

VSI Officials Committee Report

October 4, 2007

1. The Officials Committee met at 9:00 am on September 22, 2007 at the Raintree Swim & Racquet Club in Richmond, VA. Attending were Kevin Hogan, Mike Willard, Cathy Rudolph, Avis Aheron, Tom Elliott, George Smith, Jim Frye, Stephanie Suhling, Pat Donohue, David Strider, Mary Turner, Jim Knicely, Tom Colasurdo, and Michael Downs. Wally Hunt was absent.

2. Relay takeoff slips and service pins were distributed. Certification cards for 2008 and training cards will be distributed at the Swimposium.

3. An extended discussion took place regarding communications within the committee, between the committee and club officials chairs, and between the club officials chairs and club officials.

E-mail, while a valuable tool has its limits, not the least of which is that "context" is frequently missing from the message. Talking either in person or on the telephone is often a much better approach.

It is critical that we educate our club officials chairs and encourage them to communicate with their club officials. It was also noted that many of our clubs have no officials and thus have no contacts listed in our officials database. In these cases we should be using the point of contact listed for these clubs on the VSI website.

4. The Southeast (Cathy, Mike) and the Southwest (Avis, Kevin) districts are being managed on a geographic basis, with each co-chair responsible for selected clubs. The Central (Tom, George) and Northern (Jim, Stephanie) districts will be managed on a collaborative basis.
5. Clinics have been scheduled in all the districts and there should be more to come. Clinic dates should be circulated to all club officials chairs and to Michael for posting on the VSI website. Discussion took place with respect to getting club officials chairs to take a more active role in recruiting trainees and setting up the clinic in conjunction with the district co-chairs. The idea is not to shift the responsibility for setting up clinics from the district co-chairs to the club officials chairs, but rather to have a shared responsibility.

The clinics also present opportunities for up and coming individuals to become more active by volunteering to help. Depending upon the experience of the individual, this could involve acquiring increasing levels of responsibility over the course of several clinics, or being heavily involved from the beginning. These individuals may then become future clinicians or committee members.

Clinic outlines and material are posted on the website and should be followed so that trainees are being given a similar introduction to officiating. Discussion also took place as to the desirability and feasibility of developing a self study clinic (or at least something that could lead to an express clinic following self-study). Mary brought up the option of recording a presentation as she does for teaching assignments. If we want to investigate this option it will have to wait until next summer.

6. Tom Colasurdo discussed the care and maintenance of the Officials Roster. The roster is in particular need of help in the Northern district. Tom will provide the districts with spreadsheets listing each club and their listed certified officials and trainees. These lists need to be reviewed with each club on a line by line basis and any corrections noted and sent back to Tom.

Re-certification should be done against these lists as well. When an individual re-certifies that should be marked in some fashion on the spreadsheet. Tom should be notified of all those individuals who have not recertified by December 31, 2007. These individuals will then be moved to the inactive list. Should they later recertify, they will then be moved back to the active list. Remember, it is the responsibility of the individual official to recertify. We don't decertify them, they simply fail to recertify.

7. The VSI BOD has given us approval to replace the existing name tags and to buy blanks for upcoming new officials. Cathy will be placing the order November 1. District chairs must get

accurate information from each of the clubs with respect to those individuals who are still active. Newly certified individuals who are still active and should receive a badge this year should also be included. We are aiming for only placing one order this year. If an individual cannot be confirmed as active, no badge should be ordered.

8. Referee candidates were discussed and prioritized in each district. In many cases, timing judge training is needed. These individuals will be contacted by the district chairs to gauge their interest and they will be prioritized for training depending upon timing judge certification status.

Referee training clinics will be held within the districts.

9. Jim provided the almost final Swimposium agenda. It was noted that the coaches forum scheduled for the afternoon would overlap with the committee meetings that the coaches would be attending in the afternoon. (The agenda has subsequently been revised to move the coaches forum to the morning session). Jim also took suggestions for the lunch offering.
10. Kevin reviewed some of the material available on the USA-S website pertaining to recruitment, retention, and mentoring. Retention not only pertains to existing officials, but also to retaining our trainees through the certification process. Recruiting is best done on a targeted basis – timers, officials from summer leagues, parents with fast swimmers, are all good possibilities. Sending an e-mail or posting a flyer is usually not very productive. Inviting a particular individual is generally much more effective. It was also suggested that whenever possible, we assign mentors to our trainees on a one-on-one basis.
11. Michael scheduled a meet in each district for mentoring purposes. Mentoring can include clinics, position-specific mentoring (for example, work with the starters at a session), or even help with working the meet.
12. While attending the USA-S Convention, Michael will meet with other National Evaluators from neighboring LSCs to determine if a rotational list can be worked out so that the same people are not evaluating the same meets each year (which is problematic because certifications requiring two evaluations, must use evaluations done by two different evaluators).
13. Pat discussed the need for us to begin to formally recognize an Administrative Referee. The discussion took place in two parts.

First, we discussed whether training as a Referee should be a prerequisite for Administrative Referee training. Alternatively, certification at all dry deck positions might serve as an alternative route in lieu of Referee certification. It was pointed out the Administrative Referee is generally viewed as the second in command and should be able to step in for the Referee if for any reason the Referee is not available. Many also expressed the opinion that the experience of a Deck Referee is a necessary component of the knowledge base required by an Administrative Referee. Unanimity could not be achieved on this question. By a show of hands, it was overwhelming agreed that previous training as a Referee would be required to train as a Referee.

Discussion then took place as to how to implement the training, while also recognizing that we can't immediately impose requirements that would make it impossible to staff meets. We would like to use Regional Champs, Age Group Champs, and other prelims/finals meets below the level of Senior Champs as training meets for Administrative Referee. To work at Senior Champs would then require certification as an Administrative Referee. Pat, Mary, and Kevin were tasked to develop the certification requirements. (A first draft has been done and circulated, but requires additional discussion which will take place following the Swimposium.)

14. At our previous meeting we had decided that it would be good to institute a training requirement for Timing Equipment Operator for taking and passing a test covering the Timing equipment operator. A test has not yet been developed, and this requirement will not be incorporated until such time as a test is available.

15. George Homewood (VHSL Swim & Dive Rules Interpreter) has negotiated an arrangement with VHSL that would allow USA-S certified Stroke & Turn officials to purchase an NFHS Swim & Dive Rule Book for \$7.50 and be allowed to officiate at high school swim meets. Names of those purchasing the rule books would be forwarded to VHSL. Volunteers were requested to take rule books back to their districts for sale, to collect the names and checks of those taking one, and to submit the names to Kevin for forwarding to VHSL. A number of questions were brought up including (a) are these officials allowed to work district, regional, and state championship meets?, (b) are these officials allowed to judge diving, (c) will these officials have insurance through VHSL or can they purchase insurance through VHSL? Without answers to these questions, many were reluctant to distribute the rule books. We will have to check with George for the answers.

Subsequent to the committee meeting, USA-S announced that the Officials Tracking System (OTS) is now on line. The following is the text of the announcement.

The long awaited Officials Tracking System, or OTS as we've come to know it, has been implemented on the USA Swimming web site.

To access it you will need to have a USA Swimming website account linked to your membership. Most of you, as LSC Officials Chairs, will already have a linked account. It is the same account that enables you to access officials test results or to purchase stuff online. If you don't have a linked account you can go to the certification section on the officials pages and click on one of the OTS Guidelines posted there. The introductions give instructions on how to create a linked account. The Guidelines also give basic instructions to three user types on how to use the OTS.

What will the OTS do for you and your LSC's Officials?

- LSC Officials Chairs and other designees can add any and all LSC meets, add officials to those meets and record the sessions worked in various positions for each official. Meet referees can also be designated for each meet.
- Meet Referees, once designated for a meet in the OTS, can also add or remove officials and record the sessions worked at meets. This will allow LSCs to capture and track the meet activity of all officials in the LSC.
- LSC Officials Chairs and other designees can add other activities such as clinics, meetings, seminars, training sessions, etc., and record those who participated and their roles.
- If a meet has been approved as an Officials Qualifying Meet (OQM) (an application still has to be submitted the same way as before), evaluators can be added to the meet and they can record evaluations as well as add officials and sessions worked. Once each evaluation is entered into the OTS the official will automatically receive an email at the address listed in SWIMS or attached to their linked account or shown in the roster for the meet.
- The LSC Officials Chairs can also generate reports of their officials in several formats using a large number of selection criteria, including national certifications contact data and participation detail or summaries. OTS doesn't presently track LSC certifications but is planned for the future.
- Individual officials can also record meets and activities that they have participated in which the LSC has not entered.
- Individual officials can also view their activity history in the OTS, review their evaluations, apply (if eligible) for N2 and N3 certification and re-certification as well as track the progress of the application review.
- Individual officials will also be able to search for meets in their LSC, Region, Zone, or anywhere in the country, by meet type, date ranges, meet referee or a number of other criteria.

It is anticipated that there will further versions of the OTS to add more LSC user functionality, however you and your officials should find this release to be very useful.

We have established an email address for any questions you might have regarding the OTS at OTS@usaswimming.org