



WISCONSIN SWIMMING OFFICIALS NEWSLETTER November 2014



It is that time of year again. The short course season is picking up steam and it is time to submit your annual registration for USA Swimming and to submit the Officials Annual Release of Information for Wisconsin Swimming. If you need the form, it is posted on the Wisconsin Swimming website Officials page under "Forms" [HERE](#).

As we are in an even year, Wisconsin officials are required to recertify in addition to renewing their membership for 2015. There are several different avenues to meet the biannual recertification requirements by the end of this year. For more information, please go to the "[Maintaining Certification](#)" section on the Officials page.

But speaking of recertification... below you will find a summary of this year's Recertification Clinics that were held on September 27 and 28 in Oconomowoc, Oshkosh and Madison. If you have not had a chance to fulfill the recertification requirements, Wisconsin Swimming will offer one more "last chance" make-up clinic on November 17, from 7:00 to 9:30 pm at the Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital. More information and a link to online registration can be found on the Wisconsin Swimming event page [HERE](#).

Biannual Officials Recertification Clinic Summary

Every even year officials from the entire state of Wisconsin gather in Milwaukee, Madison and Oshkosh for recertification clinics. It is a great opportunity to catch up with friends and meet other officials. It has been the philosophy of Wisconsin Swimming to bring national speakers to Wisconsin to share some of their insights with Wisconsin officials instead of relying solely on the recertification test(s). Below is a summary of what Randy discussed, and of other topics covered at the clinics.

I. Keynote:

This year, Randy Julian, was the featured speaker, presenting on the topics of Disability Swimming, and Diversity. He has been with USA Swimming for over 12 years, and is the Sports Development Consultant for the Central Zone. He is also the staff liaison to the USA Swimming Disability Committee. Prior to joining the USA Swimming staff, Randy was the Head Swimming Coach at Bowling Green State University for both men's and women's swimming for seven years, and was assistant coach at both The University of Notre Dame and Southern Illinois the previous seven years.

Swimmers with disabilities are a growing, but diverse population. Until 2004, USA Swimming sanctioned meets for swimmers with disabilities. In the meantime, swimmers have often participated in Special Olympics events. This however, has not met the needs of many swimmers particularly those with Down Syndrome who are very competitive. Alternatively, there are meets sanctioned by USA Paralympics and also, the USA Deaf organization is hosting meets. The introduction of cochlea implants however has had a profound impact on this population group. During "regular" meets disability issues of a different sort are starting to occur, but more on that later. All meets, those conducted under USA Swimming Rules and those under USA Paralympics Rules, have one thing in common, the need for officials knowledgeable in the subject area. As this presentation was part of the recertification clinic for USA-Swimming officials, the summary will focus on that.

One of the reoccurring themes of Randy's presentation was that officials, no matter what capacity they serve on are not alone. First of all, there are other officials at the meet one can consult if difficult situations or questions arise, there are more senior officials in the state that are available to help and there is always the option of contacting USA Swimming Central Office if difficult issues arise.

Meet announcements in Wisconsin usually include a question regarding swimmers with disabilities. It is the responsibility of the parents, and most importantly the coaches, to request accommodations for swimmers prior to the start of the meet. Accommodations can range from being placed in a different lane to letting the meet referee know about other physical disabilities. Under USA Swimming Rules it is allowed to have a personal assistant (who can be a coach or a parent) e.g. to help a swimmer with a special need on the block, tap the swimmer. If the person helping is a designated personal assistant for a specific swimmer, the person can have access to the event and the team area without any special credentials. If however, a person works with two or more athletes, the individual needs to be a non-athlete member membership.

Aside from “traditional” disabilities and needs, children with Autism or ADHD are a growing population among athletes. Often times, it helps children tremendously to have their parents assisting them and it also helps with the flow of the meet, e.g. to help limit or prevent outburst due to sensory overload. In these instances it is not necessary for the parents to provide all medical paperwork in order to gain access to the deck, but meet/deck referees should ask the parents questions to see if the children might need assistance or if it is just a matter of convenience. Other cases in which children need assistance from their parents is to administer insulin for Type-1-diabetes. Although this medical condition is not considered a disability, most young children need assistance administering medication and conducting regular, necessary blood tests. Other medical conditions such as allergic reactions e.g. to foods, might also require the occasional presence of parents on the deck.

Wheel chair access is unfortunately often an issue for spectators, coaches and athletes and requires flexibility from all parties involved. As a general rule, spectators in wheel chairs cannot expect to have unobstructed views or permanent deck access, but can be brought closer to the pool for brief time periods to view specific races involving their swimmers.

In general, meet referees have a lot of flexibility in accommodating special needs, and should make use of this flexibility. However, special accommodations should not interrupt the meet/competition. Here are a few scenarios “from the trenches”:

- 1) A 23-year old disabled swimmer was allowed to participate one time in an 8 and under 25 yard race. The swimmer enjoyed the race so much that the swimmer wanted to continue to compete in 8 and under events. However, at a subsequent meet, it was determined doing this would not be appropriate, as there was concern it would be disruptive for the young swimmers due to the age and physical differences. Instead, they created special shorter 25 yard senior event, within the longer 50 yard events, e.g. 30A 25 yard backstroke, so that the swimmer could swim 25 yard races with his peer group and obtain a time with manual watch times. Such a manual entry of a separate event can be done the day of the race or after the meet entry times are loaded into the software.
- 2) A swimmer is missing one hand. The swimmer is moving the arms forward in a simultaneous manner, but touches with only one hand. Is the touch legal? Yes, according to chapter 105 of the USA Swimming rules, we can only judge the body parts that are there. The swimmer moved the arms forward simultaneously, which is sufficient in this case.
- 3) A swimmer is unable to move his body in a simultaneous manner. So in the breaststroke, the arm movements are not simultaneous during the swim and the touch is non-simultaneous. Is the stroke legal? No, if the swimmer uses both arms, they must move simultaneously. Due to the disability, the swimmer could not use the impaired arm. In this case, the stroke would be legal, as the swimmer is unable to use one arm.
- 4) A swimmer missed a good portion of the swim season due to chemotherapy treatment and therefore did not meet the entry times for a swim meet. The swimmer requested a waiver of the entry times. Should it be granted? As cancer is a disease and not a disability, the rules of chapter 105 did not apply and a waiver could not be granted.

As some officials officiate both under USA Swimming rules and WIAA rules, they need to keep in mind that high school rules sometimes differ from USA Swimming rules in the area of disability. For example, a high school referee always needs a note from the physician or physical therapist and can even justify the use of kinesio tape. Under USA Swimming rules, such a note is not necessarily required (but certainly helpful). Instead, the referee should take the time to ask questions and assess the situation. If possible accommodations should be requested before the competition or during warm-up at the latest. Once the meet has started, only those accommodations can be granted that do not interfere with a meet in progress. Early information also allows to alert officials to disabled swimmers and potential accommodations that were granted. Just as a reminder, the use of kinesio tape is never allowed under USA Swimming rules, regardless of medical conditions or need.

Swimming has traditionally been a very “white” sport with few minorities participating. In the last years USA Swimming has been reaching out to the minority populations and sometimes existing clubs help clubs in the formation process by providing education and some financial aid.

II. Rule changes:

- The backstroke starting ledge (the counterpart of the new racing start blocks) was approved for use by FINA and USA Swimming. However, technical details and rules on design and implementation are still under development. They will most likely be used at only a limited number of pools, at least at first.
- Wisconsin Swimming had already disallowed the practice of “deck changing” but it is now no longer allowed for all LSCs (as opposed to being strongly discouraged). Initial occurrence should be used as an educational moment with a warning. If it reoccurs, a referee could disqualify a swimmer for the next event or the rest of the meet, depending on the situation and circumstances. As a reminder: Taking the straps off a swim suit is not considered changing. As always, common sense should be used.
- For YMCA/USA Swimming meets it is no longer necessary to have a minimum number of USA Swimming officials to receive a USA Swimming sanction as an “approved” meet.

III. Other LSC News:

In order to get a better impression of the currently available pool facilities for practice and for competitions, Wisconsin Swimming hired an outside contractor to conduct an inventory and analysis. There are currently over 8600 swimmers and coaches in Wisconsin who need venues and the sport continues to grow in popularity.

IV. Safe Sport:

The Athlete Protection Training (APT) is back to a two year renewal schedule. USA Swimming is working on developing new modules to keep the training current and interesting.

V. Chief Judge:

You have probably worked with one and might have even served as one. Chief Judges play an important role in running meets smoothly and using the role of Chief Judges is strongly encouraged. In this issue, the role of Chief Judge during a Championship meet is showcased.

Last but not least, as you are completing your annual registration and release form, please consider applying for one of the appointed positions at one of the championship meets. Even if you have already submitted your form, you can still express interest. For more on this topic, please see the article on the following page written by Beth Pless, who served as Head Chief Judge at the 2014 LC State Championship.

Head Chief Judge at a State Meet – Who, Me? – By Beth Pless

Yes, absolutely! It's not as hard as you think, and it's very rewarding. Many people have been reluctant to seek appointment as Head Chief Judge for our WI Swimming State Championship meets, perhaps largely due to misconceptions about the qualifications and requirements of the job. I acted as Head Chief Judge for the 2014 WI Swimming 13 & Over Long Course State Championships, and would like to share my experience.

I accepted the appointment with some trepidation, questioning whether my 7 years as an official qualified me for the position. Although I had served on several occasions as Starter/Referee, Chief Judge and Stroke/Turn Judge at State Meets, most of the other meets I officiated were smaller meets in the northern part of the State; very few were prelim/finals meets. Previously, I had been responsible for organizing perhaps a dozen officials to cover deck assignments on an 8-lane pool over a 2 ½ day period. The State meet would involve organizing well over 20 officials on a 10-lane pool over a 4 day period, including time trials and finals.

Quickly I learned that those experiences, coupled with the mentoring I had received from my more experienced colleagues, really did enable me to be an effective Head Chief Judge. It's important that a Head Chief Judge have a good working knowledge of the technical stroke rules; Wisconsin Swimming does an excellent job of preparing us for this part of the role through its training and mentoring program, and the regularly sponsored re-certification clinics. It also helps to be very organized and plan ahead. Having a checklist of needed documents and preparing them ahead of time is key; I relied on my Meet Referee and Administrative Referee to help me understand which documents they wished to use and how they wanted to use them. Rick Potter and Cyndy Raatz were very supportive and approachable, and I learned a lot from them during this experience.

The rest of the job – and I think the most important part – is a matter of using good communication and people skills to recruit and coordinate volunteers to create a balanced deck of officials that works well together. I had access to a lot of documents and advice from seasoned officials to assist me in prioritizing assignments on deck, and being creative with assignments on the occasions when we didn't have a large contingent of volunteers for a particular session. Effective and respectful communication of protocols, expectations and jurisdictions for their assignments was a key part of instilling their confidence in me and in themselves. Once the meet started, my job became one of making sure everyone was comfortable, confident and had all the tools needed to effectively officiate on deck. This, coupled with a little bit of fun and humor, made for a relaxed – yet still professional – atmosphere on deck.

There is little that is more rewarding than working with a dedicated core of volunteers and making sure they feel valued and appreciated. I got to know some fantastic new people and to re-connect with friends I had known before, and now know a little better. Best of all, I was able to be a part of a great competition for our swimmers, and to give back to the swimming community that has been such a big part of my and my daughter's lives for so many years.

Bio Notes: I've been a WI Swimming Official since 2006, affiliated with Ashwaubenon Swim Club in NE WI. For those interested in acting as Head Chief Judge, I am putting together the documents, checklists and tips I used this summer and I'm happy to share.

In closing, we would like to thank Officials Committee member Patrick Weisling for his tenure as past editor of the Officials Newsletter of Wisconsin Swimming. Patrick is staying on the Committee, but he is passing the reigns now onto Beth Pless and Jacky Jugenheimer. Please send us an email and let us know if there are specific topics you would like addressed in future Newsletter editions. Beth at gbplesses@gmail.com or Jacky at net-trans@earthlink.net