

2012 Convention Report General Chair

Every time I attend a USAS Convention, I am amazed at the changes I see, the “buzz” of the convention attendees and the things I am able to learn. It is those positive changes I see that create the optimism I have for swimming to gain a foothold in the mainstream of United States athletics. Four years ago, I viewed swimming as a sport everyone got excited about every four year (Olympic years). This last year, Minnesota saw a consistent growth of athletes that was echoed across the country as I listened to other General Chairs talk about the adaptations in meets, pool time and availability of elite to beginner meets that they needed to meet the needs of the swimmers in their LSCs. The “buzz” for the General Chairs was how to make the most of the House of Delegates meeting. Many creative methods were discussed on how to get all the stakeholder clubs to engage in the planning of the events for the LSC. The opportunities I learned about when I sat in on the National Disability Committees meeting. The days I attended the convention were enlightening and interesting from the General Chair’s perspective.

The General Chairs were fortunate to have Aaron Peirsol speak at our luncheon. He offered the insight of an Elite athlete to a retired elite athlete. His ability to look in retrospect and see the future coming was refreshing, heart-warming and a bit humorous. I sat at a table that had California, Iowa, Maryland and Colorado General Chairs. It was interesting to hear perspective, teasing and serious discussion concerning the LSCs growth and meet schedules. It was nice to know that many states were feeling the growing pains that we have experienced in Minnesota.

The General Chairs meeting was aimed at how the LSCs use their House of Delegates meeting. Some use the format to get business as well as education meetings in for the clubs. Some LSCs have a House of Delegates meeting twice a year. Some create benefits to the teams that attend the meeting; some make attendance a financial benefit. The LSCs all agreed that that is an important meeting for all clubs to gather and discuss everything from policy to discussion about meets/meet schedule. The importance of the House of Delegates is not lost on the General Chairs.

The most interesting meeting I attended was the National Disability Committee. It was encouraging to see the coaches forming options for all athletes to compete at the State level. The clubs that were invested in their swimmers with disabilities had creative ways of inclusion. The committee’s efforts and continued growth of numbers of swimmers with disabilities will drive the inclusion of these athletes into the mainstream swimming events across the nation.

This is the last USAS Convention I will attend. I have many memories of long meetings, Roger’s Rules and the people that I have had the pleasure of sitting with through the years. I encourage anyone with an interest in swimming and athletes to attend the convention to truly appreciate the efforts it takes to keep swimming at an elite level, as a sport for all athletes and to see a community driven for success.

Respectfully submitted,
Natalie Kuramoto
General Chair