

Smoke Signals
April/May 2010

SHORT COURSE HIGHLIGHTS

Hope you're having a great start to spring. We know it can be a hectic time of year with many activities competing for attention and we appreciate FGAC being in the mix. The kids have improved greatly in their knowledge and mastery of swimming and worked hard over the last 6 months. We want them to enjoy the current spring session and go into summer season feeling good about themselves.

So, while much of today's news is focused on the current long course session, we'd like to first reflect on our accomplishments over the last half of the short course season. Tacked onto the progress we made in the first half, they amount to another benchmark season for FGAC:

- Had our largest group of NCSA Junior National qualifiers (5)
- Doubled our number of Sectional qualifiers including the first from Level 4 (16)
- 84% of eligible senior level swimmers qualified for HS Championships
- 1 qualified for summer 2010 USA Swimming Junior Nationals in Irvine, CA
- 10 qualified for summer 2010 Speedo Super Sectionals in Buffalo, NY
- 7 finalists at 14 & under Junior Olympics
- Nearly 80% lifetime best times at Spring Champs

Our younger age groups continue to improve and deepen, which shows in stroke quality and performance times alike, but to some extent we expect this given the normal growth of the club. It's the increased number of Sectional and HS Championship qualifiers which is most striking. This is not an easy task--doing so in our region puts one well above average in the swimming world as a whole.

At the half way point of the short course season we pointed out that we had broken 300 (out of 2200 teams) for the first time in the national virtual club championships. Now, as we evaluate the stats at the conclusion of the season, consider this: We are approximately 1/20th the size of CURL-BURKE. Take the number of Sectional qualifiers above and times it by 20. CUBU certainly has a large number of qualifiers, but 320?!

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THANKS TO OUR OFFICIALS

Our team of officials is getting it done as well. One example is the January Open at Fairland, where for the 13 & up sessions we had multiple officials on deck at once, serving as Referee, Stroke & Turn and Automation Volunteers. Since we don't host meets, coming together to support those who do is important. We get what we give. It's great to see so many with interest stepping forward. We've come a long way from begging for timers!

Off the top, we'd like to thank Mike Bush, our resident officiating guru, whose commitment to the cause and willingness to serve is nothing short of inspiring. **PVS notices too, recently awarding him with the 2009-2010 Official's Award as Starter.** Congratulations Mike!

We want to recognize and thank Vince Cleary as well, for spending the extra time it takes to inform and organize parents as our official's chair and for continuing to pursue the highest levels of certification as a working official.

Rounding out our current group of certified officials whose selflessness benefits us all:

Diane Bush - Hytek & Colorado automation
Robbye Fox - Stroke & Turn, Hytek and Colorado
Pat Gallagher - Stroke & Turn
Brian Hinkle - Stroke & Turn
Bruce Kalen - Stroke & Turn
Louanne Myers - Stroke & Turn in training
Bill Raynor - Stroke & Turn
April Sheapp - Stroke & Turn

SWIM-A-THON

We have begun to hand out packets for our biannual swim-a-thon fundraiser, which returns May 16th. In case you are unfamiliar with USA Swimming Swim-a-Thon, participants are asked to solicit family and friends for a per length sponsorship, under the agreement that they will attempt to swim up to 200 lengths within 2 hours*. Contributors can also sponsor a swimmer with a lump sum.**

USA Swimming provides prizes as incentive for different levels of earnings and we tailor the event to offer club based incentives and to promote whole team interaction. We make

it a quick hitter by design, which helps to lessen the disruption of our regularly scheduled programming and to wrap it up before the summer season gets going.

Overview:

- A USA Swimming sponsored event, with a portion of the proceeds going to USAS
- Remaining proceeds go to FGAC to help fund regional and national event travel expenses, activities for the age group and mini levels and media services, such as this season's purchase of AV equipment.
- Our spring roster (Levels 2-5) will be divided into 4 teams, with the eldest swimmers from Levels 4 & 5 serving as team captains
- These 4 teams will compete in an inter-team earnings drive
- Team captains will be given time to interact with and organize their teams during regular practice times.
- Some time will be devoted to promotion during the upcoming May 11th Team Council Meeting
- Volunteer counters will be needed

The Process:

1. Swimmers receive a USA Swimming fundraiser packet and instructions from FGAC coaches.
2. They have until the day of their swim to contact family and friends for sponsorship, using their packet for solicitation guidelines and to keep records.
3. **On Sunday May 16: Levels 4 & 5 attempt 400 Lengths from 8-10:30 am, followed by Levels 2 & 3 attempt at 200 lengths from 10:30-12:30 pm.**
4. Swimmers will then have 3 weeks to collect from sponsors, with **checks payable to FGAC**. At that time they'll return their packets and earnings to FGAC coaches.

Results:

- Coaches will hold a special presentation during regular practice time to recognize and award earnings winners.
- Individuals will be awarded prizes from USA Swimming based on earnings
- Individuals will be awarded prizes from FGAC based on earnings
- Team captains will be awarded prizes from FGAC based on leadership and team earnings

***Swimmers ages 14 & up will attempt 400 lengths, with sponsorship per lap (2 lengths)**

****Immediate FGAC families may not make a lump sum contribution.**

VIDEOTAPING OF AGE GROUP SWIMMERS

As we've mentioned before, another great development this past winter has been the addition of our HD/DVD video system, which includes an easily integrated HD camcorder, HD flat screen monitor and DVD player, combining excellent playback quality with portability for efficient use. Throw in a library of USA Swimming produced videos of the world's best swimmers and we have an incredibly useful tool for both in and out of water practices.

The challenge now is to schedule filming in a way to offer everyone access. To this point we've filmed during early morning workouts since they are low use times for the facility and we're in a section of the pool near the bleachers, giving us good lighting and perspective. This has worked out well in terms of production but only allowed us to video a relatively small number of swimmers.

We think the next best practice times which will allow us to focus more on the age group levels will be Friday night at Takoma and Sunday morning at Fairland. These times may not be the best for attendance, but they offer the space and flexibility necessary to organize filming and review. Over the next couple of weeks we will begin to include videotaping at these times.

SENIOR LEVEL TRAINING TRIP

Host: H2Okie Aquatic Club

Where: Christiansburg/Blacksburg, VA

When: Friday 6/18 - Friday 6/25

Who: 15 Maximum - 1st eligible to all Level 5 until 5/20, then Level 4 by age for remaining spots

How much: \$100 to FGAC to cover transportation expenses

H2Okie Aquatics is hosting us for a week of 2 a day practices and a swim meet. The week will begin with a meet in the town of Christiansburg, in VA Tech's brand new 50 meter indoor facility. Then for the remainder of the week the kids will train at the new pool and at a local rock quarry for open water swimming.

We will transport the group by passenger van. H2Okie Aquatics has arranged for us to lodge the kids on nearby Claytor Lake. As well as spending time lake front, we'll have daytime activities scheduled including a visit to the university campus and downtown Blacksburg.

PRACTICE SCHEDULE

We apologize for inconsistencies in the practice schedule at the start of LC Spring. We made a few changes during the season that were not rolled back into the original program announcement. Sorry for any confusion or inconvenience this may have caused.

- Sunday 5/9 Practice moved to Takoma: Levels 4 & 5 11:00-1:00 pm, Levels 2 & 3 12:30-2:00 pm
- Sunday 5/16 Swim-a-Thon schedule: Levels 4 & 5 8:00-10:30 am, Levels 2 & 3 10:30-12:30 pm

MEET SCHEDULE

- No meet entries are due at this time.
- Please see website for entire LC schedule
- Reminder: Entries are due to us 48 hrs. prior to entry date and time listed in meet announcement. Make entry by the online entry form or email. We prefer that you do not use both. Please indicate which days to enter and event choices by the swimmer.

NEWS & NOTES

1. Team Council Meeting next Tuesday 5/4 from 5:30-6:30 pm. Team Council is for all swimmers 15 & over. Anyone scheduled for Level 4 or 5 practice at that time and is not on the Team Council should arrive at 6:30 and report to the meeting room.
2. During the summer LC season we are arranging an adventure day at Terrapin Adventures in Savage, MD for all team members 11 & up. More info TBA.
3. Please do your best to be punctual for swim meet warm up times. It's critical to the success of the meet that coaches are not distracted or disrupted by swimmers arriving late. This is especially true for 12 & unders who need more management and instruction. Between check-in requirements, running a constructive warm up and managing other preparation tasks, it's challenging enough when everyone's on time.
3. Although we'd love to operate our entire program from Fairland, there are a number of reasons why having an alternative site is a good thing, most notably that we have some option during pool closings at our primary site. So while Takoma is a difficult location for many, we appreciate those of you in Levels 1-3 who have made use of it this season.
5. As always we appreciate your understanding and assistance as facilities closings crop up and practice changes occur. Special thanks to Richard Stutzman, who lap swims at Takoma and inadvertently serves as point man on that facility's status!