

12-18 September 2005

To: PNS Board of Directors
From: Scott C. Haase, Administrative Vice Chair

Subject: 2005 USA Swimming Convention Summary

Reference: USA-S Convention, 9/12-18 September 2005, Greensboro NC

Below is a brief summary of the meetings or pertinent conversations I participated in while attending the 2005 USA-Swimming (USA-S) Convention held in Greenboro, North Carolina.

As a first time delegate, my primary goal at this convention was orienting myself within and learning about USA-S through attending meetings of interest. Additional goals included gathering information pertinent to the operation of PNS as an LSC as well as PNS Clubs, and representing PNS in discussions and debates, and voting as a member of the PNS delegation to the USA-S House of Delegates (HoD).

This report documents the primary messages (**Bolded**) I gathered in the meetings I attended. Additional information and reports should be obtained from other PNS representatives in attendance: Lyle Campbell, Ken Breiding, Dave Coddington, Sean Hutchinson, Ash Milad, Trent Staley, Kiko Van Zandt. In addition, Mike Dunwiddie, director of WKCAC was also in attendance. Recommendations for action are **Bolded, Underlined, and in Red.**

Tuesday, 13 September 2005

LSC Leadership Workshop –

This was lead by Sue Anderson, a staff member at USA-S, in the club development division.

This workshop was divided into two sections: Board Basics, and the Functioning Board. The primary message of the Board basics workshop was that **successful programs have a clear ‘Mission’ or ‘Vision’ and a supporting ‘Strategic Plan’** to accomplish or implement the Mission. Significant discussions included the importance of instilling that Mission and plan into the whole organization. Once instilled, it can be used from board/organization generation to generation as a guide and direction for planning and implementation of provided services and products. Organizational missions may, of course address many different issues, but without one, the organization is effectively a car on a road with (perhaps) a driver or (more likely) many drivers and no destination. Examples of Club mission statements can be found on the USA Swimming website in the swim clubs:sample Club Documents area.

Additional messages from this section included a need to fulfill the obligations of the Board – legal, operational and directive, and **a need to regularly evaluate performance against the mission and strategic plan.**

The second part of this workshop addressed a few suggestions on **how to make the Board operate more efficiently.** One suggestion that was made was to ensure that Board members **prepare for board meetings ahead of time.** One goal that was suggested was the **use of agendas of consent.** In this approach, officers present written reports ahead of the meeting and distributed with the agenda and inclusion in the minutes. These items are reviewed by Board members BEFORE the meeting, and a simple up/down assent vote is given mostly with no discussion. Exceptions are only allowed if a Board member asks that a particular item be brought up or ‘pulled’ for discussion. We also talked about Board member responsibilities. There was some discussion of the **difference between a ‘Governing’ board, and a ‘Managing’ board.** My impression is that the former monitors operations and applies corrections as needed, spending time with visionary aspects and leadership and the latter is involved in day-to-day operation. It was stated that **without effective committees, a Board is micro-managing.** Another item that was discussed was a need for an awareness of the **importance of Board Building.** Assess the strengths, weaknesses and of the Board – and the dictates of the Mission and Strategic plan – and find people to fill those holes instead of simply finding and twisting arms to fill positions. It was suggested that it might be good to look outside the LSC for Board members, e.g., business or community leaders, other non-profit leaders, etc. Along with this was a mention of a **need for a full orientation package for new Board members** with information such as the organization’s vision, and strategic and business plans, demographics, operations, history, and clear role descriptions.

This workshop was largely a subset of the Club Leadership/Business Management full-day class offered on the last day of the convention. Much of the material is pertinent to any organization. I will be requesting a set of charts from the meeting leader after the convention.

I recommend that the PNS BoD review this presentation and pursue the development of a Vision and Strategic Plan, and the improvement of the existing orientation package to include the suggested information.

Western Zone Forum -

This was led by John Kinney the Senior Zone Director. This was largely an open discussion of issues before the Zone and the HoD this year. Below is a list of the main points discussed:

- * Ideas for increasing the flexibility for the Zone Board to spend zone money
- * Proposal to separate Zone governance By-Laws from operating procedures (also being proposed at USA-S level in the HoD legislation package this year)
- * Proposal for new 3-year rotation through primary official positions at Zone meets
- * Requiring Sectional hosts to split travel costs with Zones for Zone director to attend Sectional meet
- * Proposal to handle at least some Zone issues at Zone meet, instead of waiting to subsequent HoD to address

We also talked briefly about USA-S legislative proposals and the potential changes it will make to USA-S as it makes many of the committees bound to the USA-S instead of the HoD, creates a new standing committee for LSC development, and moves AG Development to a 'special committee'. At my request, we talked about the general feelings about the proposal to remove the right for first time delegates to the HoD to vote. I voiced strong negative feelings about this proposal, and its consequences, feelings that were echoed by both John Kinney and Mary Jo Swalley – the USA-S Local Admin Vice Chair.

Wednesday, 14 September 2005

The Early Show for New Delegates –

This was lead by Judy Elroy, the chair of the Education Committee, and was emceed by athletes Trent Staley and Sarah Sofelt.

This meeting provided some introductory material on what USA-S is about and what is going on here at the convention and in USA-S in general. This was a multi-speaker format including several staff and USA-S committee leaders.

Communications –

This meeting was chaired by Ed Dellert, the committee chair.

Much of the discussion centered on improving the use of USA-S, and Club websites, and engaging with the media. One thing that was mentioned was the use of something called RSS feeds to your website, to automatically bring in content from USA-S or other content suppliers. Another thing that was mentioned was something called Google Words which is a way to potentially generate income from the website by adding word links to sellers of related merchandise. Use of web-host provided statistics as a way to drive the content of your site, and use of 2 way communication on the website was also discussed.

We also talked a bit about the difficulty of getting into or engaging with the regular press.

It was suggested that USA-S develop a guidebook for both initial website development and media engagement.

Most of the discussion of communications, in particular websites, was on how to use it to generate growth in the swimming community. It was suggested that swimming advertising might try to target women more as the person felt that they largely direct where the kids go.

I pointed out that – at least in PNS – the problem is not lack of demand, but lack of facilities and asked whether USA-S had any communications oriented on engaging the community for support. The response was that there really was nothing that directly met this need although several

homegrown approaches were suggested: most easily summarized as “Be visible”. Join and participate in any/all business organizations (Chambers of commerce, Lions clubs, Churches, PTSA's, a group called MOMS) and pursue direct engagement with local political leaders/organizations.

Other ways to make our presence known would be to distribute shirts or other wearable items to every member with the PNS logo and website. Perhaps there are other ideas. They suggested that we contact USA-S club development for Public Service Announcements or other presentation materials to take to these groups to explain the needs and the community. Mention was made of a new “We want you to join our team” promotion that is available, also “Just add water”, and “After the Gold Rush”. All are available from USA-S.

I recommend that PNS develop a program for and take a leadership role in local, state and perhaps national level community engagement efforts with respect to PNS swimming. I believe this will open doors and help our clubs and communities or other related organizations recognize and perhaps address what I believe is the major issue hindering advancement of aquatic sports in our LSC.

Safety/Risk Management Workshop –

This was lead by Sandra Pierson(sp?), although several speakers talked.

A **Facilities Safety checklist was reviewed and recommended for use before each meet** that is run. I asked if it was a requirement for insurance and they said that at this time it was only a recommendation. This checklist is part of the USA-S Safety Guidebook, which is available on the USA-S website.

An interesting briefing was given on **Lightning awareness**. This is not a huge problem in our area, of course, but it would be good to be aware of it anyway. He pointed out 2 websites with good material on lightning awareness – NOAA, and the National Lightning Safety Institute (Reference 6).

Then we reviewed the **USA-S Safety Marshal guidelines** – also found on the USA-S website. **Although it is commonly perceived to be so, this job is not just a ‘meet warmup’ thing.** The only requirement for safety marshals is that they be USA-S members to ensure coverage by USA-S insurance.

Surprisingly, to me, there **is no required training, and no recommendation for how many marshals are required to provide reasonable coverage.** At my request, we engaged in a **discussion of the difficulty of finding safety marshals for meets.** I pointed out that this job is seen as ‘being the bad guy’ and the only incentive for them to become a USA-S member is that they get a rule book. Some LSCs require the safety marshal(s) to be identified on the meet info to get a sanction. Others just use Board members or officials.

I recommend that PNS review and modify, if necessary, the process for and consistency of Safety Marshal selection, training and use within.

In addition, Risk management (Insurance) representatives **discussed insurance coverage provided by USA-S and reviewed several other available policies.** This information is available on the USA-Swimming website. In particular, we discussed limitations on the liability coverage (**NO diving board use is covered, only some non-swimming activities are covered**), and potential need for such policies as Directors and Officers, Business Owner, Property Insurance, Hired Auto liability, and Workmen’s Compensation. It was mentioned that our liability coverage levels are not particularly high given the number of participants and the potential for injury, too.

I recommend that PNS undertake a review of provided (and available) policies, and develop a recommendation to the BoD for any changes. I also recommend that this review develop and distribute additional insurance coverage communications to our member clubs.

Thursday, 15 September 2005

Western Zone Business Meeting –

This was chaired by John Kinney. This meeting had a regular agenda consisting largely of Zone officer report-outs. Mary Jo Swalley described the USA-S Katrina relief efforts going on – a \$10,000 donation on behalf of our membership was given, and several new rules have been approved allowing those that have been displaced to transfer to new clubs (and back) with no ‘un-attached’ penalty. Char Tester reported that Adaptive Swimming – newly renamed to Disability Swimming – will not be having a Championships meet this year, as USA-S has decided to ‘focus on grass-roots efforts this year.’ The 2006 host for zones gave a brief status report, and priority was randomly assigned for team area selection. Further data on this meet can be found at www.fresnodolphins.com. Candidates for several 2006-07 Zone positions were nominated. 2007 Zone Championships bids were entered by Farmington, New Mexico and PNS. Farmington strengths included full community backing and that the facility and any other infrastructure or resources needed are to be given at no cost by the city, weaknesses include accessibility to the town, and a potential for facility limitations in terms of seating and deck space and potentially other aspects. PNS strengths were a proven, and newly improved – according to Mike Dunwiddie facility, and host base and access, weaknesses were the costs the host will incur to rent and run this meet.

Grant Writing Workshop for Clubs –

This meeting presented a huge amount of information on what to include in grants, and how to find them. The information was promised to be posted to the USA-S website next week in the 'Facilities' area.

Several key messages:

1. **Grant requester MUST have a business plan** – this collects much of the information needed to put a grant together, and makes sure you know where you are going – Mick Nelson at USA Swimming is a resource members can pull on to help build the plan.
2. **Research the target grant, match what they are giving for to what you want, and understand what they expect** – for example, a successful grant request to a public safety organization (e.g., Red Cross) will not request money for a competitive pool directly, it might instead describe how the grant will be used to address the problem of drowning and increase public safety through the implementation of lessons programs, and lifelong aquatic programs.
3. **Each grant must be dealt with individually.** Grants requests for less than \$10000 can probably be handled by a volunteer. Otherwise, it will likely pay to hire a grant writer (~2500-3000/grant). USA-S is working to hire a grant writer as a resource for members
4. A small handout was given out identifying several web sources for grant writing and grant information. Notable sites to start with are grantproposal.com and grantstrategies.com. Some sources of grant money include the Red Cross, Salvation Army, US Government, Local Library, US Military, or basic google searches on "Foundation" or "Philanthropic Trust"

National Meets – Your Opinion Counts –

This meeting hosted by the National Meet Evaluation committee was an open panel discussion with national level athlete, coach, official and meet director panelists. This committee regularly interviews meet participants and spectators and develops an annual report and set of recommendations for improving these meets. The point of this discussion was for attendees to gather lessons learned from these high profile meets to improve meets in the future. Some primary messages were Facility characteristics, hospitality, handouts, having enough volunteers, having enough organizers (someone recommended at least 45 or more on the committee), and the challenges of handing awards handouts. We spent most of the discussion talking about things done or that could be to increase spectator involvement, including music, mascots, handouts, announcers, being aware of the timeline in terms of making it quick and making it support their regular lives (work schedules), advertising, looking at their whole experience from parking to ticket purchase to the 'show' to the environment to the announcing and engagement activities to exiting. Some discussion addressed the importance of emphasizing the team aspects of the competition and how that can help engage spectators.

Other items mentioned were the importance of engaging with the media – press conferences, 'embedding' reporters, parking/hospitality, hiring a PR firm.

Key improvements other than the above were new formats (alternating events), and promoting the history of the sport – past heroes, pointing out past successes in swimming and life, and promoting personalities.

I recommend that PNS undertake a review of our current Meet Evaluation process and develop a more comprehensive method for capturing lessons learned and making improvements to meet planning and operation

Friday, 16 September 2005

Tricks, Traps and Tips: LSC and Club Financial Management –

This meeting consisted of several people speaking to various aspects of financial planning for clubs and LSC. The primary message here was that **it is important for these organizations to develop an Investment Planning Statement (IPS)**. This statement describes an investment approach to be taken by the organization to support the organization goals. Having such a statement provides a long term statement of intent and helps the board by preventing having to 'reinvention of the wheel' with each changout. In addition, when followed, it protects the Board from accusations of mismanagement by removing the need for personal decisions. The speaker, Steve Drexler from RBC Dain Rauscher, described this as an integral part of the Mission, Strategic Business Plan, GamePlan (detailed business plan). USA-S can provide help with building any of these statements. This meeting also reviewed the various legally required reporting requirements.

USA-S Facilities Development Services –

This meeting consisted of Mick and Sue Nelson and John McIlhargy from the USA-S facilities development support discussing facility options, strategies and finances. USA-S provides a large amount of information and consulting to support organizations developing new or renovate old facilities. These services can be accessed through the facilities development area on the USA-WS website. A primary message was that **successful aquatic facilities will build on a foundation of diversity and inclusiveness of aquatic programs**. Single-use facilities cannot recoup their costs.

A second facilities development conference is scheduled for April 4-6 of 2006. Reimbursements of some costs are available through USA-S.

I recommend that PNS work with USA-S to sponsor a facilities development seminar for interested area clubs some time in the next year. Mick Nelson suggested that we combine this with other education initiatives – Risk Management, Club Financial management to do a more broad seminar.

Waterworks Workshop –

This meeting consisted largely of several USA-S representatives discussing meet operations and various ways to market or increase the engagement at swim meets. These included themed meets, new ways of scoring or additional contests.

House of Delegates –

The USA-S House of Delegates started Friday evening proceeded through Saturday. Minutes for these meetings are available through USA-S.