

2009-2010 Disability Report

The focus of the last year has been to move disabled athletes into the same categories as the Isc's able bodied athletes. This has been done in the following ways:

1. Financial reimbursement for travel. The forms were simplified, and the travel reimbursements were put in line with corresponding meets for able bodied athletes. This enabled more swimmers to travel to meets that were higher level, and see how they compared on the national and world scene. MSI now has a matching form for all disability meets for any given season.
2. Exposure. Due to the relationships that some of our coaches have had with media sources, several Minnesota athletes have been profiled on local and national(The Today Show) television this year, raising levels of awareness for the sport of swimming, as well as disability swimming.
3. Participation rates. These rates have been growing in part to the extra exposure, and the heightened awareness by coaches of opportunities for disabled swimmers.
4. Success and Awards. Minnesota has 3 athletes that made the World Championship Team! Anna Eames, Mallory Weggeman, and Justin Zook(formerly of Minnesota). There have also been American and World Records set by these athletes this year, including Blake Adams from Storm! Also, Coach Jim Andersen was awarded a USOC Paralympic Coach of the Year. Coach Tom Franke is one of the Coaches for the World Championships later this summer.

Minnesota continues to produce great disabled athletes. The primary goal of the upcoming year is to get more disabled swimmers in the water, and qualifying for the higher level meets. Inclusion into the upcoming Speedo Championship Series, as well as the Grand Prix series gives these swimmers a chance to race in the best pools, experience higher level meets, and gain prelim/finals experience. It will be important for coaches to identify and promote those swimmers with disabilities that would gain from participation in paralympic swimming. It is a win/win situation for Minnesota swimming to support these athletes as they further the mission for all swimmers in the state.

Respectfully,

Denise Carlson-Disability Chair