

# SWIM CLUB NEWS

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## THE BEST MODEL FOR YOUTH SPORTS ADMINISTRATION

By John Leonard

### “ATHLETE CENTERED, COACH DIRECTED, ADMINISTRATIVELY SUPPORTED”

The phrase above, from our colleagues in Australia, sums up the best model for youth sports administration in any sport. Why is this important? Because all of our children “play their sports” within the framework of a “structure.” Examples abound in youth sports, where the focus gets twisted, with predictably dreadful results for all involved, and most especially for the young people. Follow the mantra above and that will never happen.

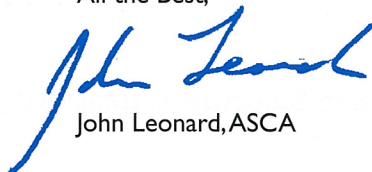
Whether it is the local swim club, a local swim committee, or a national federation, the philosophy will be sound if everything is centered around the “**needs of the athlete.**” The late great Coach Richard Quick would begin every meeting of administrators and coaches with a prayer and a plea that the meeting be focused on doing what is right for the long-term good of the athlete. Nothing is more appropriate. We gather in youth sports to serve the needs of the athlete, not the needs of coaches or administrators or parents. All decisions must be made with the best interests of the athletes at the core.

Who directs the technical side of all programs? It should be the coach, who spends years, sometimes decades in the sport. The coach has the technical know-how and the developmental expertise to most clearly see the trends and sort out the “wheat from the chaff” when it comes to developmental options for the child. Experience counts. Hence, the coach is the logical partner to direct the technical side of the sport for the athlete.

Our administrators have a key role as well. They need to do the things (beginning with appropriate funding) that can make the vision and developmental process decided upon by the coach, real. Administrators SUPPORT the program for athletes and coaches. Their activity is critical to the overall success of the youth sports experience, and it’s vital that they refrain from the “power trip” and don’t try to direct, and interfere with the role of the coach. At the same time, the coach has to recognize that administrators have a tough job in the environment of the past several decades, and their collaboration and cooperation with coaches and parents is a vital part of success for the overall organization and the needs of the athletes.

“Athlete Centered, Coach Directed and Administratively Supported.” You can’t go wrong.

All the Best,



John Leonard, ASCA



**Leadership in American Swimming through Education, Certification and Collaboration**

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