

Report on the 2008 United States Masters Swimming Convention, held in Atlanta, GA, September 25th to 28th, 2008

By Conrad Johnson, Metropolitan LMSC Treasurer

There were two very big developments at the USMS Convention in 2008: first, the new Executive Director, Robert Butcher, was introduced, after being on staff for about four months and the first year of online registration was finished. Let me deal with the latter issue first. The online feature led to a big jump in registrations from a 1.5% increase to a 4+% increase. Even in the Metro LMSC, we budgeted “flat” registration numbers at 1,700 (with an actual loss in overall lane availability in all the clubs) and with the online feature, we are now just under 2,000 members, nearly a 10% increase. Given this, I attended the registration workshop, and learned that there are more features being added to the Club Assistant program, like new searchable item selection, new email features and the attachment of donation letters for the Hall of Fame or the Legacy Fund (“US Masters Foundation”). In fact, here in the Metro LMSC, we are exploring having Club Assistant handle all the meet registrations as now some of the large teams are beginning to have them handle all their in-house registrations, like Team New York, a program close to my heart. This allows the HyTek software used at meets to have a seamless transition to individual profiles in a teams database. The proofing of results happens BEFORE the meet as the system rejects any profile that does not match the USMS registration.

As far as Robert Butcher is concerned, you may remember my statement about the last ED, Todd Smith as “underwhelming,” a characteristic Mr. Butcher is definitely not. He was “young,” (mid-30’s), very intelligent with a wicked breaststroke. You can read about his background on the www.usms.org website. He has already brought much greater relations with the other swimming federations and our sponsors. He also brought to the table an ambitious battle plan to transform the state of our sport. I attach a document to this report written to the USMS Executive Committee called, “USMS Vision and Action Plan Document.” As I sit on the USMS Finance Committee, the numbers (and how they relate to you the

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swimmers) were very front and center in this plan. It involves spending down the reserves of the organization from 1.7 to 1.4 million in the coming year and an increase in dues of 2.00 in 2010 with a projected increase of membership to 48,000. This still keeps the dues below what other organizations charge. This will make the 2010 Metro LMSC dues 40.00. It involves hiring new, full time staff: a marketing person, a club and coach services person and the elevation of the controller to a full time position. Already USMS has three full time staff: the National Secretary (Traci Grilli), the Webmaster (Jim Matysek) and the magazine editor (Bill Volkening). What may you ask will this affect me???

Despite an intense grilling by the Finance Committee, the plan was approved and as Rob says, “but, I can’t do it without you. I ask for your support in helping to deliver this vision and action plan.” He also says, he is professionally and personally “all in” on USMS. That is a statement I could not have imagined the first ED having said.

There is a time lag on the organizations capacity. Triathlons for instance, have a big head start on automation and sponsorship support. It means better events at the national level, better database access for individuals (for times/results) and better support services to new clubs, something we here in the Metro LMSC could definitely use.

As I was only one of two Metro delegates there, I was very pleased to have an Aquafit member, Tricia Cuti, with me. Her report was so good I just included it without any editing or revision. She, having a great sense of the Hy-Tek program, attended the techno presentations.

There is a problem getting good bids on championship meets. The 2010 Short Course Championships were granted to Atlanta, the only bidder and the 2010 Long Course meet was granted to Puerto Rico, unfortunately only ten days before the World Championships in Sweden.

And what would a USMS Convention be without controversy. The big issue was a vote to extend the use of wetsuits to USMS National Open Water Championships.

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The Open Water Championships are: (2010 bids are in parentheses)

- 1) The One Mile Swim (Charlotte, N.C.)
- 2) The Two Mile Cable Swim (Lake Placid, N.Y.)
- 3) The 1-3 Mile Swim (TVM Del Valle)
- 4) The 3-6 Mile (5K) Swim (Colorado Springs)
- 5) The 6+ Mile (10K) Swim (Noblesville, IN)
- 6) The new 25 K Swim (TBA)

The other swims (7) The One Hour Swim, (8) the 5-10K and the (9) 3000/6000meter are all postal swims.

By a narrow vote, with the Metro swimmers voting in the negative, wetsuits will NOT be an award category at OW National Championships. Our reasoning was this: we have allowed wetsuits to be award categories in all other open water races and National Open Water SWIMMING championships should be kept without any floatation devices and should be done “naked.” In fact, Marcia Cleveland, the OW/Long Distance Chair made shirts that said, “2008 Naked Swimming.”

Lastly, yours truly, the report author, was the recipient of the Kerry O’Brian Coaching Award given each year by the USMS Coaching Committee.

This report gives only a surface picture of the many, many things that transpired at the 2008 Convention. For more information, please go to the www.usms.org and look under “Conventions” for all the committee minutes and reports. You may also call or email me for more information or how to find things regarding the convention. Cjswim007@earthlink.net or 917-446-0595.