

ZONES 2012 REPORT

HOUSE OF DELEGATES MEETING

OCTOBER 7, 2012

Prepared by Kris Hall & Luann Giammona, Zones Coordinators

Forty-four Team Montana athletes represented Montana Swimming at the 2012 Age Group Western Zones Championships held in Grand Junction, CO, August 7th – 11th. Team Montana thrived under the leadership of our excellent team coaches Deidre Loyda, Ellen Parchen and Jade Sobek. Our coaches teamed up dividing the responsibilities of overseeing practice, coaching on-deck competition, warm-up supervision, administration and athlete management duties among themselves. Brett Maas and Michael Turner supported the team in the role of assistant coaches and chaperones. We were fortunate to have so many coaches, given the number of athletes participating increased from 29 in 2011 to 44 in 2012. Luann Giammona arranged team bus travel, hotel blocks, and catered meals prior to the trip as well as paperwork tracking, and total budget oversight. Because Luann did not have a child attending Zones, Gina Leonhardt took Luann's place traveling with the team as onsite coordinator. Kris Hall designed and procured uniforms as well as providing central communication to Zones families and coaches.

Budget: 2012 Zones expenditures totaled \$13,476, \$3,524 under our budget of \$17,000. 2012 costs came in at \$3,113 less than 2011 costs, even though we took 15 more athletes (44 in 2012 vs. 29 in 2011). Luann Giammona did a phenomenal job of managing travel, hotel and meal costs to budget when initially planning the trip. Gina Leonhardt was meticulous in managing hotel and food costs onsite.

There are so many variables which contributed to the year over year cost differences: # of athletes, cost of living in the venue city, changes in supplier availability, travel costs, travel distance to venue city, # bus riders etc... Luann developed a comprehensive cost-tracking spreadsheet which helped us determine prices to charge for bus travel, meals and the break-even number necessary to cover the fixed bus cost. Luann's tool (which can be used in future years) contributed significantly to our success in managing the budget. In addition, the cost of travel, hotels and meals was somewhat more reasonable in Grand Junction, CO vs. Clovis, CA in 2011. The greatest year over year cost difference was that there were fewer paying bus riders in 2011, leaving \$3,933 in fixed bus costs to be absorbed by MT Swimming in 2011.

Uniform costs were \$146.77 per female athlete. This was a \$12.50 cost reduction vs. 2011, due primarily to less expensive girls' shorts, race suits and cowboy hats. Uniform costs for males were \$149.47 per athlete, about \$1.50 less than the prior year. Lower cowboy hat costs were partially offset by more expensive jammers.

The athlete fee structure was as follows:

\$630 Full Travel – For 13 and over swimmers and included bus travel to and from Grand Junction, meals*

\$590 One-Way Travel – For 13 and over swimmers and included bus travel to Grand Junction, meals*

\$250 Bus Ride Only – For 12 and under swimmers and parents and included bus travel to and from Grand Junction as well as travel to and from swim venue, restaurants, etc.

\$185 Meal Package – For anyone wishing to eat all their meals with the 13 and over athletes. Includes breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Receipts

TOTAL Deposits *	\$ 26,438.50
	\$
TOTAL Refunds	(983.00)
Receivable from Athlete	\$ 869.00
TOTAL Receipts	\$ 26,324.50

Expenditures

Bus Total	\$ 8,562.00
Coach Pay Total**	\$ 500.00
Hotel en-Route Total	\$ 1,745.60
Hotel GJT Total	\$ 7,000.90
Meals en-Route Total	\$ 1,161.24
Meals GJT Total	\$ 5,761.85
Swim/Practice Fees Total	\$ 2,405.00
Uniforms/Extra Sportswear Total	\$11,550.84
Other Expenses Total	\$ 1,112.86
TOTAL Expenditures	\$ 39,800.29

Net Receipts/Expenditures \$ (13,475.79)

Budget **\$ (17,000.00)**

Variance: Over/(Under) Budget **\$ (3,524.21)**

*Receipts include travel & meal fees collected as well as income from all suit upgrades and extra clothing ordered at athlete's expense.

** Jordan and Josh Loyda's total travel fees were reduced by \$500 in lieu of a \$500 coaching payment to Coach Deidre Loyda.

Training: Former coordinator, Sheila Potkonjak, provided Luann Giammona and Kris Hall with 2011 Zones notebooks and electronic files which included forms, supplier contact information, receipts, and spreadsheets. Sheila provided excellent training tips, which helped us to make the trip a great success and was cheerful in making time to answer questions by telephone or e-mail.

Bus Transportation: Luann priced various bus companies as well as flights. Karst Stage was the least expensive option, even when considering the additional hotel and food costs. Karst Transportation cost \$8,562 vs. \$9,905 in 2011 due primarily to Grand Junction being closer than Clovis, CA. The 48 passenger bus was filled with 33 athletes (at least 1-way), 3 coaches, 2 coach/chaperones and 1 coordinator. No adults or other

family members paid to ride the bus this year, likely due to the venue being closer. We had the same bus driver as we had in previous years, Joe Purcell, who was personable, prompt, and a super problem solver. He is vested in our team's success allowing us to decorate the bus with paints and of course donning our team t-shirts as he cheered our athletes on from the stands. We will continue to request Joe for future bus trips.

Two Transportation Problems:

1) The bus was not at the Bozeman parking lot at the appointed time. The bus company did not advise our driver of our revised itinerary provided weeks in advance. Joe had the bus fueled and ready to go, so once he was contacted by Karst of the problem, he came right over. We were only delayed about ½ hour. *Next year it is recommended that the contract be revised with the actual itinerary times (when determined) and confirmation calls be made to Karst and directly to the driver to confirm pick-up time. We obtained an early-hours phone number of our representative at Karst, in the event of a problem.*

2) One of the bus' two alternators failed en route, approximately two hours outside of Sandy, ID. Joe tried to troubleshoot the problem while the athletes had a refreshment/rest stop. After determining it was safe to proceed with 1 alternator and some minor concessions, they drove on to Sandy, ID. The bus got warm, as the air conditioner couldn't be run on full and the kids had to go without a DVD player for the last two hours. Joe arranged for a replacement bus (to be driven overnight from Bozeman) to meet us at our overnight stop in Sandy, ID. The team unloaded and reloaded all our gear to the new bus early the next morning prior to departure.

2013 Transportation Considerations: *Zones 2013 will be separated into two meets on different dates (Age Group and Seniors). We are concerned that there may not be enough athletes to cover the fixed cost of a bus for travel to Senior Zones in California. 7-passenger vans were investigated as a potential cost-saving option, when athlete numbers were low in 2011. Parents, chaperones and coaches all expressed concerns about driving passenger vans to Zones. For the safety, convenience and team building, the charter bus was utilized.*

Recommendation: *Use Karst for team transportation, provided numbers are near break-even headcount. Offer empty bus seats, for free or at nominal cost, to MT Swimming Officials, who travel at their own expense, to volunteer their time to officiate. If athlete bus rider numbers are low, other options must be explored including having all athletes, regardless of age, travel at their own expense with their families or chaperones.*

Team Hotel: Luann Giammona contacted all the major hotels in Grand Junction which had sufficient dining options onsite. The Holiday Inn Airport was the most competitively priced. A room block was set up for the athletes, coaches, and chaperones. A separate room block with preferential pricing was set up for the families of athletes.

Problem: The Holiday Inn overbooked. (President Obama spoke on Wednesday, only a few blocks from our venue) Holiday Inn was unable to give Team Montana all double queens that had been contractually guaranteed. *Gina Leonhardt secured an additional room, necessary to house one of our coaches. Holiday Inn gave us the room (suite) for free for the entire week, due to Gina's tenacity and the fact the error was theirs.*

Recommendation: *We recommend blocks of rooms be reserved as soon as possible for both Senior and Age Group Zones. Coordinators should select a team hotel for AG Zones and reserve a block of rooms for families travelling with their 14 and under athletes and a coach's room. For Senior Zones, the room blocks should be similar to what was done in 2012 (athletes, coaches, chaperones and families).*

Team Meals:

Luann Giammona arranged for breakfast and catered dinners at the Holiday Inn, which were very good. We had a team dinner the first night at Old Chicago which was popular since it was tasty and all-you-can eat. Luann arranged with a local caterer to grill/cook hot lunches on-site at the pool venue. Grilled quesadillas, hot sandwiches, wraps, smoked turkey and homemade sides were great. We were the envy of the athlete village.

The competition schedule for finals indicated that, we might not get back to the hotel for dinner until 8:30 or 9:00pm each evening. Gina Leonhardt decided it was imperative to add essentially a 4th meal (carbs & protein) dubbed “substantial snack”. Gina procured, prepared and froze breakfast burritos, pasta & chicken, bean & rice burritos, and lasagna at home prior to the trip. Two roasters were stationed in Gina’s room to heat and serve up the snack (and left-overs from the hot lunches) around 3pm each day before the team departed for warm-ups and finals. As you can imagine, Gina and her roommate and helper, Tami Peters, became very popular with our athletes.

Problem: *The first evening the hotel dinner of pasta and chicken was served in precise normal sized portions, and no seconds were allowed. Some of our athletes did not get enough. Gina arranged for dinners thereafter to be buffet-style with athletes serving themselves and all was well. The catering staff at Holiday Inn was so friendly and accommodating. To express our gratitude, the entire team signed team t-shirts for them.*

Recommendation: *Dinners should be arranged all you can eat buffet style for Senior Zones. The substantial snack required significant preparation. Gina is uniquely gifted to orchestrate this, but it should not be expected of future coordinators. Athletes who require abnormally large portions should still be advised that they need to bring additional food with them to meet their 12-14,000 calorie/day needs. For Age Group Zones, we would anticipate athletes will eat with their parents except that the team could eat together at the Team Hotel’s complimentary breakfast. The coach could give daily direction to athletes and families and to allow for some team building.*

Roommates: The Zone Coordinator and Coaches worked together to assign swimmers with gender and age-appropriate roommates. These guidelines have been set by USA Swimming in the Athlete Protection – Best Practice Guidelines.

Uniform: Kris Hall sent bid requests to 6 suppliers for the entire uniform. None of the suppliers could source all items. To save cost, we selected the least expensive vendor for particular items, using Swimoutlet.com (bags, suits, caps), Universal Athletics (shorts), Hands On (t-shirts/sweatshirts), Buckwholesale.com (hats) and Rocky Mountain Embroidery (bag personalization). Each athlete received an Aquablade, a Speedo backpack, 2 t-shirts, 2 pair of shorts, a western hat and 2 latex caps. We offered an upgraded Fast Skin suit for the cost difference of the Aquablade and the Fast Skin. This year, we allowed athletes a \$45 credit, if they chose to wear their own FINA-approved, black race suit in lieu of receiving a team suit. Uniforms are a budget item that is completely paid for by the Zone budget. Uniform costs for the female athletes were \$146.77 each, a \$12.50 reduction per unit vs. 2011, due mostly to less expensive girls shorts, Aquablades and cowboy hats. Uniform costs for males were \$149.47 each, \$1.5 less than 2011, as lower cowboy hat costs were offset by more expensive Aquablade jammers. We conducted a Zones t-shirt design contest to publicize zones and generate athlete interest. Extra sportswear and team sweatshirts could be ordered at athletes own expense. Our gear proved pretty popular in trades in the athlete village, the last day.

Problems: There is always the problem of late qualifiers (i.e. at State) and last minute changes as to who is attending Zones, for whatever reason. How do we manage costs by not purchasing too much extra gear while still having some uniforms available to be flexible in the 11th hour? Ordering suits online, even with sizing charts, can be problematic as far as ensuring proper fit. We had to order replacement suits and manage some suit swapping, due to fit problems and last minute changes in participation. **Recommendations for 2013:** *Montana Swimming should provide uniforms for all athletes (Age Group and Senior) who attend Zones. Age Group kids who have attended Zones in the past will view it as a “take-away” if we don’t provide them with uniforms, since this has always been done in the past for Zones athletes of all ages. We need to balance our wish of having as many athletes as possible represent Montana at Zones with the reality that ordering uniforms requires over 5-6 weeks lead time.*

Zone Social: The Social cost was \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door per person. Dinner was included. The venue had laser tag, a batting cage, go carts, boats, & putt-putt. The athletes seemed to have a great time dancing and partaking in some of the attractions.

Problems: The athletes were only allowed 2 pieces of pizza, which is definitely not enough. The park was crowded with long lines at most attractions, so athletes didn't get to do many activities. *Gina had 6 pizzas delivered to the hotel after the social.* **Recommendation:** *Weigh the benefit of socializing with the athletes of other Zones teams against the value of what is delivered for the price.*

Communication/Inspiration: Our goal was to publicize Zones more this year to increase athlete participation. The coordinators and coaches worked with John Heryla to ensure critical Zones information and forms were available on the MT Swimming website. Kris Hall provided ongoing communication to Zones families (copying coaches) on travel, meals, hotel and uniforms. Deidre and Ellen communicated as necessary to coaches and athletes on coaching matters including qualification, eligibility, entries etc. We hosted a t-shirt design contest to generate interest in Zones with athletes. Coaches and Coordinators held Zones informational meetings at several meets beginning with SC State all the way through LC State. Coordinators procured paint, hat beads, golden horseshoes and other trinkets the coaches used to recognize athletes for swimming excellence. We painted a real moose antler gold, which our athletes carried around the deck and were allowed to sign whenever each got a best time. The antler was a huge hit and will likely be painted and used again next year.

Coordinator Position 2013: Last year, Luann and Kris were voted into the coordinator position sharing the responsibilities. When Luann volunteered for this position, she was working part time. She is now working full time and as a result, will not be able to fulfill the 2-year coordinator commitment for 2013. Gina Leonhardt did an excellent job as on-site coordinator at the meet and would be an ideal candidate for coordinator. It is important for the group to understand the amount of effort the coordinators put into planning and executing this trip. We estimate Luann and Kris put in over 150 hours each. Gina was on full-time on-site coordinator duty, managing food and overseeing our site in the athlete village, Aug 5th-12 sometimes not retiring until after midnight. We highly recommend that this position be managed in the future by more than one person. We recommend that Gina Leonhardt and Kris Hall serve as Zones coordinators for 2013.

2013 Budget: The Zones coordinators have a \$17,000 annual budget. There are a lot of uncertainties as to how we will manage the budget to fund coaches, chaperones and coordinators for two separate Zones meets in 2013. We believe the head and asst. coaches certainly are underpaid at \$500 for their significant contributions at Zones. We would love to give the head and assistant coaches \$1000 for their work at Zones. The reality is that we are going from a budgeted 2 coaches at 1 Zone meet to 3 or 4 coaches at two separate Zones meets. I would support raising coaching fees, provided the overall Zones budget can be incrementally increased. Alternately, we could leave compensation and budget as is (\$17,000 and \$500 respectively) and give the coaches a bonus (up to \$500 each) after all expenses are tallied, if we come in under budget. We were below budget this year due to excellent cost management, increased athlete participation which offset bus fixed expenses and because the venue was nearer and in a less expensive location. We are going back to expensive California next year.