Age Group National Teams Program Proposal

Summary:
The organization is proposing to only support age group (Junior and Youth) national teams in the World Championship years with the current training camp and event competition model. In non-World Championship years, the organization will support the elite age group athletes through a high-level international training camp program, similar to Olympic Development Program (ODP). Starting in 2023, FINA will offer Youth and Junior World Championships in alternate years (Youth 2023, Junior 2024, Youth 2025, Junior 2026.....)

Impact to athletes and their families:
- Reduced cost to families every other year (from $7,000 to approximately $3,500).
- Reduced time away from their family every other year (from eight weeks to two weeks).
  - Minimized commitment will allow them to enjoy their summer and impact their lives less than the current model.
  - There will be no concern of starting the school year late.
- Increased focus on skill development.
- Provides those athletes that will compete in the same age group the following year with an opportunity to begin to learn routine choreography and connect with their potential teammates and coaches.
- International exposure without the high pressures of a World Championship.
- Training with high level U.S. and international coaches.
- Opportunities to train with high level international athletes.

Impact to the organization:
- Financial reduction – The annual cost of the current model exceeds $150,000. The organization will provide monetary support for the international training camp, but the amount will be significantly less. Those resources well then be invested in other impactful areas.
- Logistical reduction – There is a great deal of planning and execution that goes into our current training camp model (housing, meals, travel, coaches, pool time, etc.). That is a significant amount of time alleviated from the Events Director, High Performance Manager, CEO and respective coaches.
Impact to selection procedures:
- There will be no change in the selection procedures. The only thing that is changing is what opportunity the top-level athletes will be selected for – FINA World Championship in one-year, international training camp in the other.
- We will continue to invite the next tier of athletes to Talent Camp as we currently do.

How will this impact us internationally:
- The competition that this impacts most directly on an annual basis is the Pan Am Aquatics Artistic Swimming Championship (formerly UANA). It is important for the United States to be represented and compete well in this event, however it is not an event that impacts our world standing.
- The proposal is to offer the first right of acceptance to the age group champion at their respective National Championship. Accepting clubs/athletes will be participating as a club option and will be required to complete club option information.
  - Junior athletes - the event will be the U.S. Junior Championships. The champion of each event will be invited. If the champion declines the offer will be made to the runner up.
  - Youth athletes – the event will be the U.S. 13-15 Championships. The champion of each event will be invited. If the champion declines the offer will be made to the runner up.
  - Qualifying teams must be able to meet the requirements of the PAQ Artistic Swimming Championship (i.e., US citizens)
- It is believed that high level athletes and teams that have trained together all year will produce high level results at this meet.

Conclusion:
This proposal skews to the positives. As the proposal was developed there were negatives that were expressed (i.e., athletes missing out on the opportunity to compete internationally if their age is off by a year). Perception within PAQ is another. We know that this is not a 100% positive proposal, but we do feel that the positives for all parties involved far outweigh the negatives. Most importantly we firmly believe that this makes our pipeline plan stronger for the long term. We need athletes and families to stay involved long term and this is a step that we are confident will help us achieve that.
Q&A Section:

Will the clubs interested in attending the PanAm Aquatic Championship need to complete a club option application?
Answer – Yes, by the January 31st deadline. Though no deposit will be required until the qualifying championship has concluded and the champion is known. Only the club of the champion or runner-up, if applicable, will need to pay the deposit and follow all club option requirements if accepted.

When will champions be required to confirm their attendance?
Answer- One week following the conclusion of their respective Championship. If attendance is accepted, the club option deposit and any further paperwork will be due to the IR Chair.

Will athletes who are selected be able to attend the national team international training camp and compete in the PAQ Championship?
Answer- If they earn a spot on both they will be afforded that opportunity. The decision to do so would be made by the athlete and their coaches.

When will the international training camp be held?
Answer - Late July/early August

When will the PAQ Championship be held?
Answer – Mid to late August

What expenses with USAAS cover for the international training camp?
Answer - Athletes will be required to pay an estimated $2,000 (flight, meals, lodging, training, coaching included in that amount). USAAS will cover all expenses beyond that amount.

What expenses will USAAS cover for the PAQ Championship?
Answer- Judge(s) and registration. Potentially a portion of airfare or lodging

Where will the international training camp be held?
Answer – This will depend on the year, facility availability, etc. We will utilize our international connections to ensure high level coaching and training is conducted.
If a club represents the US at PAQ Artistic Swimming Championships, do all athletes need to be US Citizens? Answer – Yes, they do.