



# U.S. Paralympics Swimming

## Competing in a Varsity Collegiate Program as a Para-Swimmer

### The Basics about NCAA and General Questions to Consider if choosing a non Collegiate Team

- **What academic area of interest do you want to study?**
- **Do you have multiple areas of degree interests and can the school accommodate all of them if you change your mind on what degree you will seek?**
- **What environment do you need: large, small, rural, urban, close to an airport, public transportation, etc.?** Think this through, What is a need and what would be nice. Think on the line of a must have. Be certain what will be a deal breaker.
- **What accommodation does your impairment require and does the institution provide what you must have?**
- **How far away from home are you willing to go?**
- **If all the academic pieces fit, then look at the Swimming Program and consider the following:**
- **NCAA sponsored Teams** all have some overlapping rules while some are specific to the division.
- **DI & DII institutions can give athletic and academic scholarships, DIII can only give academic scholarships.** Each division is designed by NCAA to meet a variety of philosophical points. For each para-swimmer it is important to look at every aspect of the team to help determine which division of NCAA competition best fits your goals and provides you the experience you are looking for.
- **What type of team experience are you looking for?** To be a part of the varsity team potentially earning a spot on the scoring roster? Or do you just want to be a team member and don't care if you don't get to swim in the away or big meets?
- **Where do your times fit into the team and conference? Are you able to be in the range of competitiveness to earn a spot?**
- **What is the size of the team?** Too large (over 48 for both genders) may not give you the opportunities you are looking for.
- **Be sure to ask about & understand the try-out policies of all teams.**

### Questions about Swimming w/IE:

#### 1. **What do you look for in a student athlete?**

We look for a well rounded student athlete who is motivated and has a true passion for swimming. Their main goals are in the classroom and the pool in that order.

**2. What is your training philosophy?** We believe in quality stroke development over putting in a lot of yards. We combine this with effective racing strategy to improve performance. There is an emphasis on IM & stroke swimming. We also make good use of our underwater cameras and the TiVo unit to analyze races after meets.

**3. What does a typical week of practice look like?** We train 2 mornings and 5 afternoons, as well as a Saturday morning if we are not on the road. We also require 2-3 strength training workouts a week that include lifting and are part of AM's.

**4. How would you describe your training volume? Beginning, Mid/Highest Peak, and Taper?** We are a quality driven program, yes we do volume especially during winter training, but we have sprinters top out at round 4000, mid 5000, and distance 6000 during any one practice in the afternoon. Mornings are short 45 min. specific race training in the pool.

**4. Do you travel on a training trip in the winter?** Yes, this past year we traveled to Arizona for a little over a week during the winter break. Does everyone go?

**5. Do you separate your team into specific training groups? If so, how do you separate them? If mixed gender teams, do you mix all practices or just some?** We separate by sprint, middle, 4IM, and distance. Typically we separate out by training group 2-3 afternoons and both mornings. All practice except Saturday morning is mixed.

*(These are open ended and will require sharing that you may have a few added goals for the training year.)*

**7. What accommodations for my impairment are you comfortable making based on what I may need?**

**8. Do you see this working for you and your staff? For your team? What challenges do you feel we may**

**9. Would I have a spot on the team roster? Would I get to swim in dual meets in individual events, or just a spare relay? Will I get to attend invites and Conference Championships?**

**10. How do you feel about working with me on my full seasonal plan for training and big meets that includes not just the collegiate season but also that for U.S. Paralympics Swimming?**

### Questions about Academics w/IE:

**1. How many school days do the athletes miss traveling to competitions?** On average we miss 4 days of class. Two days at our mid-season invitational and two days for our conference meet. Some athletes will miss a few afternoon classes for an early Friday afternoon travel meet.

**3. How do your athletes balance the rigors of academics and swimming?** Our team does a great job of balancing both. Year to year, our overall average men's team GPA is 3.0 and the women's team is 3.4. We have three different practice times in the afternoon to choose from to accommodate the class schedule.

**3. Do you require study tables for your team?** Study tables are used as needed. If our overall average drops below 3.0 then we require a few hours a week of study tables.

**4. How do professors work with athletes when they miss a class or classes to attend a competition?** We have a great working relationship with professors because we instill the need for athletes to communicate and get the academic side of things responsibly taken care of upfront and to work ahead proactively.

**5. What is the team policy regarding an extenuating circumstance that I may need to miss a workout due to academic restraints?** We have 3 options for practice each day, there is also an open swim time available during the day, so our expectation is that when you plan ahead, you can still manage to get the work in where it fits best regarding the circumstances. We also have a "mental Health" day, where an athlete can opt out for the day. There must be good sound reasons, and it can not be over used. Typically, it's a rare situation that it is ever used.

### General Academic Success Suggestions:

- Complete standardized tests early!
- Start strong by attend every class, you are paying for it!
- Take advantage of professor office hours.
- Take advantage of free tutoring and resource centers on campus.
- Have all papers reviewed by the Writing Center on campus, this is vital to earning every point possible.
- Set up your schedule, plug in academic first, then athletics and work your plan.
- Go to the library to study and do work
- Develop good sleep habits!.
- Work ahead, be proactive not reactive.
- Track your own progress in each class.