

Convention Report – Julian Mackrel – Senior Athletes Representative

2012 USAS Convention Report

Filled with both work and play, the 2012 USAS Convention was a fantastic experience. Meeting with your peers from all over the country to talk about an activity that you love and dedicate a substantial chunk of your life to, is one of the coolest and most rewarding opportunities available in any sport. In addition, seeing the inner workings of USA Swimming and actually having a voice is a feeling beyond any other, and makes you realize all of the dedication invested by others to make our swimming community safe, fair, and a rewarding experience. Below are the topics which we discussed:

National Team Director Frank Busch attended our Eastern Zone Meeting with the simple goal of making sure everyone understood that no successful athlete appears out of mid-air. They all have, and need, "grass roots", a starting place. The individual LSCs and zones are these roots which all athletes need, a community which can instill enough confidence in it's younger swimmers to have them continue down the difficult yet rewarding path of swimming. It our job as the elder athletes of Metro and the Eastern Zone to encourage more and more young kids to either begin or continue swimming.

Rowdy Gaines (also known as the hysteric announcer during swimming events such as the Olympics) and Gold Medalist Ricky Berens gave a presentation about the "Make a Splash Foundation" which is dedicated to helping children learn how to swim in order to lower the number of drownings per year. Rowdy begged us (and in turn, you) to spread the word about swimming. 70% of African Americans, 60% of Latinos, and 42% of Caucasians cannot swim. It is our job to lower these percentages substantially, so encourage friends, family, anyone who doesn't know how to swim to sign up for swimming lessons. Your voices in your communities could help end what Rowdy considers an epidemic.

One of the biggest sections of the entire convention was the Safe Sport committee. I doubt most of you have even heard of Safe Sport (I hadn't), but the Safe Sport Organization was established to keep our USA Swimming members safe from sexual, physical, and/ or verbal abuse. 1:4 girls and 1:6 boys under the age of 18 are abused every year, and many of these cases are never reported. It is our job to involve athletes in Safe Sport Training. It is imperative that athletes know that if they have been abused by an adult, coach, or another swimmer that they should report it to either their parents, Metro Board, or Safe Sport. There is a link to Safe Sport on the USA Swimming website homepage. Ideas to encourage athletes to participate in Safe Sport training can be Tweeted (@julianmackrel) or messaged to me/ posted on Metropolitan Swimming on Facebook.

The Eastern Zone decided on the following:

- 1) Sectionals will be long course year-round.
- 2) Relay- only swimmers will not be allowed to participate in time trials at Sectionals.

The possibility of an Eastern Zone Open Water championship was brought up, but not discussed in detail.

The most important theme for us athletes is to get more athletes in our LSC involved. Help reduce the rate of drowning, inspire you peers to be the best that they can be at practice, and spread the importance of Safe Sport. Frank Busch stated that selfishness and team don't mix. The Senior athletes of Metro are a team, and I believe that none of us would be so selfish as to not spread any of the knowledge learned today. It is USA swimming's job to be here for us, the athletes, and it is our job to make sure we spread this information among everyone in our LSC to protect those who think they don't have a voice, and raise swimming in our LSC to new heights.