



Building a Successful High School Triathlon Club: A Case Study of Princeton High School Tri Club

Introduction:

The Princeton High School Tri Club (PHS Tri Club) was founded in December 2022 and quickly achieved remarkable success, becoming the NJ State Champions in 2023. This case study explores the key steps, strategies, and experiences of the PHS Tri Club in establishing a thriving high school triathlon club. The club's journey provides insights and practical guidance for those interested in starting similar initiatives.

1. First Steps and Contacts:

The initial step in creating the PHS Tri Club was a determination to establish a club for high school students interested in triathlons. Having a coach at the school who had experience in triathlons was instrumental. For those without a coach with such expertise, reaching out to various faculty members, including those from sports like swimming, track, and cross country, is essential. While the preference is to have a faculty advisor, if not available, exploring other options to create the club is possible. Research your school's club policies and be sure to understand the process for starting a club. As long as it's not strictly prohibited, you can create a club even without formal school support and an advisor.

2. Gaining Approval from the Athletic Director (AD):

Gaining approval from the Athletic Director is a critical step. Clear and compelling messaging is key. The PHS Tri Club likely emphasized the benefits of promoting a unique, inclusive sport that encourages physical activity, teamwork, and personal growth. Highlighting the relatively low barrier to entry for triathlon events, especially relays, can make the club more appealing.

3. Attracting Student Interest:

To garner student interest, the PHS Tri Club began with recruiting friends and expanded to involve students from various sports teams. The club leveraged the appeal of relays, making participation accessible to those with different athletic backgrounds. They also encouraged students to create their own teams, enhancing recruitment efforts. Hosting engaging and competitive events helped maintain interest.

4. Keeping Students Engaged:

The PHS Tri Club kept students engaged through regular, concise meetings and by preparing for upcoming events. Short and focused meetings allowed for quick updates and event planning. They utilized surveys to understand club members' preferences and needs.

5. Sponsorship Strategies:

Securing sponsors is essential for club sustainability. The PHS Tri Club approached local businesses, especially those already involved in sponsoring sports events. They created presentations that outlined the club's goals, financial needs, and potential benefits for sponsors. Consider suggesting fundraising events as part of your sponsorship proposal. Flexibility and open-ended sponsorship requests allowed for a variety of contributions, including cash, equipment, and event support.

6. Age Groups and Race Distances:

The focus of the PHS Tri Club was on high school students, and they primarily participated in sprint triathlons. The case study did not mention relays, but it's a common practice for clubs to participate in relay events, which can be an excellent entry point for beginners.

7. Support Team

The support team for the PHS Tri Club primarily included a few involved parents, club members, and their advisor. As no one had prior experience with running a club, they learned through trial and error.