

Coaches Committee Quarterly



Spring 2001

Coaches Survey

Thank you to all the coaches who responded to our 2001 Coaches survey. Following the survey results are general comments made on the survey by the responding coaches and a summary from USMS Coaches Chairman Scott Rabalais.

Experience & Status of Responders

Head Coach	76%
Assistant	24%
Pd-full time	10%
Pd-part time	55%
volunteer	35%

Hours per week

to masters coaching	8.47-9.01 hours
on deck	5.19-5.39 hours
off-deck	3.28-3.62 hours

Years experience

Masters Coaching	9.8 years
Overall swim coaching	14.7 years

Staff and Team Size

Number of swimmers	49 to 51 swimmers
competitive	45%
triathletes	18%
fitness	38%
novice/learn to swim	15%
Number of assistant coaches	59
Pay of assistant coaches	\$18.30/hour

ASCA/MACA Certified

yes	39%
no	61%
If yes, what level	3 (average)

Team Structure

Coaches Employed by:

club board	24%
(Employed by board of directors	75)
If so, a member of that board	no=42%; yes=58%
USA swim tea	6%
Health Club	20%
Ymca	26%
school	11%
Self employed	11%
Other	2%

Financial

Does team have budget no=67%;yes=33%

Estimated Income

Dues	85%
Meets	11%
Fund raising	4%

Salary and Benefits

Salary

Annual Salary	\$18,157
Monthly Salary	\$681
Weekly Salary	\$36.25
Hourly Salary	\$16.86
Bonus Structure	per swimmer

Benefits

Major Medical	6%=yes;94%=no
Dental insurance	2%=yes;98%=no
Retirement benefits	6%=yes;94%=no
Life insurance	2%=yes;98%=no
Other benefits	13=club membership

Additional income

Meet expenses reimbursed	30%=yes;70%=no
Professional dues reimbursed	45%=yes;55%=no
Continuing educ. Reimbursed	27%=yes; 63%=no
Paid vacation (amnt)	13%=yes;87%=no
Written contract	9%=yes;91%=no
(how often renewed)	most=annually

Chairman's Personal Comments:

There are several areas where I believe we can work to improve the status of Masters coaching in USMS. Only 10 percent of those who reported indicated they were full-time Masters coaches, yet the average group size coached was roughly 50 swimmers. We would certainly want to see more programs flourish so that full-time, paid coaches can administer them, thus perhaps lending to larger team sizes.

The level of experience seemed quite high for Masters coaches. The average Masters coach had worked with Masters for 10 years and had been involved in coaching swimming for 15 years. In most fields, if you have been in the profession for 10-15 years, you are likely to be considered an expert or at least a veteran.

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For those coaches without access to a long course pool: With long course and open water seasons quickly approaching what creative solutions do you have for preparing your swimmers for these venues?

Before we had access to long course water, we would do “Phantom 150’s”: 150 yard repeats without using the walls. Swimmers would flip-turn just short of the walls. That forced them to use their legs to get moving again and taxed their aerobic system more appropriately.

*Marty Hamburger, Head Coach
Dynamo Masters Swim Team*

For long course we do 225’s for 200 meters. For 400 meters we do 450’s. For open water training I have taken the lane lines out of the pool and have turned off the lights using only the outside light of the day.

*Kevin Polansky
Loveland Masters Swim Club*

I have those interested in Open Water swimming do drills consisting of:

1. Closed eyes when swimming a 25...only opening to sight (lifting head and looking at the end of the pool. (this also helps with swimming straight)
2. 25’s with head up...to strengthen neck muscles used for sighting in Open H2O
3. Pull all the lanes and practice swimming side by side with no lanes!
4. Work on more distance free sets and add the drills #1&2 while you swim the distance set!

*Susan Bradley-Cox
UK Masters Wildcat Coach*

As for long course season, we are able to convert our pool to short course meters though we’d prefer to have a long course facility. Nevertheless, by swimming meters, our swimmers can get a better feel for their times and endurance for the long course meets.

As for open water swims, we practice sighting drills in the pool and discuss the aspects of open water swimming with our club members. We also encourage our swimmers to participate with a local open water swimming club that swims twice/week in a reservoir so that they get more first-hand experience.

We encourage our swimmers to compete in the long course meets and open water swims by promoting the events, combining them with team picnics and dinners, emphasizing that we have many open slots in our team records for long course up for the taking, and offering other forms of support and incentives (i.e.: awards).

*Alan Liu
Mountain View Masters*

We swim in a 25 meter pool. We have one practice a week at Lake Travis as an open water swim. I also take the ropes out of the pool to allow turbulence. We will even swim around the edges in a circle without touching any walls, or cross in the middle with one diagonal line of swimmers going under the other.

*Dean Lackey
Austin Aquatics Masters & Lackey*

Preparing my swimmers for long course with training in a short-course pool: Right after either YMCA Masters Nationals or USMS Nationals, I get my swimmers to think long course. I explain that on average, the science of swimming has proved the 50-meter pool demands at least 15% more energy and than short course training. A simple comparison shows down-and-back (short course) is 50 yards, while the same (long course) is 100 meters...the distances really add up quickly long course!

The logical approach, and one supported by training physiology, suggests over- distance repeats. Add to this some “baggage (not garbage) yards,” say freestyle leading off a swim, to get the swimmer uncomfortable aerobically before target strokes are stressed. An example training swim would consist of either a 50-yard freestyle followed by a 75 target stroke (for a total of 125 yards) or a 75 free + 75 target stroke (for a 150 yard swim).

Another approach I use is to train with fiberglass fins doing 250 yard repeats.

Here I alternate (odd & even swims) between (half free + half target stroke) with all target stroke...this to bring in the concept of muscular endurance. Aerobic physiology suggests a 5-seconds rest per length swum; this allows for individual adaptation...the higher the aerobic capacity, the faster the swims with the prescribed rest. The use of fins permits the swimmer to complete the overdistances much more easily and gives him/her the ability to attack the set with confidence.

The proper approach for a balanced training regimen (preparing for long course) would require breath control swims and streamlining with breath-holding leading into swims. Again, this is performed with fins. The logic here is to prepare the swimmer breath-wise (aerobically) for the upcoming demands of the “big pool.”

*Ed Nessel
Garden State Masters*

We don’t start long course until mid-June, after open water season has started. Here are a few tips I offer when I coach:

- Do a long swim at the end of practice to semi-simulate the feelings at the end of an open water swim. These swims will help develop a “can-do” attitude. Recall these swims and good feelings at the event.
- When practice is full and the pool is very wavy, consider the less-than-ideal conditions perfect for preparing for open water swims!
- Mentally practice your event during practice: what do you want to think about? how will you handle challenges? how will you pace your swim?
- Work on stroke technique, not just yardage.
- Try out your wetsuit in the pool. Check for proper fit and feel.
- Visit the event site and take a practice swim well before the event. Use this experience to practice imagery: see yourself at the venue and mentally practice how you want to feel at the start, during the event, etc.
- Talk to open water veterans for advice and tips on successful open water swimming.

*CJ Lockman Hall, M.A.
Montgomery Ancient Mariners*

Has your club ever done any team building events away from the pool? If so, what did you do and what were the results?

Santa Cruz Masters, like many teams, hosts at least one seasonal celebration per year, usually an end-of-the-year holiday event at a swimmer's house. People really appreciate the chance to visit with each other, meet spouses and kids, as well as swimmers from the other workouts. Feedback on this event has been quite positive over the years.

In the planning process for this Spring is a team Psychic Party. We are going to have a Tarot reader to analyze the cards plus an Aura reader to take and interpret aura photographs. Sounds like fun, huh?

Joel Wilson, Santa Cruz Masters

We do many team building/social events with our program. From rough water swims, to bowling banquets to golf tournaments to all out rock and roll engagements with live band entertainment. We even tried a softball game, but that got a little too tough for swimmers, for some reason.

Most of these events are attended by only a percentage of our program participants. Usually we get around 100-150 athletes to the bowling and rock and roll events. The rough water swims also attract around 150 swimmers, with weekly ocean swims (once the water warms up), pulling in around 10-12 families. Our golf tournament usually scores around 40 folks, trying to hit a ball.

Other than that, and our large varied workout schedule, most of our socializing goes on before, during and after workouts. It's all about community ya know.

Future events include a swimmer and family member swim, coach/athlete challenge event and somewhere down the line, perhaps a lawn bowling, bocci ball, badminton and croquet match.

Sickie

UCSD Masters Swimming

We have several social events away from the pool that help build team spirit and camaraderie. Some of the events are annual traditions, and others are spontaneous. Some of the things we do are:

- Golf with BBQ afterwards. We played a scramble and had "awards" for things

like Earthmover (biggest divots), Life's a Beach (most sand traps), Tourist (most off-course shots), etc. This was a blast!

- Ultimate Frisbee. We did this after practice one Saturday, and it was great to see people excel to different levels at a different sport.
- "Triathlounge" An annual day-long affair that includes: swim practice, water polo, brunch, road/mountain bike ride, run/hike/skate, matinee movie, lounging, dinner. Swimmers get to spend an active day together and celebrate with dinner afterwards.
- Team Auction. Swimmers earn points through the month of February by attending practice, competing in meets, helping coaches, etc. They use these points to bid on items at an auction dinner at the end of the month.
- Summer Picnic. An annual event that allows members to socialize outside the swimming world.
- Holiday Party. We have a fancy dinner, watch a slide show of the year's team events, and get our silly awards from the coaches. It's a great way to end each year.

Alan Liu, Mountain View Masters

Our swim team has several social events throughout the year to make swimming together more pleasant. We find that it is easier if people who share a lane under trying circumstances know each other. These events run the gamut from meeting at a local coffee shop for breakfast after Saturday workout to organized camping and rafting trips on some of our great Western rivers. We have parties throughout the year including a big holiday/awards party where gag and serious prizes are given out. This past fall we also had a triathlon which did start in the pool but then switched to a run/walk/bike/whatever leg to a coach's house for the third leg that was a party.

*Priscilla Kawakami
Utah Masters Swimming*

Team building events for us are more social events too. Some of the things we

do test ourselves mentally and physically by presenting us with a different environment in which to challenge ourselves. Some of the things we've done include mountain bike and camping trips to Hana; exploration swims in the ocean discovering mother natures natural water-park phenomena, hiking through Haleakala Crater, spelunking in a lava tube, beach picnics, volunteering at the age group swim meets, and dinner and movie after Friday night practice.

It's great fun, and definitely brings even more camaraderie to the group.

Janet Renner

Valley Isle Masters Swimmers

Saturday morning lake swims, coffee/breakfast following, great way to include others (like spouses) due to the need for kayakers/canoers; plus food!) we have also had parties/bbq's at athlete's homes - good attendance, great time of learning more about people (like seeing what they look like with clothes on - sorry, couldn't resist the old swimmer joke)

Scott Tripps

Hopkins Masters, MN

We worked at an aid station for the most popular 10K road race in the area, about 3,000 runners. I made sure we worked well into the race, at about the 4 or 5 mile point, as I knew many of the "runners" would be walking by that time. We made posters with our club name and made sure the runners knew who were cheering for them. And, we had a table set up at the finish line, where we distributed brochures and talked with potential swimmers.

Scott Rabalais

Crawfish Aquatics

As for team building we have had a sports psychologist in to talk with our masters group along with The head coaches of the University of Wisconsin and Univ. of Arizona to work on stroke technique. Along with that, we have 2 potlucks a year to socialize and get to know other swimmers from other lanes. During Christmas, we have a secret Santa give a small gift to another team mate..... we do relays and fun things to keep it light and to build team unity.

Kevin Polansky

Loveland Masters Swim Club

Survey Results

Our certification levels are low. Unfortunately, only 39 percent reported that they were ASCA/MACA certified. Two alternatives here are either to more widely promote the available certification programs or to develop our own certification process within the USMS Coaches Committee and promote it properly.

Coaches are relying heavily on swimmers' dues to support their programs and may wish to venture into fundraising as a means to provide a greater salary and/or more resources for their team.

Alarming, over 90 percent of coaches have no written contract with their employer, and relatively few coaches are receiving supplementary benefits and reimbursement of employment-related expenses. As a group, we should work to increase these benefits and reimbursements as they are key to longevity and advancement in the profession.

Scott Rabalais

General Comments from Survey Responders

1. **Overall improvements to be made in salaries and working conditions.** Most respondents made it clear they were not in the coaching business for the money but because they loved what they do. Comments emphasized the need for competitive pay, subsidized pay in some form, higher wages, or a need for a step salary program.

Several coaches encouraged a salary more in line with the training required or equal to the swim lesson hourly rate.

2. **Under services or programs the coaches would like:** Sample contracts were cited four times. The need for more coaches clinics, sample workouts, credentialing, discounts on products and services, more training videos, more information on fitness programs, additional information to new coaches.

Other requests were for health benefit coverage (three requests), more information on aging and the benefits of exercise, more full time education and mentoring, visiting clinics and more frequent mentor clinics.

3. **Under general information requested:** Methods to better communicate with the YMCA and YWCA was requested. Better ways of advertising the benefits of a fitness program, using success stories to promote the program and more promotion by management of USMS was mentioned.

Two respondents encouraged dumping MACA, one encouraged closer ties with ASCA and one recommended strengthening MACA. One request was for a MACA school locally.

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657 Sandpoint Road
Carpinteria, CA 93013



www.kiefer.com 1-800-323-4071