

Chapter 1

An Introduction to High School Coaching

WHAT ARE YOU GETTING INTO?

As a new high school swimming coach, we want you to know that your friends at the National Interscholastic Swimming Coaches Association are eager to help you be a successful high school swimming coach.

This manual is designed for all coaches; to both help new coaches get started on the right foot and suggest ways to improve established programs. Success in high school swimming is defined by a high level of satisfaction for both the athletes on your team and yourself as the coach. We want you, as well as your athletes, to have a fulfilling experience.

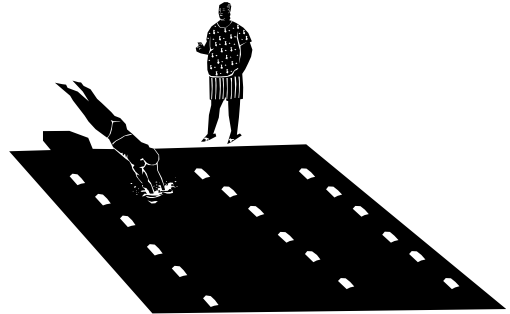
A lot of high school swimming coaches do not set out in life to coach high school swimming. Frequently, they are teachers who are asked by their administration to take on the swim team. Sometimes they have a background in swimming, and other times they do not. This manual can help coaches in both situations.

NISCA is your professional service organization, consisting of nearly 2,000 high school swimming coaches. Over 6,000 high schools in the USA offer competitive swimming. That means we can extend our services to a large number of coaches who presently are working in swimming. As each coach improves his or her ability to work with the high school team, our whole high school swimming scene will improve. That improvement is our goal.

In our opinion, high school swimming, and later college swimming, is the most compelling and exciting part of the competitive swimming scene in the USA. Young people bond easily and naturally with their schoolmates, and loyalty to their high school is a natural. The tremendous rivalries and traditions that build up over time in the high regions, leagues, and districts around the country are a dynamic part of the high school educational experience. You as a high school swimming coach, get to play a key role in that experience.

This manual is divided into six chapters, each with a specific focus:

- **Chapter Two** will help you organize your team and your work into pre-season, practice and competition season, and year-round tasks.
- **Chapter Three** will discuss how to prepare a team for competition
- **Chapter Four** covers one of your most significant responsibilities, conducting home swim meets.
- **Chapter Five** is communicating with several of your target audiences
- **Chapter Six** discusses relating coaching responsibilities.
- **Chapter Seven** is about diving.



While this may seem like an overwhelming amount of information to absorb, we have tried to organize the material in as “painless” a fashion as possible. Each topic is introduced by a brief explanation of its purpose or function, some ways to implement it, and then some examples from your fellow NISCA members on how they actually accomplish the task.

The “examples” found in the “Resource Section” of each chapter are for your use. Feel free to copy them and avoid having to reinvent the wheel.

WHAT ARE YOU BRINGING TO THE JOB? RECOGNIZE YOUR STRENGTHS

Before we get started, let us reassure you about what capabilities you bring to the job as a high school swimming coach. You will be surprised at how much you already have.

1. You are an adult. Teenagers, no matter how mature, need adult experience and guidance in all their activities. They need adult perspective and the ability to step away and view things objectively. Most teenagers have a strong need to simply be “taken seriously” by an adult. For many of those who will join your team, you are “it.” Your life experience will be tested and will be valuable to your students.
2. You have a degree of emotional control that can act as an example to your students. Sport is about playing . . . playing within the rules, within limits, and recognizing that what separates play from war is that play has rules. Your emotional control provides the basis for teaching sportsmanship.
3. If you are a teacher, you are professionally trained to understand the educational process. In swimming, it is better to teach one skill well than to know about 20 skills, and not be able to teach any. Your educational skills are very valuable.
4. You understand the concept of TEAM. (Together – Everyone – Accomplishes – More) You have most likely been a member of a team and know the benefits. You can teach this critical life skill.
5. You have the ability to “make presentations.” Public speaking is generally not thought of as a part of coaching, but in fact, your ability to stand before a group and communicate clearly, effectively, and with confidence; is an important leadership skill. As a teacher, you are very accustomed to this task.
6. Vocabulary. You have the language to express yourself. Many of your students may not. Clear expression of ideas or feelings is vital to good coaching.
7. You have patience. Many of you may wonder about your patience, but most surely you have developed this quality to a greater degree than your students; and you will need it in coaching. Sometimes you will work and work on a point, seemingly without any effect. Then suddenly it’s the “Eureka!” effect, you will have the joy of seeing one of your swimmers finally “get it.” How satisfying!
8. Some of you may be former swimmers. You probably have some physical abilities that will be an addition to your coaching. If you are not an athlete, you have the experience to know enough to go find good role models, live or on tape, to demonstrate to your athletes.



These eight abilities, plus others that you uniquely bring to your coaching, get you off to a good start. Whether you are a former All-American swimmer with tons of swimming experience, or the high school Algebra teacher “drafted” into coaching the swimming team, you will bring skills to your coaching, and you will need to develop others. Our hope is that this manual will allow you to maximize what you already have, and fill in the blanks for what is missing.

As you become more experienced as a high school coach, you will find that one of the greatest coaching resources in the world is all around you, and you see them every week at swim meets . . . your fellow coaches. NISCA coaches will go out of their way to help you succeed in coaching and will help you in every way they can.

If you need to find a NISCA coach in your area to discuss swimming with, contact our Secretary at secretary@nisca.net for a telephone number and address.

