**What Goes Into Putting Together Our Practice Schedule**

    Please note a couple tings when it comes to what I have to consider in terms of scheduling:

1 – We actually have 7 different phases of our schedule:

  A – Our tryout week (Sept. 6-8)

  B – Our pre-high school season phase (Sept. 12 to Nov. 3)

  C – Our pre-holiday high school season phase (Nov. 4 to Dec. 16)

  D – Our holiday season phase (Dec. 17 to Jan. 3)

  E – Our post-holiday high school season phase (Jan. 3 to Feb. 16)

  F – Our post high school season phase (Feb. 17 to March 5)

  G – Our championship season phase (March 5 to season end which varies for each group)

2 - I have to account for all high school (HS) and middle school (MS and at Academy, only) aquatic activities (practices, meet schedules and the like) during those phases of the season inclusive of SC’s water polo season which is going on all fall.

3 – I also have to account for their school calendars and any major events happening there.

4 – I also have to account for an adjustments that need made when we switch portions of the season so that practice groups don’t get shorted practices or have too many practices in a week when we make each change.

5 – I also have to account for holidays within the mix.

I then have several things that I wanted to accomplish with the schedule:

1 – I wanted to increase the number of Novice practices that we are offering in anticipation of the large group we expect there this year. I have increased that from 3 choices per week up to 4 or 5 (depending on the part of the season we were in and available pool time) to accommodate the growing numbers.

2 – We wanted to keep up the pattern that we started in the spring of doing whatever we can to have like level practice groups (Academy Level 3 & St. Charles Level 3 are an example of “like level” groups) practice together 2 times a week for heightened competition levels and so that the athletes got to work with more coaches on staff.

3 – In doing this (#2) each group would then have 2 practices that was just their group BUT I tried to make sure that in as many of those cases that I could, I made sure a “back-to-back” level was also in the pool at the same time as that training group. Academy Level 1 and Academy Level 2 are examples of “back-to-back” levels. Since our Level 1, 2 & 3 practices are written by the Head Age Group Coach (HAGC) what this does is to allow athletes who excel in a particular stroke to move up for a training set in that stroke with the upper level group to help create a more challenging environment for everyone. I was able to do this in about 80% of these situations (where one level was not training with the like level from the other pool).

4 – I then also put into consideration that I wanted each Level 1, 2 & 3 group to have 3 home pool practices and then (only) one away pool practice. Example: The Academy groups would have 3 practices at Academy and then 1 at St. Charles and vice-versa for the St. Charles groups. Only in one case in one phase of the season was I not able to do that. (SC Level 1 during the high school season as the time to practice there really diminishes due to other high schools using SC’s pool so they have to travel to Academy twice each week during that phase of the season.

5 – When considering travel to the other pool I tried to make as many weekday “like level” practice situations at St. Charles so that the travelling folks were going against business traffic while making the weekend like level practices at Academy since there was no business traffic to consider. Again, it won’t be perfect for everyone but I did get as many of those as I could schedule like this.

6 – I also tried to adapt the schedule so that it wasn’t exactly the same for like levels at different pools. Example, If one group went M, W, F & Sun I tried to make the same group at the other pool a little different so that if folks had scheduling problems on certain nights that maybe they could go to the other pool for practice on another night with that practice group. We do allow this but it is not an “open” policy meaning you just cannot swing back and forth between pools otherwise we could have 40 kids showing up to a pool one night. However, we will see if we have room on those nights and, if so, we will grant permission to use the other pool’s practice on a short term or long term basis.

7 – I also added a little bit of training time to each group’s practice this year. It normally was only 15 to 30 minutes a week but that adds up over the course of the entire season!

8 – For Level 4 I am adding a Level 4 Elite training option offering them a 6th practice each week on Sunday mornings along with the Level 5’s.

9 – We will also add several practices throughout the season for Level 2 & 3 swimmers as part of our 14 & Under Elite Development Practice schedule.

Yes… there is much to consider in this so try as I might it never comes out “perfect” but we sure try to make it as good as we can.

  Thanks for being a part of our TEAM for that’s what we are… a team!