance at this stage, pre-HPS helps lay the foundation for healthy routines, confidence, and resilience as athletes grow into higher levels of training.

Expectations & Athlete Development Process:

Pre-HPS is a learning and development program. Our goal is to teach athletes and families what is expected in a structured training environment while supporting growth at an age-appropriate pace. If an athlete is struggling to meet pre-HPS expectations related to effort, behavior, communication, or follow-through, coaches will address concerns using the following process:

1. Conversation and guidance with the athlete, with parents informed, to clarify expectations and provide support.
2. Short-term focus period with clear and achievable goals to help the athlete build consistency and confidence.
3. Program reevaluation, which may include adjusting participation or recommending a different SLAP pathway if pre-HPS is not the right fit at this time.

This process is designed to support learning, safety, and enjoyment while helping families make informed decisions about future participation in the HPS.