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USA Swimming Officials Newsletter

March 18, 2013

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APPLY NOW

Hope you can join us at these upcoming meets. Applications to officiate are now posted. Click on the links to apply.

ARENA GRAN PRIX SERIES

- [Mesa, AZ](#) – April 11-13, 2013
- [Charlotte UltraSwim](#) – May 9-12, 2013
- [Santa Clara, CA](#) – May 30 - June 2, 2013

SUMMER MEETS

- [Open Water Nationals/WCTs](#) – May 17 & 19, 2013
- [Phillips 66 National Championships/World Champions Trials](#) – June 25-29, 2013
- [US Open Championships](#) – July 30 - Aug 3, 2013
- [Speedo Junior Nationals](#) – Aug 5-9, 2013

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Welcome to the Officials Newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a foundation that allows for direct on-going communication with each of you. Articles will 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.

SUMMER MEETS

There will be four national championship meets this summer – Open Water Nationals/WCTs, Phillips 66 National Championships/World Championship Trials, US Open and Speedo Junior National Championships. Applications for these meets can be found on the USA Swimming website or by clicking on the links in the left column. Please check your calendars, and come join us for these important events.

After being in my position for two years, I have become more and more impressed and appreciative of the LSC and Zone Officials Chairs and the role they play to ensure our athletes and coaches have a fair venue to compete. When you consider the “pay,” it is quite admirable (and maybe just plain amazing) that there are folks who are willing to tackle the job. Not only are they thrust into the role with little preparation or training, but they are second guessed and criticized when they seek to do the right thing. They try to accommodate the wishes and desires of their officials, who sometimes forget that there are others with the same wishes and desires. Some oversee more than 500 officials, and others maybe only 20-30 officials in their LSC; both are expected to make sure that every meet runs smoothly. I also have been impressed by the various tools created to equip their officials to perform at the highest level. So from one chair to the others, my hat is off to all of the past and current LSC and Zone Official's Chairs, and I want to thank

you for your tireless commitment to our sport and our athletes. I am hopeful those receiving this newsletter will take the time to express their appreciation as well.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Clark Hammond, National Officials Chair

OPEN WATER OFFICIATING

By Sandy Drake, Hawaii swimming

Open Water swimming often is compared to running a marathon. The athletes train much differently than they would in the pool. Officials also are trained differently from pool to open water officiating. An Open Water Official must be able to “go with the flow” as conditions can vary significantly during the race.

However, becoming an OW Official is considered just another certification that you obtain. It’s much like going from stroke-and-turn judge to becoming a starter. It’s just another aspect of officiating. Check with your LSC to see if they have already developed certification standards and training materials for OW.

As I was speaking with other OW Officials, we all agree on one thing: An important difference between pool and Open Water swimming is the magnitude of safety considerations. Even though all officials place the safety of the swimmer before all else, Open Water swimming takes safety to a new level. The pool venue affords an element of protection from climatic conditions and is a much more controlled environment. Even if an official has never been to a given pool, there are certain constants we expect at the venue: water quality, course length, starting blocks, lane lines, backstroke flags, timing equipment and a level pool deck for observation. Safety is always a concern, but at the pool, many variables and unknowns are eliminated.

The Open Water swimming environment is not controlled. Everything is variable and much is unknown. As with conducting a swim meet at an outdoor pool, we do have to deal with weather. However, in the ocean, river or lake, we also have marine life, water quality, air, water temperature, tides and currents to consider as part of the overall Open Water swim venue. Observing the race can be from a boat, the beach or rocks on a shoreline. The starting line could be on the beach or in the water. The finish line could be in the water or up the shore by the parking lot. Even events that are run consecutively at the same location year after year can be affected by different weather conditions, changing environmental conditions, varying numbers of entered athletes and volunteer support personnel. Open Water swimming

Officials consult with local water safety personnel, local agencies and sometimes the Coast Guard to understand the local conditions for the race. Even though an Open Water swim event is one or two races, it is the complexity of the preparation, the course and the overall officiating experience that makes it so interesting and fun.

The positions for OW Officials include: Referee, Assistant Referee, Administrative Referee, Announcer, Safety Officer, Medical Officer, Course Officer, Clerk of Course, Starter, Chief Timer and three timers, Chief Finish Judge and two Finish Judges, Recorder, Race Judge (one per competitor in escorted races) and Turn Judge (one at each change in the direction of the course).

The USA Swimming Officials' Committee offers training for Open Water at certain OW events. You also may volunteer at any local OW race. There is an online test for OW officiating that should be taken before you officiate at an OW event. You also may read through the various OW training manuals, which are located on the USA Swimming website under the Education and Training [link](#) in the Officials section.

Being an OW Official can be very rewarding. No two races are alike. Depending on the venue, escorted or unescorted races, lake or ocean, we look at each race differently. It is just another exciting way to volunteer your time as an official.

OFFICIATING – AN ATHLETE'S PERSPECTIVE

By Cece Etter (Cece is one of two Athlete Representatives on the National Officials Committee)

Getting disqualified in a race can mean many different things to swimmers. As an eight-and-under, it may mean a trail of tears leading into a big hug from your mom or dad. For a 10 to 15-year-old, it may mean that after the meet, you get a Blizzard from Dairy Queen. A senior swimmer may say, "Why didn't the official just pull me out of the water so I wouldn't have had to finish that 400 Medley."

As I explained, getting disqualified in a race can be classified as devastating to a swimmer or, "I could care less." Either way, the swimmer learns a valuable lesson: Not to make the same mistake twice. A disqualification potentially could be the difference between a win or loss for a team. That's why it becomes critical for swimmers not only to listen and respect their coaches, but also to listen and respect the officials at meets.

Although disqualifications are a major part of an official's job when keeping a meet fair, that is not the only thing that officials are

responsible for. Officials oversee several components of a swim meet: the swimmers, coaches, timers, volunteers, spectators and of course, officials. Without swimmers, there would be no swim meet. But without officials, a swim meet would be nothing less than chaotic.

Officials are a valuable component in keeping the meet running smoothly. We all know that everyone would like to stay at a pool all day and watch kids swim back and forth, but the officials keep the meet on a tight schedule, especially for prelims and finals meets. Their importance to the overall meet becomes more significant as you grow older and begin to appreciate their help.

FROM THE INBOX

Responses by Dan McAllen

Often officials send their technical questions to the Rules & Regulations Committee for clarification. And since we often get repeats of the same question, we thought it might be good to share them with you. If you have a question you would like answered, please forward it to officials@usaswimming.org.

Question:

Recently, I've been asked by some officials about the "modesty rule" and the enforcement of it at age group meets. Below is the USA Swimming Rule and our LSC abides by it. It is on page 69 of the 2012 USA Swimming Rules and Regulations book.

205.10 SWIMWEAR IN AGE GROUP COMPETITION

.1 For age group competitions, it is permissible for the swimmer to wear a single set of garments underneath his or her competition swimsuit for modesty and/or privacy reasons.

Would you please clarify what "a single set of garments" is? Is a Speedo brief worn for modesty purposes allowable?

Answer:

A Speedo brief or swimsuit worn under the competition suit does, in fact, qualify as a modesty garment pursuant to the provisions of rule 205.10.1., and is legal in age group competition. Note that rule 102.8.1B limits the athlete to a single swimsuit except as provided in 205.10.1. Obviously, there are other options that a male swimmer may choose for a modesty garment. However, that rule doesn't exclude another brief, and use of the word "except" in rule 102.8.1B certainly implies that a second swimsuit falls into the modesty garment category. Had the rule intended to prohibit the wearing of a second brief or suit as a modesty garment for age group competition that prohibition would



have been written into the rule.

