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USA Swimming Officials Newsletter

October 19, 2012

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RULE CHANGES

Items adopted by the 2012 House of Delegates can be found on the USA Swimming website. Click [here](#)

APPLICATIONS TO OFFICIATE

Minneapolis Grand Prix – Click [here](#) to apply.
Austin Grand Prix – Click [here](#) to apply.

Welcome to the October 2012 Officials Newsletter. The purpose of the officials 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.

Look forward to hearing from you.
Clark Hammond, National Officials Chair

GIVING BACK BY PAYING FORWARD

Olympiads are mentoring the next generation, are you?

An organization or team is only as good as its foundation, and this summer veteran Olympians were “caught in the act” of strengthening the base by mentoring younger swimmers. One sighting included veteran backstrokers extraordinaire Natalie Coughlin and Ryan Lochte working with Olympic team rookie Rachel Bootsma on her starts in training camp leading up to London. Did it help? According to Bootsma’s Aquajets (MN) club coach Kate Lundsten, “Oh yeah! Not only did they give her tips, but the fact that they cared so deeply about her performance gave her energy and confidence.” [Note: add this to the many reasons officials attend National Meets – you get to hear some inside stories from top coaches and swimmers!]

Another sighting may have required a bit more searching. At the bottom of the roster for the Junior Pan Pac Team that competed on Oahu in August was a listing for “National Team Rep – Aaron Peirsol.” The three-time Olympian, gold medalist and world record holder

considered his Junior Pan Pac assignment the best trip of the summer, even better than the Olympics. Why? The opportunity to interact with up-and-coming junior swimmers, to share his experiences and feelings on the big stage, to mentor them to step into the big fins of swimmers who will retire during this Quad. (And to lead morning swims in the ocean off the Ko Olina coast!) “Our Olympic team had a mix of young and old, but a lot of our top guys and gals are older and may not stay until 2016. This team needs to be ready to step in, deal with the pressure and perform.”

Give them energy and confidence. Get them ready to step in and perform. This mentoring theme easily can and should be applied to the officials’ side of our sport. Recall that Rachel, an 18-year-old, bested Natalie for a roster spot in the 100 back. Still, Nat gave back, making her teammate and her team better. Note that Aaron could have spent a week relaxing in Hawaii without a gaggle of 14-18 year olds in tow. But he didn’t. He swam, laughed, ate, talked and coached with them, diffusing tension, building a team, sharing a passion.

We mentor to give back. We mentor to pay forward to a sport that has been good to us. We need younger people in our ranks of officials, learning our craft, gaining experience, dealing with nerves so they eventually can take our places on pool decks everywhere. We take them under our wing, and teach them the fine points of officiating to give them energy and confidence. We mentor them so they can step in, deal with the pressure and perform. We should be happy the “youngsters” are coming, rather than fearing that they will displace us. A different perspective is good. The frequent looks of pride and celebration on Aaron’s face as Team USA performed race after race in Waipahu said that it’s all good, and maybe even better.

FROM THE INBOX

Responses from 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.

Butterfly Underwater Recovery

Question: A swimmer during the swim portion of the stroke recovers “short” on the butterfly recovery. Specifically, the swimmer recovered simultaneously over the water with bent arms until the hands and arms

got approximately even with the head. The hands and arms then entered the water and were extended forward while they were submerged until the arms were straight when another pull would begin. Is this an underwater recovery?

Answer: Yes, a swimmer who "shortens" the over the water portion of the recovery, puts his hands and arms back under the water, and continues to straighten them to a fully extended position where the next power stroke can begin has, indeed, recovered under water in violation rule 101.3.2.

If, however, the hands enter only a couple of inches from full extension and the swimmer is simply extending slightly to get a better grip of the water, that would not be an underwater recovery. Over the water recovery contemplates the arms reentering at a fully extended position, so that upon entry the hands and arms can begin a pull for the next power stroke. If the hands enter at a point where they must then be extended underwater to reach the point where the next power stroke can be commenced you have underwater recovery. Obviously, even with a "short" recovery, if upon the hands and arms reentering the water a stroke is immediately commenced without further extension, no violation would occur.

Deck Changing

Question: As a Referee what is my responsibility for implementing the new legislation "strongly discouraging" or perhaps "forbidding" deck changing?

Officials are not expected to be watching the deck for such violations – their eyes should be on the pool; however, as with any rule, it is your responsibility to ensure that violations which are brought to your attention are addressed with the offender. Obviously, there is a difference between "strongly discouraging" and "prohibiting." If the meet announcement "strongly discourages" deck changing, it would be appropriate to speak directly with the offender and inform him/her of the statement in the meet announcement and encourage compliance. This also could be addressed with the offender's coach.

If deck changing is "prohibited" and the options for penalty are not contained in the meet announcement, a first time offender should be informed of the requirements of the meet announcement, the expectation on the Referee's part, and acknowledgment by the offender that the rules henceforth will be followed. In this situation the coach absolutely should be informed of the conversation with the athlete, and the future expectation. Even if options for penalties for violations are included in the meet announcement, the Referee should issue a warning for a first-time offense to both the athlete and his coach. While rule 102.22.3 allows the Referee to apply an appropriate penalty should an athlete act in an unsportsmanlike manner, only in

extreme circumstances of repeated violations or intentional disregard for the rules should the athlete be banned from further competition. Remember, the objective of this legislation is education, so that swimmers will halt this practice voluntarily. Punishment should be considered only where education is not fulfilling that objective.

USA SWIMMING RULES & REGULATIONS

HOW THEY'RE MADE & WHAT THEY MEAN

By Ron Van Pool

As officials we are often asked “Where does that rule come from?” or “What does it mean?” These are good questions that often are followed by “How can the rule be changed?”

USA Swimming’s Rules & Regulations result from two basic sources:

- FINA (the International Aquatics Federation). By rule, the technical rules of USA Swimming (those involving how the various strokes are started, swum and finished) must follow FINA’s rules.
- USA Swimming’s legislative process.

Changing a rule starts with an amendment. Article 511 specifies how amendments to the Rules and Regulations may be made, and who can make recommendations for amendments. Basically, an amendment may be proposed only by an LSC, a duly constituted USA Swimming committee, a member of the USA Swimming House of Delegates (HOD) as identified in Article 507, the Board of Directors, the National Board of Review, or any Allied or Affiliate Group Member (NCAA or YMCA). Amendments must be in the prescribed form and be submitted to the Rules & Regulations Committee by May 15, in order to require passage by majority vote of the HOD. Amendments submitted after the May 15 deadline require a 90% majority to pass, and amendments to Part 5 of the rulebook require a two-thirds majority.

At the September 2012 USA Swimming House of Delegates (HOD) meeting, amendments to the rules came primarily from committees, such as Rules & Regulations, Safe Sport, Governance, Club Development and Times and Recognition, although individuals and LSCs certainly could have submitted proposed amendments. The subject matter this year involved Parts 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 of the rulebook. During the HOD meeting there was vigorous debate on several of the items being considered and some were amended. USA Swimming is committed to a democratic governance process and follows Robert’s Rules of Order during deliberations. Items adopted by

the 2012 House of Delegates can be found on the USA Swimming website. Click [here](#).

Officials are encouraged to submit recommendations for rules changes to their LSC, to a USA Swimming committee, or directly to the Rules & Regulations Committee pursuant to the provisions of Article 511.2.1. Article 511.2.2 specifies the form for submittals, including inclusion of a rationale for the amendment.

In addition to the process for amending the Rules and Regulations of USA Swimming, LSC's have similar processes for amending its By-laws and procedural rules which govern the LSC. Officials may recommend policy and procedures amendments to their LSCs for adoption by the LSC House of Delegates.

Rule making is an evolutionary process. For example, the backstroke and breaststroke rules have evolved as athletes, coaches, and technical experts have developed new ways to swim the strokes, and rule makers have sought to ensure fairness to all competitors. Understanding how and why a particular rule has changed over time allows an official to better apply the rule. A rule that may seem difficult to interpret often makes more sense when put into the context of its evolution.

The meaning of a rule can be obvious or may require interpretation. Interpretations of the technical rules are issued by the FINA Technical Swimming Committee and the USA Swimming Rules & Regulations Committee Chair. Procedural rules interpretations may be issued by the Rules & Regulations Committee Chair, the LSC or, in some cases, responsible committees such as the Officials Committee, depending on the nature of the question. Officials not only should review the rulebook frequently, but also should strive to stay up-to-date with rules interpretations. New interpretations are posted on the USA Swimming website, and notification emails are sent to all officials and all LSCs.

So where can an official find out about a rule? Ask the USA Swimming Rules & Regulations Committee (see "From the Inbox" above), the USA Swimming Officials Committee or your local LSC Officials Committee. Experienced and knowledgeable leaders can help provide the proper background to aid ensure the correct application of the rules.

Key things to remember – the rules are not as arbitrary as they may sometimes seem. They are the result of a deliberative process, by FINA, USA Swimming or LSCs and are thoroughly vetted by the various Congresses or HOD prior to being adopted. They do change with time.