

BEST PRACTICES TO GROW PARTICIPATION AT STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

High school state championships not only serve as a platform to showcase athletic prowess but also foster personal growth, teamwork, and a sense of accomplishment among students. However, maximizing participation in these championships can be a challenge. This document aims to provide a comprehensive guide on best practices to enhance high school student engagement and boost participation at state championships. By implementing the strategies outlined in this guide, schools, coaches, and administrators can create an environment that motivates and empowers students to excel in their respective sports, leading to increased representation and a vibrant atmosphere at state championships. Together, let us explore proven methods to inspire, support, and encourage high school students on their path to success in state championships.

Organization:

- **Distance Options in High School Wave:** The High School wave of the Triathlon Championship should provide participants with a range of race options, including the super sprint, sprint triathlon, aquabike, aquathlon, and duathlon. This will cater to individuals who are new to triathlon or those who prefer shorter distance events. To accommodate the super sprint distance, it is recommended to incorporate an earlier turnaround point on the sprint course. This adjustment will enable the inclusion of participants seeking a shorter and more accessible challenge.
- **Age Groups:** Two suggested age groups for both genders are 14-16 and 17-18. This division ensures fair competition among athletes of similar age and provides appropriate challenges based on their developmental stage. As teams grow in size and events get bigger, considerations can be given to year in school categories (Fr, So, Jr, Sr).

Consider Adding Relays: Explore the possibility of including relay teams as an additional category within the High School Triathlon Championship. This allows athletes to form teams and compete together, fostering teamwork and camaraderie among participants. Options here can be Mixed Relay where two male and two female athletes do a super sprint distance triathlon/duathlon in

- succession or single discipline relays for the athlete who is not yet positioned to do a full triathlon or multisport event (different kids each doing swim, bike, and run).
- **Showcase for College Meet:** Transform the High School Triathlon Championship (The State Championship could also be an option) into a showcase event for college recruitment. Invite Club and NCAA institution coaches from the state to attend the Championship and provide them with opportunities to meet with athletes, offer scholarship opportunities and share information about their respective schools. This creates additional interest for both athletes and coaches, increasing the potential for college athletic opportunities. NCAA programs MUST clear this with compliance before embarking on this type of venture.

Special Offers:

- **USAT Membership Discount:** To further encourage parents who are members of the USA Triathlon (USAT) to register their kids for the High School Triathlon Championship, we propose offering a discount specifically tailored to USAT members. This incentive not only promotes family engagement in the sport but also emphasizes the advantages of USAT membership.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that USAT has introduced a special offer. When a club registers for the High School Triathlon Championship, USAT will provide 10 annual memberships free of charge. This opportunity not only supports the growth of triathlon clubs but also enables more young athletes to access the benefits of USAT membership.

- **High School Promo Code Discount:** Create a discount code specifically for high school students or triathlon clubs associated with high schools. Promote this discount through high schools and allow students to receive a 20% discount on their registration fees. This encourages participation among high school students and strengthens the connection between the Championship and the high school community.
- **Referral System:** Implement a referral system for kids participating in the Championship. If a participant refers five new sign-ups using their unique promo code, the referrer receives a complimentary gear item while the referred individuals receive a discount on their registration fees. This incentivizes participants to spread the word about the Championship and promotes a sense of community among the athletes.

Reach:

- In order to enhance the High School Triathlon Championship and foster community engagement, partnering with various organizations, such as YMCAs/YWCAs, recreation facilities, PALs (Police Athletic Leagues), fitness clubs, and other kids sports groups, can provide valuable support and mutual benefits. These partnerships can offer branding opportunities, shared resources, and increased participation for the high school division. Here are some potential partnership ideas:
- **YMCAs/YWCAs:** Approach local YMCAs and YWCAs to discuss a partnership for the High School Triathlon Championship. Propose co-hosting the event or utilizing their facilities and resources for training sessions, workshops, or pre-race activities. In return, offer branding opportunities for the YMCA/YWCA, such as displaying their logos on event materials, participant jerseys, or banners. Also, consider them as a potential option to host a packet pick-up.
- **Recreation Facilities:** Engage local recreation facilities, such as community centers or sports complexes, to collaborate on the High School Triathlon Championship. Seek their support in providing venue spaces for the event, race route planning, or equipment rentals. Offer branding visibility for the facility during the Championship, including signage and recognition in promotional materials.
- **Fitness Clubs and Facilities:** Reach out to local fitness clubs and facilities, such as gyms, studios, or personal training centers, to explore partnership possibilities. Seek their involvement as training partners, where they can provide expert coaching, conditioning programs, or specialized workshops for high school triathlon participants. Offer branding and promotional opportunities within the Championship for the fitness clubs and facilities.
- **Kids Sports Groups Collaboration:** To maximize engagement and participation in the High School Triathlon Championship, it is essential to establish collaborative relationships with various kid sports groups, such as youth soccer leagues, swim teams, or track and field clubs. By engaging these groups, we can tap into their existing membership base and create cross-promotion opportunities that encourage their members to take part in the triathlon event.

A key aspect of this collaboration is providing educational opportunities for coaches to learn more about the sport of triathlon. This knowledge transfer not only benefits

the coaches themselves, but also enable them to guide and support their athletes effectively. Moreover, offering an avenue for kids to learn additional skills beyond their primary sport can enhance their overall athletic development and help them advance in their chosen discipline.

- **Churches:** Consider reaching out to local churches and exploring partnership opportunities for the High School Triathlon Championship. Churches often have youth groups or athletic programs that could be interested in participating. Discuss the possibility of using church facilities for training sessions, hosting pre-race events, or even organizing a post-race celebration. Offer branding and recognition opportunities for the church within the Championship, such as mentioning their support in event announcements and displaying their logo on promotional materials.

Promote:

Note: This initiative presents an excellent opportunity for race directors (RDs) to engage local volunteers in leading this collaborative effort. RDs can seek assistance from college interns who possess the ideal skill set to make a significant impact in this area. College interns can contribute their expertise and enthusiasm to promote the High School Triathlon Championship and coordinate activities with kids' sports groups. Their involvement can bring fresh perspectives and innovative ideas to enhance the success of this endeavor.

- **Social Media:** Leverage popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok to create engaging content and reach a wide audience. Share updates, training tips, athlete spotlights, a day and a life of a HS multisport athlete and highlight past successful events. Encourage participants, parents, and supporters to share their experiences using event-specific hashtags. Collaborate with influential social media accounts related to triathlon or high school sports to expand your reach.
- **Website and Online Registration:** Create a dedicated website or a section of the website for the High School Championship where participants can find information about the event, registration details, course maps, and FAQs. Ensure that the website is visually appealing, user-friendly, and optimized for mobile devices. Offer online registration to simplify the sign-up process for athletes and their parents or guardians.
- **Email Marketing:** Build an email database by encouraging athletes, parents,

- coaches, and supporters to sign up for event updates. Send regular newsletters containing important updates, training tips, inspirational stories, and exclusive offers. Personalize emails based on participant categories, such as high school athletes or parents, to provide relevant and targeted content.
- **Collaborations with Schools:** Reach out to high schools in the area and establish partnerships. Offer to conduct informational sessions or presentations during school assemblies or physical education classes. Provide schools with promotional materials, such as flyers or posters, to display on notice boards. Encourage school sports teams and coaches to promote the HS Championship to their athletes. Relays combinations might be a good way to do so.
- **Local Media:** Contact local newspapers, magazines, and radio stations to share press releases, athlete profiles, and event updates. Offer interviews to showcase the Championship's unique aspects, such as the inclusion of a super sprint category or the involvement of college coaches. Additionally, consider partnering with a local television station to cover the Championship and showcase highlights.
- **Community Outreach:** Attend local events, sports expos, or health and wellness fairs to promote the Championship. Set up a booth with banners, brochures, and giveaways to attract attention and engage with potential participants and their families. Connect with local sports clubs, community centers, and athletic organizations to spread the word about the Championship. Try and answer the question - how do the best local sporting events drive the community into their events? Watch and learn.
- **Collaboration with Sponsors:** Collaborate with sponsors who have a vested interest in youth sports, triathlon, or fitness. Work with them to promote the Championship through their marketing channels, such as social media, newsletters, or website banners. In exchange, offer prominent branding and recognition during the event, on promotional materials, and on the Championship's digital platforms.
- **Online Communities and Forums:** Engage with online communities and forums related to triathlon, high school sports, or youth athletics. Participate in discussions, offer valuable advice, and share information about the Championship when appropriate. Be mindful of community guidelines and avoid excessive self-promotion, focusing instead on adding value to the conversation.