

2016 USA Swimming Convention (Atlanta, GA.)
Sept. 21 to 25th

Submitted by Donald P. Spellman, SR. Vice Chair (9/30/16)

I arrived on Tuesday afternoon (late, due to fog / flight delays) to Atlanta.

September 21, 2016

8AM to 10:15AM – Senior Development Comm.

Tracking, Funding, and the next Quad Plan were highlighted. Goal is to repeat or improve the success from Rio.

Mitch Dalton talked about how USA-Swimming is going to rely heavily on the FINA Top 100 rankings each season heading into the next Quad Plan for the National Junior Team. There will be a minimum of 26 men and 26 women (with the focus going towards the individual Olympic events). They are also revising the vision statement for the Junior Team over the course of this year.

National Team Director Frank Busch spoke about the “team culture” that existed before and during the meet in Rio but also addressed some of the disciplinary issues that came up following competition (with members of the Men’s team). Coach Busch felt we exceeded expectations from Olympic Trials and was impressed with how the veterans helped the rookie members of the team adjust to the schedule / logistics of the Olympics (late nights, travel to pool, press conferences, etc).

Russell Mark spoke about “Unpacking The 2016 Olympic Experience”. He spoke about the need to stay on the leading edge of “technical awareness” and the use of video to adjust minor details in strokes and turns. He also saluted the athletes for paying more attention the last two games to details like nutrition, strength training, and sports medicine. While the training was fun and social events lead to better team bonding the team seemed especially good at “dialing in” when they had to preform (especially at training camps in San Antonio and Atlanta).

10:30 to 11:30AM – Diversity and Inclusion Meet & Greet

I headed to this a bit late (due to an overlap with Senior Development) but was able to meet some new faces and reconnect with some old friends. There were some new handouts / programs highlighted by USA-Swimming. These included new cultural inclusion resource guides for Latinos, African-Americans, and LGBTQ athletes. These are all available from USA-Swimming and I will bring some copies to the ISI HOD meeting as well.

1 to 2:10PM – LSC Development Meeting

Listened to a panel discussion on topics related to Leap program levels and how to grow your LSC in non-Olympic years. The importance of having active committees at the LSC level was also a big focus since the needs / issues / problems that come up

in each LSC can be quite different. The meeting was lead by Cherita Gentilucci, Jane Grosser, and Arlene McDonald.

2:10 to 3:50PM - Russell Mark: What's New in Technique

Russell broke down some of the technical aspects of Rio and former Olympic swimmers.

Simone Manuel (50 & 100m Freestyle)– Catch phase (early) and worked on keeping a low head position (especially during her approaches to walls).

Looked at her “relaxed throw of the hand” forward on the recovery phase.

Breathing Pattern – switched her “dominant” breathing side from 2015 to 2016.

During the 100m Free at the 2015 FINA World Championships Simone's PB was 19 Right / 3 Left. When she tied for Gold in Rio she had switched to 20 Left / 2 Right.

Katie Ladecky (200, 400, 800m Freestyle) – Mainly focused on footage of her catch phase (both above and under the water). Her catch is more narrow than sprinters and she gets into a “sideways triangle” position early. Mark also looked at Katie's turns and foot position on the wall.

Michael Phelps (Freestyle relays, IM, Butterfly) – Looked at the angle of MP's push offs and how he involves his core muscles and engages his legs to generate power on his underwater dolphin kicking prior to breakouts.

We would also look at MP's timing of kick and pull phase on the butterfly later (after looking at Dana Vollmer's). Phelps' stroke is a bit different from most international level fly swimmers since his torso is long and legs are relatively short compared to his arm-span.

Ryan Murphy (Backstrokes) – We looked at footage from Ryan's training camps over the course of the last two years while Russell highlighted slight changes (as Ryan also got stronger). Keys were a quick catch near the surface, 20 to 30 degrees of rotation, and his palm facing backwards at the end of the stroke cycle. Ryan's core strength improvements over the last 3 years played a key role in his victories in Rio (and a WR leading off the Medley Relay when he said he felt “tight” before warming up for finals).

Katie Miley (100m Breaststroke, 400m Med. Relay) – Watched video of both training camps and Olympic races. Main focus was on her “rounded and full” pulling patterns and her connection of her hands to elbows to core (while maintaining at tight line during the kick phase). We also looked at Katie doing “Accordion Drill” with a snorkel to fix timing and bodyline problems.

Lilly King (100, 200m Breaststroke, 400m Med. Relay) – We looked at the front side footage of Lilly's strokes to study her head position and glide phase. The side view of her stroke and turn were also shown with emphasis on how she brings her heels up quickly on her kick phase and how she sets up each stroke incorporating her hips and core.

Dana Vollmer (100m Butterfly, 400m Med. Relay) – We looked at training video from both 2012 and 2016. Focused on her body press forward & down (shoulders and torso) and the angle of her hand entry (with fingers pointed down).

4 to 5:10PM – Town Hall Meeting w/ President Jim Sheehan and CEO Chuck Wielgus
This was mainly a question and answer period with these two gentlemen. Both addressed the Code of Conduct problems following competition in Rio (and the punishment phase). They also talked about how USA-S is going to revamp Splash magazine and our new recruitment goals. There is a continuing effort to get “Make A Splash” programs going in urban areas to improve water safety and bring more minority athletes into all aquatic sports. Chuck also addressed recent health concerns but stated that he had no immediate plans to step away from running the sport.

7 to 8 PM – Welcome Reception (hosted by Risk Management in the Grand Hall / Exhibition area)

8 to 9:10PM – Attended the Central Zone Preview & Discussion meeting (lead by Coach John Bradley) to preview upcoming legislation and future meets for the CZ. I met up with John Bradley later to discuss both Zones and Sectionals meet formats (after our ISI delegation dinner).

September 22, 2016

9 to 10AM – Steering Committee Club Coaches Open Forum
Frank Busch and other coaches discussed training camps, national team funding, and changes / improvements to the Quad Plan. Panel discussion continued for 30minutes but I had to leave early.

10AM to 11:30AM – Central Zone – Section 1 Coaches Meeting
Main focus was on Sectionals meets for the next 4 years. Many LSC's wanted to move to a LCM set-up EACH YEAR for Spring Sectionals. I felt at least 2 years out of Olympic Trails was ideal (and better than just doing so in Olympic years). Much of this is coming from the fact the Central Zone is not producing as many National Team members and Olympic Trails qualifiers as other Zones. Illinois representatives felt very strongly that we should focus our efforts on more LCM championship level meets at that moving to ALL Sectionals meets would be ideal. Even if we had limited access to TRAIN in 50m pools during the winter they felt we should still focus on RACING in 50m pools (since Olympic Trails cuts can only be achieved in the LCM format).

Sectional time standards were also discussed. The focus was on those swimmers outside of the Zone having to meet tougher standards and keeping the size of the meet under control for the venues we have / may have access to in the next 3 years.

Time trials will be limited to 2 per athlete starting this spring.

1 to 1:50PM – Mighty 2500 Reunion

Leap guidelines, building the base, and retention were the main focus of this meeting. Broke into small groups with each LSC to exchange ideas and come up with plans we can bring back to both our day to day operations and seasonal planning. Phil, Travis, and I attended this event. Phil felt we needed to make sure we secure a new Diversity / Inclusion Chair along with a Disability Chair to meet the needs of future athletes. For the past 4 years I have been covering Diversity / Inclusion in a liaison capacity while also serving in other roles on the ISI Board.

3 to 4:15PM – Diversity / Inclusion Training

This meeting included presentations on what some of the LSC's have done for projects aimed at D&I. We discussed both templates for a 1 and 2 camp / clinic. Coach Jennie Wharton Shamburger did a presentation on the clinics / camps they set up in Gulf Swimming over the past year. We also saw the set-up and discussed camps conducted in 2016 CZ and Eastern Zone (along with pictures of Coach Frankie Hanson and James Davis).

It was good to hear some of the entry level programs / learn to swim programs also being developed in urban areas to help "drownproof" populations that in the past did not have access to affordable swim lessons.

7 to 8:45PM – Central Zone (Meeting #1)

Future Zones & Sectional sites were discussed (including presentations) and approved. Pam Lowenthal (IL.) presented the registration report. Candidates for both Zone and National offices also came by the meeting to introduce themselves. We reelected Amy Hoppenrath (MV) to a second term as Central Zone Non-Coach Director.

September 23, 2016

5:20 to 8:10AM – Helped fellow Central Zone (and Rochester Orca) Coaches John Bradley and Tom Walsh run a SCY circuit workout for the Athlete Reps. at the Georgia Tech. University Aquatic Center (home of the 1996 Olympic swimming & diving events). Time frame included bus rides to and from the site.

9:10 to 10:20AM – Coaches Meeting (Discussion)

Main topics included the size (and duration) of Olympic Trails. Some were concerned (again) it was too big. There were also many questions / comments about the funding for the Quad Plan with those athletes who improve late in the cycles (last 2 years especially) and those in college.

Many voiced concerns about the need for clubs to "train to the top" as a great number of kids nationally ranked at ages 12 to 16 are not improving in certain Zones (areas). *Personally – I can see this is related to high school coaching / formats / rules in certain states – like Iowa.

1:30 to 3:20PM – Diversity / Inclusion: Now, New, Next

We listened to a presentation and had a question & answer period with Schuyler Bailer and his father. Schuyler is a transgender athlete who swims with the Harvard University Men's team (after being a member of the Women's team before his surgeries). This was an extremely (and sometimes sad and funny) presentation that included topics ranging from surgical and hormonal transformation (and the FINA & NGB rules), the role of parents and peers, interactions with both teams at Harvard and his club teams, the role of coaches in athlete's lives, and even the current North Carolina "bathroom laws" (which are basically poorly written, unenforceable, unconstitutional, and now costing the state billions of dollars).

3:30 to 5:30PM – Central Zone (Meeting #2)

We changed Zones to a 4 day format and voted in new events for 10 & Under (400m Free), 11-12 (400m IM, 800m & 1500m Free), and 13-14 (50m Fly, Back, Breast) for the new format.

We also approved set distances for the Open Water races to mirror what is being done for Open Water nationals and in other Zones. All distances will be contested in km so they line up with FINA time standards and courses.

Other changes to the Central Zone manual will be posted at the Central Zone webpage.

7 to 9PM – House of Delegates (Meeting #1)

This night started with the In Memoriam segment and a message from USA-S President Jim Sheehan. Lifetime members from various LSC's were honored before the LEAP certifications were recognized. Iowa Swimming Inc. achieved Leap 2 status this year (YEAH!) and our athlete representatives received a check on behalf of the LSC. There is a photo of this uploaded to the LSC website and Facebook page. Phillips 66 Performance Award was presented to Katie Ladecky along with awards for water safety and diversity / inclusion.

The meeting concluded with some video highlights from the Omaha Olympic Trials, Rio Olympics, and Rio Paralympics swimming competitions.

September 24, 2016

9AM – House of Delegates (Meeting #2)

Following an address from CEO Chuck Wielgus, the Treasurer's report, the USA-S foundation presentation, and the registration report we voted on various changes / updates for the USA-Swimming rule book and approved the budget.

Two pieces of legislation stand out that will impact our LSC meets this season:

1. (R-2) Deck Pass is approved as proof of USA-Swimming membership.
2. (R-3) 102.5 – Seeding, Lane Assignments, Swim-Offs, and Order of Heats

I will attach the legislation that passed in the HOD to my e-mail along with the notes from the CZ Section 1 Coaches Meeting. Feel free to contact me with any questions related to this report or the meetings I attended.

DP Spellman