



## **Key Factors In Successful High School Coaching by John A. Casadia, Jr. (1994)**

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*Coach John Casadia is ASCA Certified Level 4;5 • YMCA;HS;USS. John is the Head Coach of the Vineland Girls High School Swim Team. From 1972 through 1992 he had 18 consecutive conference titles, 187 straight league dual meet wins, 3 Sectional State Titles, 12 undefeated seasons, 42 High School All-Americans, 12 High School Scholastic All-Americans, 55 State Champions, and 5 National short course meter high school records. Some of the awards Coach Casadia has received include the NISCA Outstanding Service Award and NISCA Zone Coach of the year.*

It's a pleasure being a part of the 1994 ASCA World Clinic. I'm excited about the opportunity I have to share with you some of the methods, ideas, and strategies I have found very useful in developing the Vineland High School Swim Program. I have been with VHS Swimming since its inception in 1974.

I hope this presentation will refresh or better yet, serve as a “spin off” making your Team a little more successful and giving you more time to do what you do best, Coach. I realize there are many problems facing today’s high school swim coach. Pool time is at a premium with many high schools not only having to rent pool time but traveling long distances just to get there. In addition to this there are often too many kids with varied abilities per lane, possibly no assistant coaches, and of course the “State Regulations” governing swimming and diving. On top of all this, some teams must even “share” pools with other teams! All these demands make, what I consider the most essential spoke in the wheel of a successful swim program, that much more important and that spoke is organizational planning.

A Coach must be organized throughout the season, with special emphasis shortly after the season and a month or so prior to the start of the next season. During this time organize what you want to accomplish during the post and pre-season, as well as your plans for the season itself.

Keeping a notebook throughout the season noting things you want to incorporate next season will help in this organizational process. A well-organized plan will permit you to work that plan during the season.

Be sure to include your assistant coaches and team captain in this stage. It’s also vital to organize for the following season during the “off” season, because there are fewer demands on your time. Here are some suggestions as to what you might want to consider when organizing your plan.

# **POST SEASON**

Note: Defined as that period of time immediately after the season.

## **Weight Training**

Along with your trainer, evaluate the in-season weight program, those areas that were successful and those that need greater attention. Also, design a maintenance schedule for your athletes for this time period. In our program we do stretching, medicine balls, general exercises, and light weights for 45-60 minutes three times a week. It is important to “chart” athlete progress even during the post season.

## **In-Coming Freshmen**

Identify incoming freshmen. If you have several schools within your district with 8th graders, assign a junior to each school for recruiting purposes. The junior should first call, then meet with the building principal to secure permission to place posters throughout the school advertising your program. We enlist the help of the physical education staff at each school to have interested students sign-up. We then use this list to invite prospective team members to parties, weight training, summer camp, etc. At the end of our summer camp we have a little team social just to introduce new members of the team and discuss the up-coming season.

## **Pre-Season**

Note: Defined as that period of time about 10 weeks before the official start of the season

In our area Swimming is a Winter Sport. We begin this phase of our Program about mid-September after the kids have had a chance to settle into their school routine. **The first thing we do in the weight room is test everyone** to establish a base. We go to the weight room three times per week for about an hour to an hour and a half. Our program includes stretching, exercises (lots of sit ups...within three weeks we're up to 500-700), moderate weights, and 45 minutes of medicine balls. Our goal **is to have our swimmers into a solid weight program** BEFORE the season, so this phase is very important.

## IN SEASON

***Note: Defined as that period of time practice officially starts.***

### Weight Training

Review last year's Post Season notes and then design **your exercise/weight program around the availability of** your pool time. Never sacrifice pool time for dry land training. Again, CHART EVERYTHING.

### Practices

Check Post Season notes and design practices accordingly. Stick with broken sets, with emphasis on the basics: starts, turns, form, breathing, etc. I've found swimmers to be very organized individuals... so I photo copy every practice and place it by every lane. This way the swimmers know exactly what is expected and it saves time (and your voice).

**When planning practices or weights for that matter, keep** in mind the time frame with which you are working, the number of swimmers and their

ability, number of lanes you have at your disposal, etc. If you are bussed to **practice, devise stretching and weights that can be done while in transit.**

## **Team Goals**

At the first team meeting these goals are established under the direction of the Team Captain. Prior to this **meeting, advise the captain to keep the goals few and** simple with steps planned to achieve each goal. These goals should include:

- **Practice goals**

## **2 Attendance**

- League, Championship, Sectionals, States 4 Special meets (tournaments)

## **Personal Goals**

**These include practice, weights, and attendance, as well** as time goals. We have every swimmer fill out a Prelim Goal Sheet. This sheet contains several questions **regarding training, weights, attendance, and projected time goals for 2 events. When this sheet is returned, I** meet personally with each swimmer to discuss his/her goals. Once we agree on the goals, Goal Charts and Race Split cards are given to the swimmer for each goal.

## **Parent-Swimmer Brunch**

**This is a great way to introduce the new parents to the “vets”.** It should involve ALL parents, team members, and Coaches. It's also a good idea to invite your AD, principal, superintendent, Board Members, athletic trainer, and the local press.

***Have packets of team material for every new parent/team member. This packet should contain an in-depth explanation of your program and what you plan to discuss in the business portion of your meeting following brunch. A variety of topics are covered. Try to include something for everyone. The benefits of a packet are twofold: first, team rules, code of conduct, eligibility, etc. are known at the beginning of the season; second, parents, and team members can take the packet home and read it more carefully at their leisure. Note: Put this packet together BEFORE the season when you have the most time. Invite AD, trainer, etc. to say a few words. Possible funding for this event might come from local merchants, team fund raisers, etc. Another option is to use the school cafeteria.***

### **Meet Organization**

Try to plan your meet line-up at least two days prior to **the meet**. **This allows swimmers time to concentrate on** the events they are going to swim and also gives parents time to adjust their schedules so they can attend the **meet**. **Devise a check list to insure swimmers are not** “over-vented”. On meet day post this sheet and a copy of the line-up in the team area. Prior to the first meet hold a “pasta” party at a team members home. The team **captain can assign various items to be provided by every team member**.

## **DELEGATING RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Team Captain**

This position should not be taken lightly. The team captain is not only the “liaison” between the coaches and the team but should also be responsible for organizing **team meetings, pre-meet poster parties, community service projects, etc.** A special meeting for all potential team captain candidates should be held either during the post or pre-season outlining the captain’s responsibilities.

## Coaches

Coaches (I do not like referring to my coaches as assistants) should help in the planning of weights, practices, and meets. All coaches must know they are vital to the **program! There is nothing worse than a coach who does** not feel important. They are excellent sounding boards for your ideas. Encourage them to be free thinkers and listen to what they have to say.

## Managers

Surround yourself with dependable managers. If **swimmers and divers are the heart of the team, managers are** the guts! Managers are responsible for most of the **clerical work: taking practice attendance, filling out event sheets and event cards, recording meet times and places,** etc. In addition they prepare all the weight/exercise equipment each day, put the lanes in, etc. They also chart and record workout times, address and stuff envelopes to parents of team members. All of us know **the part they play running and scoring meets.**

## Parents

Don't be afraid to utilize parents whenever possible. Find out their profession, it may be of value to the team **(silk screening, printing, catering, etc.).**

## OTHER ASPECTS TO CONSIDER

### Newsletter

We have a newsletter and it's called THE BUOY. THE BUOY is published once a week throughout the season. It contains information regarding meets, race splits, **coach's comments, team activities, alumni information, and up-**

coming events. In each issue a senior is also highlighted, noting their “outside” activities.

### **Yearbook**

This publication highlights the team and individual performances. It also contains special events and meets that have occurred.

### **Academic Paddle**

The “Paddle” honors all team members who have achieved academic excellence during the swim season. It is displayed in the Team Trophy Case.

### **Team Poster**

Working with your high school photography and printing departments, you can create a poster with each Team member’s picture and the season’s schedule.

### **State Shirts and Slogans**

Design a special shirt for the State Team; possibly create a State Slogan.

### **College Fact Sheet**

This is a great way to get information to colleges regarding your upperclassmen. When you get an inquiry from a college, simply mail it out. Our College Fact Sheet contains the swimmer’s name, home address, phone number, times, grades, and personal comments about them.



### **End of Season Evaluation Form**

**Devise questions regarding weights, practices, goals,** etc. Also include a personal evaluation. Design specific questions for each class. This evaluation will be helpful **in planning the next season.**

### **Team Scrapbook**

**Assign a manager to cut-out all newspaper articles about** the team and its members and place them in the Team Scrapbook. Share this scrapbook with the Team at your End-of Year party.

### **Team Photographer**

Get a parent to take snap shots of the team throughout the season. Place these in the pool area next season or place them in the scrapbook.

In conclusion, I hope I have touched upon some of the key factors of “spokes in the wheel.” that are a part of every successful High School Swim Program. While no **two programs are identical, you can incorporate some of** the ideas we have explored today. Remember, the coach is the hub of the wheel, and first and foremost must be organized. Plan ahead. Do as much planning as you can BEFORE the season. Select good individuals as your coaches, captains, and managers. DELEGATE as much as you can to others. Be innovative, don’t be afraid to try new methods, ideas, or strategies.

Thank you for your attention and special thanks to ASCA for inviting me here today.

## **Personalized Caps**

**Print or silk screen the names of your swimmers on their** caps. Enlist the help of your art department.

## **Removable Tattoos**

These are great for meets, sectionals, and states. This can also be a great fund raiser for the team.