

Hello Fellow Officials -

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend this year's USA-S Official's Workshop in Phoenix in October as a representative of the Montana LSC. The workshop is a long-time annual event sponsored by USA Swimming meant for first time attendees who have not been referees for more than 3-4 years. 51 of the 59 LSC's across the country were represented, including Alaska and Hawaii. Wyoming, unfortunately, was noticeably absent. 64 officials attended, ranging from trainees who were just completing their Stroke and Turn certification, to Referees who have been officials for many years. The eight presenters were members of the 2012-2013 National Officials Committee, with Clark Hammond as moderator.

Friday night was a great welcome dinner and ice breaker on the rooftop patio poolside with lots of good food, refreshments and USA-S bags and door prizes handed out!

Saturday the workshop was formatted into six separate sections as follows:

Officiating from an Athletes Perspective - CeCe Etter

USA-S Rules - Recent interpretations, FAQs - Dan McAllen

Chief Judge at local meets - Amy Hoppenrath and Paul Jones

Deck Referee - Jim Sheehan and Dan McAllen

Admin. Referee (fully certified Referee) or Admin. Official (dry-side only) - Lucy Duncan

Starter - Melissa Hellervik-Bing

Two breakout sessions to discuss and report on specific situations were included for the last four sections.

Sunday morning was an open forum Q & A session, and included a presentation on U.S. Paralympic Sports by Doug Griswold from New Jersey.

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Here are a few highlights:

Safe Sport guideline in regard to training/new officials - max 60 days after first time on deck, no fee required until certified.

CeCe Etter suggested ways to increase athletes global knowledge/interest in the sport - team captains attending coaches meetings, and coaches teaching athletes the rules, not just technique; she also suggested it could be beneficial to swimmers if officials could offer to communicate/discuss new rules and interpretations with coaches.

Various bits from the others:

+ 'At the finish' in the backstroke rules were meaningless words, and don't really change the backstroke, just our discussion of it;

- + breastroke rule change for distinct 2-hand touch will affect USA-S, but mostly just for new/younger swimmers;
 - + Purpose of DQ slip is not something 'magical', it is for communication and tracking, to give notice; some LSC's use report lists instead of dq slips; good stroke/turn briefings will help officials know the rules and help determine if what the swimmer did is a violation, or just ugly/not a violation, and make filling out the dq slip easier
 - + FINA approval of backstroke starting block wedge, design forthcoming, will need to be available to all, will not be required to be used, will be facility responsibility (for some that will mean club responsibility)
 - + 4-hour rule for 12 & unders - will see more split meets
 - + Official's are part of a bigger group, a meet team, corporate effort; our interface with others and showing appreciation to them, is important.
 - + Characteristics of good Referees - judgment, leadership, collaborator, team player - shares problems, asks for suggestions, listens, considers precedence, solution-oriented, thinks ahead; makes athlete friendly decisions
 - + Duck vs. Chicken - appear calm, not like you've had your head cut off, but paddle furiously underneath
 - + Balanced deck important concept, referee calls may unbalance deck
 - + Characteristic of a good starter - patience; you're there to help them get a good start; "Swimmers start the race, not starters"; not required to be a good starter to be a good referee
 - + Careful of multiple stand command, no rule that all swimmers come down together, don't give that instruction
 - + Role of CJ's - mentors building relationships
 - + Uses of CJ vs. DQ writer - some LSCs with few officials use experienced parents/volunteers/scribes to write DQ's; CJ's also useful in furthering training of newer officials
 - + See eLessons in Hytek for training
 - + Swimposiums available to LSCs every 3 years, covered by USA-S, for officials, parents, coaches, swimmers
- + Find rulebooks, interpretations, changes, athlete protection, code of conduct info on the USA Swimming website 'ABOUT' tab, select Rules & Regulations;
- + Find all other training resources including checklists, Guide for Officiating, Situation and Resolutions, 10-Point Self-Eval, "Professional" Official lists here: Member Resources, then Officials, then Education and Training, then click on Education and Training Resources (you won't see all the info unless you click on this resources link). Note: There is a wealth of information for all levels of officiating in this section that many don't know about. How can we encourage officials to survey this material??

Many other little discussions, in-session and out, took place, particularly regarding protocol for swim-offs, re-swims, false starts, delay of meet, flyover starts, briefings (call of the day), admin/meet/deck ref relationships, ref/starter relationships.

If I can be of any further help to the LSC, please feel free to contact me. And again, thanks for the opportunity.

Best regards,

Rosanne