



Virginia Swimming Officials Winter Newsletter

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Welcome to the end of 2020!

While most of us had high hopes for the start of a new decade, I think we can all agree that this year needs to get buried in the archives. COVID-19 change a lot of things but the one thing it could not change is the creativity of the human minds. We can adapt to change, though not easily, we still can push ourselves to make it happen. Yes, collectively our brains are more developed and complex than this infectious disease. From the swimming perspective, we found a way to hold practices and host meets, ensuring our athletes were in the pool and everyone was safe. We found a vehicle to host meetings, clinics and train officials. We should all be grateful because roughly 30 percent, roughly 18 of the 59 of the Local Swim Committees (LSCs) within USA Swimming **are not swimming**. While we work with USA Swimming and the other LSC's by providing our best practices and support, we hope that all of our athletes can safely return to the pool and compete. With several vaccines in the pipeline, the light at the end of the tunnel is a little brighter. We can only hope they are successful and allow us to return (albeit slowly) some sense of normalcy back into our lives. While no one has a crystal ball, this year has taught us to remain vigilant and thoughtful, and to think outside of the box. So, here is to the end of 2020. let us be thankful for the lessons we have learned this year and put them to good use. On behalf of the Officials Committee, I want to thank all of you for your support for our athletes! We wish you all and your families a healthy and successful 2021!

What's your call?

Situation: In a 200-meter backstroke event, the referee blows the first long whistle. The swimmer in lane 3 leaps as far as he can into the pool and slowly sinks to the bottom of the pool. He slowly rises to the surface moving farther away from the start end after which the referee blows the second long whistle. While the other seven swimmers assume a position at the wall, the lane 3 swimmer very slowly swims to the wall and very slowly assumes a starting position. The starter asks that the swimmer in lane 3 be disqualified for delay of the meet. The referee concurs and the swimmer is disqualified. Is this a good call?

ZOOM Clinics

We have hosted a bunch of Zoom clinics this fall and will continue throughout the year. Roughly, 100 volunteers and officials attended a Zoom clinic. In addition, we also had close to 90 officials attend our first Virtual Swimposium in September. This may be the new normal for several reasons. First, if you are interested in advancing to a new position, these clinics provide an introduction with the roles and responsibilities. Second, any official can attend these clinics, there are no restrictions and you will get credit for a learning activity in OTS. Third, many times officials are asked to start a new position at a meet as a “field promotion”, Chief Judge comes to mind. While this may be necessary at some meets, it does not mean it has to be the norm. Having an understanding of the role, prior to starting a new position is more palatable and will allow someone to become a little more comfortable in their new role. Lastly, it is easy. No rushing to a meeting after work, rather, you are in the comfort of your own home, and will meet several other officials across the Commonwealth.

Timing Systems for Sanctioned, Approved and Observed Meets

The USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Committee has recently approved a waiver allowing the use of Colorado Timing Dolphin Timing System in the Semi-Automatic Timing (Synchronized Start/Manual stop) mode.

Prior to this waiver, the Dolphin system was mainly employed at USA Swimming Sanctioned meets as a tertiary system. Simply put, they were used as a back-up watch.

So what does this mean? Given the pandemic, there are a lot of clubs who do not have a traditional timing system equipped with pads and buttons. Plus, they may not be able to compete at various meets because of limitations on the number of competitors. This waiver, allows clubs to use a similar timing system that is usually employed at Summer League meets. Basically, when the starting unit is activated, the dolphin watches start synchronously. When the swimmer finishes, each timer stops the watch and the time is recorded. This allows the smaller clubs to host intrasquad meets and affords their swimmers to compete and their times will be recorded in SWIMs database. This is a major win for our athletes! Many thanks to the Rules and Regulation Committee for thinking “outside of the box”, reviewing the timing rule language to ensure the Dolphin system comply with the “semi-automatic timing” criteria.

This waiver is only for the Colorado Dolphin Timing System. Swimmingley is another type, however this Swimmingley is not approved for capturing semi-automatic times.

New Eastern Zone Officials Chair



If you worked a Zone or Sectional meet you may have seen or talked to Bob Menck. He was a staple at each of these meets, his sense of humor brought a smile to all of those he met. Unfortunately, Bob passed away in July and we lost a great friend.

With that void, the Eastern Zone has been searching for a new Officials Chair and it is a great pleasure to announce they have selected one of our own, Genny Kimbel.

Her responsibilities will include:

- Promote and foster a uniform officiating philosophy within the Eastern Zone that is in-line with the National officiating philosophy with the goal of achieving consistency in officiating throughout the Eastern Zone.
- Maintain communication with the Eastern Zone LSC Officials Chairs to promote and achieve consistency in officiating and a minimum level of qualification and certification of officials.
- Disseminate information as needed, within the Eastern Zone, concerning policies and procedures developed by the National Officials Committee and other related USA Swimming committees, concerning officiating rules and procedures.
- Assist with the training of Officials, within the Eastern Zone, in accordance with procedures established by the National Officials Committee, through zone level meetings, workshops or via communications with LSC Officials Chairs. g other officials for the Eastern Zone Championship Meet. further communication and education among Eastern Zone Officials. Championship Meets as well as any other pertinent issues or activities.
- Approve of the Eastern Zone Age Group Championship and the Speedo Champions Series Meet Referee.
- Work with (in an advisory capacity only) the Eastern Zone Championship Meet Referee and host club in recruiting and assigning other officials for the Eastern Zone Championship Meet
- Attend the Eastern Zone Championship, and or Speedo Championship Series Meets, whenever possible, in order to conduct officials meetings, assist in officiating and to further communication and education among Eastern Zone Officials.
- Attend Eastern Zone Meetings, whenever possible, and report on the officiating at the Eastern Zone

Genny will do very well with this position. She is one to pack her bag on a Thursday night, travel to meet and work all of the sessions at a moments notice. If you see Genny on deck, make sure you congratulate her with her new role and let her know that we all here to support her!

Meets so far

Our technical planning committee has been very busy this year with meets to say the least. Virginia Swimming has hosted over 70 meets since September. Every age group has been represented in these meets and again we are thankful that we can safely host meets for our Athletes.

The LSC Officials Committee wants to give a big shout out to Mary Turner, Emily Fagan, John Stanley and Jessica Simons for making this happen. I am sure there are many others, including both the Age Group and Senior Coaches Committee members and both committees deserve a lot of credit as well for developing the meet formats. Thank you!

Are Our Pools Safe?

One might think so if they have read the article in December edition of Swimming World. They recently published a study conducted by the New Jersey Swim Safety Alliance. This group tracked 60 indoor Natatoriums within the state of NJ. These facilities tracked the number of incidents and possible spread of COVID-19 at their respective pools. Now for the good news, of the 327,316 people who used these facilities since July 2, 2020 and there were 0 cases of COVID stemming from the use of those facilities!

The keys to their success can be attributed to following the strict protocols and guidance. Everyone is required to wear a face mask if not in the pool and occupancy is limited for each of the practice sessions.

Certifications versus Registration

Just a note about certifications and registration. Certifications are issued by Virginia Swimming. Specifically, your corresponding District Chair. In our Officials Handbook (https://www.teamunify.com/va/UserFiles/File/vsi-officials-handbook18_021438.pdf), page 8 discusses certification and recertification. Certification is on an annual basis and we require that an official complete eight (8) sessions per calendar year to retain certification. However, given the current environment, the District Chairs will be very liberal with the recertifications. It is the right thing to do. I would expect your certifications to be updated during the first week of 2021. If not, touch base with District Chair.

If you have a National Certification that has expired, those are still valid for three years after the expiration date. To update your National Certification, you will have to attend an Officials Qualifying Meet (OQM). In Virginia, we normally offer OQMs for Age Group and Senior Championships. If we are hosting a zone or Sectional meet, they will also be offered there as well. The LSC Officials Committee cannot update your National Certification. Only you can by attending an OQM, requesting and successfully passing an evaluation, then submitting an application to the National Officials Committee. We may or may not have OQMs this year, so if yours is expiring you still have some time to become recertified.

Certifications versus Registration (Cont)

For Registration, again the LSC Officials Committee cannot update your registration. The registration is your Non-Athlete Registration with USA Swimming. Virginia Swimming acts as the intermediary for USA Swimming for this process. This registration is also based on the calendar year and can be found at on the Virginia Swimming website under the Registration tab (<https://www.teamunify.com/team/va/page/registration/registration-forms>). For officials, click on the Non-Athlete Registration Form. I suggest you download the form onto your computer first, then fill in the blocks and send it into the information noted at the bottom of the form. Also, check with your Club Chair, as most clubs in Virginia will reimburse their officials for a Non-athlete registration.

Age Group and Senior Championships

The Age Group and Senior Coaches Committee are still working out the plans, so we do not have any relevant information to share. There are plans, however, a lot depends on the future Commonwealth regulations. Once we hear something definite, the meets and forms to officiate will be posted on our website at (<https://www.teamunify.com/team/va/page/meets/championship-meets>). There are dates posted on this page, however, those were noted as possible dates, not firm dates, and are subject to change.

You Make the Call —>Resolution

This is a call that requires good judgment from the referee. Did the swimmer delay so much that he was creating a problem for the other swimmers? Swimmers have different ways to prepare to race and you don't want to interfere with that unless it negatively affects other competitors. An alternative approach versus a DQ might be to discuss the situation after the race with the swimmer and/or the coach. This is especially useful for the first occurrence of this type of activity. Is the call correct? It might be but this is a situation that can only be decided on site. Applicable Rule: 101.1.5A, 101.1.2A

Final Words

1. Now is a good time to check and review your deck pass and make sure everything is current for 2021
 - ◆ Registration—Expires each calendar year
 - ◆ Athlete Protection—Expires 1 year from the date you took the training
 - ◆ Background Check—Expires every 2 years
2. Bookmark the clinics page and sign up for a for one or more. There is always something to learn about in swimming, plus you will receive a learning credit in OTS which is always useful if you are planning to obtain a National Certification.
3. Most of all, relax and enjoy your family during the holidays. We have all witnessed what the COVID pandemic has created and destroyed and no one saw this coming.

I am grateful for all of you, my committee and especially for the two athletes on my committee, Lewis and Cooper. It is always great to hear their perspective on swimming and the athletes are the sole reason as to why we officiate! Wish you all the best in 2021!

Looking for a gift? Try friendship. There is no greater gift in life!

All prior newsletters can be found at : <http://www.virginiawimming.com/vsi/Official/Resource/NewsLetter/PreviousNewsletters.html>

If you have questions or comments/suggestions or a topic for the newsletter, drop us a note!

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Thanks for all you do for our Sport!