

## **2017 USAS Convention Notes, Dallas**

### Meet G Ryan (Diversity & Inclusion)

G Ryan is a non-binary, trans-man who is competing at the colligate level. G was born a female and has decided to postpone hormone treatment to be able to compete in colligate swimming. G's presentation was focused on the stresses that trans people face daily, and on the use of proper pronouns.

Standard pronouns for cis-gender people are he, him, his or she, her, hers. Cis-gender mean that a person's gender identity matches their sex at birth. Non-binary people refer to themselves by the pronouns they, them & their, or ze/hir/hirs, or even without pronouns at all, just the use of their name.

There was much conversation about using pronouns when introducing one's self to create a comfortable space and to normalize that there is more than just the two traditional ways to refer to a person. For example, a person can say "Hi my name is John and my pronouns are he, him and his." It may seem bizarre to do at first, but change is always going to move away from the norm.

The next point on this topic was how to refer to groups of people in a way that includes everyone rather than excludes some. Using terms like ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, son and daughters, can be very limiting and create a space where some people do not feel welcome or included. Instead, use terms like welcome everyone, people, swimmers, children, guests, etc. The goal is to work towards intentional inclusion rather than passive exclusion.

### Coaches Meeting

This talk began with a presentation from a member of the Governance Committee to support the legislation to change our Board of Directors structure. It was a heated long discussion that took much of their time. Once it was concluded, the floor was opened to coaches in the room to bring forward concerns for USAS to address.

Questions asked:

- What are we going to do to get college coaches back at this convention?

The feeling was that attendance by high level college coaches had significantly dropped off and that there was a need to bring them back, because they are a valuable part of our sport. The response was that college coaches can choose to come, and they choose not to. Despite the seemingly callus response, it was said that the issue had been brought up before and that there would be a task force to look at the issue, along with what the point/focus of convention is, what they want it to be.

- How are teams moving forward with healthcare for coaches?

A member of Operational Risk committee brought up that all coaches are able to get coverage through USA Swimming's market place via the website. Another coach brought up that individual teams may join co-ops or groups that offer medical insurance to a large group of small companies.

These were the only questions brought to the floor. The last person to speak was George Block with an ASCA report. He was promoting the World Swimming Association ([worldswimming.org](http://worldswimming.org)). Here is a quote from their website “WSA is an idea born in Sept. of 2015 to address the failure of the existing world bodies to fairly, openly, and honestly administer our sport and provide for our athletes. After 11 decades of failure to become athlete-centered, the WSCA Coaches decided that it was time to develop something *NEW*.” They want to create a transparent governing structure and be the new model of a world governing body. It’s only \$5.00 to join.

Before closing the meeting, there was a call for more coach representation of the committee for the Arena Pro Series, which was acknowledged and noted for the future of the committee.

#### Engaging and Empowering LSC Athlete Leadership

This meeting was on the Athlete track, but included many of the adults in leadership for each LSC. There were select athlete reps from LSC that have well developed athlete committees that gave presentations on what their LSC’s had accomplished. The favorite idea for was a leadership camp put on at a facility that often does team bonding and development for corporations. One major question that was posed to everyone in the room was “does your athlete committee have a budget?” Empowering the athlete committee to develop programs and create a budget to promote those programs, was a major of this meeting.

After presentations were done, we were given a selection of tables, each with different talking points. This session was to create conversation on what LSC’s are doing, struggling with, and brainstorm solutions. I went to a table that was for leaders of LSC’s to get ideas on what other LSC’s are doing to get athletes to participate. Two of the people at the table were very new and we’re dealing with just creating an athlete committee and trying to get athletes to attend a meeting. The other member at the table was part of an LSC that had given the presentation on running a leadership camp. Despite having a well-developed committee and working programs, he also had the same issues with keeping kids involved and active in meetings.

Goals for PC: Make sure we have active athlete reps on all committees, have regular athlete committee meetings, with goals, action items and deadlines, create programs and budget for them, develop an election system for athlete reps, and create a process for continually bringing in new athletes to the governance of our LSC.

#### Mind/Body Connection: Let’s Talk About Mental Health (Nat Team Athlete Committee)

This panel discussion included Allison Schmitt and two of her coaches, Chuck Batchelor and Lenny Wiersma. Allison was able to speak to the major issue of depression and how it affects athletes. Even though she had reached the ultimate goal of winning an Olympic medal, she was incredibly unhappy and desperately needed help.

Allison's major messages, that all young people should hear, were:

- "Social media is fraud." People that are posting constantly are often the ones that are in the most need of help. The pressure to look happy and having fun, while still being successful in school and swimming and at home are overwhelming youth today.
- Seeing a psychologist is an athlete's best asset. Allison said she had wished she had seen someone sooner and that a psychologist can be a greater help than all the training an athlete can do. If the mentality of an athlete is not functioning well, there is little chance that an athlete will be able to succeed.
- The process is what matters. Enjoy the process and all that goes into becoming a better swimmer. Happiness is not accomplishing a goal, it is having a goal to pursue.
- Perception of who a person is independent of swimming. Too many people see themselves as swimmers, and when their swimming is not going well, they see that as a reflection of who they are as people. Swimming is something that people do that aid in how they behave, but it is not who they are.

The LTAD model for sports was recommended as a resource to aid athletes to deal with transitions and setbacks. USA Swimming has also created an athlete development resource guide which is highly recommend for all coaches.

<https://www.usaswimming.org/news-landing-page/2017/02/20/american-development-model-for-swimming>

Allison's presentation is currently feature on the homepage of [usaswimming.org](http://usaswimming.org)