

REPORT OF PC COMPETITIVE PROGRAM TASK FORCE

February 25, 2004

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The Task Force was established in May 2003 and consisted of the following members: Anneliese Eggert (Chairman), Rick Kaufman (Zone 4), Todd Krohn (coach), Joyce Lanphere (Zone 1N), Steve Morsilli (Zone 2), Don Power (Zone 1S), Dash Rothberg (athlete), and Ron Selim (Zone 3), all of whom have contributed to this report. Rick Beebe and Fred Siegrist also provided information.

The Task Force was charged with reviewing Pacific Swimming's competitive program to identify problems and propose actions to alleviate those problems. The primary symptom pointing to a need for such analysis was that meets were oversubscribed; swimmers were being denied entry and an opportunity to compete.

SUMMARY OF FACTS

Using 1998 to 2002 as comparison years, data was collected on, among other things, the number of swimmers, clubs, number and levels of meets held, and meets oversubscribed in Pacific. Spreadsheets containing this information are attached to the original of this report. After compilation and review of all available data, the following facts emerged:

1. From 1998 to 2002 Pacific grew by 700 swimmers, but held 40 less swim meets;
2. In 2002, six out of nine oversubscribed meets were during the April 6 to September 2 seasonal membership period, when an additional 2,657 swimmers entered the competitive program.
2. In 1998 we did not consider "C" a time classification -- these were novice swimmers below the "B" time classification required for entry into "classified" meets. Competitive opportunities for these novice swimmers were provided in dual meets and invitationals, which had no minimum qualifying time requirements.
3. In 2002, Pacific had 21 fewer invitationals and 17 fewer dual meets than in 1998. The "C" swimmers were now included in C/B/A+ meets, contributing to oversubscription and, because of their slower times, making it more difficult to meet the 4-hour rule. Part of the reason for the decrease in number of invitationals may have been the change in fees adopted in recent years which decreased the host club's share of entry fees for invitationals to \$1.50 rather than \$1.60 (A/AA) or \$1.75 (C/B). It became more profitable for clubs to host C/B/A meets rather than Invitationals.
4. Although a current accurate count of how many swimmers Pacific has in each classification was not available, it appears that the greatest number are in the B/A category, i.e. 69% of the 9-10 age group, 76% of the 11-12, and 81% of the 13-14 swimmers. Combining these classes and then adding the "C" class or plus (+) or minus (-) designations, results in too many swimmers being eligible for C/B/A+ meets.

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5. Oversubscription to meets was, as anticipated, primarily a problem in the more urbanized areas of Zones 1S, 1N, 2, and the southern portion of Zone 3. Zone 4 and the northern portion of Zone 3 most often faced the opposite problem of too few entries into meets.
6. The 4-hour rule itself did not emerge as the primary cause of PC's problems, although it did present the challenge of more creative scheduling of age group events.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **The 4-hour rule:**
Pacific should continue to 'plan' meets to comply with the 4-hour rule through the use of innovative event schedules, however, we should also continue our policy of "no penalty" for meets that do not meet the 'exact' 4-hour timeline.
2. **Geographic considerations:**
Pacific should continue the exemption of Zone 4 and the northern portion of Zone 3 from both scheduling and 'meet cap' requirements. It should also consider making these areas exempt from future restrictions as an encouragement for Bay Area teams to travel to the more remote reaches of Pacific.
3. **Shortage of meets:**
Clubs must be encouraged to host more meets. The LSC and Zones should, among other things –
 - A. Identify pools that are available for meets
 - B. Mentor clubs and meet directors on how to host a successful meet
 - C. Encourage smaller clubs to co-host meets
 - D. Encourage more dual and tri-meets
 - E. Encourage zones to hold more than one meet (different classes) on desirable weekends, e.g. one 12&un B/A meet and one Junior meet

It has also been suggested that clubs with more than 50 (or some greater number) of swimmers be required to host at least one meet per year. We realize this is a controversial "last resort" solution and it is not recommended by the Task Force at this time.

It is recommended that an ad-hoc committee be appointed to generate other ideas and establish procedures for their implementation.

4. **Classifications:**
Restrictions should be placed on the number of either (a) events, (b) classes or (c) age groups included in classified meets, particularly during the summer season (April to September). Examples for consideration:

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- A. Classified meets should include no more than 2 classes, i.e. C/B, B/A, A/AA with no plus [+] or minus [-] designations;
- B. To make single-class A meets more viable, consideration should be given to adding 'bonus' events to A (and over) classified meets;
- C. B/A+ meets, if held, should be sanctioned only in multi-course venues; A+ meets could be held in single-course venues;
- D. Classifications should be limited in the 9-10 and 11-12 age groups, e.g. 8&un and 13&up could include C/B/A classes, with C/B only in the 9 to 12 age groups;
- E. Separate meets could be held for 10&under and 11&over age groups;
- F. Age group meets could be limited to 12&unders, using a 'Junior' format for 13&over swimmers. Changes in jurisdiction and fee schedule for 'Junior' meets would probably be required for this option.

It is recommended that, when all times become available in a database, an accurate assessment be made of how many Pacific swimmers are actually in each classification, making it possible to accomplish the suggestions made in 5 and 6 below.

5. **Competitive Opportunities:**

A Task Force subcommittee determined that advanced swimmers (AA+) should have about 80 competitive opportunities per year, while lesser classifications (A or below) should have about 40. When the accurate assessment of swimmers in each classification is made (see 4 above), these estimates of the optimum number of competitive opportunities could be used to estimate the number and level of meets which Pacific should offer each year.

6. **Time Standards:**

Based on the assessments suggested in 4 and 5 above, it is recommended that the Time Standards Committee review all Pacific time standards with the goal of achieving a more equitable balance between the various classifications. Particular attention should be directed to allowing more swimmers to participate in Pacific's "Junior" meets. While our age group program has been over-crowded, our Junior meet program has often had too few swimmers. A greater number of entries would make these meets more financially viable and shift some of our faster 11-12s to the Jr/Sr program.

In addition, it is also recommended that an evaluation be made as to whether it would be advantageous to coordinate Pacific's time standards with those of USA Swimming.

6. **Invitationals:**

- A. To restore the balance between Invitationals and classified meets, it is recommended that meet fees for Invitationals be changed to the \$2.25 (host \$1.60) specified for A/AA meets.

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- B.** To keep these meets from becoming too large, it is recommended that an ad hoc committee be established to review team limits on Invitationals. The current limit based only on the number of teams encourages hosts to invite the largest teams available while smaller clubs are not 'invited'. It is suggested that perhaps teams could be classed by the number of swimmers they have. Merely as an illustrative example: 125 to 200 Class 3; 75 to 125 Class 2; under 75 Class 1. The limitation could then be based on some numerical sum dependent on the class of teams invited, i.e. less large teams and/or more small teams.

In addition, the number of acceptable splashes could be adjusted based on the events offered, i.e. a larger number of teams could be included in a 'sprint meet' than in a meet with distance events. However, some control would have to be maintained to prevent clubs from having only 'sprint meets' just so they can have more entries.

We realize that many of the above suggestions will meet with resistance since we have in recent years embraced the idea, through the C/B/A+ format, of every swimmer being eligible for nearly every meet. However, this has to a great degree eroded the previous motivation for swimmers to achieve the next higher class (the old mindset of "Wow -- Now I can go to an A meet!") and has been a major reason that meets are now oversubscribed. The Task Force believes that considering – and implementing – some of the above suggestions could greatly improve Pacific's competitive program.