

September 3, 2007

Memo to: All Illini District YMCA Swim Officials

From: Rome Yount, Illini District Chair

cc: Ed Stranc, Jr., Illinois/Missouri Area YMCA Swimming Committee Area Chair
Dennis Norton, Sr., Illinois/Missouri Area YMCA Swimming Committee Area Secretary

Illini District Swimming Committee

Re: Consistency in observing swimmers

After our last Junior District meet there was discussion from parents who had swimmers disqualified for the first time at Junior Districts, and from coaches regarding the standard used for observing swims.

As a result, the Illini District committee spent a significant amount of time at the spring and fall meetings discussing how our younger swimmers are observed in swim meets, and have voted on and expect the following policy to be followed by all YMCA officials in the Illini District for all swim meets:

All swimmers, regardless of age, shall have their swims observed in accordance with the technical rules documented in the USA Swimming rulebook.

As this has been reviewed, discussed, and voted on by the district committee, there are to be no deviations from this policy for any closed YMCA competition held in the Illini District. Any official who is instructed or pressured to deviate from this policy, whether by a meet director or coach, is to inform the district chair. The district chair is to then contact the coach, meet director, and executive director providing clarification regarding this policy. Additionally, the following information is excerpted from the just released training information provided by The YMCA of the USA (Swim officials Level 1 Certification Course Page 11):

Point out that all races should be judged the same, even non-scoring (exhibition or "unofficial") heats, events swum by younger swimmers, events swum by newer, less proficient swimmers, etc. The rulebook does not make distinctions for younger swimmers, bronze level swimmers, etc.

Commentary:

Does this mean officials are not following YMCA values? Of course not. Let's review the discussion and hopefully provide perspective on this topic. At many meets, the 6&U age group and newer swimmers are given a blind eye from officials. This happens at early dual meets, sometimes all season. Is this the right thing to do for our swimmers? The discussion the district committee had ranged from how to encourage our newest and youngest swimmers to continue swimming along with how do we maintain a level playing field for swimmers competing for place and time.

The key points from the discussion were:

- (1) Officials provide valuable feedback to swimmers and coaches by observing the swim. This feedback allows the swimmer the opportunity to correct any stroke deficiencies.
- (2) Feedback provided by officials is valuable all season; early season DQs allow the swimmer a greater period of

time to correct stroke deficiencies.

(3) Consistency in feedback provided by officials is important. Failure to provide consistency confuses swimmers (and parents) which may result in a lessened desire to continue swimming or question the validity of official's observations

(4) Fairness to all swimmers in an event is not achieved when we ask officials to be subjective in their observation of swims, using terms like 'failure to gain a competitive edge', 'they were trying hard'.

One of the parents shared a story regarding their swimmer's experience at Jr District a couple of years ago. The 6 year old swimmer was disqualified at Jr District, and would have won the event except for the disqualification. The swimmer didn't understand the call, and the parent and swimmer asked to review the call with the official. This was done. The swimmer did not like being disqualified, but turned around, corrected the stroke deficiencies and qualified for Area Champs the following year. Now the swimmer is disappointed when officials don't make the call for all swimmers.

I am an advocate of swimming, and as an official, am an advocate of swimmers. As an official, it is my responsibility to provide feedback to swimmers and coaches regarding the technical aspects of our sport, and it is my responsibility to ensure a level playing field exists for all swimmers. The rules we follow, including USA Swimming technical rules, rules that govern YMCA competitive swimming, area by-laws and rules, and district by-laws and rules, do not allow me to decide which rules to enforce or when to enforce them.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and thank you in advance for ensuring we officiate our swimmers properly. And thank you for all of your efforts as parent volunteers who help make our sport a reality! Please ensure his is shared with all officials affiliated with your YMCA. And please let me know if you have any questions.

Rome Yount, Illini District Chair