

III. In Season

A. Team Meetings:

Team meetings often get left off a coach's weekly agenda because of time constraints and lack of planning. This leads to a lack of team communication and coordination of logistics. Every coach has experienced the nightmare of getting ready to start a meet and finding out a swimmer is not there. They either may have forgotten or told someone else to tell you they would not be able to compete for whatever reason.



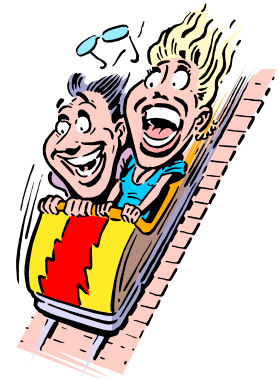
The best way to avoid these problems, especially with larger teams, is to have a short team meeting every Monday, either before or after practice. Have the key points written out so you will be thorough and use the time efficiently. Unfortunately, not every swimmer is at every practice so you may want to remind the swimmers daily of important points, such as a holiday workout schedule or upcoming meet. *Always ask if someone will not be at the next meet!* They are teenagers and too easily assume that someone else will tell you. Knowing this information ahead of time will save you time when making out lineups for the meet.

Team meetings are also a good way to remind the team of certain goals and what the focus of the practices will be. It is also a time to acknowledge outstanding achievements by the team or individuals. On occasion, you may want to let the team captain(s) run the meeting or present the special weekly awards. Remember, the meetings are a good time for the coach to listen.

B. Team Socials:

Team socials are extremely important when building team morale. It is easy to get caught up in the "drive for the championship" and forget to have some fun along the way. High school swimming is many of your swimmers "social life." They make lifelong friends and gain confidence in themselves at a critical period of their lives.

They also provide an opportunity for the coach to get to know each swimmer better, especially the new or quiet types. The more they know you care, the more apt they are to continue swimming and working hard. Socials can be as simple as going out for pizza after a meet. Others can be more extravagant, like a team trip to an amusement park, bowling, sleepovers, or a baseball game. Involve the team captains and parents in planning these events so you can focus on coaching.



It is also chance to meet parents. It is amazing what you will learn about your swimmers from their parents. Teenagers are under a tremendous amount of pressure academically and socially. You sometimes become the “guidance counselor” for the swimmers. There are many family problems and deaths of loved ones that a coach may not know about that affect their mood and behavior at practice and meets.

C. Team Newsletter:

A monthly newsletter to the swimmers and parents will generate excitement and help you communicate better with the team. Send a copy to your principal and athletic director. This will help them know about your swimmers achievements. The newsletter does not need to be fancy.

Come up with a “catchy” title or have a contest to name your newsletter. Word Perfect and Microsoft have programs for newsletters, but it will take a few issues for you to feel comfortable with them. Sometimes, it might just be better to print out your newsletter in a two column format. Check with your computer instructor at your school to see if a student would be interested in becoming the Swim Team News Editor. A parent would be another alternative. This will ease your work load, provide another perspective of your program, and involve more people in the program.

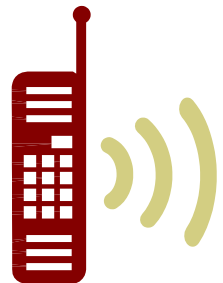


A typical newsletter could include the following items:

Swimmer of the Week and Month profile	Meet recaps
New records	Promote team socials
Practice schedule and changes	Preview of upcoming meets
Monthly team calendar	Motivational quotes & stories
Technique tips	Race Strategies
Important phone numbers	Team policies
Fund raisers	Volunteers needed
Acknowledge team members' achievements (i.e. honor roll, scouting, etc.)	

D. Phone Tree:

The Phone Tree is a great way to get important information out to a large number of people in a short period of time. Each person is assigned 1 – 4 people that they must call if they receive a call. This is a job that could be coordinated through your captains or parents organization.

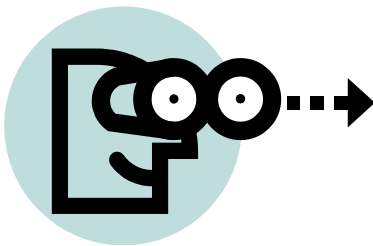


E. Record Board:

A team record board will help your swimmers set goals, provide recognition, and establish tradition. If you are new to a program, check with the past coach and/or the athletic director to see if records and a record board have been kept in the past.

To start a board from scratch, check the results of past league, region, and state meets. If you cannot find old results, start your board using the current season's results. Keep records for the fastest freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior times along with the school records. This will provide a broader based incentive. Microsoft's Excel is an efficient method of keeping track of records. You can even add league, region, state, national high school, and American records. The page can be easily updated, copied, and posted on your team bulletin board. Examples are provided at the end of this chapter.

There are several styles of larger record boards. Commercial boards can be purchased for \$2,000 - \$4,000 depending on the size and information to be displayed. If your school has a wood shop class, ask the instructor if a student could make this a term project. Kroy label machines make plastic strips that are easily applied to a record board.



The key to a good record board is visibility and accuracy. It should be displayed where the student body, not just the swim team, can see it. Trophy cases and gymnasiums might be good places, if you can not do it at the pool. Remember, you are promoting your program. Everyone likes to see their name on display for their achievements. Updating the board is a perfect job for a team manager or parent, freeing you for other jobs. They will be excited as records change.

F. Announcements / News

One of the most common complaints from coaches is the lack of coverage by local newspapers and TV. There is the old riddle about a tree falling in the forest with no one around to hear it, and the question is "does it make a sound?" To paraphrase that riddle; "if a swimmer breaks a record but the coach does not tell anyone, do not be surprised if no one hears about it."



It is up to the coach to educate the media about swimming. Chapter 2 contained an article about getting publicity for your team, review it if necessary. The newspapers will generally print meet scores and state qualifiers if you get the information to them at the end of the meet. Use e-mail or FAX for best results. If you have a swimmer or swimmers with a unique human interest angle let the media know. They often are grateful for the lead and a relationship may develop in which case they will call you for information.

Be quotable and excited about swimming when a reporter calls. Remember they are like many teachers and coaches, overworked and underpaid. If you can help a reporter do a better job, they will give more space to swimming. Be patient, it takes time to develop a mutual relationship; and then they will move on to a different job. Keep faxing and e-mailing press releases and some will eventually get printed.

Mail a pre-season list of your swimmers with statistics (league/region/state placing, year in school, potential state champions and All Americans, etc.) to your local newspaper. This will make it easier for a reporter when a deadline is approaching and they need “fill space.” Include your work and home phone number. The easier you are to reach, the more likely the reporter will call you first when they need swimming information.



Have announcements made on the school intercom or news production the day after a meet. There is always a highlight for each meet, even in a loss. Tell of swimmers who achieve best times, breaks a record, or qualifies for championships.

G. Team Bulletin Board



The team bulletin board should be a place where the team will see it daily. If your training pool is off campus, you might want to have a bulletin board at the pool and at school.

The board should be updated daily. This will keep the swimmers in the habit of checking it. It will also help promote your program to the rest of the student body. When the smallest person in the school (the one with the chlorinated green hair) wins a race, make sure the football players know!

The board can contain:

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|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Time standards | Meet schedule | Lineup for meets |
| Practice schedule | Meet results | Meet splits |
| Best times listing | Team calendar | Social event info. |
| Articles & Press clippings | Motivational quotes | Scouting reports |
| Spotlighting swimmers | Most Improved swimmers | Phone numbers |

H. Meet Lineup / Program

One of the most common questions a coach will hear is, “What event am I in?” Parents and spectators are interested in knowing who is swimming. Making copies of your meet lineup is an easy way to satisfy these people. Post it at practice, on the bulletin board, in the spectator area, and on the pool walls at the meet. Computer programs will print out the events, competitors, school, lanes, and seed times for your meets

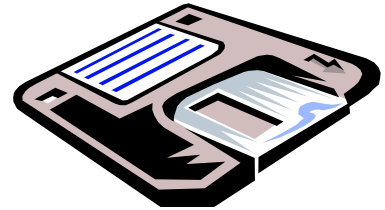
A sample lineup worksheet is included in Chapter 5 resources. Any computer program you are familiar with will let you easily produce such a form. Make a master worksheet with your swimmers in alphabetical order. Make several copies to use throughout the season. This will speed up the process of creating a meet lineup. It will also help insure that each swimmer has not exceeded the maximum number of events they can enter (four total with no more than two individual events.)

For large and championship meets you can create a meet program that can be used as a fund raiser for your team. You can sell advertising to local businesses besides selling the program at the meet.

I. Meet Results & Splits

The computer age has revolutionized the coach's ability to record meet results and splits. Hy-Tek Software currently is the most popular swimming software, with the program updates and improvements all the time.

Many state associations are recommending Hy-Tek to standardize entries for state championships. This allows coaches to simply give a disk at the end of the meet and thirty seconds later, they will have the meet results and splits available. Hy-Tek provides demos of their software on their website – www.hy-tek.com. It is recommended that you train a parent or other adult to run the program at meets.



Posting meet results and splits and showing the swimmers how to use them is critical in educating your swimmers. They need the times to help them measure their progress toward their goals. Splits will teach them how to race smarter. Relay splits will also allow you, as a coach, to learn more about your team. Not everyone can swim the 50 Free each meet but a 200 Free Relay split will help you put together relays later in the season.

J. Attendance Records

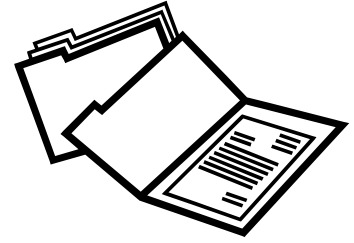
Daily workout attendance should be kept for each swimmer. This should be posted on the team bulletin board weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly; depending on your preference.

The attendance record serves several purposes. Most importantly, it alerts you to a swimmer who is erratic attending practices. Without a written record, you will probably find the swimmer not realizing how many practices they have missed. It is also very helpful when discussing the situation with their parents. Sometimes the parent assumes the swimmer is at practice and they become your best ally when they discover otherwise. Posting each swimmer's attendance percentage is also reinforcement to those who are at practices regularly.

If a swimmer is not progressing toward their goal times, check their attendance. It allows them to answer why. Attendance can also be used to help determine grades if you have the swimmers as a class.

K. Swimmer Progress Reports:

Swimmers need feedback, both positive and negative, in order to improve and stay motivated. The coach needs to talk with each swimmer every practice. The conversation can be a simple compliment or technique tip. The purpose is to reassure every swimmer that you value their efforts and care about them. The more you communicate with your swimmer's the happier they will be with you as a coach. There is a saying, *"No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care."*



There are several ways to measure a swimmers progress. The most obvious is their times in meets. The stopwatch is a great way to help your new swimmers see how much improvement they are making. Not every swimmer can place first, but every swimmer can improve the time. Post a "Best Times" listing after each meet.

A swimmer evaluation form can also be useful. Have the swimmers rate themselves on each stroke, starts, turns, race strategy, mental preparation, nutrition, training, and progress towards their goals. Two examples are in the Chapter 5 Resources. Swimmers typically are more critical of themselves than you would expect. Review their self evaluations with them, one-on-one, and suggest ways to improve. It will also allow you to compliment them on areas they are doing well.

The fastest swimmers do not necessarily have high self-esteem. They need "positive strokes" just as much as the beginning swimmers. Remember the "Sandwich Method" when making stroke or race evaluation comments. Always start with a positive, make a suggestion on how they could do better, and then finish with a compliment. The more positive you are around them, the more likely they are to listen to your advice.

It is beneficial to let the swimmers' parents know how their child is progressing. This can be verbal or written, formal or informal. They love to hear about their children doing well and will often repeat your positive comments to the swimmer at home.

