



Officials Chair Report

Niagara LSC Spring House of Delegates Meeting

May 14th, 2016

Department of Redundancy Department

I'll keep saying these things until all of us are repeating them in our sleep....

1. If it isn't in the OTS, it didn't happen.

Out and About

The following Niagara Officials stepped, or will be stepping, outside of the home court:

Pat Kerins (HAMB) attended an Officials Workshop in Dallas, TX, on October 23rd-25th, 2016.

Jim Stromski attended an Open Water Officiating Clinic in Ft. Myers, FL, April 7th – 10th, 2016.

June Mundt (UN) and Jean Lalomia (SHAQ) will be officiating at the Arena Pro Swim Series in Charlotte, NC on May 12th – 15th, 2016.

In Memoriam

Long time swim Official Ruth Miller (UN, Tonawanda) passed away this past Feb. 18th. I worked several meets with Ruth over the last couple of years and had her come to Liverpool twice as an N2 mentor for one of our local meets. She was a wonderful person, a dedicated Official, and she will be sorely missed.

Officials Chair Election

The 2016 Spring House of Delegates marks my 5th year as your Officials Chair. It has been my privilege to have served you during this time. I believe that change is generally a good thing as it brings in fresh eyes, ideas, etc. It's been a nice ride and I've done some wonderful things and met a lot of great people along the way, but it's time to turn the reigns over to someone else. The election will be held during the Officials Meeting at the HoD on May 14th, which begins at 9am. A simple majority of those Officials in good present will elect your new Officials Chair. There is, currently, one declared candidate, Rich Bleichfeld (UN) from the Buffalo area. Nominations can be made from the floor until the time that the vote is called. I hope that many of you will make the trip to the HoD to take part in this important decision.

Verifying an Official's Eligibility before each Session of a Meet

I decided to give this topic its own section this time around as I believe that it's extremely important and we're still having problems with it. There is an ongoing problem where Officials are being allowed on deck with expired officiating certifications, USA membership, background checks, or APTs. This is a problem because, other than the officiating certifications, the Official is no longer a member of USA Swimming once any of those has expired. I am aware of at least 2 meets since this past January where all of the times achieved are now in jeopardy because key required Officials (a Referee and an AO) have served on deck when their USA membership or officiating credentials have expired. Why is this so important you may ask? For two main reasons:

- USA Swimming rules require a minimum number and type of certified Officials at all sanctioned meets and, further, Niagara LSC policy has some additional requirements. If these rules and policies are not adhered to, the sanction can be voided after the fact and, therefore, every time that was achieved at that meet will be pulled from the SWIMS database.
- Scarier, if a non-member is allowed on deck and, God forbid, something happens (slips and cracks their head open), the USA insurance that typically covers these types of things at meets *may not* cover this person. Do I have any volunteers that want to find out where liability may fall? Anyone? Speaking for myself, I am not willing to bet my house and future earnings that it won't come back on me if I allowed that person to be on deck.

These and other issues can be wholly and easily avoided by the Meet Referee (or his/her designee) taking the simple step of inspecting the certification card or otherwise verifying that all Officials that will be on deck are eligible to be there and, yes, that includes new Apprentice Officials. There's a process in place to get new people on deck and it needs to be followed. Going forward, when I generate and post the Officials Contact list on the Niagara website, I will include the officiating, USA membership, BGC, and APT expiration dates so that they can be easily viewed by anyone with access to a web browser. The Contact List can be found on the Niagara website under Swim Guide > Officials here:

https://www.teamunify.com/SubTabGeneric.jsp?team=eznslsc&_stabid_=56973

Official Certification vs. USA Membership and Expiration Dates

(I'm carrying this section over as there's still confusion out there.)

Just a reminder that there is still some non-conformity in all of the expiration dates we have to be concerned with. As a certified Official, you need to be aware of these so that your USA Swimming membership or officiating certifications do not lapse.

First, you have to be a member of USA Swimming to be an Official and be allowed on deck. Your USA Swimming membership is indicated by the big, colorful card that says '2015' and maybe 'Official' on it. That card has nothing to do with as to whether you are actually certified as an Official. It just means that you are a member of USA Swimming and registered as an Official. Your USA Swimming membership expires on Dec. 31st of each year. You can renew your membership for next year (2016) starting Sept. 1st.

To be a non-athlete member of USA Swimming, you must undergo a background check (BGC) and complete the Athlete Protection Training (APT) presentation. Here's where it goes a little awry. The APT is good for 2 years and will expire on the Dec. 31st (like your yearly USA Swimming membership) two years after you take it. Again, you can complete the APT for next year starting Sept. 1st. The background check, on the other hand, is good for 2 years, but will expire at the end of the month in which you initiated the check. So, if I did my BGC in October 2013, I would have to initiate and pass another BGC by Oct. 31st, 2015 so that my USA Swimming membership would not lapse. If your membership lapses, you are no longer an Official until you again become a member of USA Swimming.

Your officiating credentials are shown on the card that gets sent out of the OTS to you as seen below.

 Jim Stromski NIAGARA SWIMMING				B/C Exp: 12/31/16 Reg Exp: 12/31/15 APT Exp: 12/31/15			
 Jim Stromski USA SWIMMING				B/C Exp: 12/31/16 Reg Exp: 12/31/15 APT Exp: 12/31/15			
LSC	Level	Expires	Instr/Eval	National	Level	Expires	Eval
Stroke & Turn	Q	12/31/2017		Stroke & Turn	N3	06/30/2018	-
Chief Judge	Q	12/31/2017		Chief Judge	N2	06/30/2018	-
Starter	Q	12/31/2017		Starter	N2	06/30/2018	-
Referee/Deck Referee	Q	12/31/2017		Referee/Deck Referee	N3	06/30/2018	-
Meet Referee	Q	12/31/2017					
Timing Judge	Q	12/31/2017					

As you can see, the BGC, USA Swimming membership, and APT expiration dates are shown at the top of the card*** and my officiating credential expiration dates are shown in the lower portion. All of your officiating credentials expire on Dec. 31st three years after you become certified or re-certify in a position EXCEPT FOR Administrative Officials who are on a 2 year certification cycle.

Remember that if any of the dates at the top expire, it doesn't matter what it says in the lower part. You are not a member of USA Swimming and therefore not an Official. To recap:

USA Swimming membership – Expires on Dec. 31st and you can renew for the next year starting on Sept. 1st.

Background Check – Expires at the end of the month 2 years from when you pass the check (i.e., October 2013 to October 31st, 2015).

Athlete Protection Training – Expires on Dec. 31st two years after you complete the training module.

S&T, Starter, Referee, etc. certifications – Expires on Dec. 31st three years after you become certified or re-certify in a position.

Administrative Officials – Expires on Dec. 31st two years after you become certified or re-certify in the position.

I bring all of this to your attention for two reasons: there seems to be some confusion out there as to the difference between your USA Swimming membership card and your officiating credentials card AND that the first round of Administrative Official renewals will be due by Dec. 31st this year. If you are an AO, please check your certification dates and plan accordingly.

*** Note that my BGC is expiring on Dec. 31st like all of the others. I did that intentionally last year. My BGC was going to expire on Feb. 28th, 2015, but I chose to 'give up' 2 months of the check to initiate the next one in December so that all of my expiration dates (other than the 'National' ones) would expire on Dec. 31st. Makes life easier only having to worry about one date.

By the Numbers

I'm pleased to announce that, as of today (5/2/16), the number of certified Niagara Officials is 263, 18 more than the Fall HoD meeting. Of those, 31 people are certified strictly as AOs and another 13 that are AO and at least S&T certified. Also, 50 Niagara Officials hold an N2 certification or better in at least one position. Nice job!

LSC Chief Judge Training

Brooks Howard conducted our first Chief Judge Clinic in Webster just before the LSC SC Championship meet this past March and he did a great job with it and it was well received. There were 11 people in attendance and most of the attendees were able to immediately take what they learned in the classroom and apply it on deck during the Championship meet. I believe the purpose behind the Clinic was met as the meet ran with fewer issues than the previous year and those working the CJ position were more in tune with what was expected of them. I hope that this Clinic will be continued in the future and that people wanting to expand their horizons in the officiating world consider the 'meet level' Chief Judge track.

LSC Mentoring

We expanded our LSC N2 mentoring initiatives this past year in that there was 1 Starter only mentoring meet and I asked another person to begin N2 mentoring. Jean Lalomia (SHAQ, N3 Starter) visited the Binghamton area in February for the Championship Qualifier meet and shared her knowledge and experience with the Starter position with the folks down there. The feedback I received was very positive and I know that Jean enjoyed meeting all of the great people in the area. Brooks Howard joined the mentoring ranks this past year performing N2 S&T and CH evaluations at both the LSC Championship meet and the Speedo SC Sectional in Ithaca.

2015 – 2016 Budget Status

The Niagara Officials Chair was allocated a budget of \$5,500 at the 2015 Fall HoD meeting for use to the betterment of officiating in the Niagara LSC. Here are expenditures of that budgeted money to date:

Starting amount on September 1st, 2015 = \$5,500

Date	Name	Description	Amount
9/1/15	Jim Stromski	Name badges for new Officials	\$300.00
10/23-25/15	Pat Kerins	Round trip airfare to Dallas Officials Workshop.	\$447.70
2/26 - 2/27/16	Jean Lalomia	Starter Mentoring at UNAC Qualifier Meet	\$295.70
3/10-13/16	Jim Stromski	Courtyard Marriott (Penfield). For N2 Evaluations at Niagara LSC SC Championship	\$365.94
3/10-13/16	Jim Stromski	Mileage and tolls to and from Webster	\$66.20
3/10-13/16	Jim Stromski	Per Diem Travel Allowance (\$30 x 4 Days)	\$120.00
3/23-25/16	Jim Stromski	Hampton Inn (Webster) N3 Opportunities (Stromski)	\$397.08
3/31-4/3/16	Fred Leff	Ramada Ithaca - N3 Opportunities (Leff)	\$412.87
4/6-10/16	Jim Stromski	Round trip air to Ft. Meyers, FL for OW Clinic	\$335.20
4/6-10/16	Jim Stromski	Baggage Fee for the above	\$50.00

Total Expenses: \$2,790.69

Amount Remaining: \$2,709.31

Although it looks like there is still plenty of money left for this budget year, \$2,000 is earmarked for National Championship level travel reimbursement for Officials who work those meets. We have two heading for Charlotte and selections for the US Open and Junior Nationals are yet to be announced.

Niagara Officials Travel Reimbursement Policy

Speaking of travel reimbursements.... The decision from last year on how to fairly divide the pool of travel money was as follows:

At the end of the budget year (August 31st), the pool of funds will be evenly divided between all those requesting reimbursement. All requests for travel reimbursement are to be made through the Officials Chair by filling out and sending the 'Reimbursement Voucher' found on the Niagara website here:

<https://www.teamunify.com/eznslsc/UserFiles/File/Swim%20Guide/Financial%20Mgmt/Reimbursement%20Form.pdf>

On the Radar

Arena Pro Series

For those of you pursuing N3 certification in a position other than S&T, be aware that, beginning next year, attendance at an Arena Pro Series meet (formerly known as 'Grand Prix') can be used to meet the 'must work at a National Championship meet in the past 5 years' requirement for advancement to N3. This is good news as there are many more people seeking N3 certifications and a limited number of spots available on deck at Jr/Sr Nationals. If you are on track for N3 certification, keep this in mind as an alternative to Jr/Sr Nationals.

LSC N2, Zone, and Sectional Meets

If you're thinking of advancing to or renewing an N2 or N3 certification, here are some meets to put on your calendar:

2016 Niagara Classic, May 27th – 29th, 2016, Buffalo, NY (Up to N3)

2016 2016 Niagara LSC LC Championships, July 29th-31st, 2016, Buffalo, NY

2016 Long Course Senior Zone Championship, August 4th – 7th, 2016, Buffalo, NY

Even if you're not interested in the N2 or N3 certifications, I highly recommend that you work one or more of these meets just to get the experience. There are always great people who just happen to be very experienced and knowledgeable Officials at these meets and everyone, including myself, can learn a great deal from them.

Respectfully,

Jim Stromski
Officials Chair
Niagara LSC