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2015 Convention Notes

Wednesday, Sept 30 – Diversity & Inclusion Meet & Greet

Introduction of Members of the National D & I Committee

Ice breaker game of Human Being Bingo

-Move around the room to meet people who have done the different things listed in each of the

bingo squares

Discussion Lead by Bill Kirkner, Topic – What Discrimination looks like and its affects. How Discrimination acts within a society.

-Asked for everyone in the room who was left handed to move to the table at the front of the room.

-5 people of a room of about 50 people were right handed, which is roughly the estimated percentage in the country (2-10% of the population).

-Latin word for right, as in right handed is dextro. Word for left is sinistro. Immediately, each of these words creates a different value and judgment for people. Those who are considered dexterous are capable and skill, and posses a desired characteristic. Those who are sinister are evil and conniving, and have one of the worst human characteristics.

-Left handedness is outside of what is considered normal, and being different is often seen as wrong or bad. Being left handed even becomes a character trait which can designate a person as a witch. The simple circumstance of being left handed becomes a crime which is punishable by death.

-Then comes along the person who is ambidextrous. These people can choose to be either left or right handed, thus leading to the idea that being left handed is a choice.

-If someone is therefore choosing to be left handed and thus evil, it must mean that they must be sick, or somehow misguided.

-If someone is sick or misguided, it follows that there must be a way of curing or correcting the behavior. Society can go as far as to help a person even without their consent.

The fact is the being left handed means none of these things, yet all of the above things happened. People were disciplined, ostracized, incriminated, persecuted, killed, and institutionalized without consent to try to fix a problem that was not actually a real problem. The punch line at the end of this guided discussion, “It’s a good thing we don’t think and treat people this way anymore, right?”

We are all, of course, aware that this is still the way society thinks and behaves, it has merely selected new groups of people to discriminate against. It is up to each of us to dispel false beliefs, to include all people, and to teach others how to be inclusive.

Wednesday, Sept 30 – Diversity & Inclusion Hot Topics

Panel question session of the members of the National Diversity Committee

Questions were fielded by the moderator, Manuel Banks of USAS D & I, as well as from the audience.

Most questions were to bring up the issues that many people are often apprehensive to discuss.

Each member defined what diversity and inclusion means to them. It was clear that it does not just mean racial diversity, but being active in finding way and to create opportunities for people of all racial, ethnic, cultural, gender identical, economic, and religious background.

The biggest question which everyone, including USA Swimming, is trying to answer is how. How do we get more people included in swimming? There was a lot of emphasis on parent/adult education. Doing a team open house for the community, hosting open lessons for the public, opening up team events to the public, outfitting swimmers with “the brand” so that others will ask about swimming, and holding evens outside of the pool for family and friends of swimmers were all ideas on how the get more people in.

Once we get swimmers, how do we then keep them in swimming? There is a great need for shorter simpler meets that are more accessible to newer swimmers and families. Having funding and equipment available for those swimmers who would not otherwise be able to afford to stay in the sport. And of, course continuing to educate about the opportunities that swimming can create for the kids as they get older.

Lastly, there was a general agreement that many coaches just simply don’t understand enough about culture to help those that they are trying to attract to the sport. No one is perfect and no one is going to be able to understand where every group of people is coming from, but the onus is on the coach to make the effort to understand and to be sensitive. Making the parent an ally, and asking for their help in understanding, showing an honest interest and willingness to accommodate differences in culture, and putting in the effort to make every kids feel included as a member of a team are the building blocks of creating a truly diverse sport.

Thursday, Oct 1

LSC Age Group Chairs Workshop #1 – Age Group Development Committee Reports

1. National Team Culture Development – Frank Busch

USAS’s National Team Head Coach gave a short presentation on what he sees as the biggest needs for age group coaches to help create athletes that will someday get to the National Team level. The major elements that he would like to see:

-Sell the Work – Realizing that kids are different today, but not getting hung up on that difference. Coaches need to adapt to what they have to work with. Coaches need to teach the value of hard work.

-Teach Team – Instill the importance of the group being more important than the individual and that together we all rise.

-Positive Environment – Kids are brought up in a negatively reinforced environment these days and team and coaches should never allow that on the deck.

-Teams should all have a simple team code that is taught, that is visible, and that is repeated often to swimmers. Example: Show up on time, pay attention, be honest, and honor your team with your hard work.

Closing notes to the coaches: Frank strongly reinforced that AG is the back bone of our sport and that what we do not only has a huge impact on the face of USA Swimming, but has a huge and lasting impact on the individuals that we work with. Our work is important and we should never feel like we are less valuable because we coach young kids, and may never coach at the national level.

2. Tech Suits for AG Swimmers – AG Committee

The issue on the floor is whether or not the national committee should put forth legislation banning tech suits within AG swimming. This would not exclude younger aged athletes from wearing tech suits in Open Meet competition (Sectionals and above). There was much discussion on all of the negative points of having AG kids wearing tech suits which included:

-Cost Issue – Tech suits put a large burden on families, and we need to keep costs down in order to retain families in the sport.

-Fairness of Competition – Not every kid can afford these suits, and not having a suit puts these athletes at a disadvantage. This sport needs to be inclusive not exclusive.

-Swimmer Psychology – The suits are creating a shift in the culture of swimming that coaches are trying to combat. Parents and swimmers who believe that they “need” to have the suit are corrupting the value of all the hard work they are putting into swimming, and the wrong message is being sent to those families.

-Backing the Coach’s Philosophy – The goal of for USA Swimming to send a message that will back the large majority of coaches. Teams that institute bans on tech suits run into issues with families arguing with coaches, creating negativity among the parent groups, and families leaving to other teams that allow the suits. If USAS states its views on AG swimmers using tech suits it will help all coaches greatly.

It is important to note that there was a lot of emphasis put on parent education. Coaches are responsible for educating parents and swimmer that the suit does not get across the pool, the swimmer does. The hard work a swimmer does should not be devalued because a suit helped that swimmer go fast. The suit is not necessary to go fast. The suits are anti work, anti team and anti positive environment, all things that were covered just minutes before by National Coach Frank Busch.

The issue was put to a show of hands to move forward with development of positive reinforcement. All but 2 people raised their hand in a room of at least 70 people. It will be at least another year before it comes out but you can let your teams know that it is coming.

3. USAS Marketing – Jim Fox Marketing Director

Two programs out this year to help promotion and retention at the club level. Swim Today is the first program , which is returning for its second year. Teams can sign up and receive either a Recruiting Kit or Retention Kit. The kits contain customizable posters, wrist bands, banners, bag tags, goodies and give-aways for team to hand out as promotional items at any team event. More info at swimtoday.org.

Second program is Swim Jitsu which now has 2 versions (Core and Light). Swim Jitsu as basically a giant inflatable bounce house obstacle course. The Core version uses a 50 meter pool, but the new light version can be done in a 6 lane 25 yard pool as long as the minimum pool depth is 4 feet. This event can be opened up to the community and as long as participants can swim a 25, anyone can go on the course. This event is primarily to bring in participants who are not already on a team, but of course team members are welcome. More info at swimjitsu.com

Side note: USA Swimming is no longer doing the Splash Bash parties to promote the boost in interest we get from Olympic Trials and the Olympic Games.

4. Safe Sport – 2 Athlete Reps

There is a great need to spread information about the Safe sport program as there is only about 10% of swimmers and parents know about it. The program was created to protect athletes, but they cannot use the program if they are not aware that it exists. LSC leadership is asked to spread the word to coaches, and have coaches gather there 12 and older swimmers to talk about the program. There is a video and training module available at [safesportinitiative.weebly.com](mailto:safesportinitiative@weebly.com) for both parents and athletes. There are also many resources for team available at usaswimming.com.

5. Legislation to vote down/remove

There was a motion to amend the number of events an age group swimmer could perform in one session in order to allow some creative fun meets formats to work. People we in agreement with the concept of the change, but the motion had been formatted in a way that would cause other issue. Motion was rescinded so that it could be formatted correctly and presented at another time, as it would not have passed in the current format.

6. Breakout Group for Review of *Progressions for Athlete Development* Document

This document was developed many years ago and was not readily available to it originally indented audience. The nation age group committee has been overhauling it and it is headed into its final draft stage. Members were broken up into smaller working groups to review the sections of the document which include progressions on : Biomechanics, Physiology, Character Development/Life Skills, Psychology, and Competitive Performance.

In the document there are 6 levels which cover from the novice, entry level swimmer, to the Sectional level swimmer. The document intended to be used as a suggested guideline of competency at each level. The AG Committee is very cautious of creating a guideline which some coaches could use a cookie cutter format to strictly train their athletes with. The document intentionally leaves out age ranges, and gives very few suggested training sets at each level to avoid dictating a coach’s training, or a parent using this document against a coach’s training plan.

Final draft of the document projected to be published by the end of this swimming year.

Side note: Draft not available for reproduction or distribution.

Thursday, Oct 1

LSC Age Group Chairs Workshop #2 – How Credible Coaches Think – David Benzel

David Benzel is an author and coach turned motivational speaker. He has developed a non-profit that provides recourses to coaches and parents to improve the success of youth sports experience. The presentation he made was focused on coaches, but he also has multiple presentations for parents. Below is a summary of the major concepts covered in his presentation.

Section 1 Definition of Inspiration vs Motivation – Inspiration and motivation are not the same thing, but they are often used interchangeably. A person can me inspired by something but still not motivated. A person can be manipulated to do something, but that does not mean that person is motivated to continue to do it on their own. Inspiration is external and is helpful, but motivation is always internal and must be created within one’s self.

Ex – Why do we work? Money Why do we work well or hard? – Love, reward, pride, advancement, satisfaction, recognition, praise, enjoyment

Swimmers swim for fun, friends, enjoyment, achievement, competition, recognition.

Motivation is the pursuit of an unmet need. Therefore you cannot motivate your athletes. But you can give your athletes the satisfier that meets the unmet need.

Ex – Why does the mouse run the maze? – Hunger The cheese is the satisfier, but a full mouse will not run the maze, because that need has already been met.

We can, however, inspire our athletes. Inspiration is a high energy level of the intellect or emotion. Expose athletes to the elite stars in action (watch the pros). Tell stories of what others have overcome or accomplished. Paint a picture of what you see in their immediate future. Don’t create huge public expectations. Use phrases like, “If you are willing to do the work you could…” Help them see how far they have come on their journey. Help them learn a new skill and celebrate progress. Most importantly find out the Why of why you swimmers swim. Find out the root of their unmet need and help them continue to meet that need. Swimming will not remain a part of their life if it no longer meets a need for them.

Section 2 Create a Uniquely Positive Learning Environment – Negative vs Positive Reinforcement

The “Gotcha Coach” seeks to catch the swimmer doing wrong using criticism, complaining, condemnation, blame, fault finding, ignoring, punishment and penalties. These are immediately undermining for an athlete and will prevent motivation. A cop can give you a ticket for running a red light and you may stop running red lights, but the ticket will not make you a better driver.

The “Excellence Coach” uses encouragement, education, edify, praise for effort, acceptance, attention, reward, celebration, empowerment, and enablement. Everything that we enjoy doing is because of positive reinforcement. Reinforcement comes from the outside first and after time, it comes from within. Coaches should tell swimmers what they value in a swimmer and then reward swimmers who demonstrate those values.

Coaches who are upbeat before practice even starts, who welcome athletes to practice, who have a practice plan (and share the what and why of practice), who catch athletes doing well, and who use short easy to remember phrases are far more effective than the coach who is apathetic or not present before practice, who ignores athletes before practice or appears impatient, who makes negative assumptions about athlete’s motivation, who fails to have a thought-out purpose for practice, who fails to reinforce proper execution of skills, who uses unspecific praise, who speaks in a condescending tone, and belittles, ridicules and embarrasses athletes in front of others.

Section 3 Customize Approach by Reframing – Talent is Irrelevant – Natural Gift vs Developed Skill

If you are talented what do you need to do? Nothing, just show up and be talented. Some talented athletes never achieve success because they have been made to believe that their talents and abilities are fixed. They development the mindset that they must look good at all costs. They aren’t willing to work too hard are practice or want to practice too much. When they are faced with setbacks, they run away blame others for their deficiencies. How could it be their fault if they are so talented? When they are unsuccessful they are devastated because now an integral part of their being has failed.

An athlete that believes that their talent and abilities can be developed then they can continue to learn and learn for the rest of their lives. They will work with passion, dedication and effort. They will have the ability to embrace and learn from mistakes and confront their deficiencies. Coaches can reinforce the “I’m Talented” mind set by saying things like you’re so talented, you’re very fast, you’re a quick learner, you’re so coordinated, you’re a smart swimmer. Better ways of giving praise are, I’m impressed with your hard work, I like how you stuck with it, your turns are improving because of your steady work, you showed terrific pacing today, your attention to your stroke was noticeable. The student that is told “wow, you must be very smart” will choose an easy task in order to continue to look smart. The student that is told “wow, you must have worked really hard” will continue to work hard to learn more.