



State of the Academy -- December 2020

Dear Pegasus Families,

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented challenges for all of us. We at Pegasus hope that your families and friends have stayed healthy these past 10 months and will safely navigate the months ahead of us.

Pegasus was on a complete lockdown from the second half of March through the end of May. So, it was a great relief when practices resumed in June on a limited basis and the kids had an activity to look forward to again. As did the coaches! Even though we have not been able to run our regular schedule, with up to six weekly practices, we have held practices at SMU consistently since mid-summer. In addition, many of our kids have recently returned to competition -- including three teams that competed this past weekend at the State Championships -- as well as several ODP selection camps over the past couple of months.

We have enforced COVID protocols throughout this time to keep athletes as safe as possible at practice. To date, we are not aware of any athlete contracting COVID at practice and there have been no positive-test clusters within our team. We know the constant juggling of schedules and group assignments has been frustrating for you, and we appreciate your patience as we navigate through the pandemic.

Looking ahead, we are all eager to get back to our normal practice and competition routines. We look forward to returning to our old base at HP High School soon, particularly since, once we do, we will be practicing at HPISD's brand new state-of-the-art, eight-lane, all-deep pool. We also look forward to resuming practices at Oak Point

Recreation Center as soon as possible. As pool time becomes more readily available we will once again offer more practices per group, including girls-only and goalie practices.

As Pegasus recently embarked on its fifth year of operations in November, and good news on vaccines gives us hope that we will be able to return to a more normal practice and competition schedule before too long, we think now is a good time to revisit our aspirations and review our accomplishments since our last State of the Academy report in March 2019.

We have made great strides in building a water polo program that will be widely recognized for its excellence in and out of the pool. We continue to build out our coaching staff, opportunistically acquire more pool time, and implement other initiatives that will help us achieve our mission.

In the pool, our teams continue to get better. Our 8th grade-and-under team defended its State Championship in May 2019. We have entered teams as young as 10-and-under and as old as 18-and-under, as well as girls-only teams into various tournaments. Several of our teams have traveled to California and competed successfully. Most recently we entered two 7th grade-and-under teams and one 9th grade-and-under team into the State Championship Tournament. Congratulations to our 7thU Blue team for bringing home the State Championships and our 9thU team for taking third, while our second 7thU team took a respectable sixth place.

One of our biggest accomplishments over the past 18 months has been our successful sponsorship of a temporary work visa for Slobodan (Boban) Stankovic, a professional Serbian Water Polo coach. His addition to our coaching staff, just a few weeks ago, allows us to continue our trajectory to become one of the premier water polo clubs in the country. Boban will introduce concepts into our organization based on the Yugoslav School of Water Polo which is currently used by Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro. This "School of Water Polo" is based on a systematic approach to teach very young children the fundamentals of swimming and water polo in a highly competitive setting with the goal of developing future Olympians. We look forward to being able to fully implement this approach once we return to normal practice schedules for all groups.

Even though the pandemic has slowed us down we have continued to develop and improve our youth water polo program. After years of encouraging all new Pegasus families to enroll their young athletes in a competitive swimming club in order to improve their swimming technique and endurance we have now charted a somewhat different course. Like top European water polo teams, we have brought swimming

instruction in-house and have recruited professional swim coaches to teach proper fundamentals to our newest members, irrespective of age. This investment to instill proper swimming technique provides our developing athletes with a solid foundation upon which to build water polo skills. By starting with swimming first, before advanced ball skills are introduced, we hope to develop a pipeline of young athletes with both the physical and fundamental training needed to grow into water polo players of the highest caliber.

Pegasus has continued to support and advance high school water polo programs in North Texas. When the 2020 season came to an abrupt end Pegasus coaches were coaching high school teams at St. Mark's, Highland Park, Jesuit and Woodrow Wilson. With the addition of water polo as a UIL varsity sport in the fall of 2022 we fully anticipate that our coaches will continue to be integral contributors to high school water polo programs. We feel strongly that the better our competition is, the better we will be. To that end, we will be launching the Pegasus Water Polo Coaching Academy early next year to help coaches from other clubs and schools develop their coaching skills. We hope that someday in the not too distant future North Texas will be recognized as one of the premier water polo markets in the USA.

Our helping hand has been also extended to our friends at Trident Water Polo. Pegasus was able to accommodate all of Trident's athletes after the tornado shut down the St. Mark's pool for nearly four months late last year. Trident athletes have been welcomed again as an integral part of Pegasus since we resumed practices back in June and played an integral part in Pegasus' 7th U State Championship victory.

We will continue to compete on a local, regional and national level and continue to support camps and clinics with national and international coaches.

On the growth front, we are currently pursuing the possibility of building another hub at the brand new Garland ISD Natatorium. This facility features the largest indoor facility in Texas and is slated to open in January 2021.

Pegasus continues to strive to offer water polo to every child irrespective of ability to pay. Through the generosity of our Masters members, both from the Water Polo and Swimming communities, we have been able to expand our Scholarship Program in the past 18 months. Many thanks to all the donors who enable our scholarships. Expanding our Scholarship Program is one of our highest priorities in 2021. Our member families have also continued to support our fundraising efforts allowing us to meet our equipment needs as we continue to grow. We are very grateful for your support.

In order to broaden our base of potential supporters within the greater aquatics community we brought two adult programs under the Pegasus umbrella over the past 18 months. First, in May 2019, Dallas Water Polo club (Masters) merged with Pegasus and has been successfully operating under Pegasus administration since then. Many of our coaches are drawn from the membership of Dallas Water Polo and we believe there is powerful synergy between the Pegasus junior program and the Masters group. More recently, Pegasus formed a Masters Swimming program, initially at SMU, under the Pegasus Aquatics Masters Swimming (PAMS) banner. We want to sustain and build upon the long-standing tradition of Masters swimming in Dallas and see Masters swimmers as vital components of the greater aquatics ecosystem we hope to nourish through Pegasus. Welcome Masters swimmers!

We would like to take the opportunity to thank all of our coaches for everything they do for our athletes. You are the core of who we are. We want to recognize, in particular, the swim coaches that have joined us in the recent months for sharing their time and knowledge with our athletes and helping us build a special program. Finally, we want to extend a warm welcome to our new Masters swim coaches. Welcome!

Our growth could not have been possible without Laurie Dunlap, our Administrative Director. She has shouldered the burden of keeping everything straight in our organization, which is challenging to say the least. With the recent addition of Marylyn Toledo, a social media expert (and Masters swimming coach), Pegasus now has a consistent and positive presence in the "online" world.

Most importantly, we want to recognize and honor the commitment that Spencer Dornin and his family have made to propel Pegasus and the sport of water polo in North Texas. Spencer's selfless service to Pegasus has positioned us to build a program we could have never imagined four years ago.

Finally, we thank all of you who have stood by Pegasus during these very challenging times. You have been our greatest "influencers" in promoting our program, and have helped immensely with your time, knowledge and generosity.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Pegasus Water Polo Academy

Nikola Zivaljevic MD, MBA, MHMS
Chairman of the Board and President

Houston Hall
Vice President

Link to **March 2019** State of the Academy

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