



Dear Jason,

The 2011 SwimOutlet.com Junior Olympics is fast approaching. Based on feedback from last year's Junior Olympics, we want to update you about our pledges for the 2011 event. We have made great progress in our work to improve the JO experience and have the following changes in place:

#### **Age Groups and Age Verification – What all athletes need to know**

- In order to compete in a National Championship, an athlete must be a current GOLD level member of USAWP.
- An athlete's division for a National Championship event is determined by the fixed "age as of date" of **August 1**. (For example, if an athlete turns 19 on August 2, he or she will be eligible to play 18U for JOs; if he or she turns 19 on July 2, he or she will not be eligible for 18U and will move up to the 21U age group)
- USAWP has introduced a **photo ID card** with all 2011 membership renewals as a form of easy athlete and coach identification. All athletes taking part in a National Championship will be required to have:
  - **Photo ID** - preferably their USAWP Membership ID card or a government issued photo ID. A temporary ID is available anytime by logging into your online member account.
  - **Proof of age** - this may be a copy of a valid government document (e.g., birth certificate, passport, driver's license, state ID, school issued ID) with birth date listed.

#### **21 & Under division added**

This new age division replaces the 20 & Under National Championship and is now one of the age group national championships that makes up the Junior Olympic Tournament.

#### **Junior Olympics Challenge added**

One of the most significant changes this year is the introduction of the **Junior Olympic Challenge** event. The 2011 SwimOutlet.com Junior Olympics is made up of the Junior Olympic Championships (Platinum and Gold divisions) and the Junior Olympic Challenge (Silver and Bronze divisions). The newly added Challenge event will offer the opportunity for an additional 150 teams and 1800 athletes to participate in an end of the summer premier championship. To qualify, teams must participate in their zone qualifying tournament. Complete details on the divisions and teams are available at <http://www.juniorolympics.com>. In this inaugural year, we are pleased to be able to offer this in the same locations and times as our Championships event allowing families and coaches to combine their travel.

### **Schedules/Brackets poste**

- Schedule templates for all age divisions can be found at <http://www.juniorolympics.com>.
- Venues will be identified according to gender and age group and posted online by May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- We are also committed to publishing a first draft schedule of play no later than two weeks prior to the start of each session.

### **Format of play - “back door” is back**

- We have reinstated the “back door” opportunity for teams who lose early in the tournament to play their way pack into medal contention. We are confident this will help to correct any seeding anomalies.
- All divisions will play longer quarters as the tournament progresses; actual length of play for each age and gender is available on <http://www.juniorolympics.com> under the NJO Championship and NJO Challenge tabs.
- Games will be played to a win/loss result. The complete explanation on advancement and tie breakers is found on <http://www.juniorolympics.com> in the Rules section.
- A new age-appropriate ball, sized between the current women’s ball and the junior ball, will be used for girls 14U and boys 12U to help improve ball handling skills.

### **Courses and Venues**

Courses will be uniform for each age group.

All Junior Olympic Championship divisions 16U and older will be playing in 25M courses with the exception of the 18U and 21U men who will play in 30M courses.

## **Referees**

A new evaluation process and assignment system for our referees is now in place; every USAWP referee has been evaluated and has received a certification level for 2011. This certification level will help determine game assignments.

Our National Referee Association has conducted three – two day onsite training seminars in various zones, reaching nearly 40% of our referees. This training is offered in conjunction with an on-line certification course for those officials who live outside of the area where training has been offered.

There will be at least one more onsite seminar before the Junior Olympics. All referees assigned will have received performance evaluations.

Our new system will also track all red cards for each game; rules governing red cards will be uniformly enforced according to the USAWP Conduct of Championships. No exceptions.

Instructions to referees will be published to everyone prior to the opening of the tournament and those instructions will be reinforced during nightly referee meetings.

We will add a JO Expo seminar for parents led by head referees on “rules of the game,” which will also include clarification of referee instructions for the tournament, points of emphasis and an opportunity to ask questions of our nation’s top officials.

Scoring Table personnel will be uniformly trained and tested in all aspects of their jobs prior to start of Junior Olympics.

## **Tickets**

Tickets will be available for sale June 1.

Will call tickets will be available throughout the tournament and at several major venues.

Siblings participating in either session will receive free “crossover” admission to attend their siblings’ games.

## **JO Expo**

USA Water Polo will again offer a JO Expo prior to the start of each session; July 29<sup>th</sup> for the boys/mixed and August 3<sup>rd</sup> for the girls.

Athletes who have not yet signed a letter of intent with a college, have completed their junior year of high school, and arrive at the Expo with family and

ends may participate in the College Coach Meet and Greet.

Younger athletes will have the opportunity to fill out prospective college student athlete questionnaires but will not be allowed contact with college coaches.

### **Host Hotels**

We currently have a number of host hotels in a variety of room types and price ranges available on the JO website. Entry fee rebates will remain in effect for those using host hotels.

Complete details on amenities and booking procedures are also available on the “Lodging” page at <http://www.juniorolympics.com> under the planning tab. Some of the discounts or value added are quite substantial, and they are only available when booking through the JO website link.

All of this is designed to deliver the best JO experience possible, and meet our commitments that Chris made to all of you in the fall to take JOs to a new level. We will continue to provide updates as we move closer to JOs, and we welcome your constructive feedback.

See you on deck!

Scott Tanner

Director, Sport Development

USA Water Polo