

**SAVING YOUR MEN'S COLLEGE SWIMMING  
PROGRAM:**

**A Practical Guide**

**By Phillip Whitten  
*Swimming World Magazine*  
and USA Swimming**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

College swimming – especially men’s college swimming -- is in crisis. Indeed, the continued existence of our sport at the collegiate level is very much in doubt. To a greater or lesser extent, this is true of all men’s Olympic sports, with most women’s sports not far behind.

The purpose of this booklet is to educate college swim coaches, as well as all supporters of college swimming and diving, as to how they can help preserve our sport. The sections that follow discuss why the crisis has developed and, most importantly, what can be done by coaches, team members, parents of team members, alumni, community leaders and other supporters, including other swimming organizations to save our sport.

This paper is divided into eight sections. After this introduction, the next two sections address the question of why our sport is being targeted for cuts. It is essential that all supporters of college swimming – and, indeed, of all Olympic sports – have an understanding of the issues that surround the dropping of our programs. Once people know the issues, they are empowered to think and act accordingly and appropriately to situations as they arise.

Section 4 discusses some of the intricacies of Title IX and explains why Title IX is *not* the cause of our problems. Section 5 describes briefly the successes some universities have had in reversing decisions to cut their programs.

Sections 6 and 7 form the meat of this booklet, describing the concrete steps that coaches and other supporters can take to prevent their program from being cut. Or, in the event that a program is put on the chopping block, what they can do to prevent that guillotine blade from being released.

This information has been gathered from our involvement at *Swimming World* in support of programs that have been threatened, supplemented with ideas contributed by coaches, swimmers, parents, alumni and others who have learned from the school of hard knocks. These two sections are intended to provide supporters of college swimming with valuable knowledge gained through the sometimes painful experience of others.

Finally, section 8 has a list of resources on which you can call to draw attention to your situation if your program is threatened, and to help you fight for it through the legal system and the media.

## 2. The Problem

Here's a brief, dispassionate synopsis of the problem we are facing:

Since 1993, at least 35 college swimming programs have disbanded. UCLA was the first big one, though Illinois came a year earlier. It seemed inconceivable that a school with such a glorious history in men's swimming (and gymnastics as well) would simply kill the program. What's more, university administrators refused attempts by alumni to endow the program. People were upset, but the UCLA situation seemed to be an aberration. And indeed, the particulars of the UCLA decision (and subsequent decisions by that school) are quite idiosyncratic.

In retrospect, however, UCLA was not an aberration at all, but a harbinger of things to come.

Since 1994, many other men's swim programs have been cut including:

Adrian College  
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville  
University of Arkansas, Little Rock  
University of California, Irvine  
California State University, Northridge  
Canisius College  
Chico State University  
Cornell College (Iowa)  
University of Dallas  
Fresno State University  
Georgia Southern University  
Hobart - William & Smith College  
University of Illinois,  
Indiana University (Penn.)  
Iowa State University  
Juniata College  
University of Kansas  
Loyola University  
James Madison University  
University of Massachusetts - Boston  
University of Massachusetts - Lowell  
University of Miami (Ohio)  
Moorhead State University  
Morehouse College  
University of Nebraska  
New Mexico State College  
University of New Mexico  
Northern Arizona University  
University of Richmond  
Rutgers University - Camden

San Francisco State University  
San Jose State University  
University of Washington  
and, most recently, the University of Vermont.

Some of those programs have been saved, but the depressing list goes on and on. It's no exaggeration to say that virtually *no* program is safe. The Big 12 has gotten so small, some journalists have suggested holding next year's conference championship in a hot tub.

According to NCAA figures, in the 1981-82 school year, 181 of 277 Division I schools (65.3 percent) had men's swimming teams. By 1998-99, the most recent for which statistics are available, 152 of 321 Division I schools (47.4 percent) had men's swimming teams. The number and percentage have declined since then. The same trend is occurring at Div. II and III, though to a somewhat lesser degree.

The result of all this is that: thousands of male swimmers have lost scholarship opportunities, or simply the opportunity to compete at the college level; the US is losing its major source of its Olympic swimmers; and swim coaches are losing their jobs.

The same is true—to an even greater degree—in other men's Olympic sports. Gymnastics has lost about 75% of the schools that used to sponsor it; wrestling is barely breathing; baseball, golf, tennis, men's water polo, even track and field are in serious jeopardy.

### 3. Why Are Olympic Sports Being Cut?

The question is *why*. The answer isn't easy. Two reasons are commonly given: (1) Title IX and (2) budgetary woes. While both of these contain elements of truth, they are essentially bogus. When you hear Bill Byrne, the Athletic Director of the University of Nebraska, say there isn't enough money to support men's swimming, you know you're not being told the entire story. The Athletic Department at Nebraska is awash in money—it's one of the fattest in the land. And, as swiminfo discovered, Nebraska was completing negotiations with Alltel Corporation for a \$9 million gift to the Athletic Department at the same time as Bill Byrne was crying poverty. A few months later, he discovered enough money in the till to give himself and a handful of coaches and athletic administrators record bonuses amounting to more than \$1.2 million. No, it's not that there's not enough money. It's a matter of *priorities*.

So, why are these ADs killing swim programs left and right? I believe it is a combination of seven main reasons:

1. Contempt for our sport and other Olympic sports. Their attitude reminds me of the old "Saturday Night Live" skit with baseball player, Chico Esquela. Like Chico who knew only beisbol, for these ADs, it's "swimming -- I don't know." But "football been very, very good to me."
2. Lack of knowledge. Most ADs come from football programs. In fact, quite often they are former football coaches who have been kicked upstairs—a perfect illustration of the Peter Principle. They've risen to their level of incompetence. Unfortunately, it's a level where they can inflict great damage. Recently, an increasing number of ADs are being recruited not from a coaching or educational background, but from the world of business. They are under tremendous pressure to keep the high profile coaches content, and that, in turn, means higher salaries. Olympic sports are seen by these administrators as an unnecessary expense.
1. Many seem to have a quasi-mystical belief that they're just one brilliant move away from being the next football or basketball powerhouse -- the next Notre Dame or USC or Penn State. But guess what? Lightning almost never strikes. The \$300,000 they take from swimming to build new luxury boxes to entice fat cat corporate types or to hire a second assistant line coach won't do anything – except add to the debt. Ask the AD at Iowa State. That brings up another important point—the phrase "revenue sports." Football and basketball we're told, over and over again until we no longer question it, are "revenue sports." Well, yes, at Notre Dame and USC and Penn State. But, according to the NCAA, they are money *losers* at the vast majority of colleges and universities. Last year, according to the NCAA, well over 80



percent of Div. IA and IAA football teams lost money. *Money losers!*

4. They are not very imaginative. Recently a group of Iowa State alumni met with the AD and offered to endow the men's swim team and underwrite and advertising and marketing campaign for the football team, which is a major money-loser. The AD refused, commenting that the department had never done anything like that before.
5. Sometimes it's a personal issue. Reportedly, personal animosities had much to do with the initial decision to cut men's swimming at UCLA and subsequent generous proposals to revive the men's program.
6. They think they can do it with impunity. If an AD is inhibited from cutting a program because he fears the outcry that action will engender, he is likely to find other ways to deal with budget issues. Bob Fredericks, the AD at Kansas, decided to resign after he cut men's swimming. The ADs at Washington, Miami of Ohio, and elsewhere did not anticipate the support their swim teams enjoyed. Faced with a firestorm of protest, they reversed their decisions and now are working to enhance their programs. In every where the decision to cut swimming was reversed, it was due to political pressure, usually combined with economic pressure on the university or athletic program and a commitment to improve facilities and opportunities.
7. Even well-intentioned ADs, however, may find themselves tempted to cut men's swimming or other Olympic sports, due to the funding dilemma faced by almost all athletic departments.

### The Funding Dilemma

Almost all schools that have cut men's swim programs have cited "budgetary constraints" as the rationale for the cuts. While the issue is actually one of priorities, to comprehend the rationale of budgetary constraints, one must understand that university athletic departments are generally funded by four primary sources:

- (1) The University, through appropriations from its general fund;
- (2) the students, through student fee allocations;
- (3) boosters, through donations; and
- (4) ticket sales and profits from revenue sports, such as football and men's basketball.

Athletic Directors are hired (and fired) by university presidents. To obtain additional support for the athletic department from the university's general fund, Athletic Directors must go through the president. Many presidents feel that it is inappropriate for additional resources to go to an athletic department, as opposed to academic departments. As a result, there is

either a tacit or explicit understanding between President and Athletic Director that the AD's job is to provide a "self-sustaining" athletic department..

Increases in student fee allocations are usually considered a long-shot proposition, as many student groups are already vying for limited resources. Persuading the student government that additional fees should go to support a multi-million-dollar athletic department, as opposed to other, smaller-scale student activities is generally a difficult political point to sell. And rightly so.

The majority of Athletic Department boosters are supporters of the most popular, visible college sports—football and men's basketball. As a result, fundraising for a new football or men's basketball practice facility is much easier than fundraising for a new swimming facility.

Finally, ticket sales and the revenue generated from TV contracts are largely dependent upon the competitive success of a school's football and men's basketball programs. Teams that fare poorly in the competitive arena generally have poor attendance and/or fail to be picked up by ESPN and TV stations.

#### The Arms Race

As a result, Athletic Directors are faced with a tough reality: Your football and men's basketball teams must have winning seasons, or you're in danger of losing your job. Unfortunately, this is an impractical expectation, as it is practically impossible for every team in a conference to have a winning record. Because Athletic Directors are held to this impossible standard, they are tempted to pour every available resource into the revenue-generating sports.

One need only look at the escalation of coaching salaries for football and men's basketball. Million-dollar salaries (plus bonuses) are becoming commonplace. In addition to becoming the highest-paid state employees, many head coaches are provided substantial budgets to recruit high-priced assistant coaches. This phenomenon aptly has been dubbed an "arms race." A fitting description, this competitive strategy is based on the concept that, "he who offers the most to the prospective recruits, wins the most games."

Some football programs even brag about their capacity to recruit all the top talent, if for no other purpose than to gobble up all the talent, so that they will not face them as opponents. Rather, all the talent will be wearing their jerseys—either on the field or riding the bench.

The arms race concept requires that every available resource be allocated to revenue sports. As such, all sports that detract from the bottom-line of the Athletic Department's income statement (even if that statement is written in red ink) are viewed as inconsistent with the goals of the Athletic Department. Therefore, Athletic Directors look to cut sports, and thereby cut costs, so that additional resources can be allocated to the revenue-generating sports.

### Why Men's Sports are Targeted for Cuts

Women's sports cannot be cut, due to Title IX, a federal law requiring equitable apportionment of federal funds at federally-funded institutions (see page 00). Because nearly every state university relies upon federal funding, Title IX's applicability is far-reaching. Although passed into law nearly 30 years ago, many institutions still fail to fully comply with Title IX's mandates. Although the gap is narrowing, the number of opportunities in intercollegiate athletics still remains disproportionately in favor of men, primarily as a result of the resources expended on football.

As a result, Title IX protects women's sports from budget cuts. There is no corresponding protection, however, for men's "non-revenue" sports.

An implication of Title IX is that only men's sports can be cut for budgetary reasons. This is only a matter of convenience, however, not a matter of law. Women's sports *can be cut* for budgetary reasons, but only if the athletic department is in compliance with Title IX. Few athletic departments comply with Title IX.

One reason for the continued disparity in athletic opportunities is football. Offering over 88 scholarships, there is unfortunately no women's counterpart. Rather, an athletic department must offer multiple women's sports to counter the enormous number of men on a football team.

Interestingly, football coaches defend the need to offer 88 scholarships and, sometimes field teams of over 100 men. In contrast, pro football teams have rosters of 53 players. What's more, pro teams play 16 regular season games, plus playoffs. College teams generally play 10 or 11 games, with the possibility of a bowl game for the top teams.

In addition, pro players are heavier, faster and hit harder, so the likelihood of injury – and the need for replacements – is much greater at the pro level.

In addition, a study conducted at Miami University, showed that only about one-half of college football players ever get to set foot on the stadium grass during the course of their entire careers. The rest are just

cannon fodder, practice dummies, and potential starters elsewhere, who are “stockpiled” to keep them from the opposition.

Despite the logic of these arguments, college football coaches are virtually unanimous in their “need” for 80-110 member team, including “scholarships” for fourth stringers – most of whom never play and never graduate. The result is that men’s Olympic sports, including swimming, have suffered immensely.

## 4. Title IX

In 1972 President Nixon signed into law landmark federal legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender in federally funded education activities or programs. This legislation now known as Title IX applies to high schools, community colleges, junior colleges, colleges and universities. The U.S. Constitution through the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment also bans discrimination on the basis of gender at schools that receive any federal funding.

Taken together Title IX and the Equal Protection clause form the legal basis for scrutinizing the gender equity activities of administrators in athletics. In understanding the meaning of a statute, i.e. Title IX, courts look at the *intent* of the legislators. In the case of Title IX, the only authority on congressional intent is the statement of Senator Birch Bayh. He stated that it was enacted to “provide for the women of America something that is rightfully theirs – an equal chance to attend the schools of their choice, to develop the skills they want, and to apply those skills with the knowledge that they will have a fair chance to secure the jobs of their choice with equal pay for equal work.” Congress never raised nor discussed the subject of women, men and athletic opportunities at public and private federally funded schools.

Congress did delegate to the Department of Education (DED) the authority to promulgate regulations for determining whether a school’s athletic program complies with Title IX. Prior to issuing the regulations the head of the department remarked: “I had not realized until the comment period that athletics is the single most important thing in the United States.” An agency within the DED, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), actually administers Title IX. The pertinent regulations apply to interscholastic, intercollegiate, club and intramural athletics. They do not apply to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

### Determining Compliance

In determining compliance, courts grant these administrative regulations “controlling weight unless they are arbitrary, capricious, or manifestly contrary to statute.” The plain reading of the DED regulation on athletics prevents a school from denying a student the opportunity of participating in sports on the basis of gender. A special regulatory exception for single gender teams is made for bodily contact sports or where the selection of teams is based on competitive skill. However, when a school has historically limited the athletic opportunities for, say, women in a sport and the men have had the opportunity to participate in that sport, then the women must be allowed to try-out for the team unless the sport is a contact sport. This contact sport exception allows schools to offer a men’s only football or basketball team. The dissenting judge in one of the leading gender equity cases, *Cohen v. Brown University*, argues that this regulatory exception

means that “contact sports should be excluded from the calculus” in evaluating Title IX compliance.

### The Three-Prong Test

In addition to its regulations, the DED promulgated a three-prong test via a Policy Interpretation statement to assess whether a school is in compliance.

Theoretically, an athletic program fully meets Title IX’s mandate so long as it satisfies one of the following three conditions.

1. Are opportunities for women and men athletes substantially proportionate to their enrollment?
2. Does the school have a history of expanding athletic opportunities for the underrepresented gender?
3. Has the school demonstrated success in meeting the interests and abilities of those students?

A further OCR clarification memo followed shortly thereafter. A note of caution: one can not mix the participation head counts of club, junior varsity or intramural teams with varsity athletic participation when determining “safe harbor” compliance. Recently, Congress passed the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act. This statute requires schools to publicly disclose athletic funding for scholarships, coaching salaries, operating expenses and gender participation rates. Both the NCAA and The Women’s Sports Foundation analyze and report on these data annually. The U.S. General Accounting Office has begun to study athletic participation rates based on gender. The latest report indicates that the time period between originating the proposal to drop a sport, e.g. men’s swimming, and making the final decision is typically less than three months.

### Key Court Decisions

To date the U.S. Supreme Court has not accepted for judicial review a Title IX lawsuit dealing with a school’s attempt to comply with these administrative regulations and policy statements. A number of federal circuit courts of appeals in different geographic jurisdiction areas have addressed some of these issues. It is difficult to generalize the factual patterns that occur. In many cases the women seek certification as a “class” of athletes who allege discriminatory treatment by virtue of the school failing to elevate a club sport to varsity status; unequal funding in terms of benefits and scholarships; and an imbalance between the composition of athletic rosters and the proportion of women enrolled.

One of the most recent federal appeals court cases occurred in New York. Former female softball and lacrosse club athletes at Syracuse University sued their university alleging non-Title IX compliance. The court noted that just over 50 per cent of the student population were female, however, women made up only 32.4 per cent of Syracuse’s athletes. Yet, the court found compliance under one of the three prongs because “it had continued a practice of program expansion which is responsive to the abilities and interests of its student body.”

From 1981 until 1996 Syracuse had added no new varsity women's sport teams. In 1997 soccer joined the eight other women's varsity sport teams. Then in 1998 Syracuse announced plans to add women's varsity soccer and lacrosse just prior to the filing of the lawsuit and agreed to add women's varsity softball once the lawsuit was filed. The court determined that these additions constituted "past and continuing remedial efforts to provide nondiscriminatory participation opportunities through program expansion." At the time of the lawsuit Syracuse funded eleven varsity sports for men.

In contrast to the Syracuse decision, a federal circuit court of appeals for the New England area held that Brown University had failed to meet any of the three OCR imposed conditions for Title IX compliance. The Brown decision occurred before Syracuse. The court focused on the fact that the men students occupied a disproportionately high percentage of the overall athletic roster spots. At the start of the lawsuit, Brown's men undergraduate students outnumbered women by 52.4 per cent to 47.6 per cent. Women occupied 36.7 per cent of the varsity athletic spots. This statistical disparity was sufficient evidence to find that Brown had failed to fully and effectively accommodate the interests and abilities of women.

Brown had demoted two women's varsity sports (gymnastics and volleyball) and two men's varsity sports (water polo and golf) from university funded to donor funded team status. The school saved less than \$16,000 by not funding the men's teams and about \$62,000 by not funding the women's teams. These cost cutting measures did little to impact the athletic participation gender ratio.

The court in Brown has received criticism from some observers on both legal and policy grounds. Schools are required to identify and meet the athletic interests of women, but those of the men go unmet especially if they change over time. Statistical data compiled support this conclusion – men are losing teams and athletic roster spots. The popular culture suggests all men athletes are competing against women athletes for funding and team size. Perhaps, more accurately, men competing in non-revenue sports, e.g. swimming, wrestling, track and field, etc., are pitted against men competing in revenue sports, football and basketball, for varsity spots.

*Stated another way, men competing in non-revenue intercollegiate and high school sports, including the Olympic sports of swimming and water polo, are losing the opportunity to train and compete because of expanded funding and roster sizes for men's football and basketball.*

On a legal basis, one could argue that the Brown decision turns Title IX into an "affirmative action" bill stuffed with congressionally unintended "quotas" and "preferences" for women. Critics point to the language of Title IX itself which contains language that prohibits the ordering of preferential treatment on the basis of gender due to a failure of an athletic program to substantially mirror the gender

ratio of a school. The exact statutory language guarantees that no person shall be excluded on the basis of gender from “participating in, denied the benefits of or subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” The plain meaning of this section of Title IX runs afoul of the majority opinion in *Brown* and another cutting edge federal circuit court of appeals from northern California.

The California court held that reducing the proportion of roster spots for men, wrestling in this case, was an appropriate remedy when the men students of the California State University system occupied a disproportionately high percentage of the athletic roster spots. This court rejected the argument that men might have a higher interest in participating in college sports than women. Pointing to the OCR’s Clarification memo, the court determined that a school may cap squad sizes and eliminate teams when men athletes are over-represented.

In a famous U.S. Supreme Court decision, *U.S. v. Virginia*, the court visited the issue of whether the then all-male publicly funded military institution, V.M.I., violated certain tenets of the Equal Protection clause. The court stated that “parties who seek to defend gender-based government action must demonstrate an ‘exceedingly persuasive justification’ for that action.” The federal Equal Protection clause provides that “no State shall make or enforce any law which shall...deny to any person...the equal protection of the laws.” Originally this post Civil War amendment to the constitution applied only to African-American men. Today different religious, race, national origin, and gender groups who believe a government entity, e.g. a federally funded school, has denied them equal treatment make seek relief under this constitutional provision.

An unresolved legal question when men or women seek judicial relief under the Equal Protection clause against a school’s decision not to elevate a club team to varsity status, to fund one gender’s team and not another gender’s team, to cap or even eliminate a team based on gender is: What is the legal standard or burden in determining the validity of a gender based action? For instance, when a school creates a group classification based on gender must it merely demonstrate that this classification serves an important government objective (greater athletic opportunities for women) and the remedy taken (cutting men’s teams) is substantially related to meeting this government objective or must a school demonstrate a higher “heightened scrutiny” or “exceedingly persuasive justification” standard as the V.M.I. case suggests.

Many states also have equal protection standards in their state constitutions. Increasingly, states are enacting gender equity statutes similar to Title IX. These, too, are sources of law available to parties who question the actions of school administrators and boards. The NCAA is the primary rule-making authority for intercollegiate sports. Different rule making agencies or associations exist for junior and community colleges and high schools. Schools frequently link geographically to form conferences. All of these bodies formulate policies,



enforce rules compliance, and offer championships. Some insightful commentators have recommended that these bodies consider expanding the sports offered for championships to include dance teams, cheerleading squads and even members of the band. These newly recognized varsity sports then become part of the calculus of determining gender equity compliance.

Finally, a leading member of the U.S. Senate is considering legislation to help preserve men's and women's Olympic sports at the pre-college and college levels.

### The Misplaced Animosity Towards Title IX

The implication of Title IX, including the protection afforded women's sports, has created considerable animosity and resentment among *some* members of men's non-revenue sports. These feelings naturally stem from the effect of budget cuts hitting *their* sport, and not another's. Rather than question the arms race mentality which benefits only two sports (football and men's basketball), those who have been affected by the arms race and implicated by Title IX have wrongly focused their anger toward Title IX.

It is crucial to remember that the current application of Title IX does *not* mandate that men's sports be dropped in order to comply with Title IX. Rather, Title IX merely protects women's sports from being cut at an institution which has failed to comply with a federal law that has existed for nearly 30 years.

It is ironic that the foot-dragging of the past 30 years and the failure of athletic departments to comply with Title IX has resulted in men's non-revenue sports attacking women's non-revenue sports. The irony lies in the fact that athletic directors, who control *all the money and resources*, are not being taken to task for gender inequity and out-of-control spending. Rather, the non-revenue sports, which have *no access to money or resources*, are fighting amongst themselves for the scraps that remain.

Most ironic of all is that one of the key targets has been swimming – perhaps the sport in which the least amount of gender bias exists. Virtually all swimmers in the US grow up and train with mixed-gender teams, and *every* male swimmer has had the experience of being whipped by a female, at least in practice. This experience engenders mutual respect and a sense of camaraderie among male and female swimmers that is rare in other sports.

Another way to put it is this: Typically, football and men's basketball, which comprise about 20 percent of the population of an athletic department, receive or have access to 80 percent of the athletic department's resources. The remaining non-revenue sports, which comprise about 80 percent of the athletic department's population, are left

to squabble over the remaining 20 percent of the athletic department's resources. This is an obscene reality.

#### Men's and Women's Non-Revenue Sports Must Work Together

Just as it is important to keep in mind that Title IX does not mandate cuts in men's sports, it is equally important to keep in mind that Title IX does not afford women's sports unlimited protection. Title IX only protects women's sports from being cut *when an athletic department is currently not in compliance with Title IX*. Many schools are making progress towards Title IX compliance, however. This compliance is being met through cuts in men's offerings, as well as the adding of women's sports.

It is reasonable to speculate, however, that as soon as schools begin to meet the compliance ratios mandated by Title IX, women's sports will begin to be cut, as well. Another possibility is that some women's sports will be cut, only to be replaced with less expensive women's sport alternatives with larger squad sizes. Gymnastics, for example, might well be replaced with soccer and bowling (a big sport at Nebraska).

Given that women's sports are likely to be targeted for cuts in the near future, men's and women's non-revenue sports share a common interest. Considering the sport of college swimming, there is additional motivation for men and women to work together, as it is often the case that when a men's swimming program is cut, the women's program suffers a setback, as well. Nebraska is a textbook case.

Understandably, women swimmers would prefer to attend an institution that strongly supports its swimming program. A school that cuts its men's swimming program undoubtedly demonstrates a lack of support and respect for the sport of swimming. As a result, coaches of women's teams typically report that they lose many recruits when it is announced that the men's team has been cut.

## 5. What's Been Done

Some schools have been able to reverse the decision to cut men's swimming. Such was the case at the University of Washington, Miami University (Ohio), James Madison University, the University of California at Irvine, and others. In every one of these cases, effective organization and leadership by a few individuals won the day.

At Washington, alumni and swimmers' parents used political clout and effective lobbying not only to reverse the decision, but to *increase* the school's commitment to swimming. At Miami, the lobbying of influential (and affluent) alumni with a new president, along with strong support from the women's team, won the day. An article in the { } issue of *Swimming World* described in detail how the issue was won.

At James Madison, alumni support helped retain the program but at a decreased funding level, while at Irvine, the team appealed to the student body which voted overwhelmingly for increased student fees to keep the program alive.

At *Swimming World*, **SWIM** and swiminfo.com, we have been very active on the issue of college swim programs being cut, covering every threatened program, and writing editorials and articles examining the claims of university officials. We will continue to give maximum publicity to this issue and do whatever is in our power to organize the swimming community to fight back effectively.

We have also organized a consortium of attorneys—mostly former swimmers or the parents of swimmers—willing to work *pro bono* on behalf of threatened programs.

With the generous assistance of USA Swimming, CSCAA and ASCA, this booklet is being distributed to every college swim coach in America, as well as interested junior college and high school coaches and other interested parties.

Bob Groseth, a pioneer in this issue, has been forging alliances with the governing bodies of other threatened Olympic sports and has made considerable progress. Clearly, we will be more effective in winning the day in concert with other threatened sports than if we find ourselves squabbling over the crumbs left behind by football and men's basketball.

In addition, Bob has been organizing at the state and Congressional district level, beginning with the state of { }, to produce legislation to protect Olympic sports.

Finally, though the USOC has been slow to realize the threat the cuts in men's Olympic sports mean to US Olympic dominance, that organization is beginning to acknowledge the problem and, one hopes, to use its considerable influence to protect these sports.



## 6. What You Can Do To Prevent Your Program From Being Cut

This section is the meat of this booklet—by far its most important section. If you can make your program impregnable, invulnerable to challenges from unsympathetic Athletic Directors or financial pressures, you will never have to deal with the gut-wrenching process of having your program cut out from under you, feeling devalued in your profession, or telling your athletes that your university was reneging on its sacred promises.

The key is to be *proactive*—to take a series of actions before anyone even thinks of putting your program on the chopping block, actions that will armor-proof your program, making it invulnerable to the depredations of short-sighted AD. It's far easier to prevent your program from being cut than to have it reinstated once it's been cut.

Yes, it will take extra work—work you probably didn't bargain for when you first decided to become a swim coach. But the alternative is to leave yourself open to having your program destroyed. Make no mistake about it: *Virtually every men's collegiate swimming program in the nation is at risk.* (And the women's programs are only marginally safer.)

The unemployment lines are filled these days with swim coaches who thought they were invulnerable, that it couldn't happen to them. Baby, it can happen to you. And you can be sure that it *will* happen to some of you in the next year unless you are prepared. If it can happen at UCLA, with its glorious history, it can happen at your college or university. Don't be lulled into a false complacency.

Fortunately, you can prevent your program from being cut. Here are the actions you need to take—before there's even a whisper of trouble. I cannot overstate the importance of taking these actions. (Incidentally, you may be able to get the university to pay for some of the things you need to do by hiring a student to do them under the Work-Study program.)

- 1. Establish an alumni list.** Include each individual's name, address, phone number, e-mail address, occupation. Note his or her area(s) of influence. Keeping a list of current e-mail addresses is critical should you need to act quickly. Make sure all of your current swimmers understand the importance of the alumni list and their future roles as supportive alums.
- 2. Organize and cross-reference your list into significant categories, especially those who can provide legal, political, public relations and financial assistance.** Make sure you have your ducks all in a row.
- 3. Communicate regularly with your alumni and other supporters.** A number of teams have established alumni newsletters, published four or six

times a year, that serve to maintain a sense of community across the generations. I am particularly impressed with *The Bear Claw* at the University of California at Berkeley. If mailing costs are a problem, you can have the newsletter sent out via e-mail. Also, established a web site for your team. Undoubtedly you will have swimmers on your team who are expert at building and maintaining a web site. (Incidentally, the web site can serve as a recruiting vehicle as well as a means for maintaining contact with alumni.)

- 4. Organize the people around you who will help most.** Identify a team member who will go to bat for the program if things go bad. Identify a parent whom you can educate and who will serve as the leader of the parents. Ascertain an alumnus who will serve as the chairperson of your alums. Get to know your local (town and county) leaders because they know the state legislators and can speak to them in your behalf. Make a list of your state representatives.
- 5. Promote your team in the local media,** including television, newspapers, radio, campus publications, the school's alumni magazine, etc. The University of Georgia's Jack Bauerle has a once-a-week radio program. That should be possible on many campuses.
- 6. Make an effort to meet the local media and introduce them to your team.** Schmooze with them. If you already known a reporter, it is much easier to call him up and pitch a story or remind him about an upcoming meet, than if you cold call when you need coverage. Don't underestimate the power of personal connections.
- 7. Make sure someone is telling your story to the media.** At most schools, there will be a student SID assigned to your team. Talk to that person and encourage him or her to get your story out. If there is no assigned SID, try to get a Work-Study student or student assistant to carry the ball. Know when a fast swim is among your school's all-time top 10 and report it.
- 8. Form friendships and alliances with the women's swim coach, as well as with the coaches of other vulnerable, mostly Olympic, sports.** There is strength in numbers. Within our own sport, promote the idea that the men and women are part of *one team*—just as they have been throughout their USA Swimming, YMCA and high school careers.
- 9. Establish friendly relations with your Athletic Director and other decision-makers, including the school's president, key academics and trustees.** Again, never underestimate the importance of friendships and personal connections. Go to lunch with the AD; get involved within the department;

understand your school's athletics priorities. Let these folks know you consider yourself part of their team and are fully supportive of all the sports the school offers. Remember: Not all ADs are hostile to Olympic sports. At some universities, such as Auburn, the AD and president are enormously supportive, attending the SEC and NCAA Championships for both men and women. Get to know not only the AD and president but other important institutional and local figures—the provost, the mayor, county supervisor, police chief, etc. Have them serve as coach or assistant coach at your intra-squad meet or alumni meet. Award team gear to all guest coaches. In addition, recognize that you must become more political in the hiring and firing of Athletic Directors. Get yourself appointed to the selection committee. Your survival and that of your program may depend on it.

**10. Tell your student-athlete story.** Tell it over and over. Shout it into the ether. Get that story on TV, on radio, into the school paper, into the local newspapers. One of the great strengths our sport possesses is that swimmers perform very well in the classroom. More often than not, they boast higher grade point averages and higher graduation rates than other athletic teams, and even higher than non-athletes – despite the long hours they devote to training. Several schools are particularly good at getting the word out about their student-athletes. This year the University of Georgia did a marvelous job telling the media about the spectacular achievements of Kim Black and its five incoming freshmen with SATs over 1400. Notre Dame, North Carolina and Virginia are also outstanding in this area. Minority swimmers, regardless of socioeconomic background, perform as well in the classroom as non-minorities. This is a great story. If you have minority swimmers on your team who are doing well academically, make sure the media know about it! Also, proactively get alums, parents and student-athletes to write the AD, university administration, and the Board of Trustees or Regents regarding the achievements of your team.

**11. Establish an endowment.** This may be the single most important act you can take to ensure your program's long-term survival. With the help of your alumni, begin to endow your scholarships or budgets. The long-term goal should be to fund your program entirely – for scholarships and expenses – through the endowment. Many schools are in the process of doing this now. There is no reason why it cannot be done at every school, whether Division I, II or III, or NAIA.

**12. Get your team involved in community service.** Your swimmers must be involved in community service – everything from teaching youngsters to swim

to reading to elementary students; visiting senior citizens in nursing homes and children in hospitals; collecting food, clothing and holiday gifts for those in need; working at the local food bank.

You, too, need to be involved locally. Speak as often as possible for local sports banquets for high school and age group teams, Rotary meetings, Lions Clubs, Boy Scout and Girl Scout dinners, etc.

**13. Build a constituency on campus.** Make your meets interesting, try to make them spectator-friendly by producing inexpensive meet programs, using knowledgeable and entertaining announcers, etc.

**14. Recruit locally.** It helps build and maintain local interest in the media. One of

the rationalizations used by the ADs at Nebraska and Iowa State is that there were few local boys on the men's swim teams. While these officials were, not surprisingly, applying a double standard (most of their football and basketball teams were recruited from out-of-state), they did have a good point, and one that could help safeguard your program.

**15. Dress for success.** I know this seems superficial, but people still tend to judge

others by the way they present themselves. Check out pro or college football or basketball games. The coaches almost always dress in suit and tie. In contrast, the dress around the pool deck tends toward the casual. Yes, it's muggy and humid on the deck, but if you want your AD, your president and trustees, and your fellow coaches to see you as a "professional," just as they do coaches in other sports, dress the part. It's a small price to pay for a big return.

**16. Stay in regular touch with us at *Swimming World*, *SWIM* and *swiminfo.com*.**, and support efforts to save all swim programs. We now have the largest swimming web site in the world. We are committed to saving our sport, cover all aspects of the sport and can get your stories out to the largest possible swimming audience. What's more, we're happy to do so.

**17. Speak out and support efforts to control runaway NCAA football and basketball costs.** Think nationally, act locally. Support efforts to get the NCAA to own up to the fact that football and basketball spending is out of control, that if universities continue to support these two sports as the current trend indicates, there will be fewer men's sports, only the TV sports on the men's side, and diversity sports on the women's side. Emphasize the devastating effect this will have on thousands of young athletes, and on the USA's performance in the Olympic Games.

Encourage the NCAA to mandate that a larger minimum number of sports be carried on the men's side.

Encourage NCAA apportionment of television royalties based upon the number of sports offered at an institution.



## 7. What You Can Do If Your Program Is On the Chopping Block

While it is far better to be proactive and take measures that will safeguard your program, do not despair if you find your program is on the chopping block. There are still actions you can take to have the decision reversed.

1. **Organize your alumni.** Find an alum willing to carry the ball.
2. **Apply pressure wherever you can.** Use whatever tools are at your disposal: publicity—the media may be very sympathetic; major donors; your congressman, senator, governor, local state legislator, student government, the student body. Write to local newspapers, call local radio and TV stations. Remember, you've got a great story to tell: about genuine, unspoiled student-athletes. Tell it! People are sick of spoiled, pampered athletes who think the world owes them. They will go for your genuine story!
3. **Be politically astute,** but don't hesitate to act because you're afraid of offending the AD. Your program—and your livelihood—are on the line here. It's a war; fight to win.
4. **Contact us** so we can get your story out to a national constituency.
5. **Use our *pro bono* Legal Defense Team.** It is headed by Michael Jones, a New Hampshire judge, nationally-recognized authority on sports law, a former college swimmer and current Masters swimmer. Judge Jones has, at his disposal, more than 50 lawyers who are volunteering their time, expertise and services in the defense of college swimming. Use it!

Please feel free to contact me by phone or e-mail if you have additional suggestions. I am always open to new ideas.

Coaches, this is a life-or-death struggle. Right now, we are in danger of losing it. But we have the resources to win it. If we act—and act together—we *will* win.

## 8. Resources

*Swimming World* Magazine:

**SWIM** Magazine

Swiminfo.com

e-mail: swimworld@aol.com tel: 520-284-4005

Phillip Whitten

e-mail: swimphil2aol.com tel: 480-874-9364

Legal Defense Team

(Judge Mike Jones)

e-mail: jonesjudge@hotmail.com

USA Swimming

contact person?

E-mail: ???

tel: 719-578-4578

Other ??