



Swordfish Scoop

Issue 14

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COACH'S CORNER

Thoughts from Head Coach, Matt Donovan

Often times I tell the team that there is a "plan" and I ask that you trust that I in fact am doing this and not just giving lip service. While it is not productive to show the whole world what the staff and I are currently working on behind the scenes, what I thought I could do is to show you a model from the past. This was constructed by me in 2003-2004 season with the help of former coaches Bill Barr and Tom Koellhoffer. This was the first formal 4 year plan that I wrote. This plan leads to the quad plan that we are almost done with and I will use the data from the 1st 12 years to build the next 4 and beyond. In the interest of space I have condensed the major points here but I am more than happy to show the whole document to anyone that is interested. I will leave it up to you the reader to determine how successful we have been at achieving our goals since 2004.

One item that I omitted here is something that took a good deal of time; developing our current Mission Statement. It can be found on the main page of the team website. Enjoy!

Coach Matt

The meeting opened with a review of the Mission Statement, Vision and Goals for the SVY Swim Team that was drafted in 2003. Matt Donovan pointed out the 18-20 of the 23 major goals for the team needs to accomplish & that the time has come to move the team forward to the next level.

MAJOR AND MOST IMMEDIATE GOALS:

1. Get universal buy-in on the SVY Team Mission Statement. Manage and grow the program consistently and fairly based on the framework contained in the Team Mission Statement.
2. Put in place a Measurement Plan that measures progress towards the above to include from YMCA Bronze to the USA Jr. & Sr. National Championships.
3. Retain control of high school swimmers: Meet with local high school coaches to get them to return to a Tuesday/Thursday dual meet schedule and to respect Matt's intentions regarding his "Friday's Off" policy. This will enable Matt to have his swimmers in the water on a consistent basis and opens the possibility of a return to Sunday practices.

4. Define standards and measurement plans for each practice group and age group.
 - How does Bronze lead into Silver - into Silver 1 into Silver 2 into Gold?- Is the program in Bridgewater comparable to the program in Hillsborough?
 - How do we get our swimmers to go to Junior and Senior Nationals?

5. EXTEND the commitment of the "Y" to the swimming team, DEMAND commitment from ALL Swimmers, Coaches and Parents.

Swimmers:

Prioritize participation on THIS team; make a YEAR-ROUND commitment that includes double sessions in the summer. (Topic for discussion: What should the 9-10 Long Course program look like? How do we evolve the Long Course program for 11-12's, 13-14's, etc?)

Coaches:

- Accept the reality that improved swimmers will move up to a higher practice group and that under- performing swimmers will move down.
- How often do you expect your swimmers to attend practice?
- What is the quality/caliber swimmer you're looking to develop?
- What is YOUR commitment to the team and to your group (Practice plans, recording yardage, recording attendance, better practice structure?)

Parents:

- Support and empower Matt and his coaching staff in all areas.
- Revise and update the Constitution of the Booster Club.
- Implement a point-by-point STRUCTURED BUDGET with line item allocations

Matt:

- Build the best coaching staff in New Jersey.
- Set the tone required to make us a Top Ten team at Nationals by providing the coaches with your goals for their season and give them the freedom to achieve those goals in their own way. YOU set the parameters for the week, the month, the season. Let them know your approach and what works for YOU, then stand back.

Thoughts from Head Coach, Matt Donovan

MAJOR AND MOST IMMEDIATE GOALS: (continued from page 1)

Incidental topics mentioned:

1. To get swimmers to Olympic trials, we need our college swimmers to return to us. How do we do this in an organized manner that doesn't disrupt the age group teams practice session or interfere with the coach's ability to stick to his/her program?
2. How can we be good coaches and also have lives?
3. Develop a coaching library of mixed media teaching tools (Arizona tapes, etc.)

Topics for Further Discussion:

1. The lower age groups need to become more competitive. How can this be accomplished?
2. Financial aspects of the program. Can/should the Parent Board compensate the coaches directly? What are legal, insurance, tax, moral ramifications? How do we justify this course of action? How do we generate funds? How do we handle the "Y" in this context?
3. Do we create a "Select Team" that works out with Matt one day per week? How do swimmers qualify for the select team? Do we change them more money?
4. We need to create an ongoing internal PR program for the team that advertises past achievements (we produced a National Champion Team 1975, 1990).
5. Should Matt begin to transition himself from coaching to managing?



Back by request ... Championship Energy Cookies! These cookies are favorites with Team SVY swimmers and coaches.

Ingredients

1/2 cup flour (Gluten Free Flour can be substituted)
2 teaspoons baking soda
3/4 cup cold butter cut into cubes
2 - 2.5 cups brown sugar
5 eggs
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
2 cups peanut butter
2 cups split of any of the following (choc chips, raisins, craisins, coconut, peanuts, etc)
5 3/4 cups whole oatmeal

Mix oatmeal, baking soda and flour in a bowl. In a larger separate bowl, cream butter until light yellow - add sugar and beat well. Add one egg at a time, beat well each time. Stir in vanilla and peanut butter. Add dry ingredients. Chill for 3 - 4 hours. Place 4T of dough in the shape of a ball on a cookie sheet. Bake at 350 for 12 - 15 minutes, or until lightly browned.

This recipe and many other nutritional ideas will be included in our Team SVY Cook Book. Thank you to all the families who contributed recipes for this special fundraising project. A special thank you to the coaches who took time out of their busy schedules to provide some "very inspiring" messages and very good recipes. We are planning to have the cook book ready for a spring delivery. More details about how to order your personal cook book and our taste testing event will be communicated in coming months. Thank you in advance for supporting our Team!



SAVE THE DATES ...

Strong Kids Campaign Kick-off - Wednesday, February 1st - 7:00 pm at the Bridgewater Y

Team Banquet - Saturday, April 21ST from 11:00 am - 4:00 pm at the Bridgewater Marriott - More details forthcoming

Long Course Cup* - SVY Hosted Swim Meet - Scheduled for June 8th - 10th at Princeton University

July Independence Meet* - SVY Hosted Swim Meet - Scheduled for July 6th - 8th at Rutgers University

Third Annual Casino Night - Tentatively scheduled for Saturday, September 29th - more details forthcoming this summer

* **Note to winter swim team parents:** As per our parent work commitment, you are required to work at least one of our summer hosted meets. If you do not work one of the summer meets, your meet fee account will be charged \$50.00.

JUST BUSINESS - Over the next 6 months, we will be involved with fundraising activities that will benefit Team SVY. As you are aware, we are a not-for-profit organization and do rely on volunteers to help make our efforts successful. Below are opportunities for which we'd like everyone to consider volunteering their time ... our continued success is attributed to the many hours our volunteers put forth on behalf of Team SVY. Thank you for your continued support!

Somerset Patriots Ballpark Fundraiser - Come out and support Team SVY by volunteering to help out at one of the fundraiser games scheduled over the next 6 months. These events are fun for the entire family and they benefit the entire team. Our first event is scheduled for April 28th. Please check the website for the most up-to-date information.

Team SVY Long Course Meets - We are pleased to announce that Team SVY will be hosting 2 Long Course meets for the 2012 season. The first meet will be held at Princeton University from June 8th - 10th. The second meet will be held at Rutgers from July 6th - 8th. As a reminder, our winter short course only parents due have the responsibility as per the parent work commitment to work at one of our summer hosted meets. More information about when and how to sign-up as a parent volunteer will be communicated in May.

Meet Fee Accounts - As we enter into the upcoming Championship season, please be sure to pay any outstanding balances due on your meet fee account.

Strong Kids Campaign - The Kick-off meeting will be held at the Bridgewater Y on Wednesday, February 1st. Come on out and join in on the fun and learn more about how the Strong Kids Program helps the local community! If you can't make the event, brochures about the program can be found at all of the Y branches. Please consider donating towards this campaign and be a part of the Team SVY family that helps to make a difference in the lives of the children in our local community. You alone can make a difference ... the Team SVY family has the opportunity to make a bigger difference!

New Team Website - Our new Team website will be launching on Jan 31st. During the next few months, we will continue to bring new content, tools and other enhancements to our site. If you have website development experience and are interested in joining the website enhancement committee, please contact Clara Ruhnke at clara_ruhnke@yahoo.com.

Success Through Teamwork ... 5 Steps To Being A Good Teammate (this article taken from www.responsiblesports.com)

(for parents, coaches and athletes!)

It's no secret. The most successful teams in any sport all seem to share one trait in common: superior teamwork. The no-look pass. The effortless double play. A beautiful give and go. The partnership between two players or the ability of a group of individuals to come together and work in concert as one to achieve a goal is the signature of winning teams.

But being a good teammate is sometimes difficult. As Positive Coaching Alliance Executive Director and Founder Jim Thompson comments, "It is an intricate dance of cooperation and competition. For example, you may compete with teammates for playing time even while you (ideally) cooperate with them to defeat the opponent. Lots of room for disagreements, misunderstandings, hurt feelings and competing agendas." Those teams that can master this delicate balance of cooperation and competition find themselves more successful, both on and off the field or in the pool.

Teammates can have a profound effect on each other. Boston Celtics Head Coach Doc Rivers, commented on teamwork in the latest episode of the [Responsible Sports Podcast Series](#), "Let's say I give a great half-time talk or pre-game talk. [Or] any coach saying positive stuff to get the guys up. There's an impact there, you know? But when you have teammates doin' it, when there's a teammate who other teammates can trust, they know he has great character and they know everything he does is for the team, you can't beat that."

As parents and coaches we oftentimes ask our youth athletes to "be good teammates" but don't always give them specific suggestions and tools to fulfill that request. So this month we once again turned to our partners at Positive Coaching Alliance to help us outline some actionable steps that we can all take to be good teammates. (And an important note before we get started: parents in the stands and coaches on the sidelines are teammates of youth athletes just as much as their fellow athletes. If you think of yourself as a teammate, responsible for supporting these athletes, you'll see that these ideas apply to you as well!)

How can we, as parents, coaches and athletes, be good teammates? Here are a few suggestions:

- 1. Cheer** - Teammates cheer for each other. When someone makes a great play, encourage them - from the field, from the bench and from the stands. Our friends at ASA Softball have a terrific tradition of cheering from the dugout as a team for the player up to bat - and as a team, they stick together to cheer the balls, strikes and hits - regardless of the outcome. Cheering for your teammates is a sign that you support them - that you have their back. Particularly when you are going through a slump, it's important to know - and hear - that your teammates are still behind you and believe in you.
- 2. Remain Positive & Maintain Control** - Universally, good teammates are those people who remain positive. They remain positive about themselves, and positive about their teammates. They quickly "brush off" mistakes by themselves and others and focus on the next play, the next opportunity, and the next game. They also maintain control, keeping their cool in difficult situations and not allowing their emotions to overtake the task at hand.
- 3. Talk!** - Ever notice how great teams talk a lot? The best hockey teams on the ice are calling out things like "Reverse", "Man On" and "1 on Hard" all game long. They're calling out "drop pass", "boards now" and "Far side!" Even the bench is helping out, yelling "Got 2" or "Slot!" When you see these players talking all game, they are not trash talking. They are communicating, sharing, directing and cooperating. Great teammates communicate throughout the game. That's why coaches so often yell out, "Talk to each other!"

And great players don't just talk during games. They talk a lot during practice as well, discussing how to play better together or sharing ideas on what worked and what could use improvement. Outside of practice, teammates are also connecting on a personal level, focused on the key insight that knowing each other better will translate to their performance during the game. How often do you hear in professional sports about a new wide receiver joining a football team and spending time with the quarterback in the off-season? It's about building a rapport that then influences their partnership on the field.

Success Through Teamwork ... 5 Steps To Being A Good Teammate (continued)

4. Be a good example - Good teammates lead by example. Leaders on teams don't need to be designated as "Captain" to be an influential leader. Doc Rivers cites Kevin Garnett as the type of player who leads by example. Our favorite example of Garnett's leadership came last season when he was struck by a season-ending knee injury. Instead of withdrawing from his teammates, Garnett could be seen cheering loudly for his fellow teammates from the bench for every game, charting during practice and games to share valuable insights with his teammates and coaches, working with Glen "Big Baby" Davis. Even Paul Pierce commented that Garnett's leadership was so valuable to the team that his presence was important from the bench even when he couldn't be on the court.

Coaches and parents can help athletes see that each and every one of them can be leaders for their team. Together with your youth athlete, develop a list of values that you believe a good leader of a team possesses. Then jot down some ideas for how your athlete can represent those values during games and practices and how they can lead by example. With this mission in mind, you'll be surprised what athletes can do!

5. Take responsibility - When things aren't going well or when they get tough, it's sometimes easy to blame mistakes on others. It's human nature - and we know, it's hard to resist the temptation to blame others. But good teammates take responsibility for themselves and their actions - good and bad.

A good friend to Responsible Sports once said: "When you point a finger at someone, there are three fingers pointing back at you." This is a great reminder that pointing the finger at someone else neglects what your contribution may or may not have been. Good teammates resist the temptation to point fingers but instead recognize their responsibility and take ownership of what occurred - and then moves forward. As Jim Thompson likes to say, "Next!"

Being a good teammate is an essential part of **Honoring The Game** and contributes to the opportunity to translate the lessons of sports to the lessons of life. (Imagine if we all applied these very principles to our work lives.) Our goal is to be good teammates for the youth sports team we support, regardless of our role. Parents, coaches, assistant coaches, trainers, administrators, and of course the athletes are all members of the team and have the ability to elevate our collective teamwork to achieve our goals. **Are you a good teammate?**



2011 Training Trip - Key Largo, FL .. an amazing experience for our kids! What started out to be a family vacation turned in to a trip for me out of necessity to ensuring my daughter was following her concussion therapy protocol, while monitoring her concussion symptoms. I am really grateful that GK (Gary Kucsan) and Coach Matt didn't mind my son, Michael and I tagging along. I witnessed amazing experiences and team bonding activities from the minute the kids woke up until the time they went back to their rooms to sleep, usually extremely exhausted. Their schedule was packed with activities and when the best laid plans needed to be tweaked, Coach Matt, thought quickly on his feet to come up with yet another plan to keep the kids occupied and working together as a team. A visit to the dollar store was a creative idea to keep the kids engaged due to being ahead of schedule. You should have seen the workers face when 33 kids entered to purchase a gift under \$2.00 for a teammate they didn't know, and then hear them tell their teammates the inspiration behind their purchase. I could go on for pages and continue to write about each day and the various events, but space is limited here. I'd like to summarize my thoughts about the experience from a parent perspective. We've all read various emails about the coach, athlete and parent relationship. I witnessed first-hand for 7 days the relationship between the athlete and the coach. It's truly a special bond that parents should foster as our children grow and develop into young adults. It was very evident to me during the trip that our coaches had our kids' best interests in mind. We should all embrace and support their efforts daily! I would welcome the opportunity to speak to any parent who would like to know more about the trip and the experience. Please contact me at robin.mckenna@svynj.org at let me know of your interest! Robin

Calling all writers ... Parents and Swimmers, if you are interested in publishing a story in our next newsletter, please contact robinmckenna@svynj.org.