

South Dakota Swimming, Inc.
General Chair Report
House of Delegates Meeting
October 6, 2024

LSC Championships

I want to thank Aberdeen, Rushmore, and Chamberlain Swim Teams for hosting our Long Course State B, Long Course State A, and Seasonal Championship Meets this summer. Thank you for welcoming us into your facilities and for hosting successful meets. Thank you to all the volunteers for giving their time to host everyone. Thank you to all of the officials and other volunteers from throughout the LSC who gave their time to help make our Championship Meets a success.

USA Swimming Workshop and Annual Business Meeting

The USA Swimming Workshop and Annual Business Meeting were held in Denver, CO from September 26-28, 2024. I want to thank Jose Gonzalez, Kyle Margheim, Corey Wright, and Cole Kincart for attending.

There were many great speakers who gave ideas of how to help improve the sport at the grassroots level. Even though the Olympics has just occurred, and everyone was excited about the National Team, I think USA Swimming really tried to make this about us, the LSCs and club teams, and what can be done to help us, and not about the few Olympic swimmers.

On Thursday there was a panel discussion of what teams and LSCs are doing to help grow and retain. Some of the ideas I took away from this were:

- LSC Mascot that attends swim meets and LSC Championships. Mascot does pictures, signs autographs, etc.
- LSC Championships are Family Fun Fests – games, such as cornhole, T-shirt cannon, fun wheel – spin to win a prize, inflatable screens, balloon arches (every heat for 10 & under are announced and walk through the arch). As Jamie Platt, Executive Director of Mid Atlantic Swimming stated, it is about creating the moments the kids will remember after they are done swimming competitively.
- Use NIL to your advantage. There are college athletes looking to do things. Have an athlete come to your championship meet to hand out awards.
- Small, themed swim meets with continuous music, awards after every event, fun name. Dennis Lugenwa, coach of Low Country Aquatic Club in Savannah, GA, refers to it as Banana Swim, after the Savannah Bananas baseball team.
- College Fair – invite small colleges (D3) to a morning pentathlon, and in the afternoon the athletes can meet with different college coaches and learn about the schools

On Friday there were several sessions for different positions. In the General Chair track, I learned that the issues we face here in South Dakota are the same issues faced by LSCs across

the country. It has nothing to do with the size of the LSC. An LSC with 10,000 athletes have the same issues, and the same struggles, as we do.

The main issues identified are:

- Growth
 - Awareness of the sport
 - Facilities and water time
 - Cost
 - Other activities for athletes
 - Cultural changes – video games
- Retention
 - Other opportunities for athletes (is it fun; do their friends stay)
 - Cost
 - Travel time/commitment
 - Communication, education and support for families
 - Coach longevity
- Performance
 - Pool access
 - Quality of coaching - education
 - Team mindset – goals for different levels of swimmers or just one goal
 - Catering to just one level of swimmer
 - Commitment level – going to meets and practices
- Revenue
 - How do clubs and LSCs have revenue to support the sport without pricing out families?
 - Rising costs of pool rental
 - Can LSCs help Outreach athletes by providing a swim suit and goggles

Strategic Planning and Strategic Thinking

- Adopting a mindset that anticipates future trends, challenges and opportunities
- Fostering innovation and aligning our vision with the action

It is important that leaders of the LSC keep looking ahead. We cannot be stuck in the past, because the youth sports landscape is changing rapidly. We must change with it or be left behind.

There were also changes to rules for both the Central Zone and USA Swimming.

Central Zone

- Rules were amended to clarify that to hold a position (officers, committees, committee chairs), you must be a resident of the Central Zone.
- Composition of committees were updated to make sure that athletes have sufficient representation (at least 20%)
- Zone meets are 3.5 days long with 10 & Under traditionally swimming on days 3 and 4. Now, 10 & Under will have events moved to day 2 to shorten days 3 and 4.
- 13-14 800 freestyle relay is being moved to day 1 to shorten day 2

- Bonus events will now be allowed in distances of 200 or less, instead of 100 or less
- Annual dues increased from \$0.25 per annual registered athlete per LSC to \$0.35.
- Swimmer surcharge at Zone meets increased from \$1.00 to \$1.25.

2025 Central Zone Athlete Summit

- June 19-22, 2025 (please arrive by noon EST on June 19; will conclude at 12:30 EST on June 22)
- Cleveland State University in Cleveland, OH
- Athletes will stay in dorms. Chaperones may be able to stay in dorms.
- There will be athlete tracks and non-athlete tracks
- Cost will be \$230 for housing and \$200 for meals per athlete
- Each LSC can send 4 athletes and 1 chaperone.

2025 Central Zone Meets

- Open Water Championships
 - Pleasant Prairie, WI – June 13, 2025
- 14 & Under Long Course Championships
 - July 31 -August 3, 2025 – Rochester, MN (South Dakota committed)
 - August 7-10, 2025 – Holland MI

2026 Central Zone Meets

- Open Water Championship
 - Pleasant Prairie, WI – June 12, 2026
- Multicultural Meet
 - Madison, WI – June 19-21, 2026
- 14 & Under Long Course Championships
 - July 29-August 1, 2026 (Wed-Sat) – Minneapolis, MN
 - July 30-August 2, 2026 – Evansville, IN

Bidding is open for the 2027 meets.

USA Swimming Changes

- Composition of some committees were updated to make sure athletes have sufficient representation
- Several rules were also updated from FINA to World Aquatics
- 13-14 year olds are eligible to swim the 50 backstroke, 50 butterfly, and 50 breaststroke at championship meets
- Due to injury, an athlete can tape no more than 2 fingers or toes
- In long course and short course meters, backstroke flags must be at least 1.8 meters (5 feet 11 inches) above the water surface
- Definitions were added/updated for Administrative Referee, Alternating Kick, Deck Referee, Meet Referee for OW, and Meet Referee for pool competitions

USA Swimming did vote to increase club dues. The old dues were \$70.00 per club per year. The new dues are now \$225.00 per club per year effective September 1, 2025. There are several

reasons for the large increase. USA Swimming had not increased club dues since the 1980s. Also, the funds from the increased dues are going to be used by Team Services to provide:

- Increased LSC and club visits – each LSC will have an in-person visit at least once every 2 years to better understand the needs
- Age Group Excellence Program – award programs that are succeeding in retention and growth and share best practices
- USA Swimming App functionality – provide useful reports and data in mobile format for coaches to easily access
- Support for home coaches at camps – reduce financial barriers for opportunities for in-person coach education and networking
- New Club Success addition – add in-person mentorship to select clubs in the New Club Success program to improve chances of long-term viability
- Teams-in crisis services – provide support for clubs who are experiencing challenges to improve athlete retention

I believe South Dakota Swimming has some opportunities to improve and grow the sport in our LSC, and look forward to working in collaboration with USA Swimming to make the experience better for everyone here.

Stanton Anker
SDSI General Chair