

Notes from the USA Swimming Age group Chairs Workshop  
April 22-24, 2005  
Bill Marlin, PVS Coaches Rep.

**The Event:**

USA Swimming sponsored a weekend workshop for all LSC Age Group Chairs at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs. Attending were 36 LSC Representatives, plus eight of the ten members of the USAS Age Group Planning Committee, the Program Development Vice President, and many USAS staff members.

**Overall impressions – where we stand:**

1. PVS is strong in terms of organization and information dissemination. Many Age Group Chairs operate alone and with out any type of committee support. Here in PVS we have the support of the Coaches Competition Committee meetings but that may not be enough.
2. Where we don't measure up is in the area of "fun". Other LSC's have more creativity in their meet programs.
3. Parent education continues to be an area we need to improve. We will start to address this with the Swimposium in Oct. of this year. Perhaps a parent education section can be added to the PVS web site.
4. 4. We are urged to develop clear working definitions of and objectives for "age group" and "senior" swimming, to be used consistently in framing LSC program development. It seems that we have made a few attempts at this in our past but have not produced a finished product.

**What the National Team coaches want from the Age Group Programs:**

The national team coaches were meeting elsewhere in the complex. Prior to speaking to us, the keynote speaker (Ruby Newell-Legner) met with them informally and asked what the message should be to the country's age group program planners. The Answer:

1. Remember that age group swimming is more than just 12 & Unders
2. Put in place a logical, sequential meet program
3. Keep it fun and keep 'em coming.

There is some challenge for all, including those of us from PVS, in these short lines.

**Parent Education:**

We are urged to develop a "parent philosophy" on the LSC level:

- Enjoy the Sport
- Understand the sport
  - Swimming, competitions, structure and purpose
- Role of Parent

The USAS handbook is being re-worked and will be distributed when completed. We have already received a copy of the USA Swimming parent presentation for our swimposium which will allow us to present it at future programs. We can modify it as needed. Some of the most useful content was an outgrowth of USAS's "Sports Science

Summit” held in 1998-9 as a multidisciplinary study of athlete development. It is in the best interest of both our swimmers and our program to try to get some of this material in front of as many parents and coaches as possible. I strongly suggest that this be a priority initiative of the Age group Committee in the coming season(s).

Among the suggestions were:

1. Parent Education information can be included in meet programs.
2. An LSC registration packet (or individual team registration packet) can include information on our programs, the LSC philosophy and where the parent fits in, and a guide to web resources. This can also go up on the PVS web site in a parent education section if one is created.

### **Coach Education:**

In the specific area of coach educational programs:

- The Sports Science Summit produced analysis of swimmer development that is highly relevant to all aspects of age group coaching: training, skills development and social/psychological. One simple concrete recommendation is that coaches track growth metrics for all their swimmers at least twice a year. (eg. Height & weight) to be able to follow their developmental stage as well as their chronological age.
- It was observed that many (or most) of the coach education programs tend to target the experienced coaches. Yet many of our entry level and developmental swimmers are coached by younger coaches, including rookie coaches. Many new coaches “coach the way they last remember being coached” and their freshest memories may be college swimming, not 10 & Under swimming. This points to the need for targeted education programs at the LSC level. This is why PVS is offering an age group coaches track at this year's Swimposium and NOT a Senior coaches track. It was noted that a mentoring program pairing experienced coaches with those new to the profession or to age group coaching can accomplish the same goals.

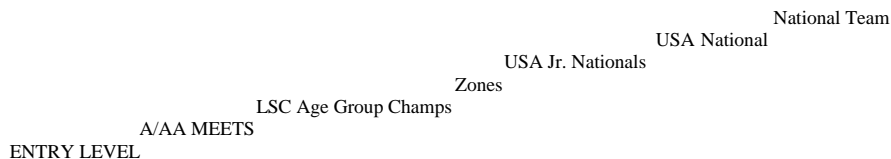
### **Creativity and Fun:**

We shared ideas of many creative meet formats. We came up with the idea of submitting all the meet announcements for these to USAS and creating a meet format library on the USAS website. Some examples:

- Meets with cookouts or social / dances following (one LSC – winning team gets steaks, second place team gets burgers and others get hotdogs)
- Duel or intersquad meets where Sr. swimmers act as coaches for age group kids
- “boarder Brawl” with neighboring LSC
- All boy / all girl meets
- Mystery meets or events – swimmers get to the blocks and event is picked at random from a hat...or IM meets where the order of strokes is picked out of a hat
- Theme meets (coaches and swimmers dress up)
- Iron Man meet – (200 fly – 400 IM – 1650 for each swimmer)
- 8 & Under skills meets
- round robin duel meet schedule

### **A Logical Progression:**

We are urged to develop or programs around a “progression ladder” which allows athletes, coaches and parents to understand where they are and where they can go in the sport. This is only an example:



### **Camps:**

We received a preview of the proposal to be made at this falls convention:

- USA Swimming funding of LSC age group “catch the Spirit” camps will be ending. The materials will still be available. This program has been used by only a few LSC’s recently.
- The funding will be re-directed into a new series of Zone Select Camps (One for each of the 4 Zones) Each Zone will select the swimmers with the fastest 2 times (swum at any LC Meet) per event per sex. Each swimmer can only represent one event – that with their highest power point rating, so a total of 26 boys and 26 girls will be chosen for the 2 ½ day camp. Girls must be 12/13 at time of qualifying and boys 13/14. the head Coach will be selected from a different Zone to avoid conflicts. Assistant Coaches will be drawn from LSC Zone Team Head Coaches.
- Selection will be in September for a May camp
- USA Swimming will pay for the camps, but the swimmers must transport themselves there. It is hoped that the LSC’s will pick up some of the cost as well.
- The Zone Select Camps are viewed as a step in the progression that then includes the national Select Camps and National Junior Team.

This plan makes sense but will have to be budgeted for.

### **Time Standards:**

USA swimming is developing a new “power point” ranking system which will be exclusively part of the next version of Hy-Tek Meet Manager. This idea is to improve upon or replace the current motivational Time Standards with more flexible, comprehensive system. Each Event and single age will have a correspond to 800 points on a scale of ZERO to 1300, and all times will map to a point value that is meant to be comparable across events, age groups, etc. Hy-Tek will have the ability to print point values with results.

- Power point values can assist in planning our own meet time standards
- Swimmers may compare themselves to others in other age groups or events
- Swimmers can measure their own progress as they age up one year at a time

- LSC's and clubs can compare strengths and weaknesses in age groups and events.
- Meets could be scored on national Power Points, which takes away the element of who happens to show up
- Boys like to "keep score" and since each swim, from the fastest swim to the slowest swim, gets a power point score it may help to keep boys in swimming

**Boys in Swimming:**

We heard a preview of the highlights of the report of a task force set up to assess and study the imbalance in participation between boys and girls in swimming and recommended action. In Summary, they found a serious and growing problem. There are many recommendations which were presented to the USAS board including:

- LSC's are urged to help expose boys to college swimming
- Alternative meet formats to help retain boys in swimming
- Coach Education – A national position paper will be produced on this topic
- Practice and training – recommendations include separation of boys and girls in practice and camp situations where possible. Specific motivational programs at the club level.
- Parent education – A number of national and local initiatives.
- Recognition – support movement to single age group records and top 16 at the national level, LSC and club level.
- Organizational relationships – work to resolve conflicts w/ H.S. swimming and summer leagues.

**LSC Age Group Chairs Goal Sheet** was shared with the body.