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Welcome to the new e-newsletter for USA Swimming Officials. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a foundation that allows for direct on-going communication with each of you. We plan to have articles that cover the technical rules and interpretations, situations, application deadlines for upcoming meets, news from the officials committee, etc. If you have any feedback, comments, or suggestions for stories (or even want to submit an article), please e-mail us at [officials@usaswimming.org](mailto:officials@usaswimming.org).

Look forward to hearing from you.  
*Clark Hammond, National Officials Chair*

**The Referee/Starter Team**

*By Paul Memont, New England Swimming*

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I use the term “Team” because the Starter is the backup for the Referee and the Referee is the backup for the Starter.

We all should have read the documents concerning the Referee and Starter on the USA Swimming website, including the Checklists and The Professional Series. And we have heard these points many times!

- The Starter picks his/her position on the deck and the Referee finds a place close enough to make contact if the noise level is high.
- The Referee controls the pace of the meet by deciding when to hand the heat over to the Starter.

What many of us may not know, or think about enough, is how these two officials -- the Referee and Starter -- interact with each other before and during a meet. My opinions follow.

Before a meet, the Referee and Starter should talk about any procedures and protocol that may be meet or Meet Referee specific. Each meet -- at any level -- is unique, and may have differences because of these preferences. When National Evaluators mentor, they should mention that details will change from meet to meet and from Meet Referee to Meet Referee. We all find procedures that work best for us and Meet Referees usually have minor differences in the way they like the deck to run. Remember, the Meet Referee sets the protocol and we all follow it! There is not one way to do anything! We should not hear, “this is the National way” or “this is the way it’s done at Nationals and the only way it should be done!” There are many paths we take that lead to the same destination and great results. None of us are or should be puppets! Be flexible, adaptable and prepared to follow instructions handed down by the Meet Referee.

There is a chain of command. The Meet Referee is the leader, decider of policy, sets the atmosphere and attitude of the meet. On deck there is also a chain of command. The Referees all receive their marching orders from the Meet Referee. The Starters receive the protocol that may vary meet to meet from the Head Starter (if

there is one) who usually meets with the Referees and Meet Referee before the meet. If the Meet Referee has no direct input for the Starters, the Head Starter decides who will take order of finish and other protocol and procedures.

### **Back to the “team”!**

During the meet, the Referee and Starter should communicate before every heat. Sometimes the Referee will mention there will be an empty lane, a DFS, or another issue with a heat. The Starter should communicate with the Referee before every heat, mentioning empty lanes or a lane that you think should be empty but has an Athlete. The Starter is the failsafe for the Referee, his or her other set of eyes. Without taking your eyes off your jobs, small talk between heats serves to relax the two of you and shows everyone watching that you both are having a good time. This communication should become a positive routine, reduce mistakes and lighten the mood on deck.

### **What I believe is not proper:**

As New England Officials Chair, I've received a few complaints from Starters concerning overzealous Referees and more experienced Starters. The complaint is usually that another Referee or Starter keeps telling them how to start, where to stand, how to say take your mark. When I talk to the Officials doing this, they don't understand why it's improper to over-mentor, or they don't understand why I try hard not to give much input. They typically say "with your experience don't you think you should mentor everyone every chance you have?"

I think this falls into the same category as a National Evaluator not giving an evaluation unless asked for. At the LSC level, when we have a qualified Starter working in the position, unless they are hurting the Athletes, we should let them work. If one little suggestion may help greatly then feel free, but be very frugal with advice unless asked. When we get to the higher levels, it's even more important to let the Starter work without critiquing; remember we are a team. If the Athletes are not getting good starts then a little mentoring may be reasonable, but it's very important not to overdo it.

Lead and mentor by example. We should never be telling Starters where to stand, to hurry it up because we have a timeline, talk louder (it's alright to pass on to the Starter that there may be an issue being heard). We should never tell Starters how to hold the microphone, for instance, "you must hold the microphone with one hand" or "you must hold the microphone with two hands," especially when an Omega system is being used. The important thing is that all Athletes get a fair and patient start, the cord is protected so that Athletes and Officials don't trip on it, and we have a plan to execute hand signals for deaf swimmers if needed. For any standard microphone like the Colorado or Daktronics, I personally feel we should be using one hand so our free hand can give hearing-impaired signals if needed.

Remember that the key for the Starter/Referee team is to communicate with each other! This cuts tension and lets everyone on and off the deck see how much fun you are having. They may want to take part next meet!

For the same reason, smile as often as you can!

Don't mentor unless asked or the Athlete is not getting a fair start!

Don't assume your teammate sees everything -- let them know!

Have a lot of patience with not only the Athletes but also everyone else!

Mentor by example!

Enjoy or stay home!

Be a TEAM!

## **From The Rulebook**

*By Dan McAllen, Chair, Rules & Regulations Committee*

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### **FACTS:**

You are the Referee for a preliminary/final meet. Finals are being swum in ABC order as opposed to the typical CBA order. When the A Final is called to the blocks for the Men's 200 butterfly, the swimmer in lane 6 is missing. This is the first moment that you are aware of a problem in the A Final. You then are told that the swimmer has gone home due to illness. Immediately you approach the swimmer in lane 4 of the B final that is waiting behind the blocks to swim and advise him that you have an empty lane 6 in the A final that he can move into. He refuses, saying that he is fine with swimming in the B final. Your first thought is, "he can't do that" and must move up. Is that correct? Do you leave the lane empty?

### **RESOLUTION:**

Interestingly, this situation is not really covered by the rules, but nothing in the rules requires that a swimmer move up just because the opportunity is available. The refusal, while surprising, is within the rules, but there is no need to swim the A final with an empty lane. Rule 102.5.6 B provides that empty lanes may be filled with swimmers from slower heats and by using the alternates. Thus, logic would dictate that the Referee then would turn to the lane 5 swimmer in the B final to fill the missing A final lane, move the fastest swimmer in the C final into lane 5 of the B final, with the first alternate then moving into the C final. Rule 102.11 gives the Referee the authority to decide all questions not covered by the rules, so while other solutions may be advanced to resolve this issue, the one suggested is the preferred resolution.

## **High School and Collegiate Swim Times – How Does USA Swimming Track These Times?**

*By Suzanne Heath, Times and Recognition Committee*

## *Chair*

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The 2014 championship seasons for the nation's high school and collegiate swimmers are now in the record books. If you use the Event or Times Search features on the USA Swimming website, you may wonder why the times for these athletes are shown as LSC-UN in the SWIMS database.

- First of all, remember that the swimmers are not representing their club teams at the time of these swims; they are competing for organizations with different governing rules, and with eligibility requirements that have nothing to do with the club structure of USA Swimming.
- Meets held under the umbrella of a different governing body using different rules are "observed" meets if a request is made to the local LSC to include the times swum for USA Swimming usage. This means that USA Swimming officials are present at the meet, according to our rules and policies, to observe the competition and note any violations of USA Swimming technical rules. These violations are reported to the SWIMS Times Officer or designated official in the LSC.
- Once an observed meet is completed, each LSC, according to its policies, may load the times that are valid for USA Swimming use. High school meets are loaded by the LSC; NCAA meets are loaded directly from the host institution.
- During the high school and college seasons, athletes may represent their schools in scheduled competitions. In some states, the high school association may restrict the time a swimmer may practice with his/her club team and prohibit competition in club meets during the season. If a swimmer's time from an observed high school meet were to be credited to the club team, the athlete could lose eligibility for the school.
- For this reason, and in order to protect all our USA Swimming member high school swimmers, the times swum in these observed meets are credited to the athlete for swimming unattached in his/her LSC.
- Similarly, the times swum in NCAA competition that go into our database are shown as LSC-UN for member athletes. If a college meet is observed, the times also will go into the USA Swimming side of the SWIMS database. If a meet is not observed, the times only will show on the NCAA side of the database (secondary organization times).
- Times in the USA-S database for member athletes are eligible for records, for top times, for Scholastic All America, and for use as entry times into any USA Swimming meet.

When the Virtual Club Championship program was initiated, Club Development worked with the Times and Recognition Committee in an attempt to get credit for the club of record for high school

swimmers. Given the differing policies and restrictions of state associations, this was not possible. Rather than permit club credit for high school swims in states where it was not an issue, the decision was made to maintain the same status for all swimmers – a good example of fairness across the board which is a cornerstone for programs sponsored by USA Swimming.

## **Apprentice Official Registration Helps Tracking of Officials in OTS**

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Earlier this year SWIMS and OTS were modified to allow the registration of **Apprentice Officials** prior to becoming a current Non-Athlete Member of USA Swimming. Apprentice Official status expires 60 days after the recorded "Start Date," which may be no later than the first day the Apprentice Official trains on-deck at a swim meet. The use of this process needs to be coordinated between the LSC Registration Chair and the LSC Officials Committee.

All apprentice officials must be either current Non-Athlete Members (including APT and BGC) or registered as a non-member **Apprentice Official** prior to "on-deck" training. Check with your LSC for specific requirements.

Once registered, Apprentice Officials can be entered into meets in OTS. Apprentice Stroke and Turn Judge (XJ) or Apprentice Administrative Official (YA) sessions then can be recorded for them as long as meets are completed on, or prior to, 60 days after the registration date.

Please contact your LSC Officials Chair or LSC Registrar for more information about this process.

## **OTS Updates**

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Recently the Officials Tracking System (OTS) has undergone some updates and enhancements. These include:

1. Registered "Apprentice Officials":

- can be added to meets that are completed on, or prior to, 60 days after the registration date. They only can be credited with apprentice S&T (XJ) and apprentice AO (YA) sessions.
- have access to OTS "My History" for 60 days after their registration date.
- can be found and added to "Activities" at any time.
- can be found and included in any OTS reports.

2. Certification summaries for officials now include any LSC Evaluator/Instructor levels assigned to the official by the LSC Officials Committee.

Additional columns to accommodate this information have been

included in the CSV version of the officials detail report.

LSC Evaluator/Instructor levels are shown in other locations after the position certification in similar format to the National evaluator levels.

Format is: XX YY:zz

where   XX (upper case)   = certified position,  
      YY (upper case)    = LSC certification level, and  
      zz (lower case)    = LSC instructor level.

3. Apprentice Administrative Official (YA) and Apprentice Timing Judge (XT) have been added to the positions drop down for session recording.

*Note: These also add columns to the CSV version of the “Officials Detail Report.”*

Apprentice Open Water Judge (ZJ) and Apprentice Open Water Referee (ZR) will be added soon.