

## GROUP STRUCTURE and "BLOCK" Scheduling

We are always looking at ways to improve our team and our sport by offering the very best opportunities for our athletes to thrive in our program. One of the most important parts of this is to allow athletes the opportunity to try our team. Experts believe, and we agree that young athletes should compete in multiple sports until they are approaching or going into high school.

In an effort to make it easier for young athletes to try our sport/team and to stay in it, we are reorganizing the younger portion of our program. Developmental, Age Group 2 and Age Group 1 will be offered in blocks of 6 weeks on and 1-2 weeks off. There will be 6 blocks offered through the year.

Athletes in these groups will be registered under USA Swimming's FLEX Plan at \$20.00 per year. This registration fee will be paid by the club as part of your "block" fee. The FLEX Plan covers the athlete at all Westfield Aquatics practices and up to TWO USA Swimming Sanctioned meets per year. Any athlete who chooses to participate in more than two USA sanctioned meets will be required to extend their USA Membership to a FULL Member Registration which is \$70.00. The athlete's family will pay the different of \$50 at the time of that registration change.

There are several reasons we chose to make these changes.

- 1) To take the pressure off athletes and families from choosing one sport too early. Want to play soccer? Great we'll see you in two months. Want to try basketball, no problem we hope to see you in the session after that. Want to try swimming? OUTSTANDING! We have 6 different blocks through the course of the year that you can sign up for when it fits YOUR schedule and other demands.
- 2) We believe BURN OUT is the most overused phrase in youth sports. Athletes come and go from activities all the time for a multitude of reasons and BURN OUT is the phrase assigned to most all of them. We do however believe that children have short attention spans and can get bored or lose focus. We believe that giving athletes multiple breaks throughout the year will keep them interested, engaged and excited about what they are doing even if they choose to sign up for all 6 blocks.
- 3) We will be able to schedule our blocks around many of our holidays; fall break, Christmas...Allowing our families to have time with each other, to travel or to host guests without any sporting commitment to us. It will also allow the simple pleasure of a nightly family meal for a couple weeks to reconnect and step back from today's hectic and heavily scheduled lifestyle.
- 4) This will give many members of our staff time off with their families. It will also give them time to focus on their "real" jobs. This will give the coaches a break to get refreshed and excited to work with all the athletes when they see them again.
- 5) Athletes will not "get out of shape" during their time off. Young athletes don't need to "train." There are a few physical/physiological developments that consistent activity in young athletes develop. One is greater capillary development in larger muscle groups,

this is almost exclusively legs for young athletes. The other is “aerobic base,” which is a generic term for the development of your cardio vascular system. Both these traits are developed over years not weeks of activity and do not diminish over a short period of time.

- 6) If an athlete chooses to participate in all 6 blocks during the course of the year, they will have swum 9 months. 9 months of swimming will allow the athlete to continue to move their skill level forward in the sport and prepare them for our program when they are asked to do more.

We are excited about this change and feel that it will improve our athlete’s and the team’s long-term development.

WA Staff