

# STRATEGIC PLAN

The comprehensive review recently completed by the staff assessed where we are and what changes need to be made to ensure the organization can meet the demands of the future. After identifying these areas, a strategic plan was developed with specific objectives, accompanied by an accountability system to measure its success. This plan will focus on five primary areas:

- Membership Growth
- Web Site
- Officiating Bureau
- Sponsorship
- Administrative Services

The Strategic Plan is meant to be a living document that is refined throughout its life. The material presented here provides an overview of the direction we are intending to head and a basic idea of the objectives we hope to achieve. However, the strategies necessary to fulfill these objectives and in some cases the objectives themselves may be modified over time, to best meet the changing needs of the conference.

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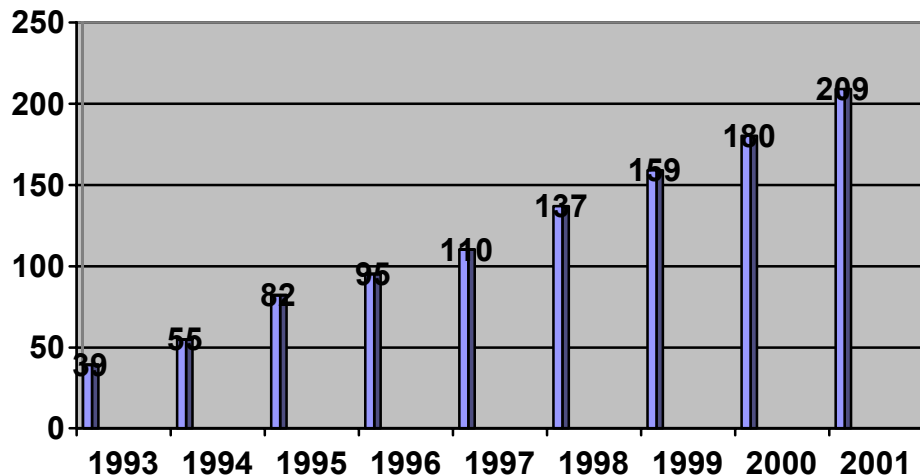
## MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

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We have grown from a small group of teams with some basic scheduling needs to the largest water polo conference in the nation, serving over 200 teams nationwide.

In the last eleven years, this growth has changed the CWPA in the following ways:

- We now sponsor 33 championships each year
- 1183 league games were scheduled, assigned, and played in 2001
- We coordinate six different weekly polls
- Our annual budget has grown from \$5000 to over \$190,000
- We annually issue awards to more than 800 student-athletes



Our objective is to grow at a pace of at least eight institutions per year, bringing our membership to the 250 mark by 2005. Ultimately, we would like to see one out of every three NCAA institutions in the country sponsoring a water polo program at some level. This may be achievable by 2010 at our present rate of growth.

To achieve this goal we will focus on direct mail and phone calls to clubs that are competing as independents outside of a league structure. Years two and three will include clinics for new teams in different geographic areas, specifically targeting swim teams that compete against our current membership.

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## WEB SITE

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We launched the web site in 2000 and hired a Director of Communications in 2001. Since that time we have made some changes to improve the site including:

- Anyone can now get complete information about a team from the School Profiles section, including rosters, team outlook, location, contact information, and directions to the school.
- The Latest News section is now easier to navigate and read.
- The General Information section is expanded to include everything you need to know about the conference and running a tournament.
- Officiating assignments are available at the beginning of each season, along with evaluation forms for coaches.
- A section now covers Frequently Asked Questions.
- We have added a Coaching Resources section.
- Several forms can now be completed on line including:

Participation Contracts  
Pool Reservation Forms  
Referee Evaluations  
Head Referee Reports  
School Profile Information

Our objective is to increase the web site's usefulness and level of interest through a variety of means. Specifically we hope to:

- Post pictures from competition
- Make more administrative forms capable of on-line submission
- Post pictures for Players of the Week and feature articles
- Provide more feature stories
- List sample training schedules, drills, and workouts

To accomplish this goal, we will be purchasing a digital camera to take pictures, as well as encouraging teams to contribute their own photographs and stories.

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## OFFICIATING

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Just six short years ago we were in the midst of a referee's strike and coaches were faced with the prospect of having to officiate their own games. Today the CWPA has a full-service Officiating Bureau that not only assigns games, but makes travel and lodging arrangements for our referees as well. Each referee now receives a CWPA shirt, an NCAA rule book, and numerous opportunities for training throughout the year. We also pay the first year's insurance costs for new officials.

The major objectives will remain the same—increasing the quality and quantity of our officiating pool.

### **Increasing the Quantity**

Recruiting and retaining referees are the primary ways to increase our numbers. To improve our retention of officials, we recently issued a survey to past referees, for the purpose of identifying the reasons they are no longer officiating. This survey indicated that the two primary reasons referees stopped officiating centered on family obligations and requirement to travel. Amount of discretionary time was listed third and adequate compensation was fourth. When asked what would prevent them from returning, they indicated the same reasons that led to their retirement.

While we cannot change the fact that officiating often conflicts with family obligations and it will require time away from home, we have made strides to allow our officials more flexibility in choosing their assignments and locations. Officials now complete an availability form that permits them to prioritize the weekends and locations they would like to work. Assignments are made using these choices as the primary guideline (taking into account their level of experience). It is rare that we will ever schedule referees for anything but their first or second choice (90% of the assignments made in the last two years gave the referees their first or second choice). As to compensation, we have increased the rates of pay per game, and increased the reimbursement schedule to include hotel, per diem, and car rental. Our financial objective by 2003 will be to ensure that every referee makes a minimum of \$100 for a weekend of officiating, regardless of travel expenses or geographic location (referees not flying to events will often average \$300).

Successful recruiting of new officials depends upon identifying potential candidates, offering enough incentives to attract these individuals into service, and then providing convenient opportunities to become trained and involved.

Each part of this process is critical to increasing our number of referees nationwide. To accomplish this objective, the Director of Officials is organizing a campaign oriented towards graduating seniors. It will involve direct contact, as well as a mailing campaign that will outline the increased compensation offered and the numerous dates and sites available to gain training throughout the country.

## **Increasing the Quality**

Improving the ability level of the existing referees requires three basic elements:

- Commitment by the referee
- Education for the referee
- Evaluation of the referee

To implement a plan that will increase the quality of our officials, we will identify a core group to serve as head referees at our events throughout the country. These individuals will be selected according to their level of experience and availability.

Each referee earmarked for this group will be asked to make a basic level of commitment to training on an annual basis. This will require all of our head officials to attend at least one training session per year. Sessions will be offered at the beginning of each season to discuss rules interpretations and CWPA policies and procedures. In order to ensure participation, the expenses incurred by these individuals will be assumed by the conference.

The officials identified in this core will then serve to educate the other officials they work with throughout the season and ensure that all CWPA policies are followed. This on-site education program will complement the clinic schedule available during the year that is oriented towards new officials.

Evaluation of our newer referees will be made by these head officials during every tournament. We also expect to increase the number of officiating evaluations received from coaches since the Evaluation Form is now interactive. The summarized results from these forms will provide useful information to our officiating core. The head referees performing these assessments will be evaluated during their annual training sessions and at championship events.

Proper use of these individuals will permit our organization to mentor our less experienced referees, while increasing the level of consistency in maintaining CWPA policies throughout the country.

In the appendix, we provide a statistical breakdown of our current assignments, along with several other areas pertaining to officiating.

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## SPONSORSHIP

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To date our sponsorship has relied upon print advertisement in the media guide. The establishment of the Board of Advisors has been painstakingly slow. Individuals we thought were willing to participate have been unable to do so and it has not been a high priority with the CWPA staff. This will be a key area of focus for 2002-2005.

Specific areas of sponsorship during the next three years will target:

- Goals
- Balls
- Suits
- Drink
- Travel
- Awards
- VISA/Master Card
- Apparel
- Timing equipment
- Sports whistles
- Scoring and game management software
- Title sponsorship of championship events

Our initial objective will be to create partnerships with sponsors to provide additional services and products for our membership. This would range from product discounts to sample merchandise. Existing relationships now include:

- Equipment Discounts of up to 40% available from Toppers Apparel and Bags.
- Free meeting space and annual corporate rate with the Valley Forge Hilton.
- Travel and lodging arrangements and financial rebates from All Sport Travel.
- Award Merchandise for all-Conference athletes in exchange for advertising from:

Tru West  
Team Concept  
Toad Hollow Athletics

We hope to have a relationship with at least one sponsor in 75% of the categories by 2003.

The second objective will be to increase advertising revenue from the media guide. Our intention is to establish a marketing intern position to handle the work in this area.

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## ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

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This area describes our essential purpose for existence, namely coordinating a schedule of competition and assigning officials to work the league games. It also covers the broad spectrum of activities the office performs for our membership. Our goal is to increase the effectiveness of the office while adding to the services offered to our institutions. Specifically, our goals include:

- Increasing the brand recognition of the CWPA.
- Establishing the sites and dates for club schedules six months ahead of time.
- Establishing the varsity schedules a year in advance (pending legislative approval).
- Increasing the quality and accuracy of the league program.
- Provision of additional game management services during championship events.
- Greater staff support for the membership.

To increase the brand recognition of the CWPA, we will be purchasing banners that will be sent to tournament sites throughout the country. By purchasing a selected amount each year, we expect to have enough banners to distribute to every division for every tournament within four years.

To establish earlier schedules, we will be relying on the cooperation of the membership to make this possible, both in securing the necessary sites in advance and in the legislative approval to eliminate modification of the schedule once it is established.

To increase the quality and accuracy of the program, we have initiated a proposal to establish the first date of competition a week later than previously scheduled. This will allow for adequate time to obtain accurate information from our teams.

In order to provide additional game management services, our intent is to hire an intern to attend selected championship events including but not limited to the National Collegiate Club Championships, the Division III National Collegiate Club Championships, and the varsity Eastern Championships. The additional costs associated with this position would be offset in part by the increase in revenue obtained when merchandise and tickets are sold at the site.

To provide additional support for our members, the office will be seeking to hire a Team Liaison to assist the membership in meeting deadlines throughout the season.

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## **SUMMARY**

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The progress made towards the objectives listed in this strategic plan will be monitored periodically and refined when necessary. It is our hope that these changes will make the CWPA an even better organization than it is today.