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Welcome Jim Holcomb as New National Officials Chair



Jim lives in El Paso, Texas, and is a member of the Border LSC. He served as LSC officials chair, admin vice chair and general chair.

Jim served on the National Officials Committee from 2004-2006 and National Times and Recognition Committee from 2007-2014. He is currently the Texas state high school swimming rules interpreter and state championship meet referee.

Jim was involved previously with the American Youth Soccer Organization serving as regional commissioner, area director and section director. He was also an AYSO national referee in soccer but prefers refereeing in swimming as there is far less running involved.

In his paying job, Jim is a professor of economics at The University of Texas at El Paso. He has been married to Priscilla for 34 years and has two children, Alex and Rachel, who were both swimmers.

Rule Change Breaststroke - Timing of Permissible Butterfly Kick After the Start and Turns

Jay Thomas, Chair, USA Swimming Rules & Regulations Committee

1. On Nov. 29, 2014, FINA convened an Extraordinary Congress in Doha, Qatar, and adopted changes to FINA rules.
2. The Rules and Regulations Committee acting pursuant to the provisions of Rule 511.1, hereby amends the following rule to conform to the rules of FINA.
3. Rule 101.2.3 is amended – the underlined passage indicates the affected wording.

“101.2.3 Kick – After the start and each turn, at any time prior to the first breaststroke kick a single butterfly

kick is permitted. Following which, all movements of the legs shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement. The feet must be turned outwards during the propulsive part of the kick. Scissors, alternating movements or downward butterfly kicks are not permitted except as provided herein. Breaking the surface of the water with the feet is allowed unless followed by a downward butterfly kick.”

4. The rule, as amended, is effective immediately.

5. This memorandum specifically rescinds an earlier “Interpretation of Article 101.2.3 (Breaststroke)” – dated March 13, 2012.

Got My Evaluation, So What’s Next?

Each year, thousands of USA Swimming’s finest officials go through a mentoring process at Officials Qualifying Meets around the country with the aim of improving their knowledge and techniques at several of the various officiating positions. This past year was no different. Unfortunately, several hundred officials never follow through on the national certifications they have earned simply because they thought the evaluation granted them an automatic certification. That’s not the case, so here’s what needs to be done for those who have already received their evaluations.

Before 2014 comes to a close, log onto the USA Swimming website and take a look at your history. If you have worked 12 sessions in the past two years while at four different local meets, your session requirement has been met.

Continuing education is an important component to national certification, and it’s a requirement. Attendance at a clinic, rules briefing, officials workshop or officials committee meeting are just a few examples of the type of educational opportunities that help keep officials knowledgeable and current on the rules. Credit for those learning opportunities is logged into the Officials Tracking System under Activities. If a clinic wasn’t set up in OTS, each official has the ability to create their own learning activity by adding her/his

participation at a clinic or briefing on the “Add Other Activity” at the bottom of the Activity History tabbed page.

USA Swimming’s Mentoring and Evaluation process is designed to stretch an official’s talent by teaching new skills and expanding awareness and understanding for the different protocols and knacks that help all officials develop their expertise. Sharing those tips with others in the LSC is another component of national certification. Spreading the wisdom not only helps others, but helps reinforce newly-learned skills in all officials. Hosting or presenting at a clinic, workshop or pre-meet briefing is often the best way to share those experiences, as well as individual deck mentoring at a meet. Again, if the activity isn’t already set up in OTS, an official can log his or her participation in the “Add Other Activity” page or ask the LSC Officials Chair to set up the activity and add all the participants.

If those four criteria have been met (evaluation, sessions worked, learning and teaching activities), the final step is to Apply for Certification. That can be done either by clicking on the application from the left-column toolbar on the OTS page or by clicking on the top tab on the My History page. Once submitted, a response to the application is usually received within a couple weeks. Some applicants may receive an “application incomplete” notice. This could be for a number of reasons - some of the requirements discussed above may be missing, the evaluation may not have been logged, or in some cases the applicant is not yet eligible. In any case, the notice should be carefully read for the reason and, usually, the steps needed to “complete” the application.

Questions about the National Certification Program? [Visit this page](#) and consider reading through all the FAQs. Most questions are already answered there.

Already certified but just noticed your certification expires Dec. 31, 2014? Now is the time for everyone to get their Recertification Application submitted before they expire. Recertification questions can also be found in the FAQs.

All for One and One for All

By Jim Stromski, Officials Chair, Niagara LSC

I often hear comments to the effect, “my team needs a referee” or “my team needs another stroke and turn judge.” When asked about the reasoning behind the statement, I usually hear, “so my team can hold a meet.” This motivation dismays me as I believe that it’s shortsighted at best and detrimental to local age group competitive swimming at worst.

“How can this be so?” I always tell people that they should become an official so that other teams can host their meets. Why? First and foremost is that other clubs need officials for their meets, too. When your team is hosting a meet, it’s “all hands on deck” and I don’t necessarily mean the pool deck. There’s concession, hospitality, and timers to staff, clerk of course, timing and awards tables to be run, etc. In other words, there are so many other non-officiating jobs to be done that taking people away from those jobs to staff the deck can cause problems in those other areas of the meet. Imagine the potential outcomes of taking your most experienced timing system operator or clerk of course away from that job so that they can be a stroke and turn judge and what effect that can have on the smooth operation of your meet. These and other unintended consequences are detrimental to the athlete experience at a meet. I believe that when a team is hosting a meet, it should focus on the hosting and rely on officials associated with other teams to come in and staff the deck.

Further, if your club thinks it’s covered to host a meet because they have a referee, a starter, an admin official, and a bunch of stroke and turn judges, what are you going to do when life happens and your referee, starter or admin official suddenly can’t be at the meet? How are you going to replace that person unless your club is fortunate enough to have several people in each of these critical positions? This is where human nature comes in to play.

Right or wrong, officials know who and, more importantly, who does not come to help officiate at their club’s meets. Would you expect others to step up and help you out when you’ve never done anything in the past to help them? Could you really blame them if they said, “no, I have other plans?” My point here is that fostering a mutually cooperative environment is much more beneficial than being an island unto oneself.

Sugar, as is said, works better than vinegar.

There are other ways that living on an “officiating

island” can negatively affect both the athlete and the official. Living on an island, as it implies, means isolation. Officials who only work for their own club’s meets run the risk of falling into the “we’ve always done it this way” trap where, because there is little to no interaction with the wider officiating world, non-standard officiating processes and procedures can foster and develop. The athlete suffers because she or he is suddenly confronted with something they’re not used to, causing them to lose focus on their race or be overly officiated in some aspect of their stroke, and the official suffers because they are missing the opportunity to improve and become better officials.

Further, those not working meets hosted by other clubs are missing out on what I think to be one of the joys of officiating, and that is meeting and working with all sorts of different people. Over the years, I’ve had the pleasure of working and socializing with some of USA Swimming’s most experienced and knowledgeable officials and, believe me, you just can’t get that experience, knowledge, wisdom and seriously funny stories by only officiating your own team’s meets.

If you’re one of those officials who only works your own club’s meets, I hope this article has given you some things to consider going forward and that you decide to expand your officiating world. Remember, it’s all for one (all officials for the athlete) and one for all (each official for all athletes)!