

## USMS Swimfest 2011

**by Patty Waldron** *Two of our NCMS coaches attended SwimFest 2011: Patty Waldron and Tammy Yates.. Here is the first of their stories about the experience ...more next month.*

Coach Patty here reporting back from Swim Fest 2011! My main focus in participating in this year's SwimFest was to get Masters Certification for Coaching Level I & II. I also brought along two coaches from SwimMAC to get certified as well. All three of us vary in coaching experience, me twenty-eight years as an age group coach, as well as 26 years of experience coaching/swimming Masters, through one coach coaching for the first time in over thirty years. Neither of my assistants have been coaching Masters long. They have a great understanding of the sport, both swam in college, but as we know things are different when you stand on the deck. My intrigue with the course was, what would I learn regarding coaching the older athlete and what would my "rookie coaches" get exposed to help them become more competent Masters Coaches?



The format of the classes was very good and interactive. Sometimes you learn more from real time talk about issues and problems than you do discussing made up scenarios. The interaction was great and there was good geographic representation from coaches throughout the country.

### Day 1 Level 1

#### **In the first level, the class is designed for you to look at:**

##### 1) *What Characteristics Make a Good Masters Coach?*

The characteristics are

- A. Be flexible
- B. Know your swimmers, most importantly know their names
- C. Know your program
- D. Coach beyond the workout.
- E. Make all swimmers feel welcome (Not all programs have the philosophy or capacity to do this.)

##### 2) *Looking at the Adult Learner*

- A. Most adults are self-directed and they come with different life experiences. The rule of thumb is the more you are engaged with your swimmers the more they will be with you and probably bring you swimmers.
- B. Most adults are intrinsically motivated
- C. Seek innovative applications....use different ways to learn.

##### 3) *Break-Down Learning Obstacles*

- A. Get the environment ready to learn
- B. Learn to handle unwanted input
- C. Deal with personal anxiety and fears.
- D. Work through distractions from work and play.
- E. Unlearn bad habits-Share why change is needed
- f. Figure out learning style.....what makes the athlete tick

##### 4) *Dealing With Triathletes (They could be your biggest customers)*

- A. They have a strong desire to learn
- B. They are in great physical shape
- C. They usually come with financial stability
- D. They have a strong work ethic

All athletes like feedback but triathletes tend to want it all the time. Do your best to communicate with them and keep their tri schedule in mind. At SwimMAC we have a cycle of work that the triathletes count on and it seems to work for them. We do make special allowances for big races. Once the technique is squared away give the volume but do not forget to add speed. Make sure the technique holds up under duress. Regularly incorporate sighting drills and into the workout.

## 5) *Etiquette for Coaches*

- A. Show respect for your athletes and use positive language.
- B. Don't give out health/medical advice....send them to a professional.
- C. Remember what works for one may be harmful for another whether we are speaking of training or possible coping skills for a problem.
- D. Review all medical records of your swimmers. Know what risks you have in the pool and make sure this is communicated to your entire staff.
- E. Understand Risk Management-make sure all athletes in your program are USMS registered and make sure your guests are as well. There is a one-time waiver that can be used for guests as well.
  - a. Who is covered?
  - b. What is covered?
  - c. Where is there coverage?
  - d. When is there coverage?

6) *Goals* Have goals for yourself and the program.....develop your own style....know where you are taking the athletes and be accountable to them. Help your athletes set goals because it gives purpose to what they do, creates challenges and motivates them.

## **Day 2 Level 2**

Day two dealt with the following topics:

### 1) *Developing Your Own Coaching Philosophy*

- A. Look at the individual and group dynamics
- B. What are the differences in the group?
- C. What is the motivation for your athletes being there?
- D. What are the most effective ways to communicate?

### 2) *Develop Your Coaching Strategy*

- A. What are your coaching goals?
- B. What are the goals of your athletes?
- C. Learn the group goals and adjust your philosophy?
- D. Be the Leader-The leader sets the standards, demonstrates the standards, and communicates the standards of the group.
- E. Ask for feedback and be prepared for tough criticism.
- F. You must be a leader and a follower....tap into the experience , it builds ownership in the program.

### 3) *Managing the Deck*

- A. Managing the individual is usually easy
- B. Managing the group best achieved with rules and procedures....use resources...lane captains, established routines, new swimmer buddies
- C. Managing locker room chatter difficult
- D. Praise in public, criticize in private
- E. Set and enforce behavior standards
- E. Be positive

Then the clinic went into some basics with regard to teaching strokes. This type of information is out there and readily available.

In summary I think this is a very good program to teach and motivate people to look at Masters Coaching as a profession versus a hobby. Any time you can get a certification too it gives you more credibility with whom you work with. This course is evolving and will continue to evolve. I am hoping in the future there will be a level devoted to the business side of Masters Coaching. Would I recommend investing in these courses.....it is a definite yes.

