

Officiating 101

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Swim Alberta Level V Master Official**

Congratulations on being part of an amazing sport. Your son/daughter's commitment is going to expose you to many great volunteering opportunities.

You may be wondering what officiating is all about; why is it necessary and why should I do it?

Why do we have swim meets?

A swim meet is the equivalent of a game for any other athlete in a sport. It gives your athlete an opportunity to strut his/her stuff and show you what all the hard work in practice is about.

As well, swim meets are a source of income, a fundraiser if you will, for the host club. A successful swim meet can ease the pressure of additional fundraising for a club's membership.

So why do we need to officiate?

Swimming is a technical sport governed by a very specific set of guidelines and rules. Due to this, a large number of trained officials are required to run a swim meet.

At a minimum it can take 30-40 officials to run a swim meet in a six lane pool. The number of officials increases with each additional lane at the host facility. It is not unheard of to require 100 + officials to run a meet if you are operating two 10 lane pools simultaneously. This is why we need you.

So how do I become an official?

There are five levels of officiating in Alberta to become a Master Official.

Step 1: Level I Official

The Level I course is delivered in a couple of ways. At the beginning of each season for the year round swimmer; representatives from the Northern and Southern Regions of Swim Alberta organize an officials' clinic day. There is also a clinic day in early May to coincide with the beginning of the summer swim season which ties in nicely with the year round swimmer's long course season. All courses are usually available in a classroom setting led by a qualified referee.

Another option is the online course available through the Swim Alberta website. (http://www.swimalberta.ca/images/stories/officials/snc_level_1_clinic_2009_update.pdf). If you choose the online course, you need to notify your Swim Alberta Regional Officials representative of the course completion. This is so you can be set up in the Swim Alberta Officials Database. This helps track your history as you move along the officiating hierarchy. In the classroom setting, the referee hosting the clinic takes an attendance and this information is passed on to Swim Alberta on your behalf.

Regardless of the method of taking the clinic, once you have completed your course, make sure you print off the official's certification card. As you complete your on deck evaluations, you need to have your card signed by the referee of the session so that you receive credit for working.

The Level I course consists of three different deck positions:

1. **Safety Marshal** – this individual is responsible to insure that the warm-up part of the meet is run in a safe manner. This job requires the official to arrive 15 minutes before the start of warm-ups, confer with the referee and/or meet management on any specific procedures and be on deck throughout warm-ups. This job finishes with the end of warm-ups.
2. **Marshal** – this individual is responsible for organizing the swimmers of a meet into their respective events, heats and lanes and to insure the orderly flow to the blocks to help keep the meet running on time.
3. **Timer** – this individual has what many consider to be **THE** most important job on the pool deck. A swimmer competes at a swim meet for one thing and one thing only, a time. To that end, the timer is responsible to insure that this happens. We rely on you to observe the touches and finishes of a race and obtain an accurate time for the athlete.

To be fully signed off as a Level I official, you are required to have a successful deck evaluation in each of the above positions once. If you choose the online clinic as your method of receiving Level I there is a requirement for an additional deck evaluation as a timer, meaning you will work as a timer twice in addition to safety marshal and marshal.

So am I done after I become a Level I official?

There are many positions on the pool deck. Once you have completed your Level I you can move on to become a Level II and higher official.

What does it take to become a Level II official?

A fully certified Level II official is an individual that has successfully completed **TWO** Level II courses. This includes completing the course and the required number of deck evaluations (2 deck evaluations if clinic done in a classroom setting, 3 if done online).

Level II courses are as follows:

<http://www.swimofficials.ca/clinics/index.php>

Chief Timer – this individual is responsible for overseeing all the Timers working on the pool deck. It is their responsibility to deal with concerns arising with timing. You are the liaison for the referee and the electronics officials with the timers.

Judge of Stroke/Inspector of Turns (Stroke & Turn) – this individual is responsible for observing the execution of the swim by the athlete during the course of the race. They judge the legality of the stroke and report any infractions to the referee. They provide a fair and impartial race to all swimmers.

Clerk of Course – this individual works with Meet Manager to set up all the events of the meet, accepting entries, processing scratches and relays. This is done prior to the meet and during the warm-up period at the beginning of the meet. They will also work

throughout the meet making any necessary changes to athletes and swims. This is considered an office position and may take place on deck or away from the deck in a separate room.

Chief Finish Judge/Judge of Electronics – the CFJ/CJE is responsible for verifying the times recorded by timers and/or as part of the electronics system. They make note of any adjustments required and insure they are processed. This is also an “office” position.

Recorder/Scorer – this individual is responsible for insuring that the times are recorded in the program used by meet management. They will make any adjustments as noted by the CFJ/CJE and any disqualifications that occurred. They print off all the results for approval by the referee and then for posting for everyone to see. This is another “office” position.

Starter – this individual is in charge of starting the races once the referee has given them the go ahead. Their job is to ensure that each swimmer receives a fair start and no one receives an advantage.

Meet Manager – this is for the person who truly loves the sport. This individual commits a large amount of time in setting up, organizing and running the meets (game time).

Some of these courses are available on online but others require face to face instruction.

With so many courses how do I know which one to take next?

Most people take Stroke & Turn as their first Level 2 course. It teaches you about the execution of the strokes and why the swimmers do things in a certain way. You are learning the rules of the game just like in hockey or football.

After that, it is really your choice which one you take. Some people enjoy doing the “office” jobs, others prefer deck positions. You decide; there are no bad jobs.

The two exceptions would be Starter and Meet Manager. Swim Alberta requires that before an individual does either of these positions, they complete all the other possible courses. Both the Starter and the Meet Manager require a strong working knowledge of the various positions that are required during a swim meet.

So after Level II then what?

Level III, IV and V are the various stages of being a referee. A Level III official is the first step in becoming a referee. To become a Level III official – you need to complete ALL of the Level II courses complete with the necessary deck evaluations; have been approved for and taken the referee course and taught a Level II course.

Remind me again, who is the Referee?

Referee – this individual is the one in charge of the entire working pool deck during the meet. They are responsible for everything that happens and everyone that is involved with the meet from briefing the safety marshal(s) before warm-ups start until the last result of the last race has been signed off at the conclusion of the session. To become a fully certified Level V Referee (Master Official) can take up to 10 years to achieve as you

work your way up through all the courses.

Okay, so what's a Level IV referee then?

A Level IV referee is an individual who has worked as a Level III referee at a variety of meets and worked a position at a national level meet and had two successful evaluations by an authorized representative of Swim Alberta. Each evaluation is done after one year of working the pool deck so at a minimum, it takes two years. After the second successful evaluation one becomes a Level IV referee.

So what is a Level V Master official?

A Level V Master official is a referee that has worked for a minimum of one year as a Level IV referee, has been nominated to and been approved by the Swim Alberta Board as a master official and had that approval rubber stamped by Swim Canada's PDOC.

Does this finally mean I am done?

Yes, at the Provincial level. If you choose to, one can continue working towards national and international recognition which would allow you the opportunity to be selected to represent Canada as an official at meets such as the World Aquatic Championships, the Commonwealth Games and quite possibly, the Olympics.

So why do I need to take a course each year, why can't I just do one or two and be done with it?

A swim club is an ever evolving entity. Swimmers come and go and with them, the experience of their parents as an official.

As you can see, it takes a long time to reach the upper levels and this traditionally only occurs as long as an athlete is involved in the sport. There are some parents that get involved in the sport because their child is involved and find that they really enjoy it and become "lifers" staying involved long after their child is done. Unfortunately, they are few and far between and this is why we need you to continue to seek out the knowledge that will help you grow in the sport as your swimmer does.

As a member of the Foothills Stingrays Swim Club, your commitment to taking a course each season is complete once a family has completed all courses up to and including starter.

A few things to remember:

If you want your time at a swim meet to go by faster, volunteer. There really is no better place to watch your child swim than from the deck. Who wants to sit in overcrowded, overheated stands? It also shows your swimmer that you believe in what they are doing.

Every official on the pool deck is a volunteer. We are all giving of our time so that each and every swimmer has the opportunity to compete. Even though we are all volunteers, there is a certain expectation of conduct that is expected by us from Swim Alberta, our governing body. Swim Alberta has implemented a Code of Conduct (<http://www.swimalberta.ca/images/stories/officials/aoc - officials code of conduct approved june 9 2010.pdf>) which outlines their expectations from us as well as informs parents of what they are offering in return.

I cannot stress this point strongly enough. When you volunteer to officiate, you remove your parent hat at the door and replace it with your official's hat. It is so important that we remain impartial when we are on the pool deck as this makes every swimmer feel as if they are being treated fairly and equally. We are not there to criticize technique, discourage swimmers or speak to them in any manner that may have an adverse effect on their swim. Swimming is as much a mental sport as it is a physical one.

And finally, **WITHOUT YOU, THERE IS NO GAME FOR YOUR ATHLETE.** Please remember this the next time you are asked to volunteer.

Swimming is an amazing sport and a life skill. Enjoy it with your children.