

NEW BUSINESS - 2023 ZONES DISCUSSION:

OBJECTIVE – Assess the 2023 Zones situation and open discussion to properly adjust coaching contracts (if needed) to allow for decision-making authority regarding safety concerns for athletes and coaching staff should a similar situation arise

Meet Operation

- Entry Process
 - From the get-go (as you know), the entry process was met with little clarification without the pushing of attending LSC entry chairs for greater understanding about the new policies and guidelines for entries, stemming from the Zone's decision to allow 'bonus' swims for athletes with 1-2 AAA time standards
 - We heard from the Missouri Valley LSC that their meet recon from the host team showed issues with *every single one* of their athletes. It was clear that coaches had difficulty navigating entries for their teams.
- Technical Meeting/Coaches Meeting (Thursday)
 - We were provided with printed copies of the coaches meeting agenda, which included written verification that session timelines/reports and psych sheets would be posted *prior* to the start of the coaches meeting (Session timelines and psych sheets were *never* posted to the website or shared with the coaching staff, prior to any issues began and adjustments were made to the meet layout). I have attached the digital copy of the general meeting agenda.
 - Much of the meeting highlighted Marshall McKinney, the facility aquatics manager (hopefully not for much longer) and his discussions about the air filtration system and frequent checking and analysis of the chlorine and air in the pool. We realize in hindsight that he was likely doing so to cover his bases and perhaps serve as a 'warning' about how bad things were really going to be.
 - Attached at the bottom of the agenda was the list of coaches/officials/teams represented on the Meet Committee. It states, "The Meet Committee will hear matters relating to the competition, which includes eligibility and Meet Operations." One of those representatives, a coach from the Arkansas LSC team, was my touchpoint throughout the meet as massive changes were being made to the meet program, and he said he was never asked to be a part of *any* meet committee meetings. Robert Fry is also listed as an Officials Rep – I have not heard from him if he was involved in any discussions or meetings (but may certainly be worth asking).
- Technical Equipment Failures and Lack of Safety
 - 16 Daktronics touchpads were removed daily, and installed by lifeguards and volunteers *during* starts and open warmups at the beginning of 11&O prelims AND 11&O finals (they were consistently removed from the pool). I only saw the facilities manager help at one session with the installation of touchpads – it was usually the head lifeguard and a KCB volunteer. This was extremely dangerous, as they would walk directly up to lanes with 30-40 athletes swimming their warmup to install a touchpad. Each day, installation of the touchpads would begin ~15 minutes before the start of the session
 - Starting boxes were also installed within 15 minutes before the start of the session. I was extremely concerned that I never heard starting box or touchpad tests before the start of each session, especially having them plugged in just moments before. This should certainly not be the case at this level of competition.

- Ann noticed that for the Friday 10&U session, there was a delay in the start of the meet because the lifeguards had neglected to install the starting box at the 50s end of the pool. That same session, they had technical issues with the starting box and had to replace it twice.
 - Lane speakers were turned off for a significant portion of both 10&U sessions and the Thursday evening 11&O timed final sessions. My guess is over 50 false starts were either misidentified, or not called on by officials because they too agreed that the reason for their false start was due to the lack of identifiable start. Not to mention the number of athletes late of the blocks because they couldn't hear the "take your marks". Ann called this out to the officials multiple times, and received rude replies as a result.
- Communication (The lack thereof)
 - I will happily attach the full extent of email communication shared to us by the host team from the meet in screenshots below, with their timestamps. Every single one offered empty promises for quick updates on timelines, postings to the meet host page, and updates that we would receive from the host team. Please see those listed below.

No timeline was posted to the website or emailed out for the entirety of the meet. Were only able to make plans for bus rides and team dinners based on a timeline shared with us by the Head Coach of the MN LSC (she had an official send it to her).

Prelim heat sheets and 10&U heat sheets had been posted. No discussion regarding timers/counters for the 800 were listed in the meet program or in the technical/coaches meeting; timers had not been required the evening prior for the 11-12 1500 events.

This was the big one – cancellation of finals was at ~8:40pm, and didn't receive this until 11:00pm the night prior. Again, no discussion regarding timeline prior or discussion to alter the timing of the 10&U session. Note that there is NO urgency or recognition of the emergency cancellation just hours before, or clarification/answers for how they were going to address it – just a plan for us to "show up" like nothing ever happened. The "coaches meeting planned" was never formally organized by the host team or officials. The LSC coaches in attendance demanded that we meet with Brian Perkins (who showed up at the facility 15 minutes before the planned start of the morning session) and the Facilities Manager, Marshall McKinney. This was infuriating, as no one in charge of the meet there seemed to act like the night before athletes were dropping like flies and many were already calling out sick. The announcers and other officials kept proceeding with warmups and closing the pool like the start of the meet was planned without addressing the coaches meeting or coaches questions about the timeline. Marshall offered no valuable information, aside from saying everything is 'fine' and their testing (whose testing??) showed that the air environment was healthy and improving. He could not promise us that the air and environment would remain the way it was when they tested once increased numbers of spectators, coaches, and athletes entered the pool. His quote – "It is kind of like putting tires on a car. They are supposed to work, but there is no guarantee they won't pop". Brian also offered no valuable information/insight into the situation but did acknowledge that he has asked his officials to not stay on deck for the duration of the session due to the air quality. He said "I myself cannot be on deck like this", but then asked our athletes and coaches do what he said he couldn't – proceed with the meet. This was the tipping point for me to decide to pull our LSC.

Changes Made **WITHOUT** Coach Contribution or Meet Committee Meeting

- Moving the 10&U session on Saturday from a 1:00pm start time to a 9:25am warmup time and 10:00am start time (this was contested by me with the following email reply to the meet director/entry email and fellow LSC head coaches)

“Hello, we cannot communicate with our 10&U athletes regarding the updated arrival time for their session. It is currently 11:12pm – you are asking these swimmers to be prepared to be on deck in less than 10 hours, when they are planning for a 1:00pm arrival time. This size of a change in meet requires a vote of the coaches/meet committee. No changes should have been made tonight without that meeting. This is a dramatic change to the sanctioned meet invite, regardless of the circumstances. “

- Decision announced over the loudspeaker in the aquatic center on Friday evening to cancel the remainder of finals (I agree that it became an emergency and they needed to act fast. However, they did not call coaches together to answer questions or to collect opinions about steps moving forward)
- Decision to operate the remainder of the meet as a Timed Final event for Saturday and Sunday (elimination of Prelim/Finals format for 11&O)
- Decisions regarding when the remainder of Friday’s events would be swum on Saturday, and when the Saturday events would be competed as timed final (did not receive email communication regarding this change until after 11:00pm Friday evening).
- Elimination of relay events from Saturday’s timed final lineup

Air Quality/Chlorine Toxicity

- I will attach the links here to the news articles/interviews posted by local KC channels to aid to this – they are each spot on regarding the immediate ‘smack-in-the-face’ feeling of the chlorine levels at this pool.
- Parent informed coaches that a KS news crews would be coming to the pool to discuss the situation, and he provided a personal witness statement to share about his experience as a parent (did not mention his team affiliation or daughter’s names). I do not see his personal statement incorporated into either article, and am not sure how these news channels received the tip regarding the meet.
 - <https://www.kmbc.com/article/air-quality-concerns-lead-to-changes-and-frustration-during-regional-swim-meet-at-johnson-county-pool-kansas/44742473>
 - <https://fox4kc.com/news/johnson-county-aquatic-center-becomes-hazardous-for-swimmers-during-competition/>
- As I shared before (and I know you had noted in your email to Ellery, Melissa) – 3 athletes were transported and treated via ambulance on Friday evening. Another parent passed along a Facebook swim parent forum with a testimony of a teammate of an athlete taken in an ambulance.

Coaches and Athletes Symptoms – Chlorine Toxicity

I want to emphasize that while many of these symptoms can happen at an indoor, championship style meet with high numbers of athletes in the pool. But each of these were *incredibly severe* to the point where each of us were either impaired in our ability to coach on deck, or considered options for getting checked at an ER ourselves. We have no doubt we were exposed to a chlorine gas leak. None of us have slept more than 3-4 hours a night and have been woken up or kept from sleeping because of these symptoms.

COACH SYMPTOMS: *beginning Friday early-afternoon and lasting through the duration of the meet:*

- blurred vision;
- burning/dry/itchy/swollen/watery eyes;
- deep and dry cough;
- runny and stuffed up nose;
- persistent migraine;
- chest pain/tightness;
- excessive sneezing;
- sore throat;
- lack of sleep;
- stress;

ELEVEN Team Iowa athletes with reflective symptoms that had been either directly communicated to our staff or observed from our staff. Many of their parents also communicated they shared similar symptoms in their time sitting in the stands. One planned to medically scratch himself whether or not our team would pull out and another went to the ER, diagnosed with chlorine poisoning.

TWO of the four Team Iowa coaches sought post-meet medical attention and continued symptoms/medical treatment for days after.