

Maryland Swimming Club Development Program

In September, I had the opportunity to speak with Pat Kaplan, the registration and club development chair of Maryland Swimming. We were discussing an idea they have in place called their "Grant Program". Essentially what the program entails is a way to earn money and educational trips for their club by participating in a series of events. I have attached their 2009 program this email and I'm sure a copy will be available at the BoD meeting.

Everything about their program revolves around club recognition. They require their clubs to achieve their level one recognition to "play" as she called it. If you take a look, they offer rewards for achieving a higher recognition level, achieving a club excellence status and upping their VCC stats. Those are the areas they feel are important to the success of their LSC. If teams achieve those recognitions, they earn a certain amount of money. The spreadsheet attached shows how much teams have earned. In addition to earning money, they have an additional program where teams earn chances for coach education opportunities. They "raffle" off two chances to send an entire coaching staff to either the ASCA clinic or the Eastern States Clinic. The ways you can earn points are for things like sending an athlete to an open water competition, registering officials, and placing at their championship meets. Once again, areas they felt were important to their LSC.

Pat told me at first the program wasn't well received. The current items for recognition were not all on the original proposal. At first, coaches and teams laughed at this idea. "What is in it for them?" "Why would we want to do that when we could do it on our own?" Doesn't this sound familiar? They talked heavily with coaches and club presidents on what they wanted from the LSC and why it should be important. They included those ideas on their program. A few teams bit at first. The seal on the deal came when they presented the checks at Senior Champs. Presidents from the teams, who didn't participate, wanted to know why they weren't getting money and so started the competition. Now their program is very functional in which almost all clubs participate in. If you take a look at their website you can see the pictures very easily visible from their home page from their check ceremony. Some teams earned more than \$2,000 this past year.

I don't think we could pull off a program exactly to theirs especially with their financial costs for the program. Pat was given \$30,000 to start this program (She requested 10,000). I do feel that we need to start a program similar to this and I think this is a fantastic template. What they were able to accomplish and how they got teams to bite is incredible to me. I think we can be very successful with this in Virginia and be a trendsetter among other LSC's. I really believe that in the near future, club recognition will be a requirement for clubs, at least new clubs. This is a way to get head of that game by basing our program around club recognition. Niagara is also beginning a similar program and a few other LSC's have ideas. I think being proactive would help us be more successful in what we want from a program as opposed to watching other LSC's start ones and us following suit because we had to keep up.

What we can do is set up a program that has similar incentives like monetary rewards in exchange for things that we feel are important to our LSC. Some ideas I've thought of in the past

months were having someone attend HoD meetings and/or committee meetings (including athlete committee), placing athletes or coaches on zone team, registering officials, attending the swimposium, serving on the BoD, starting a diversity/outreach program, attending CLMBS or another USA-S clinic. We can include any facet of Virginia Swimming we feel is important. If you look at the requirements for club recognition, a lot of the areas I've listed come from requirements for club recognition levels.

I think that with the diverse background of our board and what each of us brings to the table, we could come up with a program that we are all confident in, a reward system and include what we feel is important to our LSC. In October, I heard a lot of talk about needing incentive to host meets and incentive for other things. This could be how to help with a lot of those issues among the other issues we have in the LSC. I think we should seriously consider making our own program, because it would help our LSC on many levels and give back to the clubs which in turn, helps the sport.