

**Strategic Planning
Annual Report
House of Delegates 2004**

The primary issue that was addressed this year concerned the current PVS meet sanctioning policy, its impact on meet quality, fairness, and profitability, and therefore whether any revision should be proposed.

Background:

At the beginning of the year input was received from a number of interested individuals. The issues raised included whether the current mix of sanctioned meets had become too crowded, the length of time sanctions should be requested prior to a meet, the degree to which closely scheduled meets impacted one another, whether the current prohibition for not sanctioning meets in competition with PVS Open and Championship meets should be retained.

Current PVS Policy:

Potomac Valley Swimming (PVS) maintains at C-8 of the Policy and Procedures Manual a Section dealing with the Sanction and Approval of Competition. In this section PVS states:

PVS will provide a competitive program for its member clubs and athletes through a series of meets sponsored by PVS. The PVS-sponsored meets will consist of a series of competitions designed to meet the needs of the swimmers in PVS. The PVS-sponsored competitive program will be supplemented by other competitions that are hosted by the member clubs of PVS. These PVS-sponsored meets will include:

- PVS Distance Meets
- PVS Open Meets
- PVS Championships Meets

The PVS Competition Committee will develop the PVS-sponsored schedule of competitions as follows: The schedule for the Long Course Season (May 1 to August 31) will be developed prior to, and approved at the preceding fall meeting. The schedule for the Short Course season (September 1 to April 30) will be developed prior to and approved at the preceding winter meeting. Bids for these seasons' meets will be taken prior to the subsequent meeting (winter and spring respectively). ...

The PVS Board of Directors sanctions all PVS-sponsored competition upon approval of the PVS-sponsored schedule. It is also the policy of PVS to SANCTION competition within and among PVS/ USA Swimming clubs, or to APPROVE championship level competition in which PVS swimmers are participating.

Research Conducted:

A paper was developed for the Board, which began by laying out a series of key questions and a set of draft principles for further consideration.

Key Questions to be answered:

- ❖ What information is necessary for the Board to make appropriate decisions?
- ❖ What is the appropriate number of meets?
- ❖ How should the meets be organized—PVS only, Club only, some combination?
- ❖ What is the minimum or maximum size for a meet in terms of splashes, teams?
- ❖ Should a schedule once set, be adjustable?
- ❖ How can/should the schedule support long term goals and objectives for PVS (what are they?)

Principles for setting a meet schedule:

- ❖ Ensures maximum quality opportunities for swimmers
- ❖ Fits within available time and physical resources
- ❖ Allows a high quality environment for swimmers and non-athletes
- ❖ Allows swimmers to gain times for higher level meets
- ❖ Promotes awareness and growth of swimming and PVS membership
- ❖ Meets individual club needs
- ❖ Provides opportunities in the most cost efficient manner
- ❖ Ensures appropriate number of officials and other volunteers
- ❖ Meets safety requirements
- ❖ Minimizes cost and time for all participants
- ❖ Administrative burden is appropriate and minimized

As part of this research, two areas of analysis were completed. First a review of policies in USA Swimming LSC, and second a preliminary analysis of the trend in the number of approved sanctioned meets, and the initial impact on sanctioned open meets.

First, in an effort to determine the state of play for USA Swimming LSCs with respect to the provision of competitive swimming meets, a cursory analysis was made by examining the documents available through each LSCs website. Where possible, documents (Rules and Procedures) were examined to determine if relevant policies could be identified. All existing websites were examined.

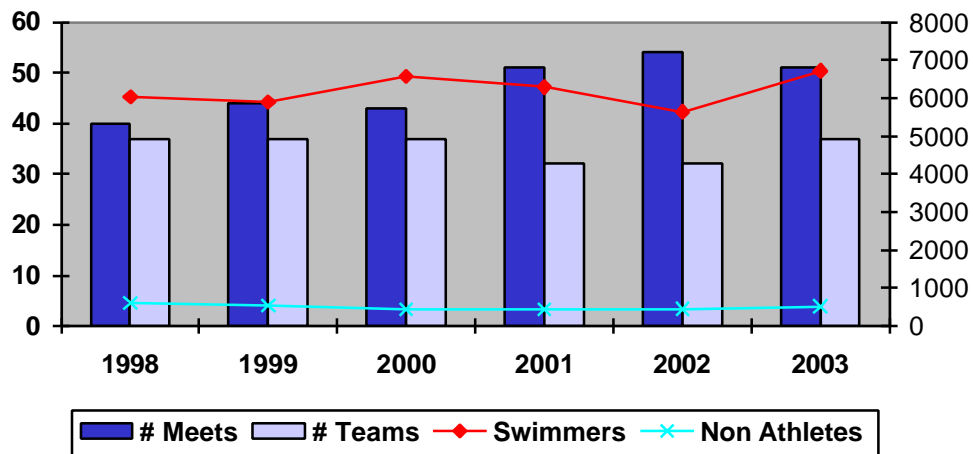
Of the 55 LSC web sites examined, only 8 appear to have relevant information regarding the establishment of an annual meet schedule and options for modifications.

General Conclusions: of the sites where information was found, there appears to be a relatively formal process to establish an annual schedule and in some cases provide for changes subsequent to formal approval either by a technical or competition committee and/or formal approval by the LSCs House of Delegates.

The state of the issue: the chart below displays the trend in the number of swimmers registered in Potomac Valley, the number of sanctioned meets, the number of registered non-athletes, and finally, the number of participating teams.

In general for the period 1998 through 2003:

- The number of swimmers has been relatively flat,
- The number of non-athletes declined significantly in the early part of the period, then remained flat with some growth in the last year,
- The number of teams has declined, and
- The number of sanctioned meets has grown by over 25 percent.



Surveys

To provide additional opportunity for input into the Board’s decision process, two separate surveys were conducted, first among Coaches, and second among Officials.

Coaches Survey:

Twenty five coaches responded to the survey. Several questions were asked including:

Do you believe the current number of meets sanctioned by PVS is?

- About right (13)
 Too Many (3)
 Not enough (8)

Comments Included: It’s nice to have several meets on the same weekend to keep them from becoming too crowded, Not enough A+ quality meets, and to many PVS meets, give clubs more flexibility.

Do you think a mix of PVS and Club Sponsored meets is?

- Appropriate (18)
 PVS Only (1)
 Club Only (1)

Comments included: Like to have PVS oversee and decide what is appropriate from Mini Champs thru Seniors; with the increased number of meets, the Open meets need to be better balanced or reduced to two sites; a few more club meets might add some excitement and flavor to the calendar and be financially worthwhile; and, too many conflicting club meets.

What is the most important factor that you consider when choosing to attend a meet?
Consider: Location, Length of Meet, Types of Events, Sponsor, Time of Year, or Other

Time of year was ranked number one, followed by Types of events, and Location in that order.

Comments included: Not enough meets in MD, not enough meets in VA, avoid poorly organized and run meets, most swimmers do not like to go more than 20 minutes from home unless it is a big meet, location is critical for non-championship meets because of transportation issues.

For meets that you have attended, what suggestions would you make to improve them?

Comments included: More efficient policies to: clear deck of parents, results posting, and scratches; Separate distance meets. Award top 16 but reduce # of meets that have top 16 in finals, more meets with just top 8 in finals. This will increase the value of finals and help strengthen USA Swimming; Shorten meets; Relays; more swims allowed per individual swimmer; and Faster meets; keep kids in the water; over the water starts.

Officials Survey:

Thirty officials responded to the survey. Several questions were asked including;

Are you currently affiliated with a PVS Club? Yes (27) No (3)

Which day (s) do you prefer [to work] most? Thursday 2, Fri 6, Sat 24, and Sun 22.

Please provide your thoughts with respect to the statement: **“I would work more meets if:”**

Comments included: Weren't so many that run back to back on consecutive weekends, sessions held to 3-4 hours—comment way too many meets; Child swam more, closer to home (less than 30 min), I knew about more; If there were fewer conflicts with travel, other sport conflicts, appreciate good hospitality; Can't work more than I do; Meets were shorter, rather work 2 three hours meets than one 4+, if parents would help time; If fewer session were held on Sunday, and were not so long; and Pretty much maxed out.

Summary: while the comments and answers to the various questions reflect a wide range of thoughts, there does not seem to be a major concern over the number of sanctioned meets at this time. In addition, while there has been some impact on the number of

swims at some of the Open meets most meets this year appear to have been more constrained by not exceeding timelines, and while the concern remains that actions not be taken to jeopardize pre-existing meets and keep them financially viable, a critical issue appears to be finding an adequate number of officials to ensure a properly run safe and high quality meet.

Recommendations:

The PVS board has taken action to allow meets to be sanctioned after the appropriate deadline if various conditions are met, including that the requested meet will not be in direct competition of an existing meet or the Meet Director for the existing meet concurs with the request were met. (It was clarified that they would they would not be permitted in any case if they are on the same weekend as PVS sponsored meets.)

If a request for a sanction is received after the appropriate deadline, and there is an already approved sanction for a meet (not an Open, Distance, or Championship meet), approval will be granted only if the requester demonstrates: 1) the requested meet will not be in direct competition of the existing meet, 2) the Meet Director for the existing meet concurs with the request, and 3) all appropriate sanctioning requirements will be met.

It was agreed that preferable terminology would be to refer to PVS Sponsored meets rather than Open Distance and Championship meets and either condition #1 or #2 must be met -- not both. Condition #3 would have to be met.

Some on the Board felt PVS should not have to sanction any late requests since this procedure denies the Board the opportunity to first get input from Competition regarding the proposal. They felt coaches should be thinking through their competition needs earlier.

The Board voted 5-2 to recommend this change in policy to the House of Delegates for their consideration at the May House of Delegates meeting. The Competition Committee meeting precedes the House meeting so they can provide input if they wish.

With respect to determining how to ensure adequate officials are available, several actions should be considered:

First, more emphasis should be placed on setting the Meet Referee and Leadership team at a reasonable number of weeks before the scheduled meet. A procedure should be put in place to increase coordination between the Meet Referee and the PVS officials committee. To improve communication between meet organizers and officials who might be available for the meet, a system to provide appropriate direct electronic links to certified officials should be considered to promote and encourage participation.

Second, an official report by the Meet Referee to the Officials Committee should be required at the conclusion of each meet. Elements in that report should include a complete list of all officials (including Club affiliation and position) for each session(s), any issues with recruiting officials, a listing of significant issues and how they were resolved, and an evaluation of the quality of the meet.

Information gathered during the summer 2004 LC meets, and 2004-2005 SC meets will be analyzed to suggest ways to ensure adequate officials are available for each meet and the quality of meets is sufficient.

HOD actions for consideration:

1. Recommendation from the PVS Board to approve an amendment to, The Potomac Valley Swimming Policy and Procedures Manual, at Section C-8, Sanction and Approval of Competition, to include the following paragraph:

If a request for a sanction for a Club Sponsored meet is received after the appropriate deadline, and there is already an approved sanction for another Club Sponsored meet, the Board may grant approval only if the requester demonstrates: 1) the requested meet will not be in direct competition with the existing meet, or 2) the Meet Director for the existing meet concurs with the request. In addition, all appropriate sanctioning requirements must be met.

2. Recommendation to modify the language in C-8, regarding the requirements for a proposed meet to be placed on the PVS schedule:

From: "A designated PVS referee is present at the competition and attests that it was conducted as specified above."

To: "A designated PVS referee **will** be present at the competition and **will** attest that it was conducted as specified above **and will provide appropriate information, as designated by the Officials, and Competition Committees, and approved by the PVS Board, that may include: an assessment of the quality of the meet, whether appropriate officials were present, and other issues the Board may feel are relevant to the determinations of the success of the meet.**"

