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USA Swimming Officials Newsletter

July 2014

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Welcome to the e-newsletter for USA Swimming Officials. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a foundation that allows for direct on-going communication with each of you. We plan to have articles that 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 email us at officials@usaswimming.org.

This is my second to last opportunity to address you as the Chair of USA Swimming's National Officials Committee. I have had the privilege of serving in this position for the past four years and I can say without hesitation, it has been a pleasure, an honor and pure joy. In these last two messages, I am going to focus on some folks who fall into the category of "unsung heroes" of our sport. I am defining an unsung hero as someone "who does great deeds but receives little or no recognition for them." While there are many, many people who fall into this category, I will be highlighting only a few. This month, I have chosen Bob Matlack. Now if you have not been to a national championship meet (and even if you have), you likely have no clue who Bob is. More specifically, unless you have had the role of administrative or meet referee at a national championship meet, you may not even know enough to care if you knew him. But to those of us who have had the honor to fill those roles, we know who Bob is and we can tell you he has been a mainstay and key member of the "officiating team" since 1996 (intermediately from 1996 to 2002 and full time since 2002) as Mr. Hy-tek, the person operating the Hy-tek program. Before the competition, he assists us as we work through entries, timelines and seeding issues. He helps with flighting the meet and anything else we need him to do. During the meet he is integral in the resolution of times and making sure nothing is missed. He adapts and overcomes each

and every challenge we throw at him. And how does he do it? It is always with humor and an air that nothing – not anything - will prevent us from recording a valid official time for each and every swimmer. His only request (and maybe this is a bit of an understatement) is that no one (I mean no one) - never – ever touches his computer. Sorry Bob – truth is the truth - I still have the scars.

I remember vividly the first short course national meet held at the Georgia Tech pool. I was the admin referee and we were having some challenges working through the two pool configuration. At one point, during the 50-meter freestyle, I was in the control room with Bob and the results seemed like they were spitting out of the printer at light speed. I mean, it felt like non-stop results from two pools. We just had to laugh. I am sure the visitors from FINA were wondering who these folks were.

So I want to comment to everyone, Bob Matlack is an unsung hero who, as part of the administrative team at national meets, works behind the scenes to make sure our athletes have the correct official time for their efforts.

Thanks Bob, we appreciate you and your contribution to USA Swimming and our athletes.

Clark Hammond, National Officials Chair

Staffing the Outdoor Pool Deck (New Opportunities and Unique Challenges)

By Eric Peterson

Keeping officials safe and hydrated at an outdoor OQM meet with TV coverage presents unique challenges – shade, sun, shelter, weather, microclimates, staffing – and splashes and the important deck dance for television coverage requires creativity and unconventional planning of the Chief Judge team. This article describes some novel approaches to deck staffing used at the June Santa Clara Grand Prix. But the basic concepts of **common sense** and **safety** are applicable anytime you are outdoors.

Let me paint you a picture of the George F. Haines International Swim Center. It is a nine lane pool in the long course configuration. At the Grand Prix, start end officials have stroke & turn assignments, a backup button to push at the end of each race, and the all important tented shade. Stroke officials and turn end officials have endless sun. Somehow the marine layer chose not to make its usual cooling morning appearance at this meet. Only one pop-up canopy could be erected at the turn end; any more than that and the spectators could not see the scoreboard. This presented an opportunity for creativity.

So, we have 22 judges on deck to fill all positions; some are cold in the shade, others are sweltering in the sun. The CJ team huddled to find ways to get the turn officials out of the sun. Our meet referee was most agreeable to creative ways of keeping people safe while at the same time making sure the competition was evenly judged. We put nine chairs under the tent in the middle of the turn end, giving thought to easy positioning for officials to move to their assigned lanes. The four inside lane turn officials were in front; the five outer lane officials in back. The temperature was probably 15 degrees cooler under the tent without the sun beating down on you and you could feel a breeze that you did not get sitting in the sun. The team flowed in and out of the tent to observe swimmers in their jurisdiction, and it looked great. Think elaborate cuckoo clock chiming on the hour, as moving figures peek in and out of the clock. We were able to focus frequent relief efforts on the stroke teams, while still having some relief at both turn ends.

But we didn't stop there. Our prelim sessions were long, and flighted. We wanted to change our judges' climate experiences at some point, and their vantage points as well. In other words, take the people who were chilly in the shade at the start end, and give them some sun, while offering our turn end folks some welcome coolness and shade. How do you make such a smooth switch during a session? Look for the freestyle events, especially the 400 free!

After the last turn of the last heat of the event prior to the 400 frees, we took all nine turn end judges and walked them to the start end, to take over the duties (including that button at the end of the race) from their start end colleagues. (Visual here: sort of like parading the championship final heat, without music or fanfare.) Our relief officials were assigned to cover turn end turns from the corners, alternating women's and men's heats. Our start end officials all stood and left the pool deck for the women's heats. One stroke official per side covered the first 15 meter pass, walked to the second 15m mark for that pass, and then headed for the tent until the next heat.

At the end of the women's heats, the original start end officials came back to their positions in the shade and the original turn end officials left the deck and had a nice chunk of time to relax, eat and rest. When we resumed the next event with technical strokes, everyone was ready and rested. Because it was a complete change, it was easy to manage. Lane 1 at one end went to lane 1 at the other end.

We did inform the deck referees prior to these activities. Having them look down and not see any officials at the turn end (with glare from the pool you could not see the officials in the shade), or the entire turn end looking like they are going home, might cause some indigestion that we wanted to avoid.

So, when you are staffing your next outdoor meet, it IS possible to staff the deck correctly AND take care of your officials. Never hesitate to rotate officials from end to end or around the pool to make sure you are not over taxing one group over another. Teamwork, great communication, an amenable Meet Referee, and a strong desire to keep officials safe and comfortable works every time.

Tips for Mentors and Mentees?

By Melissa Hellervik-Bing

July and August are the two busiest months on the swim calendar for Officials Qualifying Meets and mentoring/evaluation opportunities for officials to improve their skills. Every year we have more and more officials seeking mentoring and national certification, in large part because USA Swimming's outstanding volunteer base wants to be the very best they can be at their "hobby." Everyone possesses an attitude and enthusiasm to learn more and improve, and in response the National Officials Committee is trying to support that interest with a variety of efforts.

In order to make the mentoring and evaluation experience educational and beneficial for everyone there are a couple tips for both evaluators and those being mentored to remember.

For Evaluators:

- From time to time review a couple documents that will help you stay on top of the mentoring and certification process. Those documents include the Rule Book, Professional Documents for the positions in which officials are seeking mentoring, and certification and evaluation guidelines and standards.
- Both N2 and N3 Evaluators should be familiar with the Tips for Successful Mentoring provided in the online webinar. It can be found on the [Education & Training page of the USA Swimming website](#).
- Review the official's previous evaluations and officiating history. The evaluations should detail areas they have mastered, as well as opportunities in their officiating where you can help them improve. The detail report outlines the sessions they have worked in that position since the previous evaluation. It will show you whether they have spent a minimum of eight sessions practicing the newly-learned skills prior to seeking an evaluation. That practice is paramount to a successful mentoring experience.
 - Those reports can be sent to you from a variety of

people: the official can send you their own history and evaluations from OTS, as can the Officials Chair from the LSC in which they're registered. You can also get that information from myself, Bob Griffiths, and Clark Hammond, to name just a few.

- Evaluators also need to remember that their role is not meant to interfere with the officiating at the competition. Sometimes in our zeal to "help" someone learn we can actually have the exact opposite impact if our officials are more concerned about their evaluation and how to do the job rather than actually doing their jobs.

For Officials seeking mentoring:

- Be prepared for your mentoring experience by reviewing the Rule Book, Professional Document for the position you're seeking mentoring, and your past evaluations.
- Make sure you have been to a couple meets and served in the desired position at least eight sessions to show that you have been practicing and trying to improve/perfect your skills before seeking another evaluation.
- Let your Mentor know when and how you prefer feedback. Very often it helps you if tips are given early in your experience, which offers you the opportunity to practice the new skills during the mentoring process.
- Be open to advice and suggestions for improvement. Sometimes just the willingness to try a new skill can help the mentoring experience prove beneficial.
- **VERY IMPORTANT:** An evaluation is only the first step towards certification. It doesn't come to you automatically after a successful evaluation. There are other requirements you must fulfill:
 - You will need to have a learning and teaching activity logged in your OTS account. The teaching activity can be the most difficult to come by, but you are likely doing it already! Mentoring an apprentice official is considered a teaching activity, so log that into your OTS activity account if it hasn't already been done for you by the administrator of a meet where you fulfilled that role.
 - Work six sessions a year.
 - If you are seeking certification at the N3 level for CJ, Deck Ref, Admin Ref or Starter, you need to work at a national championship meet.
 - And most important, you must submit a certification application from the Testing and Certification page when you are logged into your account on the USA Swimming website.

When you receive notification from the USAS Webmaster that an evaluation has been logged into your profile, please consider submitting a survey about your experience. The survey helps us improve our Mentoring & Evaluation Program, as well as provides individual mentors with thoughts and feedback that may help everyone improve.

We hope you will find these tips constructive as you travel along the road to officiating improvement and success. Please contact me anytime you have questions, concerns or input into the process by emailing me at mhellervikbing@hotmail.com.

Athlete Jumps Up Late -- What's the Penalty? *By Dan McAllen - Chair, Rules & Regulations Committee*

SITUATION: The Deck Referee blows a short series of whistles directing the swimmers to prepare to swim. All swimmers move behind their block except lane three who is missing. After checking for the missing swimmer without success, the Referee blows the long "step up" whistle. When the swimmers are up, the field is then turned over to the Starter who issues the "take your mark" command and, when all swimmers are stationary, sounds the device to start the race. Immediately thereafter an athlete jumps up on the empty lane three block and dives into the pool. The swimmer is, indeed, the one who had been seeded into lane three. What should the Deck Referee do, if anything?

RESOLUTION: Unfortunately, this highly unsafe situation occurs too often in meets, and yes, a penalty, albeit not a disqualification, is in order on these facts along with an admonition not to repeat the unsafe conduct. The penalty is to treat the athlete as a "no show". Clearly, he was not at the blocks ready to swim when the race was started. The administrative penalty for a "no show" means that for this athlete the swim never occurred. Thus, no time would be recorded for the swim, and any administrative penalties for a "no show" would also be applicable.

A variation on the above facts is the swimmer who jumps up on the block late either during or immediately before the "take your mark" command, but prior to the start signal. That generally requires an investigation on the part of the Deck Referee to determine what occasioned the late response. If the excuse is a good one (couldn't make it through the crowd) the starting sequence would then be repeated and the late arriving swimmer should not be penalized. However, if the excuse is a poor one (I was talking to my girlfriend who wants to break up with me) then a delay of meet disqualification would

be appropriate as opposed to a “no show” penalty.

Hy-tek Corner

By Bob Matlack

One of questions that I’m asked fairly often is how to combine entries in Meet Manager. The typical scenario is that some events end up with only two or three entries each and so they want to swim the events together – but still have them scored separately. In Meet Manager you have two options for how to do this:

1. If the events are the same stroke and distance – but different age groups and/or genders you can go to Seeding, and click on the Combine option in the top bar and Combine the entries from the two events. When you do so you will be asked if you want Meet Manager to change the gender and/or age groups of the event to match the combination – when you say yes, it will be set for individual events to swim the entries together but score them as separate events. For relay events you also need to go to Relays, select the relay event that you’ve combined the entries into, and there make sure that each relay entry has an age and a gender that puts them in the correct age group. Also, please note that after combining entries, you need to seed the event that they were combined into so that all of the entries now have a heat and lane assignment in that event.

2. The other option is to keep them setup as separate events, but swim them together. You would always use this option if the events are using different strokes, and can use it in other cases as well. Just move the swimmers into non-overlapping lane assignments, so that in one event the swimmers might be in lanes 1-3, and in the other event in lanes 5-8. Then at the end of the event use the race number button to pull the same results from the timing console into both events – and in each case the times for lanes are empty in the event will be forgotten/disregarded.