



March 11, 2026

Dear PC Zone Chairs and Leadership,

As planning for the 2026-27 season begins to take off, I want to take a few minutes to share some goals, tools, and ideas for CBA types of meets next season.

It's important to always keep in mind that athlete members are choosing USA Swimming over countless other activities. PC and its respective zones are the local level of USA Swimming that have been put in place to provide members the best experience possible - inspiring a passion for swimming and making a difference in the lives of our members. Our membership allows us to make the connections we have and do what we love for our sport's community - none of this happens without the athletes and parents, and we must keep them wanting to come back meet after meet, year after year.

Some of my primary duties are to ensure PC services are benefitting all athletes, and to analyze information to suggest changes that increase participation and performance for all athletes. I'd encourage each zone to adopt the following goals and utilize the tools provided when and where applicable for respective CBA meets. Again, these are suggestions.

Please feel free to leverage my assistance or ask me to research any data you would like to see from previous meets to help CBA meets be a great experience for our membership. I'm here to help you all and be of service for our members.

Kind regards,

Beau Caldwell

Goal: No athlete gets shut out of a meet because the meet closes early

Rationale: PC membership is stagnant and retention is below the national average. Once members have committed for more than 2 years, the likeness of them staying around for several years is much higher. We should be striving to give our members, both experienced and relative newcomers, fewer administrative hurdles for entry into participation. If we retained 1% more each year over the last 4 years, we'd have ~600 additional athletes in 2026-27.

Goal: Plan for numbers; Know the membership

Rationale: Meets should be planned to accommodate everyone who wants to swim, then formatted according to the anticipated crowd, which may include additional sessions or additional sites compared to this past year.

Useful tool: Use the meet planning attendance chart - ask coaches to complete this for upcoming meets at least through the SCY season.

Avoid (for CBA meets): setting the sessions, then filling to what the sessions can handle. This method doesn't work since teams are pre-assigned to a particular venue and it's announced on their schedule - it's misleading to athletes and parents that they will be guaranteed participation when there is a risk of being closed out.

Goal: Get more athletes involved earlier in the meet- avoid "hurry up and wait"

Rationale: If we're asking athletes and parents to commit to a commute, warm-up, and a 4 hour session, the more we can get racing sooner the better! In baseball terms, we need to see the field or be up to bat by the end of the 2nd inning, not the 5th.

Useful Tool: Use the most applicable reformatted CBA templates based on how many athletes are anticipated to attend. These are designed to get more athletes their first swim in the first 45 minutes of the meet. Shorter distances are generally moved closer to the start of the meet.

Goal: Increase distance opportunities for 11-12's

Rationale: Splashes from 11-12's in the 1000 and 1650 freestyle are down about 35% from Sept 1, 2025-Feb 28, 2026 compared to the same timeframe the year before, and it is not due to eliminating 11-12's from senior meets. From Sept 2024-2025, 11-12's only had 5 splashes in the 1000 free and 3 splashes in the 1650 at PC senior meets.

Distance Solutions for 11-12's- Zones are encouraged to have a conversation about incorporating more distance events into their CBA meets. When the conversation happens, here are some helpful tools and ideas to incorporate the 1000 & 1650. Use the meet planning attendance chart to identify meets where there may be more space in the timeline. Try to add the 1000 and/or 1650 at least once over the course of the short course season. When you get to one for each, decide if you want to add an additional opportunity and repeat as necessary. The following are suggestions for integrating them into CBA meets.

1. 11-12's (or every age) must have a B time in the 400/500 free (or longer) before entering the 800/1000, or 1500/1650. Standard could be raised to BB or higher depending on the anticipated crowd.
2. Run the 11-12's (or 12&U) prior to 13&O to stay ahead of the 4-hour rule.
3. Mix ages and genders, seed by time only.
4. Set a maximum number of heats to run, either fastest seed times or first to sign-up.

Other useful tools and ideas to utilize when applicable and necessary:

If the meet is looking like it's going to be too full...

- Combining ages or genders in events reduces by ~5 min/hour
- Combining ages and genders in events reduces by ~7-8 min/hour
 - Both of these methods possibly allow for more athletes to attend

Last year's meet did not fill and we anticipate a similar crowd - How much can we increase entry limits?

Assuming last year's meet entry limits were 3/day, 6/meet over 2 days:

- 4/day, 6/meet (Everyone swimming 1 day will add 1 event, ~.4/athlete avg)
- 4/day, 7/meet (Everyone adds 1 event, ~.8/athlete avg)
- 4/day, 8/meet (Everyone adds 1-2 events, ~1.2/athlete avg)

Is the meet outdoors and the weather going to be too cold in the morning?

- If the meet is only 1 session/day, move the start time back 1-2 hours so athletes are competing during a warmer part of the day.