

DEVELOPING A “BRIDGE PROGRAM”

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Sierra Marlins Swim Team



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SIERRA MARLINS SWIM TEAM

- Located in Folsom, CA (Sacramento area)
- Been a top level program for 17 years.
- 2 Olympians
- Scholarship Div 1 and 2 athletes post high school
- Currently led by **Head Coach Adam Schmitt**, (1.5 years)
- Average between 175-200 year around athletes
- 9 different training groups to serve athlete's goals.
- Bronze and Silver level team recognition

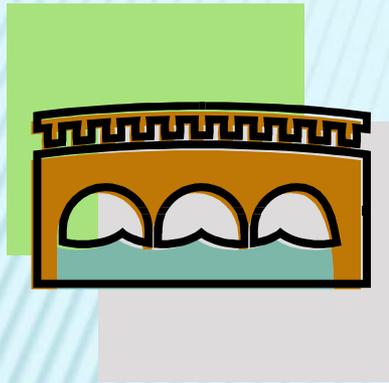
Aimee Schmitt background:



Aimee has been involved in coaching or teaching swimming lessons for the last 15 years. She helped develop successful bridge programs with camps, clinics, and lesson programs at each of the teams her husband coached with including: ASU, LSU, and the Piranha Swim Team. Currently she manages seasonal clinics at Sierra Marlins.

Aimee swam competitively from the age of 7; earned a scholarship to Stanford and led the Cardinal to a NCAA National Title in 1989. She went to Olympic Trials in '84, '88, '92; was an American Record relay member '86, '87; and a USA National Team member, World Championships '86, and World University Games, '87.

WHAT IS A BRIDGE PROGRAM?



Year-around competitive program.

Simply put, a Bridge program is anything that opens the door to your team and allows the novice swim community to see what a year-round team is all about, and potentially eases them into the desire to become a full-time member.

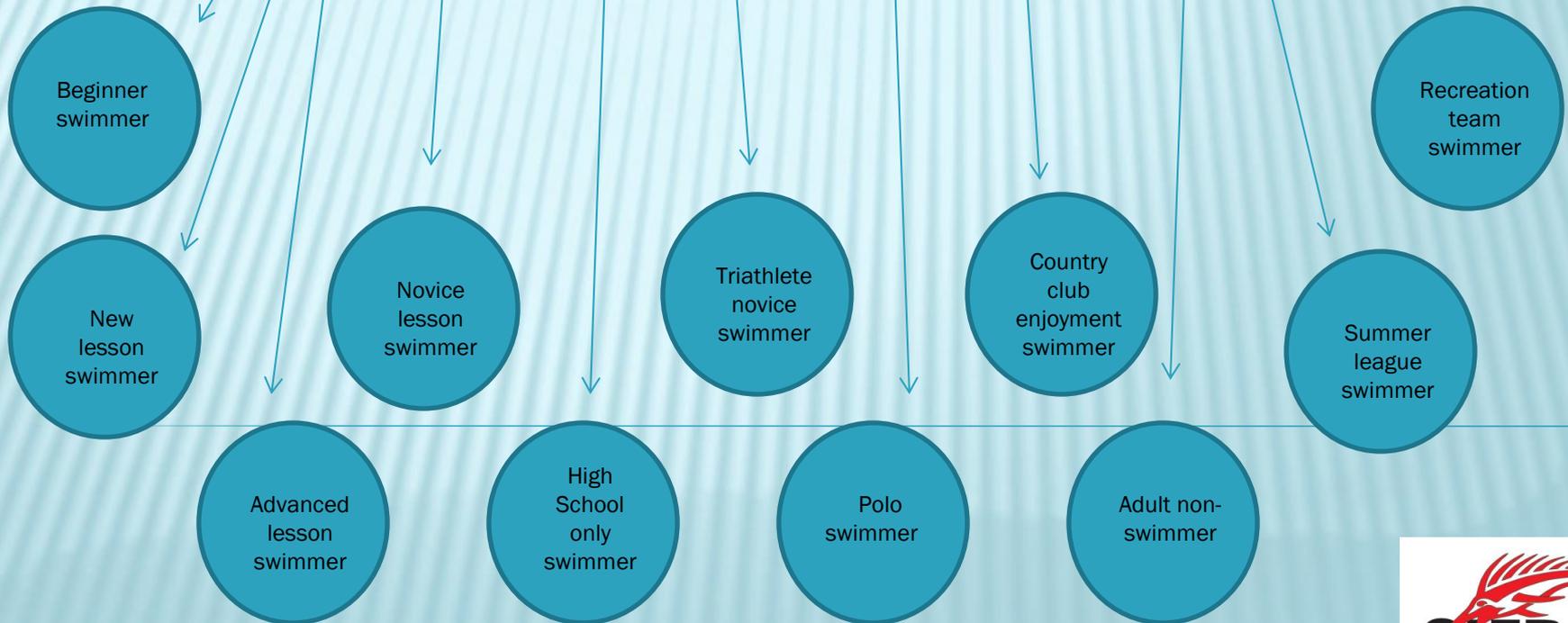
WHAT DO WE NEED A BRIDGE FOR?

Our goal is to continually grow the team and introduce local communities to the “funnest sport in the world”—swimming.



WHAT DO WE NEED A BRIDGE FOR?

There are many classes of swimmers in any community:
How do you connect them to your team?



WHAT DO WE NEED A BRIDGE FOR?



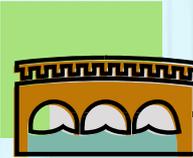
Problem: Most of these groups on the left are not going to feel comfortable just signing up on a year around team. Especially if they are older children or young adults.

1. Beginner swimmers
2. New lesson swimmers
3. Novice lesson swimmers
4. Advanced lesson swimmers
5. Recreation team swimmers
6. Summer league team swimmers
7. High School only swimmers
8. Polo swimmers
9. Adult non-swimmers
10. Triathlete-novice swimmers
11. Country Club swimmers



Year-around competitive program.

A BRIDGE PROGRAM MAKES IT EASIER



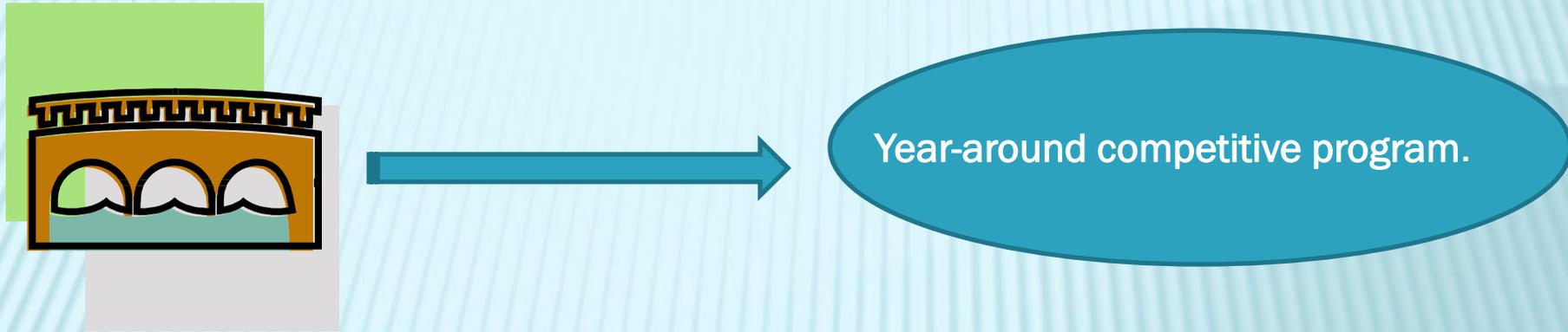
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Examples of possible
Bridge programs:

1. Lesson programs
2. Swim camps
3. Swim clinics
4. Invite a friend day
5. Special event days

Year-around competitive program.

WHAT IS A BRIDGE PROGRAM?



Each program may not be suitable for every team or facility. It is important to start with what you can do and grow over time.

lessons

clinics

Special events

camps

Invite a friend

IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF A SUCCESSFUL BRIDGE PROGRAM:

Consistently available throughout the year.

Needs to be open to specific segments of the local community

Must be marketed in advance.

Ideally lead by an experienced professional coach with assistance.

Should incorporate both fun and education.

Important to have great communication to both new athlete and parent.

Examples of Bridge programs:

1. Lesson programs
2. Swim camps
3. Swim clinics
4. Invite a friend day
5. Special event days

You will need to determine which type of bridge program will work best for your team and environment.



EXAMPLE OF SIERRA MARLINS BRIDGE PROGRAM.

The Marlins swim team has had a longstanding successful Bridge program in annual swim clinics.

While the format has changed over the years due to changes in our lane space availability and other factors with other teams in the area, the clinic has remained a consistent staple to the community.



EXAMPLE OF SIERRA MARLINS BRIDGE PROGRAM.

The Marlins swim team has had a longstanding successful Bridge program in annual swim clinics.

Successes include:

Has served between 70-100 kids per session.

Has created added revenue for the team.
(between \$10-15K annually)

Has led approximately 5-7% of participants over to year-round swimming each season.

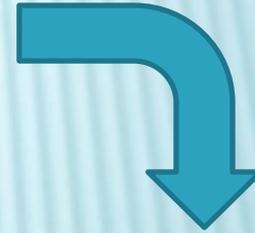
Has fostered positive relationships with local summer teams.

Has helped us develop new upcoming coaches.

Has a re-sign up rate of more than 60%.

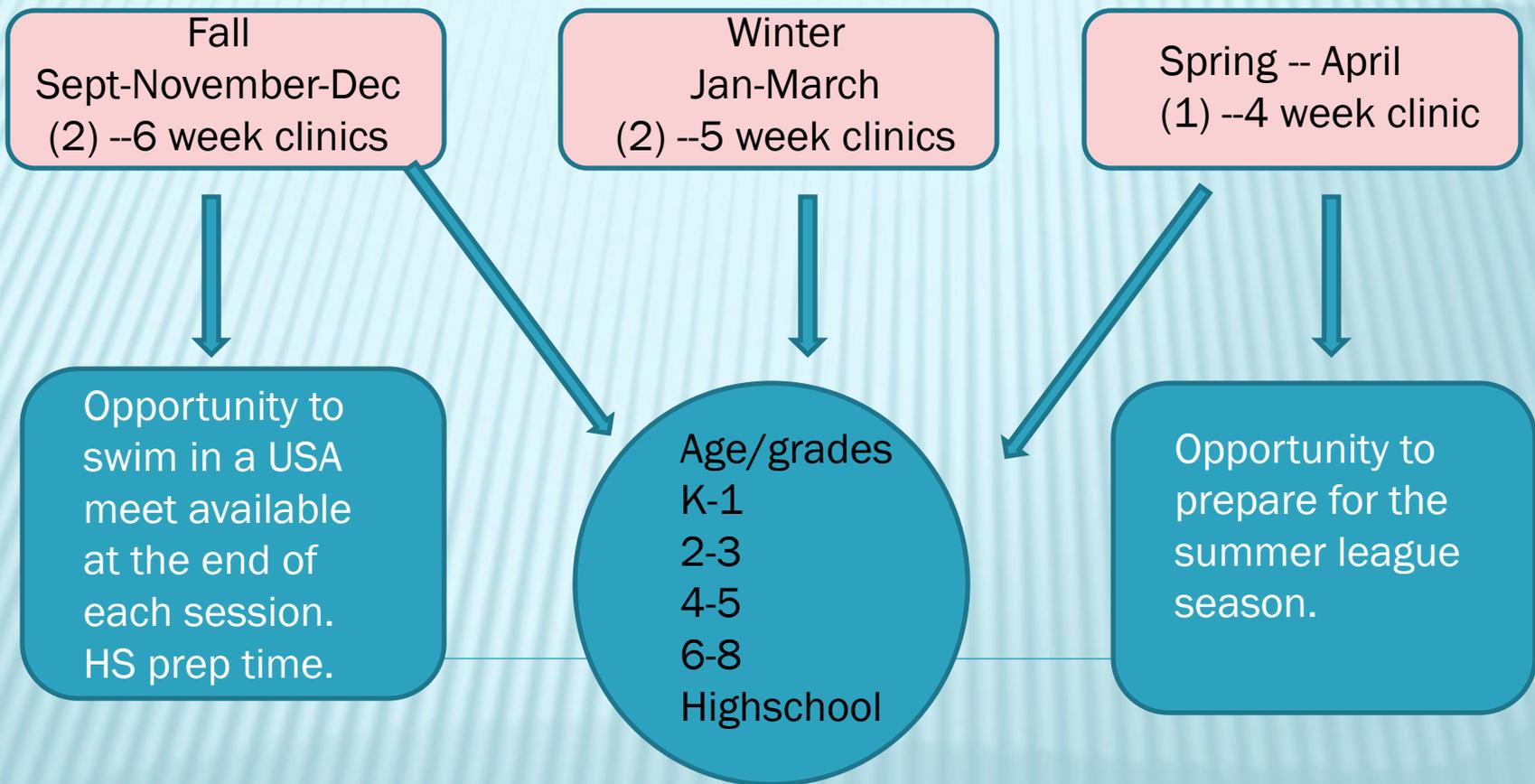
REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY:

Our community has:
3 strong rec/summer programs.
1 city lesson program.
1 local swim school
2 local high schools



For our team, it is critical to have our bridge programs available in the Fall, Winter, and Spring. We offer programs before and after the other programs offered in the area.

EXAMPLE OF SIERRA MARLINS BRIDGE PROGRAM.



POSITIVE SIDE OF BRIDGE PROGRAM

All clinic swimmers get to experience a small taste of working out with the team.

Over time, these factors play into building stronger community relationships and a stronger team.

New coaches can be trained in the style and techniques of the head coach by working with clinics.

Clinic swimmers get to be on the team and feel like a member during the same time the team is practicing.

Clinic swimmers learn the basic stroke techniques so they can become better swimmers and build a base for team training.

Clinic swimmers gain confidence in a safe environment, improving at their pace.

Clinic parents get to see first hand what a team is about and the level of quality of coaching available.



POTENTIAL OBSTACLES TO NAVIGATE:

1. Pool time/lane space availability.
2. When you time your program during the season.
3. Improper marketing.
4. Overextended staff/or uninformed staff.
5. Poor team support.
6. Incorrect goals for program.
7. Poor communication to both the new athlete and parent.



SIERRA MARLINS BRIDGE PROGRAM

Important Focus:

Working with the community to build better relations and build better education about year around swimming.

Marlins goal is not to outright “recruit” from the different teams or programs but rather *provide them an opportunity to see what it’s like from the inside of a year-around club team and determine if it is right for them.*

SIERRA MARLINS BRIDGE PROGRAM

It is Important to Remember:

Not all clinic swimmers *want* to join a year around program...and that is okay.

Not all clinic swimmers are a *good fit* for a year around program...and that is okay.



SIERRA MARLINS BRIDGE PROGRAM

Important Focus:

Working with the community to build better relations and build better education about year around swimming.

Not all clinic swimmers *want* to join a year around program...and that is okay.

But...a bridge program may persuade them in time.

Some athletes just want a way to stay in shape for the next rec/summer league or HS season.

Some athletes have many other extracurricular activities and can't join full time yet, but want to stay in shape.

Some athletes may not be ready physically to join the year-around program.



SIERRA MARLINS BRIDGE PROGRAM

Important Focus:

Working with the community to build better relations and build better education about year around swimming.

Not all clinic swimmers are a *good fit* for a year around program...and that is okay.

But...having the opportunity to “try out” through a bridge program can lead them to want more later down the road.

Some families may not be ready for the commitment of a year around program.

Some athletes may not be ready for the commitment of training with a year around program.



SIERRA MARLINS BRIDGE PROGRAM

How to start a new clinic program.

Work with your facility to plan your new program and arrange for lane space.

Start with one lane and grow from there.

Partner with local rec teams to help promote and work with their coaches and swimmers to help them become better in off season.

Connect with local swim schools or swim lesson programs to be 'the next step' in their swimming progression.

Get your participants to sign up for USA swimming membership.

Consider having your program end right before a meet so participants can also go to a meet.

Have a little welcome gift—a team cap—for them to wear during program.

Interview potential assistant coaches for the program.

WHO COACHES THE PROGRAM?

It is important the quality of the product not be compromised.

Participants want to know they are getting advanced coaching.

Immediate results are required.

Make arrangements for current staff & train new staff.

WHO COACHES THE PROGRAM?

Benefits of training a new coach to work with program.

Often lane space conflicts with existing practices. Current coaches are unable to take on the burden.

It is nice to have the clinic alongside existing practice so families can “see” what goes on with a team.

Connecting with local rec team to find an excited coach helps build community team support.

Opportunity to train a new coach to the head coach’s vision and exact technique drills needed for team.

Developing a future substitute coach and potential staff member.

Important to have a seasoned coach there to partner with the new coach for a few weeks to provide practices, establish the goals and style of daily routine.

WHAT STYLE OF PROGRAM?

Style of Bridge Programs/clinics: can include any of the following as works with your environment.

- Several short 5 -week clinics
- Longer 10-12 week programs

- Focus on younger age groups
 - Focus on HS age groups
 - Focus on Masters age groups

- Focus on conditioning only
- Focus on Technique only
- Incorporate a dryland component.

- Focus on new novice swimmers.
- Focus only on advanced swimmers.

- Create a multi-purpose program that meets multiple needs.

- Provide a session ending goal—swim meet or competition

WHAT WORKS FOR US

Marlin Clinic Programs

- Several short 5 –week clinics
 - Bring in new coaches
 - Focus on Technique

- Small coach to swimmer ratio of 1:5 for younger and 1:8 for older.

We have done several different styles, but most recently have had great success with a strong technique-style clinic focusing on different strokes each week and incorporating the same drills our team uses.

We set goals for our clinic participants to think about finishing the clinic with a USA meet. This allows them to “see” the results of their hard work.

WHAT WORKS FOR US

Program Specifics

K-1
2-3
4-5
6-8
High School

- Focus on Technique
- Focus on Fun
- Keeping ages together
- 1:5 coach to swimmer for younger groups

- Keep clinic simple and brief—keep them wanting more.
- Build on each day and each week with progressive drills and yardage.
- Use fins for drills; emphasizing leg work.
- Keep the clinic time an hour or less.
- Offering several shorter clinics versus one longer clinic.

WHAT WORKS FOR US

Marketing and Promoting

- Set up registration on team site.
- Get the word out via Facebook

- Advertise in community rec catalogs.
- Flyers to local schools.

•We have connected with the **local recreational summer league teams** and encourage them to stay in condition throughout the “off” season.

•We have connected with **local high schools** to use clinics as a way to prep for conditioning for the HS season.

WHAT WORKS FOR US

The Positive Results:

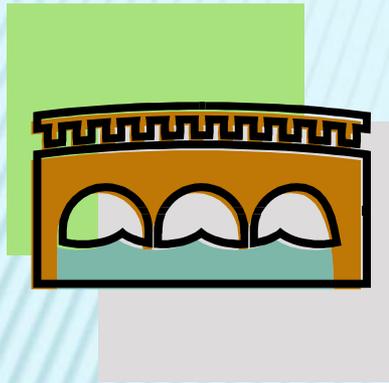
Our programs help build a better educated swim community.

Positive word of mouth; positive response from participants.

Most participants sign up for repeat sessions.
Many participants ask to learn more about the year-round team.

Local rec teams and coaches appreciate the support and cooperative spirit amongst the teams and the positive benefit to their swimmers.

BRIDGE PROGRAMS:



Year-around competitive program.

Simply put, bridge programs are a win-win for teams and the sport of swimming all around.



BRIDGE PROGRAMS:



Any Questions?
