

2017 Midwestern All-Stars
Team Iowa Head Coach's Report.

Pre Meet

The pre-meet processes are thorough, clearly written, and easy to understand. They are distributed to the ISI community well in advance of the entry deadline. They are also easily accessed. Parents should have no trouble understanding the deadlines, entry process or selection process. Anyone interested in learning about All-Stars or applying for it should be able to know exactly what to do.

I think there is a bit of confusion regarding the possibility of a fine being assessed if an application is withdrawn. Currently, there is a window in which parents can withdraw their application and not be penalized. I'd like to see that extended. I would like parents to be given the chance to confirm their participation after notification that their child has made the team. In this way, if a swimmer has only made the team in one event, or if a family's situation has changed since they submitted their application, they could still withdraw without penalty. I could see a situation where a swimmer only makes the team in one event, and a family deciding it's not worth the expense. I would like us to be empathetic to situations like that. I understand that makes more work for the Age Group Chair, but it puts the best interests of the swimmers first. If a family has confirmed they will participate, and then they withdraw, then I think a fine could be assessed.

That said, the selection process results in the best possible team given the applicant pool. As mentioned earlier, not all the best swimmers apply, and although we must respect swimmers' decisions, ISI should also develop policies that facilitate the creation of the best possible team. Currently, the athletes' preferences for individual events is given a great deal of weight, and this is an excellent policy. It is preferable to having the Age Group Chair pick their events. Application to All-Stars is voluntary, and ISI should appreciate that swimmers wish to be part of All Stars, and do everything possible to make it a great weekend for them.

The 80-swimmer limit on entries does have some consequences that ISI and the Age Group Chair must account for and work through when compiling the ISI entry. ISI is allowed 5 entries per individual event and after the athlete limit was reached, there were events that didn't have 5 entries. The Age Group chair worked tirelessly to fill those events with swimmers on the team. I recommend that this policy be written down and followed in the future. Nevertheless, our hands were tied in certain cases because entry rules stated that an athlete needs to have competed in an event and have an official time in order to compete. I would like to see ISI have the ability to fill in any individual event with swimmers on the team, regardless of whether they've raced that event since Sept 1st of that season. There are swimmers who only raced one event, and if they could fill in when needed, that would make their experience better,

and it would make the ISI team stronger. We may not be able to change the entry requirements, but a conversation with MW Swimming is recommended.

Athlete confirmation process

The process by which swimmers who made the team were informed was prompt and timely. It was almost immediately after the deadline when swimmers were told if they made the team. Also, it was a good gesture for swimmers who didn't make the team that they too were informed. That is better than telling people that if they didn't hear anything, then that means they didn't make it. I feel the majority of the team complied with instructions to turn in their code of conduct, fill in clothing order form, and make their hotel reservations.

Communication

The ISI Age Group chair did a great job of communicating with parents, swimmers, and the Iowa All Star coaches. The FB page is an excellent means of communicating, and I recommend that it be used in the future.

One recommendation I have is that swimmers submit a photo along with their application. This way, the coaching staff can become familiar with the athletes prior to the meet. The coaching staff already has the names of the swimmers and their events, so that when they meet the athletes, they should be somewhat familiar with them already. Having a picture would also help get to know the swimmers. Granted there are privacy issues and ISI would need ensure that these pictures aren't used for any other purpose than for all-Stars, but the benefit would be worth it. It may be that this isn't feasible, but looking into it would be a good idea.

The team Facebook page worked out well to as a way to communicate information to the team. I would prefer to see only administrators have the ability to post on the website instead of all members of the group. There were some questionable posts by parents, and because of this, I would like to see only the coaches, plus the Age Group Chair have the ability to post to the site.

Team Meeting

The team meeting, prior to the meet went very well. The team was introduced, they received their clothing, and the coaches talked at this meeting. The speeches by the coaching staff really helped the swimmers become acclimated to the group. The only weak point was that the gym at the rec center isn't the best place to have a meeting, but there are no other feasible options, so we made the most of it.

Team Pictures

The switch to having families pay the photographer directly is a welcome change. It takes work away from ISI and makes the photographer handle the majority of the work, which he should do, since he is being paid for this work.

Team Clothing

The clothing was well designed and looked good. I would like to see ISI give the athletes as much clothing as they can afford. ISI paid for athletes to have a hoodie, a T-shirt, two silicone caps and a latex cap. This is the largest package of clothing ISI has ever provided. My thought was that perhaps ISI could also provide stocking caps, mittens, scarves, and even pants or shorts. After all, the All Star meet is held in winter and the additional clothing could help swimmers stay warm. Parents had the option of purchasing clothing for themselves or their athletes, and this is great. If there were an official collared shirt (polo or button down) for parents to purchase, it would help promote team unity. I like the coaches' clothing, but I also think a white shirt for coaches would be both professional and something coaches could wear after the All Star meet.

Competition

The actual competition portion of the meet went well. Everyone was there on time for warmups. No swimmers missed their events. Much credit has to be given to the club coaches for how well they prepared their swimmers for this meet. The coaching staff did a great job of communicating their expectations to the swimmers and it was well received. The team cheers helped build a sense of unity and teamwork. All the swimmers talked to the coaches prior to and after their races, and that helped the swimmers greatly.

Coaching Staff

The coaching staff did extremely well working together. The staff was well informed of their duties and they responded well. Each and every coach pulled their weight, and no one slacked off. The coaching staff presented a united front, and that was useful for the athletes and their families. The coaches also got along well and that made for a pleasant experience. There were not major differences in coaching philosophies and no disagreements on how to handle the athletes. Again, this made for a great weekend.

Recognition and Awards

The ISI staff did a great job of posting picture of the medal winners on the Facebook page. The medals were mostly distributed at the meet, and arrangements were made to get the non-distributed awards to the athletes as soon as possible.

Hotel

The Hilton Garden Inn was a great choice for a team hotel. It was closer to the pool, and there were many amenities at the pool and nearby.

Coaching Stipend.

There was a mix-up in communication regarding the amounts of the coaches' stipends. In the future, if there are changes from the past, they need to get communicated to either the Treasurer or ISI office so that the correct amounts can be paid. There is a long delay between the meet and when coaches get mileage. I'd like to see coaches receive their reimbursements as soon as possible in the future.

Future of the All Star Meet

The All Star meet has traditionally been a Midwestern Swimming, Inc event. The meet has been held in Omaha, Lawrence KS, and now Elkhorn NE. This is great for Iowa, because driving time is reasonable, depending on where in Iowa the swimmers live. I would like to see the meet host rotate between LSCs. It would be nice if Iowa could host every third or fourth year. South Dakota Swimming has also expressed interest in hosting All Stars. I feel entering into talks with the LSCs at the meet about having a rotating site would be worthwhile.

Recommendations for future All-Star meets

I would like to see ISI host a team clinic after the team has been selected and prior to the All-Star meet. This could be held during the winter holiday, or perhaps the weekend before the meet. This would be a chance for the team to meet each other and develop team cohesiveness. The coaches could get to know the athletes and each other. We could use the time to work on technique, racing strategies, details, sports psychology, or other topics. We could bring in a guest speaker and/or an "expert" and have them talk to the swimmers. This would take planning, I realize, but the possible benefits would be worth it.

Overall Review

The 2017 All Star experience was a great one. The swimmers had a great time, and I'm sure they had great memories. Overall, everything done was important in making the experience great, and everything done was done well. There are a few things that could be tweaked, but that is the case with every meet. The ISI Age Group chair and the ISI office should be commended for their organization and for doing things well.

Respectively submitted,

Dave Joensen
Head Coach

2017 Team Iowa All Stars